



Looking into the Concept of Self, Struggles, and Aspirations of Badjaos Who are Temporarily Settling in Bukidnon Province

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on one of the marginalized groups in the Philippines, the Badjaos, who are temporarily settling in Bukidnon. This looks into the nomadic behavioral patterns of the Badjaos and the factors that led them to this situation. To make sense of this query, we have discussed the “coming of Badjaos” in the mountain province of Bukidnon by exploring their sense of self, day-to-day struggles, aspirations, and the factors leading to their coming. Gathering of data was done by employing a descriptive-qualitative method with the aid of key-informants, in-depth interviews, and an obtrusive observation. The researchers interviewed ten respondents. Findings reveal that our Badjao respondents have been displaced and are forced to move out of the Zamboanga Peninsula due to conflicts between the military and terrorist groups. In the process of moving from places to places, they have encountered a more serious threat with their daily subsistence. Thus, affecting their total well-being and representation of the Badjaos in their day-to-day encounters. To survive, they find ways in search of basic necessities like food and shelter. Overall, the “coming of Badjaos” in Bukidnon is viewed as an act of coping, surviving and escaping the harsh social realities they experience.

Keywords: aspirations, Bukidnon, nomadic life

INTRODUCTION

The “coming of Badjaos” in the province of Bukidnon deserves attention from both the government and the academe. Their arrival posed for concern because we see them in the cities and municipalities of Bukidnon in an unsettling condition. To illustrate, the Badjaos, together with their families, are sleeping on the streets, begging money for food, and roaming around in the areas they temporarily live. If you look at their situation, we could say that they are troubled or bothered by the mundane conditions they have encountered every day. Their nomadic patterns may also contribute to this troublesome experience. But the concept of nomadism associated with our respondents deserves unpacking at this time. This is because the term “nomadic” refers to the act of moving from one place to another in search of food or subsistence. But this might not be the only reason why they engaged in nomadic activities. So, our concern now delves on how and why the Badjaos who are labeled as “sea gypsies” are moving the mountain areas of Bukidnon. Are they still nomadic in its purest sense? Do they still consider themselves as one? If they are, what are the main reasons or factors of engaging this nomadic life? And finally, how does this coming of the Badjaos in Bukidnon contribute to the understanding of their self, struggles, and aspirations?

The literature provides that there may be variations, Roxas-Lim (2001) cited by Abrahamsson (2011), identify the Bajaos as “nomadic.” On the other hand, the ways of life of the Badjaos have always been associated with or linked to the sea. Panaguiton (2010) contends that they are known to be navigators, sailors, fishermen, pearl divers, boat builders, and mat weavers. They are the

sea-gypsies who are found chiefly in a maritime region stretching from the coastal areas of Zamboanga Bay to the Sulu Archipelago in the Philippines. However, Zayas (2017) emphasizes that there are two kinds of Badjaos: the Sama-Badjaos who dwell in the sea and the Sama-Badjaos who dwell in drylands.

The sea for the Badjaos is their home and the boat or “banca” is a symbolic representation of their culture and identity. Furthermore, their “banca” plays a vital role in their everyday social and economic survival. Primarily, they are dependent on subsistence fishing. Thus, the boat is central to the Badjaos’ material culture. And after centuries of experience in building their boats, this has become the highest manifestation of their artisanship. According to Nimmo (2001), the boats themselves contained the finest carvings found in the Tawi-Tawi area. Furthermore, these boats serve as their dwelling place (Perez III *et al.*, 1989). On the one hand, if they decide to repair or overhaul the boats, they can build temporary stilt houses for the time being.

But their way of life has changed. The Badjaos who use to dwell on the sea, have disembarked themselves and transferred to drylands. What led this transfer, however, is due to conflicts between the terrorist and military groups. Peace and order situation becomes unstable, and so the only way to survive is to leave the sea and find a new place to live.

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Historical accounts provide that during the rising tides of insurgency in the Philippines in the 1970s, the Badjaus were caught in the middle and had experienced the violent clashes between government forces and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) armed groups (Bracamonte *et al.* 2011). Adding to this, a group of pirates complicates their situation. Since then, the Badjaus have been experiencing a series of displacements. Displaced from their ancestral sea domain, the Badjaus have been scattered over big parts of the Philippines, and most refugees live in stilt houses in urban areas of Mindanao, Cebu, Bohol, and Luzon, a number reportedly fled to many parts of Sabah and several areas in the country. The result of this displacement led to the loss of their traditional fishing grounds to big commercial fishing business people which has also exacerbated their dismal state. The coastlines have been occupied by millions of immigrants from the northern parts of the Philippines. The seas are exploited by international fishing companies (Alamia, 2005; Nimmo, 2006). Only a few remain nomadic (Nimmo, 2006).

The Badjaus Today: Present Situation

Now, we mostly see the Badjau mothers and even fathers carrying their children begging and scavenging for food. Based on our observations, most of the people around them do not even bother to notice. In one instance, when we approached one Badjau family, we noticed that people around were aghast and that some of them kept their distance from the Badjaus. This seemingly act of keeping a distance is a clear manifestation that the Badjaus are still misunderstood and frowned upon. They have become the subjects for prejudices and various forms of discrimination. Sather's findings support this claim that the Badjaus are facing fierce discrimination from neighboring tribes, even from other Sama groups as well as non-indigenous groups. He states that "relations between Badjau and more powerful populations ashore (such as the Tausug and Maguindanao in the Southern Philippines) have seldom been founded on mutual respect, and everywhere the Badjau, as a sea people, have tended to be marginalized, excluded from positions of power, despised, and confined to the lowest rungs of the social ladder." (Sather 1995)

In general, there is a bulk of literature that emphasizes that the Badjaus who are roaming around the streets in cities and other urban areas still experience discrimination because of their perceived derogatory disposition. Sociologist Regina Estorba Macalandag delves into the Badjaus in an urban environment and discusses the tensions between Badjau and the province of Tagbilaran, Bohol (Macalandang, 2009). On the other hand, the study of Burton (2010) focuses on the struggles of the Badjaus in urban areas, still suggests that the lack of understanding about them, particularly on their nomadic activities. But what constitutes this lack of understanding? To shed light on this question, we need to define the concept of the Badjau's living conditions from their struggles and aspirations and explore the possibility of understanding them without giving derogatory remarks.

More so, we would like to contend that the results of our study may not represent the Badjaus in general. This is because we only focus on their narratives during

their temporary settlement in the province of Bukidnon. Furthermore, their experiences may not be similar in other areas, specifically outside Bukidnon province, which could either be favorable or unfavorable. But whatever the outcome of our research inquiry, it is our fervent hope that we can give the readers a full understanding of their present condition. Consequently, this research was conceptualized to conduct proper profiling of the Badjaus in Bukidnon so that we can mobilize and tap their full capacities and development as members of our society. We hope to address the development of four major components, namely: capacity building, equity, empowerment and sustainability manifested by economic progress, wider distribution of this economic progress, productive employment and better social conditions like health, education, housing, food and water (Bracamonte *et al.* 2011).

So, in this article, we discuss the following points: First, there is a need to re-define the concept of the Badjaus' self from their experiences or perspectives. The researchers also provide theories to support the conceptualization of the self. Second, the researchers elaborate on their struggles and how these can affect their overall development. Lastly, the researchers discuss the respondents' aspirations in life, and it is the hope of the researchers that by providing the narratives about their aspirations will guide both public and private institutions in framing necessary programs for the well-being of the Badjaus.

Theorizing the Everyday Presentation of the Self

Psychologists and sociologists stressed that the self is a multidimensional entity composing of ideas, images, beliefs, or schemas of an individual (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Myers (2016) emphasize that the self revolves on four domains, namely: **self-concept** (Who Am I?), **self-esteem** (sense of worth), **self-knowledge** (explanation and prediction about the self), and **social self** (role as an individual). Accordingly, these domains have a big influence on presenting one's self in the social world. We also believed that the self is influenced by the roles we play in our day-to-day interaction as well as their cultural practices. While Mead (1934) emphasized that the self develops through social activity and social relationships. Thus, the development of the self is the byproduct of social experiences. In his theory, he stressed that stimuli coming from the social environments allow an individual to respond and create mechanisms. Moreover, the self can always occur or exist without social contact. On the one hand, the self is also a product of culture. This premise emphasizes that self-concept is influenced either by individualistic or collectivist societies. Individualism refers to the concept of giving priority to one's own goals over group goals and defining one's identity in terms of personal attributes rather than group identifications. However, collectivism means giving priority to the goals of one's group (often one's extended family or workgroup) and defining one's identity accordingly.

Many social scientists have contended that these perceptions of one's self from different cultures and that these variations can explain cross-cultural variations

in social cognition and behaviors (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Marsella, DeVos & Hsu, 1985; Triandis, 1995). In the Philippine context, however, the self is always embedded in culture and that "cultural meanings and practices construct psychological process" (Macapagal *et al.*, 2013). In the context of our study, we contend that the Badjaus' self is both a product of their cultural practices as well as their social experiences in their day-to-day interaction.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-qualitative approach utilizing key informant interviews, in-depth interviews, and an obtrusive observation. This study was conducted in the municipality of Maramag and cities of Valencia and Malaybalay within six months. There were a total of ten respondents coming from five Badjau households involved in the conduct of this study. The respondents were composed of the following: two elderly women aged 60-70, four women, and four men aged 21-50. We also interviewed two key-informants who were the Barangays workers in the municipality of Maramag and Malaybalay City. They were instrumental in pointing out the location of the Badjaus.

To conduct the interview process, we used the Cebuano language to be able to gather our data. Fortunately, the head of their household know how to speak Cebuano and helped us in translating some of the questions into Sama language. The data gathered were analyzed thematically which include but are not limited to their day-to-day struggles, aspirations, perceived identity, and the factors leading to their situation nowadays.

Scope and Limitations

Interviewing the Badjaus was a bit challenging because of their mobile character. It was observed that they kept on moving from one place to another. However, the researchers managed to contact them through mobile communication. During the interviews, the researchers observed that the head of the Badjau family, the father, owned a low-end mobile cellular phone, which is being used for contact purposes only. When asked about their whereabouts, they lamented that they sometimes do not have e-loads, or sometimes the battery is off. They seldom recharge the cellular phone if the battery drains because this is still subject to the availability of their funds. Often, they charged their mobile phones the stores but are not free of charge.

Ethical Consideration

The researchers submitted a letter of request to the mayor of Maramag, Valencia, and Malaybalay cities and asked permission to conduct the research. Likewise, consent forms were also prepared and confidentiality was observed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section has the following parts: First, we discuss the representation of the Badjaus' self based from their perspectives. Second, we discuss their day-to-day

struggles and the factor(s) that have caused their "coming" to the province of Bukidnon. Finally, we present their aspirations and dreams for their family.

The Concept of Badjau's Self

One of the components of the self is identity. There are two types of identity: *independent* and *interdependent*. Independent identity is defined by individual traits and goals, while interdependent identity means connections with others; it is social, not personal. But identity can also be represented in many ways, which includes language, religion, beliefs, traditions, arts, and even their ways of making a living. For example, one's identity can be linked to one's ethnicity or ethnic origin. According to Tajfel (1981), ethnic identity has been defined as one's knowledge of membership in a social group and the personal meaning associated with that membership. Typically, ethnic groups have an interdependent identity because they value the "we" feeling rather than "I," which usually happens in an individualistic society.

Since the Badjaus are considered to be one of the ethnic groups in the Philippines, their identity is interdependent. The researchers observed this type of identity during the interviews. They do some things together, like eating, sleeping, walking, and begging. Aside from being interdependent, our respondents have a symbolic relationship to the sea. To them, the sea as a natural dwelling place. Thus, this contributes to the Badjaus' conceptualization of the self. And we would like to emphasize that their banca as material possession also represents their identity.

The respondents have also identified themselves as Samal Badjau, who originated from Jolo, Sulu, who speak the Samal dialect. By origin, they classify themselves as affiliated with the religion of Islam, and that they are Muslims. But they also claimed that they are different from those mainstream Muslim groups since they have a different church. Some studies stated that though listed as part of the Moro Ethno-linguistic groups, the Badjaus remained obscure in terms of how Islamized they are. Rodil (2003) asserts that the Badjaus are only considered as Muslims because of their relationship with the Sultanate of Sulu but they are not Muslims.

Groups with an interdependent identity like the Badjaus are closely associated with their family members. This, of course, is one of the Filipino traits wherein the family is closely knitted together. This is particularly true in a collectivist society wherein the "self is defined in terms of primary ingroups or relationships" (Macapagal *et al.*, 2013). So in times of difficulties, they stick together and rely on each other. The Badjaus the researchers interviewed in the municipality of Maramag, Bukidnon were composed of one kin group, a couple with three children (a teenager, a toddler, and an infant), an elderly couple (in-law of the first couple), one widow (daughter of the elderly couple), and one male (son of the elderly couple). The same couple with three children was also found at Quezon, Bukidnon (they were forced to leave Maramag, Bukidnon). They were accompanied by two Badjau female teenagers, together with their mothers (both are widows).

The family then is perceived as an important part of the Badjaos' life. Triandis (1994) emphasizes that the family is the prototype of all social relationships in the Philippines. So, cooperation and sharing are expected within their family members. This can be seen by how they earn a living. When they received money from begging, they share this with their elders, children, and other family members within their kin. Even in the process of moving, they go together.

Struggles

This section presents the everyday forms of struggles experienced by the Badjaos in the process of coming to the mountain area of Bukidnon. We have discussed them thematically showing their experiences of the unsettling condition, struggles for subsistence and acceptance and the lack of governmental services.

Lack of acceptance

But because of their physical appearance, one might misjudge them. We already mentioned in our previous discussion that some people do not talk to them because of their appearance. One of the struggles that the Badjaos faced is the lack of acceptance. This condition is also apparent in our research sites because we have also observed that the Badjaos kept on moving from one place to another. When we looked for them in the cities of Valencia and Malaybalay, the Badjaos are nowhere to be found. We investigated this situation and found out that some Badjau children conflicted with some of the locals. This had alarmed the Local Government Unit and decided to transfer the Badjaos to another place. Unfortunately, these Badjau people do not even know why other people would not want to mingle with them. But this unfair treatment is insignificant to them since their main concern is the food and shelter for survival.

Nevertheless, if there is a chance that the other people in society will accommodate and accept them instead of treating them as outsiders, they will be much grateful. These social experiences specifically the society's lack of acceptance among this cultural minority, shaped them to feel that they are unwanted and insignificant in the mainstream community. As a result, they have less concern with their self-image and how they look physically and behave differently from other people. They are less concerned if they are being seen as indolent for as long as their stomachs are full. Their self-esteem is also very low, which reflects their behavior on being passive about how they are being looked at by the majority. From our interviews, they rarely mention their strengths and capacities as individuals. But one of our respondents claimed:

Respondent # 4: *Ang akong panglantaw sa mga tawo sa palibot kay maayo man sila.*
(For me, people in the community are good).

So, despite stereotypical responses from the people around them, the Badjaos still find other people to be good. Literature provides that they are generally

deemed respectful, joyful, simple, humble, hospitable, and can easily be pleased. This supports Teo's (2001) description that they can go along with others. In a way, they have learned to speak Bisaya and Tagalog so they could get easily interact with other people.

Series of Displacements

What had led these people to move from one place to another? According to the Badjaos, the Abu Sayyaf group attacked their *banca* as a tool used for fishing and destroyed their property. What is more unfortunate is that according to them, some of their family members were killed by the terrorists. This dire situation they have experienced has driven them to move from places to places. Unfortunately, some of these places are unfamiliar to them. So, in the process, they have escaped and resided along the coast of Zamboanga City but have transferred again to other places in search of food and income. They claimed that they have been to and stayed at Iligan City, Valencia City, Butuan City, and Davao City.

They keep on transferring from one place to another. This perhaps the reason why they are labeled as nomadic. When we interviewed them, we managed to capture that they do not want to keep on moving. One of our respondents lamented:

Respondent No. 3 *"Nga gusto ragyud mi mag puyo sa amung lugar pero kay gubot man"*
(We really want to stay in our place, but there is conflict.)

So being nomadic these days is also one of the consequences of the conflict between military and terrorist groups. They even emphasized that they have no other choice but to move out of their place so they could find money to survive. Accordingly, the Samal Badjau people are not war freak individuals; instead they are peace-makers. For them, if they will not disturb or hurt others, they will not also be hurt. They also do not think that other people are harmful. The Samal Badjaos are also obedient in the sense that if they will be forced to leave the space they temporarily occupy, they will do so. They said that they are only "outsiders" and "strangers" of the area, and they do not have any rights to go against the rules. They will simply obey and leave. If people do not want them, they will not compel them.

Therefore, the Badjaos are still nomadic these days is because of various factors confronted to them like armed conflicts, stereotypical responses, discriminatory remarks and most importantly, the act of moving from places to places is an act of survival. So, based on our findings, we can say that their concept of the self is much related to their nomadic character. Because for them, being nomadic has always been a part of their cultural practices.

Henceforth, the self is a by-product of how society is shaping his/her experiences in life, which plays an influential factor in how an individual will become in society.

Unsettling living conditions

The Badjau people who are temporarily living in Bukidnon occupy a small vacant or abandoned area where they cook their meals, eat, and even put their belongings. They are usually found at strategic locations like marketplaces, a plaza, restaurants, and other business establishments where a crowd of people is usually seen. They also own a small pot for cooking rice and viand, spoon, plastic plates, and plastic glasses. They do not have proper shelters to stay at and only sleep in used cardboard boxes along the streets. Sometimes, they are also found sleeping in parks or even outside some closed business establishments at night. During night time, they only use *malong*, an indigenous blanket, to keep them covered and warm. This living condition enables them to be exposed to mosquitos, illnesses, rainfall, and danger from offenders. Besides, having only these mere belongings enable them to transfer from another place if prompted easily. In the temporary place they are in, people are wary of their presence and merely interact with them. The locals see them as indolent since they beg for alms from other people. Their being marginalized in their society hampers them to improve their status of living.

For them to survive, the Samal Badjaos in Bukidnon are begging from the locals of the municipality Maramag and Valencia City for money. This activity is done as a family affair. They start their day either at dawn or every afternoon strolling around the municipality or city perimeter where there are crowds of people. Women and children participate in this begging activity, too. The more family members beg, the larger the amount of money they can collect. Every day, their average income from begging is 100 pesos. However, there are certain occasions that they could collect 200 pesos or even more. But most of the time, their collections are insufficient even for buying for their daily meals. Somehow, food need is determined on a day-to-day basis, mainly dependent on income from begging.

This unfortunate condition of the Badjaus in Bukidnon can be added to poverty incidence in the country. Accordingly, the poverty incidence among Filipino families based on the first visit of 2015 FIES was estimated at 21.1 percent during the first semester of 2015 and the subsistence incidence among Filipino families, or the proportion of Filipino families in extreme poverty, was estimated at 9.2 percent during the first semester of 2015 (<https://psa.gov.ph/content/poverty-incidence-among-filipinos-registered-263-first-semester-2015-psa>). Besides, the PSA also claimed that during the first semester of 2015, a family of five needed at least Php 6,365 on the average every month to meet the family's basic food needs and at least Php 9,140 on the average every month to meet both basic food and non-food needs. These amounts represent the monthly food threshold and monthly poverty threshold, respectively.

As in the case of the Badjaus in Bukidnon, their average income per day (Php 100) cannot even reach the least required income of Php 9,140 per month per Filipino family. Hence, the Samal Badjaus find it difficult to feed

their family thrice a day. Their children are malnourished and famished. One of the respondents lamented:

Respondent #2 "*Lisod kayo mi diri sa Bukidnon kay dili mi usahay makakaon, usahay pang snack lang, wala mi panihapon.*" (It is so tough here in Bukidnon because we rarely eat, we have snacks sometimes but no dinner.)

It was also unfortunate for the Samal Badjaus in Bukidnon are mostly unemployed. From their narratives, they want to have jobs as a source of income. However, they have difficulties to have one specifically a good paying one. This because they have not attained any educational training or schooling. Their lack of education also contributes to the difficulty of having a good paying-job.

Some Badjaus also thought that if they attend school, they will only be bullied or made fun of by others. However, when some teen Badjaus were asked why if they wanted to attend school, they replied that they do not. Aside from the fact that they do not know the basics of writing and reading, they also do not want the idea that their classmates might bully or harass them. Many locals would presume that these Badjau people are very unknowing individuals because of their lack of education. But the knowledge they gain from their experiences in life, though insufficient, has enabled them to adapt to the new societal changes particularly in terms of technology.

Lack of knowledge or awareness about social services

With limited knowledge about city life, they have experienced difficulties as they battle for survival away from the sea where they depend for a living (Pallesen 1985, Blust 2005) and are considered as an outcast by many. Furthermore, it is unfortunate that coming from them. They view themselves as incompetent while living in urban areas because of their limited knowledge of social services offered. Not only that, they have come to believe that they are outcasts because of their disposition. This situation refers to what Steele (1997) calls as a stereotype threat, which means the risk of confirming negatively held beliefs about one's social group (Steele 1997). Thus, they can no longer become productive as they used to be because some of them have been deprived of the customary way of making a living.

Their lack of knowledge hampers them to find jobs that provide for their family's needs. One respondent expressed that he wants to find a job, but he could not because he knows nothing. The growing rate of uneducated Badjaus in the Philippines also is not reflected in the results collected by the authorized government agency about out-of-school children and youth in the Philippines. To state from the 2013 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) which covered around 36 million population aged 6 to 24 years, one in every ten or about 4 million Filipino children and youth was out-of-school in 2013.

On the contrary, some of the respondents believed that they do not have access to social services and privileges

from the government. They also do not feel that they are protected. Thus, they are being distant and distrustful from others and strangers. They do not easily trust other people and stick to what they know as good for them. They have difficulty availing these government services because they do not have any legal records like birth certificates. For example, the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program is a program for the poor and marginalized Filipinos, but our respondents expressed:

Respondent No. 8: *"Wala gyud mi natagaan ug tabang sa gobyerno, maski 4Ps wa mi naapil"* (The government did not help us and we were not even included in availing 4Ps).

In addition, they claimed that they have little knowledge of how to avail health services from the local government. Thus, their awareness of this program is quite low. One respondent lamented she suffered from a chronic cough.

Respondent No. 2 *"Giubo man ko pero wala man ko nagadto sa hospital of wala koy tambal, ginaubo ko kada gabii og buntag"* (I suffered from cough but I do not go to the hospital and I also do not have medicines, I have persistent cough at night and in the morning as well).

When asked if they know that government hospitals provide free services, they said yes and elaborated by saying that:

Respondent No. 9: *"Basta Badjau dili sila mokuha og bayad"* (If Badjau, they would not ask for a fee).

Stout, Kipling, and Stout (2001) still found that ethnic or aboriginal groups still lack the necessary health services necessary for optimal survival. Thus, their lack of knowledge to avail government services impedes them to become active participants in society. They have not asked for help from the local government because they do not know how to. When asked if they have leaders to organize and lead them, the Badjau people simply said that leaders are useless since they cannot be with them at home every day and protect them. They remain to have no recognized community leader/s that could help them established a political institution that could advance their collective interest in society.

Overall, the problems faced by the Bajaus up until today are products of the society's structure like socio-political and economic spheres. This is because they are still marginalized and have no access to government services. And the lack of understanding and recognition to the Badjaos hampers the achievement of their total cultural development.

Aspirations

For this section, we were able to extract three dominant themes concerning to the respondents'

aspirations. These can be summed up into their providing for their daily subsistence, going home, and dreamt of sending their children to schools.

Provision for their daily subsistence

To our respondents, their main aspiration in life is simply to have their daily subsistence. They hope to just feed their stomach every day from earning 100 or 200 pesos per day. Although there are times that they only eat 1-2 times a day, they still manage to survive by way of collecting money from begging. The act of begging in this context is seen as an adaptive strategy to achieve economic needs. If given a choice, they would want to go back to fishing because that is an easy way to earn money and food for their daily subsistence. So they have created ways in the process of survival by begging money and selling cultured pearls which they got from the Zamboanga peninsula and Davao region. But money has always been a problem because they also need to buy medicines if one of the family members gets sick.

Dream of going back home

They always aspire to go back to their place near the coastal areas so they could use their boats for fishing once again. So, the reason why most of them beg for money is for them to save enough for fare and their boats. As one of the respondents expressed:

Respondent # 5: *Ang akong plano kay gusto ko mubalik didto sa Jolo kay mangisda man akong bana tapos ako sa balay lang.* (My plan is to go back to Jolo because my husband can go fishing and I can stay in our house).

The Badjau families are trying to save enough amount of money to go back to Zamboanga City and fulfill their wish to buy a banca. For them, possessing a banca for fishing is important because this has been their customary activity for the longest time. They perceived that this would surely provide food for their whole family. But because of conflicts, they needed to move to the mountains for survival. Nimmo (2001) affirms this claim that the Badjau people did try to make a living on land but only for a short period of time. Since most of them would still prefer the life of the sea by which almost all of their economic lives are centered.

However, money earned from begging is insufficient, so they also try to invest in pearl vending. Saving money for fare is not always attainable accordingly, and it will take months to do so if in case their income from begging is not sufficient to suffice their daily needs. The desire to go back to their place means they will have their life back as sea people or sea nomads. But because of the unending conflict in the area, the only way to escape from these harsh reality is to go to the mountains to find refuge for a while.

Send children to school

Despite problems encountered regarding money, we managed to capture that some of them, particularly the

mothers, wish to send their children to school. They want their children to be educated. One of our respondents stressed:

Respondent No. 2: *"Ganahan unto ko makapaskwela sa mga bata pero dili nako makaya."* (I really like my children to go to school, but I cannot do it).

Like many other indigenous individuals, education nowadays is seen as important cultural capital and as a means to get out of poverty. However, the Badjau's lack of resources like money to send their children to school, the act of moving from one place to another and no permanent residency hinge them from the possibility of achieving this cultural capital. According to them, it is so unfortunate to see their children being forced to help and beg money from the residents in the area they are not familiar with. Based on their narratives, financial constraint is seen to be one of the main reasons why they are not able to send their children to school. On the contrary, some Badjau parents do not encourage their children to attend school because they prefer their children to help them in bringing income for the family in the form of begging and other ways of making a living like selling of goods and pearls.

On a positive note, our respondents are motivated to achieve certain needs and aspirations. But because of the problems relating to subsistence or day-to-day survival, they cannot fully reach their aspirations and goals. For now, it can be observed that their most basic need like physiological one motivates them to go on with their lives. Thus, the Badjau people have only achieved the most basic needs for physical survival and not being able to realize its full potential in the process of self-actualization fully. This is because they are still deprived and facing economic struggles for subsistence comes in first. But despite all of these experiences, some of them are still hopeful about their situation. One of the mothers believed that some people can still help them in their daily needs. One respondent has this to say:

Respondent #9: *Wala kayo namo gihuna-huna nga problema among kahintang kay makapangayo man pud mi.* (We don't really think much of our problem because we can always beg.)

So, the act of begging is interpreted here as an act of survival. In the process, they become creative agents by way of asking through for economic performance. This performance may not be theatrically driven, but it has become an effective tool to earn a living momentarily. But according to our respondents, given enough choice, they would rather stay in their hometown and live in harmony with their families and other people as well. But because of the unfortunate events, they remained to be displaced and are still considered as one of the marginalized groups in the country today.

Overall, the Badjau's aspirations mainly focused on economic survival from their day-to-day encounters. And those were achieved by their creative ways in making

sense of their survival by asking money and selling some pearls which they got from their act of moving from one place to another.

CONCLUSION

The literature on the Badjau suggests a multifold documentation of their lives, lifestyle, personality, and culture as a whole. But despite its voluminous publications, a vital concern should delve into what had really transpired from the past researches that the Badjau are still beholden to a different form of social inequalities like poverty, stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination. So, the lack of opportunities for the Badjau people especially those who have temporarily settled in Bukidnon. This now posits a difficulty in integrating themselves in the community due to the preconceived ideas or hasty generalizations people have on them.

The poverty situation among the Badjau indicates underdevelopment, deprivation, and degradation- a call for an appropriate development intervention is a must to enable them to survive their constantly changing environment. On the one hand, the "coming of Badjau" to the mountain areas of Bukidnon allows them to be creative agents in the pursuit of their own survival. For one thing, the act of begging is seen as an economic performance by which they can able to sustain some of their basic needs. Moreover, the patterns of migration to evade from the unending conflicts between the terrorist groups and military personnel in Sulu Island push them to move from places to places to seek refuge, security, and survival. This unfortunate situation also contributes to their nomadic activities nowadays. But this act of moving from one place to another is a mechanism for their day-to-day survival.

For now, the Badjau are constantly moving from one place to another and the process of survival was a bit tough. Because these people who used to get their resources from the sea needed to shift to other ways of survival, thus, this affects their overall well-being and self-development as the Badjau are baffled with the everyday forms of struggles for survival.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results, this paper recommends for programs regarding capacity development for the displaced Badjau. This aimed to develop and enhance the individual's self-concept. Furthermore, this paper suggests revisiting of the programs of the government, focusing more on the displaced indigenous people and create mechanisms that will help in their overall well-being.

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