



The Level of Interest and Attitude of the Local Community in Home Gardening during COVID-19 Pandemic: An Assessment

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: People are facing uncertain and challenging times in the surge of COVID-19 Pandemic; unemployment rate increases, incomes dramatically decline, and movement restrictions are evident in every household here in the Philippines. Due to income disruption, the underprivileged encounter shortage of their food resources. As such, home gardening becomes a popular initiative of the government and non-government agencies.

Objectives: The primary aim of this paper is to determine the level of interest and attitude of the residents from the Municipality of Cantilan, Surigao del Sur towards home gardening during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Methodology: The study made use of the descriptive normative design by using a convenience sampling method. The sample selection was based on participants' willingness to answer the questionnaire which serves as the primary tool in gathering the data. Wherein there are 115 total of respondents participated in the study. The collected data were treated using a simple percentage and weighted mean.

Results and Conclusions: The result shows that majority of the respondents were interested in

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home gardening and believed that it helps their family to eat better and save money during a pandemic. It also indicates that they have time to work in their garden, to be recreational, and conform that they enjoy this activity. It would strengthen their family values and the benefits of home gardening to our environment. However, they are not fully aware of the other benefits of home gardening. Meanwhile, they are unsure if they became successful in home gardening or not.

Keywords: COVID-19; home gardening; food security; vegetable.

1. INTRODUCTION

People are facing uncertain and challenging times in the surge of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Pandemic has forced local communities to be on lockdowns wherein the elderly and the youth are forced to stay at home with nothing to do and with little economic support. Unemployment rate increases, incomes dramatically decline, and movement restrictions are evident in every household here in the Philippines. In addition, due to income disruption, especially the underprivileged population encountered shortage source of food—prompting the demand for food aid from the government.

To address this deficiency of sources for food safety and security, multiple strategies were made by the government and non-government organizations, such as distributing seeds to encourage home gardening [1] & Montefrico, Mj [2]. According to Odebode [3] “Home gardening refers to the cultivation of a small portion of land around the household or within walking distance from the family home”. Home gardens are described as a mixed cropping system that encompasses vegetables, fruits, plantation crops, spices, herbs, ornamental and medicinal plants, and livestock that can serve as a supplementary source of food and income [4]. In 2020, Chandran enumerated the multiple benefits that home gardening brought to us; first it is therapeutic as one becomes happy and satisfied seeing plants grow, second it helps in improving one’s mental condition, third is food nutrition, fourth it provides additional household income, and lastly it promotes food security to low-income families. It is evident from the various literatures that home gardening is part of the agriculture and food production systems in many developing countries and is widely used to alleviate hunger and malnutrition in the face of the global food crisis. Some author believes that this trend could potentially resolve food insecurity issues and open up opportunities to transform the food system [5].

Moreover, the economic benefits of home gardening, according to Calvet-Mir, L et al. [6] go

beyond food and nutritional security and subsistence, especially for resource-poor families. Bibliographic evidence suggests that home gardens contribute to income generation, improved livelihoods, and household economic welfare, as well as promoting entrepreneurship and rural development.

However, given those beneficial outcomes of home gardening, it is important to further explore the area by assessing the locals’ level of interest or needs and its attitude towards home gardening during a pandemic; thus, this study was conducted. This was part of the Surigao del Sur State University initiative, guided with the major objective in documenting the locals’ level of interest or needs in home gardening. The result of the study could be used as a basis in proposing an intervention to fight against the COVID-19 Pandemic that potentially addresses lack of food resources and open up opportunities to help alleviate the food system in the province of Surigao del Sur and even in the whole country.

2. METHODS

The study was conducted with the use of the descriptive normative design by using a convenience sampling method. The sample selection was based on participants’ willingness to answer the questionnaire which was the primary tool in gathering the data. The questionnaire from the study of Samuel Awah Foncham [7] titled “Attitudes Towards and Interest in Community Gardening in Two Low-Income Neighborhoods” was modified in order to provide comprehensible questions with possible answers, and was utilized for schematic recording. A total of 115 respondents participated in the study, which came from different barangays in the Municipality of Cantilan, Surigao del Sur. This was conducted from January to April 2021. The collected data were checked for accuracy, and treated using the simple percentage and weighted mean with the following scale wherein the qualitative description served as a guide:

Weight	Range	Qualitative Description
3	2.4 – 3.0	Agree
2	1.7 – 1.3	Disagree
1	1.0 – 1.6	Unsure

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic profile of the respondents is shown in Fig. 1 below. Out of one 115 respondents, 95% were female and the remaining 5% were male. 97% were considered unemployed during this COVID-19 Pandemic and only 3% were employed. With regards to their highest educational attainment, the results show that 50% were elementary graduates and 30% graduated in high school, while the

remaining 20% were college graduates or Bachelor's Degree holder. As to their household income per month, the data revealed that 49% of the respondents have only below 10, 000.00 pesos income per month; which belongs to the 'poor to low-income categories' in the country [8-9]. These are the categories that are most affected during this COVID-19 Pandemic and who are dependent only on their daily income basis.

On the other hand, when the respondents were asked if they had been involved in home gardening, Fig. 2 below shows that 83% answered "YES", while 17% answered "NO".

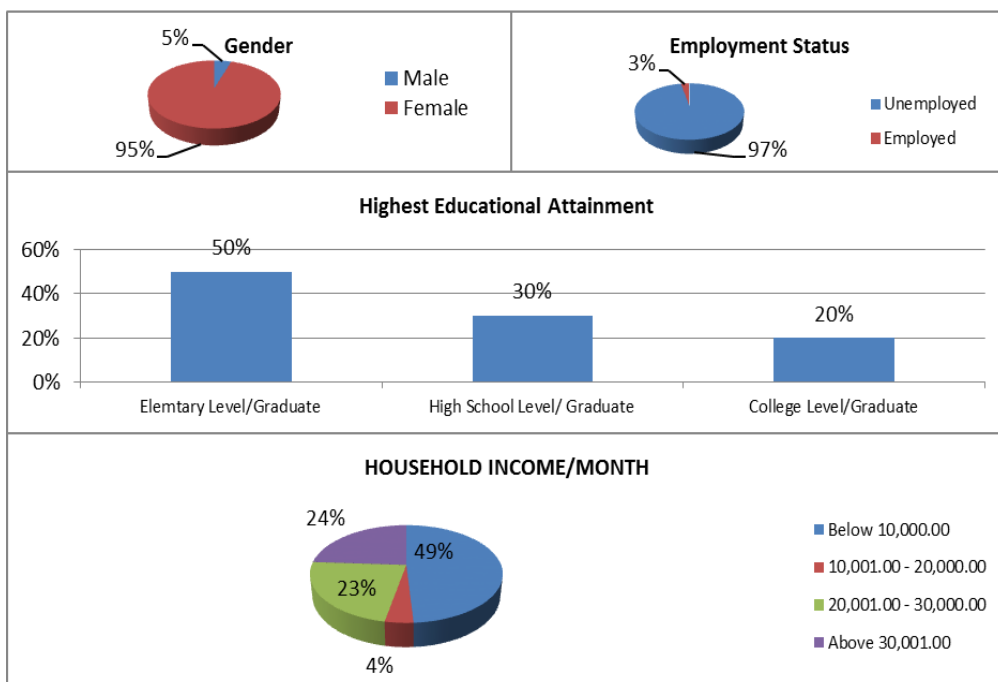


Fig. 1. Demographic profile of the Respondents in terms of Gender, Status, Highest Educational Attainment and Household Income per Month

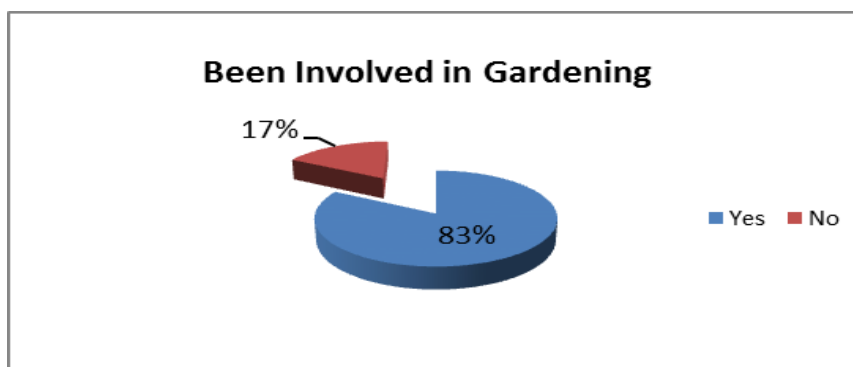


Fig. 2. Involved in Gardening

Table 1 presents that home gardening needs assessments. The results show that majority of the respondents or 96% responded "AGREE" which signifies that they are interested in home vegetable gardening, while three percent (3%) "DISAGREE" and one percent (1%) are "UNSURE". When it comes to growing fruit trees 75% of them replied "DISAGREE" and 23 % were "UNSURE", while only two percent (2%) of the respondents answer "AGREE". This is because planting fruit trees requires a big area to be planted, and most of them do not have the needed area. On the other hand, the majority of the respondents also "AGREE" with the statement that they are interested in "organic farming", "gardening as a hobby", "have some gardening experience", "know a lot about gardening", and are "interested to learn more about gardening" with a percentage of 96%, 91%, 83%, 73%, and 97% respectively. The results imply that home gardening is not new in the perspective of the respondents, considering their high level of interest. These reflect that the strategy of the government and non-government agencies in promoting home gardening to address the diminishing resources for food security during

pandemic have a bigger chance of being successful.

Meanwhile, Table 2 presents the respondents' attitude towards home gardening during the pandemic, and the result significantly displays that they "AGREE" with the following statements "Home gardening can help my family eat better", "I can save money by home gardening", "I have time to work in my garden", and "Home gardening can be recreational to me"; though they differ with the average mean of 2.95, 2.51, 2.97, and 2.97 respectively. On the other hand, with the average mean of 2.22 "DISAGREE" with the statement that "Home gardening can be a family activity to us", average mean of 1.92 does not support the notion that "Home gardening can strengthen family values such as sharing foods with others" and with an average mean of 2.26 are not certain with the statement that "Our environment will benefit from home gardening". The result shows a positive attitude of the respondents towards home gardening but not fully aware of the potential benefits of this to our environment. While "UNSURE" on the statement "I am positive that I would be successful in gardening" with an average mean of 1.62.

Table 1. Home Gardening Needs Assessments during Pandemic

Particulars	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Unsure (%)
I am interested in Home Vegetable Gardening	96	3	1
I am Interested in growing Fruit Trees	2	75	23
I am Interested in Organic Farming	96	4	
I am interested in gardening as a Hobby	91	3	6
I have some gardening experience	83	17	
I know a lot about gardening	73	36	6
I am interested to learn more about gardening	97	3	

Table 2. Respondent's attitude towards home gardening during the pandemic

Particular	Mean	Verbal Description
Home gardening can help my family eat better	2.95	Agree
I can save money by home gardening	2.51	Agree
Home gardening can be a family activity for us	2.22	Disagree
Home gardening can strengthen family values such as sharing foods with others	2.26	Disagree
Our environment will benefit from home gardening	1.92	Disagree
I have time to work in my garden	2.97	Agree
I am positive that I would be successful in gardening	1.62	Unsure
Home gardening can be recreational to me	2.97	Agree
I would enjoy an activity such as gardening	2.96	Agree

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study reveal a high level of the respondents' interest in home vegetable gardening. It shows that the government and non-government agencies' intervention to address the deficiency of food resources and security during pandemic may be effective. However, it was found out that they were not fully aware of the benefits of home vegetable gardening to our environment. Thus, the Surigao del Sur State University should take the initiative to educate the residence of the Municipality of Cantilan, Surigao del Sur about the benefits of vegetable gardening to increase their knowledge about it and boost their confidence that they could be successful in this activity in the future.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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