

INVESTIGATING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF RELOCATED INFORMAL SETTLERS IN COASTAL AREA IN DAVAO DEL NORTE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the lived experiences of informal settlers relocated from coastal areas of Panabo City to upland sites in Davao del Norte, Philippines. Employing a qualitative methodology, the research explored how relocation impacted their livelihoods, emotional attachments, and access to essential services. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data collected from seven purposively selected participants during semi-structured interviews. The results indicated that relocation significantly disrupted economic stability, as participants transitioned from coastal livelihoods, such as fishing, to alternative upland income sources like farming and small businesses. The transition resulted in significant decreased earnings, which was made worse by the high costs of transportation and travel. Another significant issue was emotional displacement, as individuals reported finding it difficult to break off their connections to the coastal area, which had significant sentimental and cultural significance. Many, however, took comfort in their new environment, which they saw as more peaceful and safe. However, gaps in access to basic services, such as potable water, electricity, and healthcare, were prevalent, often requiring families to adopt creative coping mechanisms like rainwater collection and solar energy use. These problems emphasized the need for enhanced planning and support mechanisms in resettlement initiatives.

The study concludes that while relocation addressed safety and urban development objectives, it imposed significant economic, social, and infrastructural burdens on affected families. To mitigate these challenges, the research recommends implementing livelihood assistance programs, infrastructure development, improved access to healthcare, and inclusive planning and monitoring processes. These strategies are designed to promote sustainable and inclusive progress by balancing development objectives with the well-being of relocated communities.

Keywords: Relocation, Informal Settlers, Resettlement Challenges, Livelihood Transition, Coastal Communities

1. INTRODUCTION

Living in practicalities, the marine and coastal environment give such benefits and opportunities that cannot compare to other parts of the world. Coastal areas have long been a hub of human activity, with millions of people worldwide calling these regions home. The significance of living in a coastal area extends beyond its aesthetic appeal, with numerous economic, social, and environmental benefits. Research has shown that coastal areas provide a range of economic opportunities, including thriving ports, tourism, and fishing industries, which contribute significantly to local and national economies (NOAA, 2020). Additionally, living in a coastal area has been linked to improved mental health and well-being, with studies suggesting that proximity to the ocean can have a positive impact on mental health outcomes (Wheeler et al., 2012).

The Republic of the Philippines, located in the Pacific Ocean near the equator, according to National Geographic, comprises around 7,640 islands, in which 2,000 of it are inhabited, that form an archipelago. The country can be divided into three main areas: Luzon, as the largest and the northernmost island; Visayas, composed as a group of islands; and Mindanao, the second-largest island in the Philippines, found at the southern end of the archipelago. Within Mindanao, lies the province of Davao del Norte. With a total land area of 3,422.61 sq. km., which is 18.3 percent of the total land area of Davao Region, it has the largest population density with 329 persons per square kilometer among provinces in Davao region, said by NEDA.

According to its Integrated Coastal Management Plan 2018-2023, the province has a total land area of 350,851.61 hectares that comprises 14.65% of the total land area of Region XI. It comprises 11 component cities and municipalities, four of which, Panabo City, Tagum City, Island Garden City of Samal and the Municipality of Carmen, have areas along the coastal zones. The Davao del Norte's coastal and marine waters, as part of the Davao Gulf, has a total area of 111,0023.30 municipal waters and a coastal stretch of 145.42 kilometers. The province's coastal area is not as wide and productive as other provinces but incomparable and is one of the prime tourism assets of the area. Fishing is one of the most practiced ways of living along its coastal areas and it homed a significant portion of the province's economic growth because of its industrial and recreational host activities and opportunities. It drowned to a reason why about 13% of the population of Davao del Norte reside in the coastal barangays.

Given these riches of Davao del Norte, a lot of its constituents choose to live near its waters for sustainable livelihood through utilizing its coastal and marine resources. Because of the rapid development growth of the city through its competent development plans and programs, the coastal environment and communities have been focused by redevelopment and management.

This study aimed to investigate the lived experiences of the people directly affected by relocation development of the city. It aimed to look at their reason for choosing to live in the area, their reactions after knowing the relocation plan, and how this directly affected their lives.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study aims to investigate the lived experiences of relocated informal settlers in coastal area in Davao del Norte. Specifically, the study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the subsequent economic impacts on the lives of families relocated from coastal areas?
2. What are the emotional impacts on their lives following relocation?
3. What is the impacts on their access to essential services and facilities following relocation?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to investigate the lived experiences of the people directly affected by the relocation development of the city. It aimed to examine the economic, social and emotional difficulties and challenges that relocated families continue to face, how they perceive and adapt to the loss of their familiar way of life, and how effectively the government has met their needs to support their families, as promised during the relocation process.

By understanding the experiences of relocated informal settlers, this study will offer valuable insights for local governments, policymakers, the social welfare sector, and local planners to better address the needs and well-being of those affected by the province's development projects.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on the real-life experiences of families affected by the relocation of informal settlers from the coastal areas of Panabo City. The participants were exclusively families relocated to Purok 7, Brgy. Katipunan, Panabo City. It focuses on the changes in their livelihoods, emotions, and access to basic services after relocation. Using qualitative methods, particularly in-depth interviews with purposefully selected participants, the study aims to capture the unique perspectives of those living in Purok 7, Brgy. Katipunan, Panabo City.

3. RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

Literature and prior studies provided different views on the effects of resettlement. In the context of the resettled communities of Davao City Coastal Road, this research would contribute to the additional knowledge on the Lived Experiences of Relocated Informal Settlers in the Coastal Area, particularly in the local setting.

A study by Abu et al. (2024) revealed the negative impacts of the planned relocation to those relocated communities. It was reported that relocated communities have experienced significantly lower levels of well-being and perception of safety with high levels of anxiety. As pointed out by the study, these results are caused by disconnection with the community and individual identities. Despite using several environmental and social impact assessments, it is also reported that severe social impacts continue to occur for road projects. While road projects have some benefits, the land acquisition required for these projects has led to physical and economic displacement and disruption to the livelihoods of local people. Further issues included inadequate community engagement, delayed payment of compensation, and inadequate compensation. It is suggested that improved planning and management, enhanced community engagement, and adequate funding for resettlement and compensation are required for more acceptable road projects (Kahangirwe & Vancly, 2024). Other studies also found that road infrastructure leads to residential segregation, negatively affecting the community's social interactions. Road infrastructure also improved the connectivity between the infrastructure services, which attracted more people to the area. However, due to the low enforcement of planning regulations, informal settlers emerged, thus creating fragmentation processes. The study concluded that this fragmentation is due to shortcomings in implementing the planning policy (Adugbila et al. 2023).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the following theories:

The Risks and Reconstruction Model

Explains the critical risks brought about by the displacement process, such as negative experiences with physical, economic, social, and health issues. The model recommended financial adequacy in reconstructing and improving the livelihood of those displaced (Cernea, 1997).

Émile Durkheim and Anomie Theory

This theory argues that traditional norms may fail to regulate during significant social changes or crises. Consequently, individuals may struggle to find meaning and purpose in their lives (Edwards, 2024).

Place Attachment Theory

This theory suggests an emotional bond between person and place, and place attachment is identified as a significant driver for an individual's decision to act in their physical environment, with people exhibiting varied responses to such drastic changes (Inalhan et al., 2021).

4. METHODOLOGY

This chapter discussed the research method used in this study, the sources of the data and the method used to collect the data, and the process of analysis of the data.

Method Used

This study adopts a qualitative methodology to explore the lived experiences of relocated informal settlers from the coastal area of Panabo City to upland relocation sites in Davao del Norte. Using in-depth interviews, data will be gathered from seven purposively selected participants, ensuring diverse representation of their experiences with the relocation process. The purposive sampling method is justified as it effectively targets individuals with direct and relevant experiences, making the data collection more robust and contextually rich (Tongco, 2007). This approach prioritizes reliability and participant competence to deepen the understanding of relocation impacts.

Data Collection

The way that data for this study is gathered is through semi-structured interviews, which are both flexible and focused, allowing researchers to get deep and detailed insights from researchers. Semi-structured interviews are particularly suited for qualitative research as they balance structure with the opportunity for participants to freely express their experiences and perspectives (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). Seven relocated informal settlers from Panabo City's coastal areas to upland sites in Davao del Norte will be interviewed.

Open-ended questions guide the interviews and help us learn more about the people being interviewed by letting the conversation change based on new themes that come up. The interviews' audio recordings will be typed up word-for-word, and the narratives will be submitted to thematic analysis to find patterns and main ideas. This method ensures a comprehensive understanding of the relocation process by examining the personal and social dimensions of the individuals involved.

Data Analysis

The data gathered through semi-structured interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative approach designed to identify, organize, and interpret patterns within the data. The data analysis will follow a systematic approach adapted from the study of Braun and Clarke (2006) which includes immersing in the data to gain familiarity, generating initial codes, identifying potential themes, refining and validating the themes, and synthesizing the findings into a comprehensive narrative.

This method ensures that the participants' narratives are carefully examined to uncover both explicit and implicit meanings in their lived experiences. Vaismoradi et al. (2013) emphasize the importance of thematic analysis in qualitative research for its flexibility and ability to provide a nuanced understanding of complex phenomena. By applying this approach, the study aims to distill the essential themes that reflect the challenges, adaptations, and outcomes faced by relocated informal settlers, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the relocation process.

Ethical consideration

Ethical considerations will be prioritized, ensuring informed consent and confidentiality of all participants. The study aims to contribute valuable insights into the challenges faced by relocated informal settlers to help policymakers about the need for supportive measures in future urban development projects.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A study in Davao del Norte indicated that most coastal areas were moderately exposed, sensitive, and adaptive to the detrimental effects of natural hazards. The coastal regions of the province exhibited vulnerability to natural calamities (Jocson & Magallon Jr, 2018). This section will explore the lived experiences, responses, and perspectives of the research participants who were affected by the relocation of families from the coastal areas of Davao del Norte, specifically in Panabo City.

The analysis began with familiarization, where transcripts were carefully read many times over to identify recurring words, phrases, and ideas. Relevant segments of text were labeled with codes representing key concepts. The themes

were extracted through a thorough analysis of participants' interview responses and were then grouped into broader categories, leading to the development of themes, such as: (1) Adaptation to Economic Challenges; (2) Emotional Attachment and Adaptation to Place; and (3) Gaps in access to essential services.

Theme 1: Adaptation to Economic Challenges

The most common experience shared by the participants is the decrease in their income each month. Based on the interview with the participants, all of the respondents were greatly affected by the changes and adjustments to the source of income as they transitioned from living within the coastal area to a remote upland area.

Change of livelihood which leads to decrease in income

Relocation disrupted the primary livelihoods of participants, such as fishing and coastal-based income-generating activities. Transitioning to farming, vending, driving tricycles, and other alternative sources of income was challenging, especially since the livelihood in the upland is vastly different from that in the coastal area.

“Mas dako ang kita sa kaniadto”

(Respondent 7)

“Mas dako income didto, dako deperensya kay sa dagat, ubay ubay ang income. Dinhi kay igo igo ra” (Respondent 2)

“Pirte kalayo, times 3, ang akaong bana didto sa coastal managat, so ang income naa makuha sa dagat, malibre na among sud-an. Dako jud ang among adjustment. Dinhi weekly nako tigumon ang 1000, pero didto kay one day ra sa pag paninda.”

(Respondent 3)

“Mas dako ang deperensya, sauna kung wala koy trabaho, makapanagat man ko, dinhi kung wala koy trabaho dili ko makapanagat layo man kaayo. Mas bentaha didto, kay bugas nalang ang problemahon, dire halos mag lisod palit sud-an og bugas. Lisod dinhi basta walay trabho mao maningkamot ug mangita ug trabaho. Manghurnal, mangraha, naay tigcompra. Unya walay kaugalinong yuta, mao maglisod mananghid nga mangraha kung musogot ang tag-iya sa yuta.”

(Respondent 4)

“Murag kag naa sa lasang, na dugay nakapahimulos sa tanom. Nanaom dayon kog saging diha, nanaghid ko sa city, kung pwede ba tamnan. Mao ra na akong pag laum katong bag-o ko nagbalhin dinhi. Unya nagtanom ug mais, nagdiskarte pud ko. Mahulog na ang income, igo igo nalang sa pagkaon. Didto dagko ko og income sa dagat.”

(Respondent 6)

Participants experienced difficulties finding equivalent income sources, resulting in reduced earnings and greater financial strain.

Economic Struggles in Resettlement

Aside from the adjustments required due to a change in livelihood source and significantly reduced income, the high costs associated with relocating to the remote upland areas of Panabo City present an additional challenge for the families, particularly due to the high cost of daily commute and fuel expenses.

“Mas dako ang kita sa dagat, diri dili ka maka naog sa ubos kung wala kay 200 pang round trip” (Respondent 1)

“Ahh layo ra dinhi, mas dako ang income didto, managat paman ka, walay problema panud an, kay muadto raka ug dagat. Dinhi kay lisod, muadto paka palengke, papamsahero paka, kuwaan pa gasolina. Dili kaparehas didto, naa nakay sudsod, bugas nalang kulang.”

(Respondent 3)

“Dinhi sa motor nimo, pildi napud ka sa gasolina. Kay pagpadulong palang nimo, nitubil naman ka, inya gamay rakag kuha, nisamot kay back and forth, lisod gyud.”

(Respondent 4)

“Sa karon ipit na kaayo, kay naa paman pud apasonon, samot na sa estudyante, ang estudyante, mahal ang pamasaha.”

(Respondent 2)

“Igo ra sa pamasaha ang 200, samantalang tua ka didto sa baba, daghan naka mabuhat sa 200 makakaon naka ug mga sud an.”

(Respondent 3)

As Montiel et al. (2021) stated in their study on informal settlers in the coastal areas of Panabo City, "due to unstable livelihoods and limited income, many people struggle to secure food and basic necessities each day. However, over time, they have developed skills and strategies to cope with these challenges and survive."

Table 1: Themes and sub-themes that emerge on the subsequent economic impact on the lives of the relocatees.

Themes	Sub-Themes	Supporting Statements
1. Adaptation to Economic Challenges	a. Change of livelihood which leads to decrease in income	<p>"We earn more than before" (Respondent 7)</p> <p>"The income is bigger there, the difference is bigger than the sea, the income is huge. Here is just enough" (Respondent 2)</p> <p>It's far, the income is times 3. My husband in the coastal area drives a pedicab in the morning and goes fishing in the afternoon, so the income there is from the sea. The food is easy, and it's free. Our adjustment is huge. Here I need one week to save 1,000, but in the coastal area, it only took a day to save that amount (Respondent 3)</p> <p>"The difference is bigger. Before, if I didn't have a job, I could go fishing. Here, if I don't have a job, I can't go fishing, even if it's too far away. It's more advantageous there, because the only problem is rice, it's not nearly as difficult to buy rice. It is difficult here as long as there is no job so try and find a job. We pick and sell firewoods when there is a buyer. Then you don't have your own land, so it will be difficult to ask whether the owner of the land agrees." (Respondent 4)</p> <p>It's like being in the forest, who has not been able to enjoy the fruit of the plant for a long time. I immediately planted bananas there. I asked the city if it is possible to plant. That's been my only hope since I moved here. Then I planted corn, and I also strategized. The income is just enough for food . Unlike the income from the sea, it's huge. (Respondent 6)</p>
	b. Economic Struggles in Resettlement	<p>"The income is bigger in the sea, here you can't go down if you don't have another 200 pesos for round trip" (Respondent 1)</p> <p>"Ahh, it's far from here, the income is bigger there. There's no problem there because you just go fishing in the sea. It's hard here, going to the market, getting a taxi, getting gas. It's not the same there, there is always food on the coast, your only need is rice. (Respondent 3)</p> <p>Here with your motorcycle, you will lose fuel expenses.and it got worse because you went back and forth, it's really difficult." (Respondent 4)</p> <p>"Right now, it's very tight, because there's a lot to pay for, it's worse for the student, the student, the fare is expensive." (Respondent 2)</p> <p>200 is enough for the fare. Before, in the coastal area, you could do a lot with 200, you could already eat and buy food with it." (Respondent 3)</p>

Theme 2: Emotional Attachment and Adaptation to Place

The study of Perta et. al (2014) on Attachment and Displacement, said that people's past connections to where they lived before influenced how easily or deeply they could form new attachments to their current surroundings.

While relocated families faced minimal difficulties in social integration due to pre-existing relationships with neighbors and family members, emotional adjustment proved to be more challenging because the coastal areas held sentimental value, representing their long-standing livelihoods and shared memories.

Social Support and Emotional Displacement

Relocated families faced few challenges in maintaining their social networks, as many had already established close relationships with their neighbors in the coastal area. In some cases, extended families and children also relocated with them, further easing the transition. However, having lived in the coastal area for many years—some having grown up there and built their families—moving to a non-coastal location far from their original homes proved to be a difficult adjustment for many.

“Didto gyud ko gipanganak, didto nako nagdako, tanan kaagi didto na. Ang among skills kay pagpanagat, akoang mama ug papa, mananagat. Naa pud mi bangka, ang bangka kay nagkulob ra didto, kay katong bangkaa naa natoy value, kay ang bangka nabahin na sa kinabuhi, kay naghuot na ang dughan mabaligya.” (Respondent 2)

“Naay gamay pagmahamay, dugay naka adjust. Usahay mubalik mi sa akong asawa didto aron mubisita sa coastal og mga silingan sauna”

(Respondent 5)

“Oo, mingawon didto og ganahan manudsud. Mingawon mi manudsod, lami manudsod maabot sa seawall, labi na bawod bawod.”

(Respondent 4)

“Siyempre naguol, kay among panginabuhian kay naa didto, tapos nianhi, kay layo ra kaayo ang panginabuhian namo.”

(Respondent 3)

“Daghan napud ko naamigo dinhi, magatapok tapok mi dinhi panahon sa pasko, kanang kaon kaon, pamilya raman mi dihi, bibo kaayo mi dinhi kay silingan naman mi daadn didto.”

(Respondent 6)

Peace and Order in New Settlements

Participants generally found the resettled areas to be safer and more peaceful compared to the coastal regions, where theft and disorder were more common.

“After pila katuig, mas okay na dinhi, kay peaceful naman gud, kay wala nay banha. Naa man pud panagsa kawat, didto halos kada gabii naay kawat, sumbagay, natory na na nakawatan. Sa peace in order, okay ra dinhi.”

(Respondent 6)

“Oo safe man pud diri. Walay problema sa safety, puro man pud mi silangan didto. Kabisado na namo ang among mga silingan.”

(Respondent 3)

“Safety na ko dinhi.”

(Respondent 7)

The perception of safety in the new areas provided psychological relief. Unlike the coastal regions, where theft and noise were prevalent, the new settlements were described as quiet and orderly, which further reinforced participants' satisfaction with their move.

Table 2: Themes and sub-themes that emerge on the subsequent emotional impact and adaptation on the lives of relocated families

Themes	Sub-Themes	Supporting Statements
2.Emotional Attachment and Adaptation to Place	a.Social Support and Emotional Displacement	<p>"I was born there, I grew up there, all my past has been there. Our skills are fishing, my mom and dad are fishermen. We also have a boat. The boat is just sitting there because that boat has value to us , and the boat has been part of life, and we feel emotional if we sell the boat.</p> <p>(Respondent 5)</p>
		<p>Yes, we miss there and we like to dive. We miss diving, it's good to dive in the seawall, especially through the waves."</p> <p>(Respondent 4)</p>
		<p>Of course we are sad, because our livelihood is there. Then here in the relocation site, our livelihood is too far away."</p> <p>(Respondent 3)</p>

		"I have learned a lot here. We gather here during Christmas, we eat food, we are a family here, we are very close because we are neighbors there." (Respondent 6)
	b. Peace and Order in New Settlements	<p>"After a few years, it's okay here, because it's really peaceful. There's no flooding anymore. Unlike in the coastal areas, there are occasional thefts, almost every night there is a thief. Generally, the peace in order here is better." (Respondent 6)</p> <p>"Yes, it is also safe here. There is no problem with safety, we are also neighbors there. We know our neighbors well." (Respondent 3)</p> <p>"I feel safe here." (Respondent 7)</p>

Themes 3: Gaps in access to essential services

The respondents have experienced gaps in access to essential services in the relocated site. Based on the respondent's response, three sub-themes were generated under this theme: Transportation related and commuting experiences, access to water, and access to sustainable electricity

Transportation related and commuting experiences

Being relocated in a far-upland side of the city, transportation and commuting experiences became one of the main challenges of the respondents living in the relocation site. Based on their responses, they have shared common issues of experience that they want to be addressed in terms of their accessibility in transportation. The following are the statements from the participants:

"Ang kalayo raman ang problema, hunta naay turno sa sakyanan, inya sa medical, tambal."

(Respondent 6)

"Wala pud simbahan, kung magsimba ka mupliti ka 50, mahal kayo padulong didto sa katipunan, wala pa na labot pabalik. Didto nalang ko panabo diretso, kaon nalang sa mang inasal."

(Respondent 4)

"Kaning mga kalisdanan na ug gusto mu adto sa panabo-palengke, dili jud maka adto ug walay motor. Unya ug imong kwarta gamay ra, 500 ra or bisan pag 1000, ug mu adto kag palengke dili jud maka adto kay lisod jud kaayo... Kay pamasaha-an pa, nya dugay ka maka kuan, kaon paman jud ka, gutom naman jud pag abot didtua, nya pabalik pa diri."

(Respondent 7)

Respondents 4, 6 and 7 affirmed this Transportation related and commuting experiences. The lack of accessible transportation infrastructure such as terminals is one of the effects of relocation, as revealed in the study by Ramezani et al. (2021) that residential relocation also changes the travel behavior of the communities specifically the changes in transit use, thus the lack of terminals changes the usual travel behavior of the relocated communities. In addition, as cited by research mobility researchers, relocations can trigger the need for mobility rearrangements Zarabi et al. (2019) including these changes in the ability to sustain the commuting needs. The participants' responses reflected common experiences in their commuting cost experiences.

Access to water and sustainable Electric supply

Water and electricity are the basic life essentials to survive. Based on the respondents' shared responses, getting water for their daily consumption became a challenge for them due to the difficulty and great effort in gathering and storing water from any accessible source. Hence, electricity also became a challenge for them due to the unstable connectivity. The following are the statements from the respondents:

"Dagahn sila na gipangpromise na wala natupad. kanang pagbutang ug tubig, ug kuryente. Okay ra ang tubig. Sige ra ta reklamo kay kulang gyapun, mao na nipalit ko tanke."

(Respondent 2)

"Solar ug Lampara mao raman ang madali dali. Ang sa tubig kay sa ulan, kung walay ulan kay mag nga nga. Ginapalit namo ang ginainom, nay nagdeliver, bayaran gyapun."

(Respondent 4)

"Kung naa silay ikahatg na kuryente, lisod kaayo walay kuryente dinhi, dugay na kaayo ang poste, wala gyapun kuryente. Wala mi kalingwan, naa ray wifi ug magcellphone. Usahay wala pud signal, buntod man hunta kaayo."

(Respondent 5)

Respondents 2 , 4 and 5 affirmed the gaps in accessing water and sustainable Electric supply. According to Ellao (2015), relocation sites lack access to potable water, electricity and social services across the urban poor relocation sites in the Philippines and were given empty promises by the government. Despite their difficulty in accessing these, respondents demonstrated resilience by implementing creative solutions, such as collecting rain waters and installing solar panels. Of course, conservation would be the first move to take, in order to effectively and efficiently use and consume these life essentials.

Access to Health Services

Being relocated in more rural areas than their former home, and transportation became their major issue, access to health service also became a concern. Medical and medicinal accessibility are one of the effects of transportation barriers in the area. The following are the statements from the respondents:

“Na muadto pa downtown mao to kailangan jud ka mangandam ug tambal, kay wala may mamasahero dinhi. Kadaghan nako nakagawas alas dose sa gabii, kanang naay bation, wala may mga tindahan, inya walay tambal maandam.”

(Respondent 6)

“Sabton na jud nimo na kanang dili na nimo hulaton na kalinturahon ang imong anak, mag advance naka sa mga first aid na mga tambal. Kanang nikalit lang gihubak akong anak, kadlawaong dako, nakababa jud mi ug alas dose, gibalibaran pajud pag-abot didto kay nabilin ang reseta.”

(Respondent 4)

Both respondents 6 and 4 affirmed the gap in access to essential health services. Based on the responses, the relocatees experienced difficulties in accessing general health services. Due to the remote nature of some relocation sites, the accessibility of health services are severely affected. As evidenced, the studies show that distance and/or travel time can impact healthcare service access for rural and remote residents (Mseke et al., 2024).

Table 3: Themes and sub-themes that emerge on the identified gaps by the relocatees in the essential services

Themes	Sub-Themes	Supporting Statements
3. Gaps In Access To Essential Services	a. Transportation related and Commuting experiences	<p>“The only problem is the distance, the government should provide terminals.” (Respondent 6)</p> <p>“There's also no church, if you go to church you pay 50 pesos, it is expensive going to Katipunan, not including the return. When I go there, I will just go straight there to Panabo, and just eat Mang inasal.” (Respondent 4)</p> <p>“If you want to go to the Panabo market, you really can't go if you don't have a motorcycle. And if your money is small, like only 500 or even just 1000, you won't be able to go to the market because it's really hard. You still have to pay for the fare, and it takes a long time. You'll even be hungry by the time you get there, and then you still have to go back here.” (Respondent 7)</p>
	b. Access to water and sustainable Electric supply	<p>“Many people have promised to install water and electricity, but they haven't. The water is fine but we always complain because it's not enough, that's why I bought a water tank.” (Respondent 2)</p> <p>“If there is no rain it will be dry. You buy what you drink, they deliver it, you pay for it.” (Respondent 4)</p> <p>“It's very difficult without electricity here, the electric pole is there but there's no electricity. We don't have any entertainment, we only have wifi and cell phones. Sometimes there's no signal, it's very bad.”</p>

		(Respondent 5)
	c. Access to essential Health services	<p>“You need to go downtown when you need to buy medicines, because there are no taxis here. I've often gone out at twelve at night, when I feel sick, there are no shops, then there's no medicine to be prepared.”</p> <p>(Respondent 6)</p> <p>“You should understand that you shouldn't wait for your child to have a fever, go ahead and get first aid supplies. My child suddenly has asthma. In the middle of the night, we were able to get him downtown at twelve o'clock, and he was still refused when we got there since we don't have the drug prescription from the doctor.”</p> <p>(Respondent 4)</p>

6. CONCLUSION

The study offers an in-depth examination of the challenges and adjustments faced by informal settlers in the coastal area of Davao del Norte after their relocation. The results highlight three primary themes: Adaptation to Economic Challenges, Emotional Attachment and Adaptation to Place, and Gaps in Access to Essential Services.

This study concludes that the economic difficulties experienced by relocated families and individuals in Panabo City were severe, with displaced households facing substantial reductions in income. The transition from coastal livelihoods, such as fishing, to upland pursuits, like farming, tricycle driving, and ventures of small businesses in the community, presented a significant learning challenge and financial burden. The expenses of transportation and market accessibility intensified their economic challenges. Despite these challenges, participants showed resilience by implementing other income options.

Emotional displacement posed a significant challenge, as many families struggled to sever ties with their coastal origins, which held deep sentimental and cultural value. While they maintained social networks and viewed their new areas as safer and more peaceful, adjusting to life away from the seaside was difficult. Despite this, many remained hopeful, finding comfort in owning property, which symbolized stability and a brighter future for their families.

Access to essential services, such as water, electricity, and healthcare, emerged as a critical gap. The upland relocation sites often lacked reliable infrastructure, forcing families to adopt creative coping mechanisms like rainwater collection and solar energy. Transportation challenges further restricted access to healthcare and other vital services, underscoring the logistical difficulties of living in remote areas.

The study shows how difficult it is for families to move to a place far from their familiar life and way of living and how important it is to have thorough plans and support systems. The move helped with safety and urban development goals, but it also made things harder for the areas that were affected in terms of money, health, and other things. These results can help lawmakers make better and more long-lasting relocation plans that meet essential needs such as livelihood to sustain their families and the health and safety of people who have to be relocated.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

To mitigate the challenges faced by relocated informal settlers, the following recommendations are proposed:

Livelihood Assistance: After the relocation has been implemented, livelihood programs should be the next focus in order to help people cope up with the new environment and assist them in economic aspects. Livelihood programs like farming, may it be planting crops or raising livestock, as one of the suited livelihood opportunities in the area, can be a big help for them to make up for the lost income during the transition period.

Infrastructure Development: Investing and prioritizing equitable and sustainable community facilities and utilities, like water and power systems, that will make life better in communities where people are relocated.

Healthcare Access and Community Development: Prioritize the health needs of relocated families by ensuring regular visits from social workers to facilitate community-building activities to strengthen social networks and emotional ties in the new environment and establishing local health facilities in the relocation areas. This will help meet the healthcare needs of each family and reduce their reliance on distant medical facilities.

Policy and Planning Enhancements: Create thorough relocation plans that are inclusive of the affected families, which includes talking to people in the affected areas before the move, giving them enough financial support in the early phase of resettlement, and regular monitoring to resolve arising difficulties subsequent to relocation until they have already made significant adjustments.

Ensuring that all possible needs of the people of those who will be relocated will be ready before the relocation implementation would be an essential move in order to decrease and eventually eliminate the found trend of issues in the area. Implementing these strategies will enable future relocation initiatives to achieve a balance between development objectives and the welfare of relocated families, promoting sustainable and inclusive community progress.

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