THE LEVEL OF INTEREST AND ATTITUDE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN HOME GARDENING DURING COVID19 PANDEMIC; SHORT COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT: *Due to Covid19 Pandemic, home gardening has become a popular initiative of the government and non - government agencies among affected households. The primary purpose of this paper was to determine the level of interest and their attitude towards home gardening during pandemics. The primary tool used in gathering the data was a questionnaire. The result shows that majority of the respondents were interested in home gardening and believed that home gardening during pandemics helps their family eat better, save money. It also indicates that they have time to work in their garden, be recreational, and agree that they enjoy this activity. However, they are not fully aware of the other benefits of home gardening. It would strengthen their family values and the benefits of home gardening to our environment. Meanwhile, unsure if they became successful on the said activity.*

Keywords: Covid-19, Home Gardening, food security, vegetable

INTRODUCTION

People are facing uncertain and challenging times in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic has forced local communities to be on lockdowns with most people, especially the elderly and the youth forced to stay home with nothing to do and with little economic support. Job losses, dramatic incomes declines, and movement restrictions are the actual impacts seen at the level of families or households. In addition, due to income disruption, especially the underprivileged population faced food insecurity, prompting the demand for food aid from the government.

Meanwhile, to address food insecurity, multiple strategies were made by government agencies and non-government organizations by distributing seeds to encourage home gardening [1, 2] Generally, home gardening refers to the cultivation of a small portion of land around the household or within walking distance from the family home [3]. 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]. This home gardening offers multiple benefits, such as; therapeutic as one becomes happy and satisfied seeing plants grow, improved mental condition, food nutrition, additional household income, and food security to the low-income families. They are often dependent on food amelioration given by the government. Moreover, it is evident from the various literature 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 [6, 7] 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, with the primary purpose of documenting the locals' level of interest or needs in home gardening. The result of the study may be used as a basis in proposing an intervention to fight against the covid19 pandemic that potentially addresses food insecurity and open up opportunities to transform the food system.

METHODS

The study used a convenience sampling method and was conducted from January 2021 up to April 2021. The sample selection was based on participants' willingness to answer the questionnaire completely as the primary tool to gather the data, which resulted in 115 total participants who came from different barangays in the Municipality of Cantilan Surigao del Sur, Philippines. The adopted questionnaire from the study of Samuel Awah Foncham (1998) [8.] entitled Attitudes Towards and Interest in Community Gardening in two Low-income Negborhoods was used and modified. Simple Percentage and Likert scale with 3 represents as " agree," 2 for "disagree," and one as "unsure" were used. The collected data were checked for accuracy and were treated using percentage and weighted mean.

RESULTS

The demographic profile of the respondents is shown in figure 1 below. Out of one hundred fifteen respondents, most were female (95%) and male (5%). Almost all of them were considered unemployed during this covid19 pandemic. Regarding their highest educational attainment, the results show that fifty percent (50%) were only at the elementary level or elementary graduate, thirty percent (30%) were high school level or graduate. Only twenty percent (20%) were college level or college graduates of their highest educational attainment. Meanwhile, as to their household income per month, the data revealed that most respondents have only below 10,000.00 pesos (49%) income per month. This household income belongs to the poor to a low-income category in the country [9]. These are the categories that are most affected during this pandemic 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, eighty-three percent answered yes, as shown below in figure 2, while some or seventeen percent answered no. This indicates that the experienced wise the respondents already have, and this implies that home gardening was not new to them.

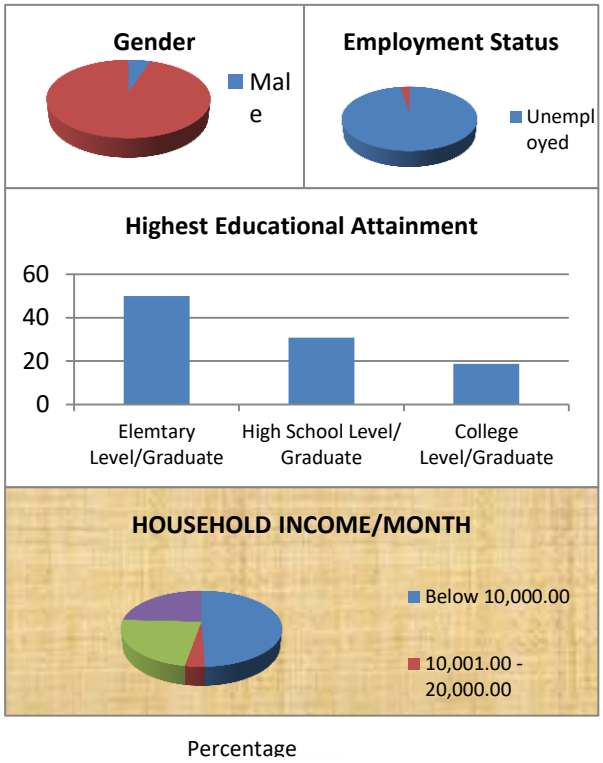

Figure 1. Demographic profile of the Respondents in terms of Gender, Status, Highest Educational Attainment and Household Income per Month

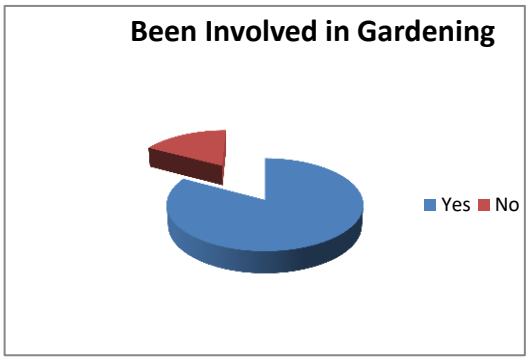

Figure 2. Involved in Gardening

Table 1 presents the Home gardening needs assessments. The result shows that majority of the respondents, or ninety-six percent (96%), responded: "agrees" that they were interested in home vegetable gardening; however, most of them also replied "disagree" (75%) and "unsure" (23%) on growing fruit trees. This is because planting fruit trees needs a big area to be planted, and most of the respondents do not have the said area. On the other hand, most of the respondents also "agree" with the statement that they are interested in organic farming, interested in 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 result implies that home gardening is not new in the area showing their high level of interest. These reflect that the strategy of the government and non-government agencies in promoting home gardening to address the food insecurity during pandemic have a bigger chance of being successful.

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	

Meanwhile, table 2 presents the respondents' attitude towards home gardening during the pandemic, and the result significantly displays that they "agree" with the statement 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 differ on the average mean of 2.95, 2.51, 2.97, and 2.97 respectively. On the other hand, I "disagree" with the statement that Home gardening can be a family activity to us (2.22), Home

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

gardening can strengthen family values such as sharing foods with others (1.92), and Our environment will benefit from home gardening (2.26). While “Unsure” on the statement, I am positive that I would be successful in gardening with an average mean of 1.62. This implies that the respondents were not fully aware of the potential benefits of home gardening to our environment.

CONCLUSION

The study and its findings reveal a high level of the respondent's interest in home vegetable gardening. It shows that the government and non-government agencies' intervention to address the food insecurity during pandemic might be effective. However, as divulged, they were not fully aware of the benefits of home vegetable gardening to our environment. Thus, the university should take the initiative to give awareness on the benefits and teach them more about vegetable gardening to boost their confidence that they could be successful in the future.

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