

Exploring the Lived Experiences of Banana Growers Battling Panama Disease During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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INTRODUCTION & AIM

- **Panama disease (Fusarium wilt)** devastates Cavendish bananas in the Philippines.
- COVID-19 intensified growers' struggles, adding health, market, and livelihood pressures.

Research gap: Few studies explore the psychological challenges of banana growers during crises.

Objective: Explore the lived experiences of growers, coping strategies, and insights.

Framework:

- **Resilience Theory** – adaptation and endurance.
- **Social-Ecological Systems Theory** – the interplay of farmers, communities, and the environment.
- Linked to **SDG 3 (Health & Well-Being)** and **SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption & Production)**.

METHOD

- **Design:** Qualitative, phenomenological.
- **Participants:** 7 banana growers (30–85 years old), Davao Region, 10–45 years in banana farming, shifted to maize/other crops post-Panama.
- **Data Collection:** Semi-structured interviews (Google Meet), Cebuano/English.
- **Analysis:** Thematic analysis → clustered responses into themes.

INSIGHTS/IMPLICATIONS

- Farmers showed **resilience** but need *stronger mental health support, financial aid, and agricultural extension services*.
- Highlights the importance of **integrating psychology with agriculture policy**.
- SDGs lens: sustainable agriculture + mental health programs for farming communities.

CONCLUSION

- Panama disease + COVID-19 created a **“double crisis”** for banana growers.
- Growers adapted through crop diversification, budgeting, and solidarity.
- Call for **interdisciplinary interventions** (psychology, agriculture, governance) to build long-term resilience.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Themes Identified:



FINANCIAL STRUGGLES

Loss of steady income, loans for inputs, transition to corn/vegetables.

“Lisod kaayo kay dugay ka maka-income sa mais... unlike bananas before.” (P5)

“It’s really difficult because it takes a long time before you can earn from corn... unlike bananas before.” (P5)

Stress, anxiety, disrupted education of children, worry over family survival.

“Among ref sauna kay puno. Unya karon wa na tubig na lay nabilin.” (P1)

“Our refrigerator used to be full; now only water remained.” (P1)



EMOTIONAL STRAIN



ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE

Diversified crops (corn, cardava, vegetables), belt-tightening, alternative income (hosting gigs).



COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Aid from relatives abroad, neighbors sharing resources, solidarity among farmers.

FUTURE WORK / REFERENCES

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