

Traditional Weaving As a Livelihood: A Qualitative Study Of Weavers In Kasibu, Nueva VizcayaMonica C. Dela Cruz¹, Chezka B. Ignacio², Catherine A. Licupa³, Shalimar B. Santiago⁴

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Solano Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines ^{1,2,3,4}moniczxc011@gmail.com¹, chezkaignition@gmail.com², cathylicupa@gmail.com³, shalimarsantiago136@gmail.com⁴**ABSTRACT**

This study assessed how traditional weaving assists indigenous weavers in Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya provide a livelihood. It specifically focused on the weavers' demographics, how weaving supports household needs, the challenges they encounter, the social and cultural significance of weaving, and their participation in training and institutional support. The study used semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires to gather data from the selected 12 weavers in Barangay Capisaan and Belet through utilizing a qualitative descriptive research approach. The results showed that most participants' main source of income is weaving, which also substantially contributes to household expenses and children's education. However, weavers must contend with challenges such as expensive and limited raw materials, low sales, limited market access, competition from manufactured products, and the need for ongoing skill development. The study discovered that while training and institutional support improve skills and livelihood sustainability, traditional weaving is crucial for maintaining cultural identity, fostering community ties, and transferring weaving knowledge to future generations.

Keywords: Indigenous communities, cultural heritage, income generation, livelihood sustainability, and qualitative research

INTRODUCTION

Traditional weaving remains an important source of livelihood and cultural heritage in many communities around the world. Studies from Ethiopia, India, Bangladesh, and the Philippines show that weaving provides income, supports household needs such as food, education, healthcare, and shelter, and empowers communities, particularly women, by creating economic opportunities while preserving traditional knowledge. (Mekonen et al., 2022; Chakraborty, 2021; Hossain, 2020; Lopez et al., 2022). In many rural areas, weaving serves as either a primary or supplementary source of income, contributing significantly to household well-being and economic development.

Beyond its economic contribution, weaving plays a vital role in preserving cultural identity and strengthening social relationships within communities. Studies emphasize that weaving serves as a medium for passing traditional knowledge across generations, reinforcing family ties, fostering community participation, and promoting indigenous heritage through cultural tourism and local traditions (Maldonado-Erazo et al., 2024; Gago Ross, 2024; Damayon et al., 2025; Cacho et al., 2025). These findings demonstrate that weaving is not only an economic activity but also an important expression of cultural identity and community resilience.

Focusing on the local weaving communities in Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya, this study investigates how traditional weaving sustains the livelihood of local weavers. It examines the challenges they encounter, the social and cultural significance of weaving, and the role of institutional support and training in preserving the craft. The ultimate goal is to provide valuable insights that can strengthen livelihood programs, enhance support mechanisms, promote cultural preservation, and contribute to the long-term sustainability of the traditional weaving industry in the municipality.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative descriptive research design was used to examine how traditional weaving sustains the livelihood of local weavers in Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya. The study utilized purposive sampling to select ten (10) to fifteen (15) local weavers which actively engage in weaving as a source of livelihood. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires, which gathered participants' demographic information (age, sex, barangay, civil status, years of experience, and types of woven products). The weavers' experiences, livelihood practices, challenges encountered, the social and cultural significance of weaving, and their participation in training and institutional support programs. Prior to data collection, permission was secured from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) and the Local Government Unit (LGU), and informed consent was obtained from all participants. The final sample consisted of twelve (12) participants. Data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentage distributions for demographic profiles, while thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, identified recurring themes in participants' responses. The study adhered to ethical research standards, including approval from the Aldersgate College Research Ethics Office (REO), compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, and protection of participants' confidentiality through pseudonyms and voluntary participation.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored by four (4) theories that provide a comprehensive framework for understanding weaving as an economic activity, a cultural practice, and a means of community empowerment. Malinowski's Theory of Functionalism explains that weaving functions as an essential social institution that supports the community's economic and cultural needs by providing livelihood opportunities while preserving cultural traditions. Innovation Capability Theory, developed by Joseph Schumpeter, emphasizes continuous learning, skills development, and innovation to improve weaving practices, enhance product quality, and increase market competitiveness. Symbolic Interactionism Theory, introduced by George Herbert Mead, views weaving as a socially constructed practice through which cultural identity, shared meanings, and traditions are transmitted across generations. Meanwhile, Commodification of Culture Theory, proposed by Karl Marx, explains how traditional weaving can be transformed into marketable cultural products that generate economic opportunities while presenting challenges in preserving cultural authenticity. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive understanding of how traditional weaving contributes to sustainable livelihoods, cultural preservation, and community development in Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya.

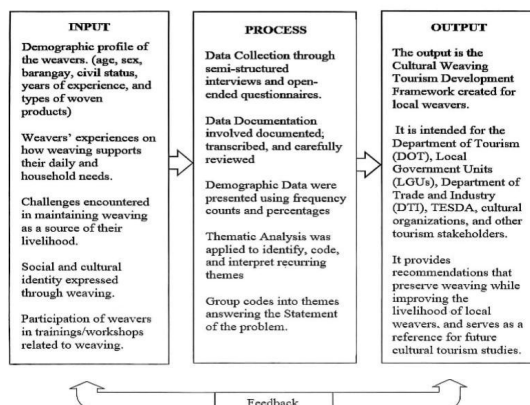


Figure 1 shows the research paradigm of the study. This research employs the Input-Process-Output (IPO) model as its framework to examine weavers' livelihoods, challenges, cultural identity, and institutional support. The model presents the study's inputs, research process, and the proposed livelihood and cultural preservation support guide, together with a community-based weaving development framework, as its outputs.

Research Setting

This study focuses on the weaving communities in the municipality of Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya, particularly in Barangay Capisaan and Belet. These barangays were selected because they are home to active weaving groups and community-based weaving associations that continue to preserve traditional weaving practices while providing livelihood opportunities for local residents.

The participants consisted of twelve (12) local weavers. Data collection involved gathering in-depth personal experiences regarding weaving as a livelihood, the challenges in sustaining their craft, perceptions of weaving as a part of social and cultural identity, and participation in institutional support programs. The number of participants was determined through data saturation, wherein no new themes or insights emerged from the responses. This research setting provides valuable understanding into the livelihood and cultural contributions of weaving communities and serves as a basis for developing recommendations to support both cultural preservation and sustainable community development.

The primary approach implemented was semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires. The semi-structured interview served as the main instrument for collecting qualitative data, allowing the participants to freely share their experiences and perspectives regarding weaving as a source of livelihood and cultural practice. Through guided yet flexible questions, the researchers explored the participants' experiences in meeting household needs, the challenges they faced, the social and cultural significance expressed through weaving, and their participation in institutional training programs. The interviews also allowed participants to communicate in their native language, enabling richer and more authentic responses.

In addition, the researchers used an open-ended questionnaire to gather participants' demographic profile, including age, sex, barangay, civil status, years of weaving experience, and types of woven products produced. This instrument also supplemented the interview data by providing relevant background information about the participants. Using both data-gathering tools allowed the researchers to obtain comprehensive, in-depth information needed to address the study objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Age Distribution of Weavers

Table 1 showed that the 26–40 age group had the highest number of participants, with four (4) participants (33.3%), followed by the 14–25 and 41–55 age groups, each with three (3) participants (25%). The 56–62 age group had the lowest participation, with two (2) participants or 16.7%. This distribution indicated that both younger and older community members engaged in weaving.

Gender Distribution of Weavers

Table 2 demonstrated that all twelve (12) participants or 100% were female. This indicated that weaving in Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya was primarily practiced by women, highlighting its role as a female-dominated livelihood activity in the community.

Distribution of Weavers According to Barangay

Based on Table 3, nine (9), or 75%, of the participants were from Barangay Capisaan, while three (3), or 25%, were from Barangay Belet. This suggested that Capisaan had more active participation, which may indicate a stronger concentration of weaving activity in the area.

Civil Status of Weavers

Table 4 showed that five (5) participants, or 41.7%, were single, while seven (7), or 58.3%, were married. None of the participants were separated or widowed. This indicated that both single and married women engaged in weaving, with married participants forming the majority.

Distribution of Weavers According to the Years of Experience

Table 5 shows that five (5) participants or 41.7%, have 1-2 years of experience (2023-2024), three (3) or 25% has 3-4 years (2021-2022), and two (2) or 16.7%, have 7-9 years (2017-2019). Another two (2), or 16.7%, had 6 months- 1 year of experience (2025-2026). This indicated that participants have varying levels of experience, ranging from beginners to experienced weavers.

Weavers with seven (7) to nine (9) years of experience were categorized as beginners in community weaving practices, showing persistent participation as compared to early involvement. This meant that weaving in Kasibu was both a continuing practice and an adaptable method of living that nurtured long-term participants while attracting new ones.

Roles of Weaving in the Participants' Livelihood

Table 6 presents the role of weaving in the participants' livelihoods. According to the results, seven (7) participants—or 58.3%—identified weaving as their primary source of income. Four (4) participants, or 33.3% of the data, thought about weaving as an additional source of income. Just one (1) person, or 8.3% of all responses, thought of weaving as a cultural practice or hobby. This suggests that most individuals weave primarily for income, with very few doing so only for cultural or personal interests; therefore, weaving in Kasibu is sustainable.

Types of Products Woven by the Participants

Table 7 shows that attire or costume was the most commonly produced item, with eleven (11) participants or 91.7% engaged in its production. This was followed by shawls and fabrics, each with nine (9) participants or 75%. Other products included Filipiniana clothing, table runners, bolero or jodi bolero, shrugs, and mixed designs, with frequencies ranging from two (2) to seven (7) participants. Multiple responses were allowed since participants produced more than one type of woven product.

Presentation of Themes

This section discusses the primary subjects that emerged from the thematic analysis of the participants' responses. To identify repeated themes and key characteristics of participants' weaving experiences, the researchers extensively analyzed, coded, and categorized the data. Four (4) major themes were identified from the findings: (1) weaving as a source of income and household needs; (2) challenges in weaving as a livelihood; (3) the social and cultural identity of weaving in the community; and (4) weavers' participation in training and institutional support. To give a better understanding of the significance of weaving in the community, each theme was supported up by a list of participant responses and then discussed.

Theme 1: Livelihood and Income

Sub-Theme A: Weaving as Primary Source of Daily Needs

For most participants, weaving was their primary source of income and played a vital role in meeting their daily household needs, including food, basic necessities, and other family expenses. The findings indicate that weaving provides financial stability and serves as a reliable livelihood. These results are supported by studies of Mekonen et al., Chakraborty, Redison, and Tikere Moffor, which emphasize weaving's contribution to household income, rural economic development, and improved quality of life.

Sub-Theme B: Prioritization of Family and Education

Participants shared that income from weaving also supported their children's education by covering school-related expenses and other long-term family responsibilities. This highlights weaving's role in promoting both financial security and educational opportunities for families. These findings align with studies by Mekonen et al., Lopez et al., and Cacho et al., which found that weaving income contributes to children's education and overall family well-being.

Sub-Theme C: Weaving as a Supplementary Source of Income

Some participants described weaving as a supplementary source of income alongside other livelihood activities, enabling them to increase household earnings while managing additional responsibilities. The findings suggest that weaving enhances financial stability and strengthens household resilience. These results align with studies by Chakraborty and Mekonen et al., which found that weaving serves as an important supplemental livelihood that improves families' economic resilience.

Theme 2: The Challenges of Weaving

Sub-Theme A: Limited and Material Costs

Weavers identified the high cost and limited availability of raw materials as major challenges affecting weaving production and income. Limited access to essential materials reduced their capacity to produce woven products and sustain their livelihood. These findings are consistent with studies by Hossain, Mekonen et al., and Redison, which reported that material shortages, limited market access, and financial constraints continue to hinder the productivity and sustainability of weaving communities.

Sub-Theme B: Machine-made competition and Commercialization

Weavers declared that traditional woven products faced increasing competition from cheaper machine-made alternatives, resulting in reduced sales and lower profitability. They also emphasized the need for improved product design and innovation to remain competitive. These findings support the studies of Alauya, Meher and Panda, and Taguba, which found that machine-produced goods create unequal market competition and highlighted the importance of innovation and design enhancement in sustaining traditional weaving.

Sub-Theme E: Challenges of Low Sales

Participants confirmed that despite their constant efforts to weave, one of their major issues is low sales. Sometimes their items go unsold, which discourages them and lessens their will to keep making. Hossain (2020) supports these findings, finding that weavers earn less profit because of low sales and insufficient market demand. Similarly, Mekonen et al. (2022) noted that rural weavers face these problems because they cannot reach customers or predict demand. In addition, Redison (2025) states that many communities are experiencing the same situation.

Theme 3: Social and Cultural Identity

Sub-Theme A: Community Cooperation and Knowledge Sharing (Peer Mentoring)

Participants recognized weaving as an important activity that strengthens social connections within the community by promoting unity, teamwork, and knowledge sharing. They also emphasized that weaving skills are passed on through trainings within and across barangays, helping preserve cultural traditions and encourage community collaboration. These findings align with the work of Ross, Cacho et al., Soguilon and Compadro, Lopez et al., and Alauya, which highlight weaving's role in fostering social cohesion, cultural preservation, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and community empowerment.

Sub-Theme B: Cultural Identity Through Designs and Traditions

The findings revealed that weaving serves as an essential means of preserving cultural identity and traditions. Local weavers actively promoted their craft through trade fairs and cultural events, highlighted distinctive woven designs such as the citrus design and Jodi bolero, and emphasized passing weaving knowledge to future generations to prevent the loss of their cultural heritage. These findings are supported by the studies of Cacho et al., Ross, Alauya, and Maldonado-Erazo et al.

Theme 4: Participation in Training, Workshops & Skills Development

Sub-Theme A: Training Exposure and Skill Development

The findings showed that government agencies and partner organizations play an important role in enhancing weavers' skills through training programs and workshops. These initiatives enabled weavers to learn new weaving techniques, develop innovative designs, and improve the quality and marketability of their products, contributing to greater livelihood opportunities. These findings align with studies

by Taguba and Carlo, which found that training programs strengthen weaving skills, encourage product innovation, and improve income-generating opportunities for local weavers.

Sub-Theme B: Support from Government and International Mining Company

Most of the weavers recognized that collaboration between government agencies and non-government organizations plays a vital role in sustaining weaving livelihoods. Support from the Mun Abol project of Oceana Gold, together with assistance from agencies such as DTI, DOT, PLGU, and MLGU, provided training, capacity building, product promotion, and livelihood opportunities for local weavers. These findings are supported by the studies of Soguilon and Compado and Milgram, which emphasize the importance of collaborative support programs in sustaining traditional weaving. Furthermore, Carr et al. and Holden and Jacobson noted that while mining companies can create livelihood opportunities through community development initiatives, they may also pose environmental and social challenges that require careful management.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on adherence to the conducted research findings and conclusions, the following were proposed:

For Local Weaving Associations. Weaving groups are encouraged to improve cooperation, peer mentoring, and exchange information among members. They may also consider product variety, better packaging, and more effective marketing tactics to boost competitiveness in both local and tourism markets.

For Government Agencies (DTI, DOT, LGUs, TESDA). These agencies may develop and sustain community-based weaving support development and cultural tourism integration. Training programs may also include entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and digital marketing to help weavers expand their livelihood opportunities. In addition, tourism promotion may be endorsed by integrating weaving into cultural tourism packages, festivals, and heritage tours in Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya.

For Entrepreneurs and Business Owners. Private business owners are encouraged to collaborate with regional weavers on product development and fair-trade agreements. Through ethical procurement, they may promote the production of high-quality woven products such as everyday items, clothing, and interior design. Weavers may be able to expand their market reach and earn more money by establishing reliable connections with tourist destinations, hotels, souvenir stores, and internet platforms.

For the Kasibu Weaving Community. People in the community may take steps to actively advocate weaving as a source of income and a common cultural identity. Local involvement in weaving-related events, celebrations, and cultural initiatives may strengthen relationships and increase knowledge of their native culture. To sustain cultural tourism development and preserve weaving traditions, community participation is crucial.

For the Next Generation of Weavers. Youth-focused weaving initiatives, such as school-based seminars, apprenticeships, and mentorship from veteran weavers, could be implemented. These programs could help ensure the survival of traditional skills by encouraging young people to see weaving as both a practical source of income and a symbol of cultural heritage.

For Future Researchers. Future research could widen the scope by including more people, examining different weaving communities, or delving deeper into related subjects such as consumer demand, tourism impacts, raw materials, sustainable practices, and weaving businesses and their economic support. This may provide more detailed and dependable baseline data for cultural tourist development.

For Raw Materials Support and Production Sustainability. LGUs and partner agencies may provide continuous access to affordable and sustainable raw materials such as fibers, natural dyes, and weaving supplies. Establishing a local raw material support system or supply hub may help reduce production costs and ensure uninterrupted weaving activities. This support directly improves productivity, income stability, and working conditions of local weavers.

For Policy Development in Kasibu. The local government may consider developing policies that formally support weaving as a cultural tourism asset, including incentives for weavers, funding for cultural programs, and integration of weaving into local tourism development plans. This may strengthen Kasibu's identity as a cultural tourism destination while ensuring long-term sustainability of the weaving tradition.

AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools helped with grammar and structure in creating this article. No AI tools were used to collect, analyze, or interpret data; all authors are credited for their academic contributions.

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