

INTAYON AG-IPON: Lived Experiences of Senior High School Fisherfolk During the Goby (*IPON*) Fry Season in La Paz, Laoag City

Roger Jr. Agandao¹, Paulo Tunac Edd, PhD²

¹Teacher II Ilocos Norte Regional School of Fisheries DepEd – Schools Division of Laoag City

²Principal IV Ilocos Norte Regional School of Fisheries DepEd – Schools Division of Laoag City

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of Senior High School student-fisherfolk at the Ilocos Norte Regional School of Fisheries (INRSF) during the goby (*ipon*) fry season in La Paz, Laoag City, as basis for developing responsive school support mechanisms. Utilizing a descriptive phenomenological research design, the study examined how students balance academic responsibilities and seasonal fishing activities, and how these experiences influence their attendance, academic engagement, and personal growth. Twelve (12) purposively selected Grade 11 and Grade 12 students with at least three years of goby fry fishing experience participated in the study. Data were gathered through in-depth, semi-structured face-to-face interviews guided by an *aide-mémoire* and were analyzed using Colaizzi's seven-step phenomenological method to identify significant statements and emergent themes. Findings reveal that participation in the *ipon* season results in occasional absenteeism and academic challenges, yet cultivates responsibility, resilience, time management, and strong motivation to complete schooling. Teacher and family support emerged as critical factors in sustaining academic continuity. The study concludes that the dual role of student and fisherfolk reflects both constraint and growth, highlighting the need for structured catch-up mechanisms and flexible academic support for coastal learners.

Keywords: Student-Fisherfolk, Goby Fry Season, Phenomenological Study, Academic Engagement, Coastal Livelihood

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

For many students, education extends beyond classroom learning as they balance academic responsibilities with work to support their schooling and daily needs. Globally, students increasingly engage in part-time, seasonal, or informal work in response to financial demands, making employment an integral part of their educational journey (Yanbarisova, 2015; Tumin et al., 2020; Amparo, 2025). The World Bank's Global Findex database further indicates that a significant number of students worldwide work primarily out of economic necessity rather than personal choice (Alarilla, 2024). While employment may offer financial support and real-life exposure, managing both school and work often places students under considerable pressure.

As this global pattern manifests in students' academic lives, research shows that working students frequently have trouble managing academic requirements alongside employment and family responsibilities. Filipino students often struggle to maintain satisfactory academic performance while working due to limited time, fatigue, and competing demands (Abenoja et al., 2019). These students often experience a "tidal rise and fall" in their work-study balance, navigating constant pressure to meet anchored expectations from both their teachers and employers (Colet et al., 2024). Moreover, when students' work is unrelated to their academic track, its negative effects on learning outcomes tend to be more pronounced (Sanchez-Gelabert, Figueroa, & Elias, 2017). Consequently, working students may face reduced school engagement and heightened academic challenges.

Despite these constraints, student employment is not entirely disadvantageous. Engaging in work allows students to develop practical skills, discipline, and a sense of responsibility that contribute to personal growth and future

employability (Kosi, Nastay, & Šušteršič, 2014; Balacuit & Lopio-Alas, 2022). Their lived experiences often reveal themes of resilience and adaptability, as many adopt creative coping mechanisms—such as seeking support from the community and fostering leadership skills—to manage economic realities (Siazon et al., 2025). In addition, for some students, work becomes a meaningful learning experience shaped by family roles and community practices. This dual nature highlights the need to understand working students' experiences beyond academic outcomes alone (Siazon et al., 2025).

These realities are especially evident in coastal areas where student work is closely tied to family livelihood. In La Paz, Laoag City, Senior High School students enrolled at the Ilocos Norte Regional School of Fisheries (INRSF) and belonging to fisherfolk households actively participate in the goby fry season, locally known as “*ipon*.” Notably, approximately 33.33 percent, or one-third, of the Grade 11 and 12 aquaculture student population at INRSF is involved in fishing activities during the goby fry season, highlighting the scale of student participation in this livelihood. During this period, students join their families or friends in catching goby fry, contributing to household sustenance while continuing their schooling at INRSF. However, although this seasonal activity supports family livelihood and sustains local fishing practices, it also requires considerable time and physical effort, which may influence students' academic engagement and overall schooling experiences.

Given these interconnected realities, understanding how these students navigate their dual roles as students and contributors to family livelihood becomes essential. This study aims to explore the lived experiences of Senior High School students at INRSF, focusing on their challenges, coping strategies, and the meanings they attach to participating in the goby fry season. By emphasizing the learners' personal insights and community-based adaptive strategies, this research seeks to capture the resilience required to manage dual demands (Malinao & Liquido, 2025). Ultimately, the findings seek to inform responsive school support systems and community-based educational interventions for working students.

Objectives of the study

The study aimed to explore the lived experiences of senior high school student-fisherfolk in Grades 11 and 12 at the Ilocos Norte Regional School of Fisheries (INRSF) during the goby (*ipon*) fry season throughout the school year 2025–2026.

Specifically, the study sought to:

Describe the influence of participating in the goby (*ipon*) fry season on student-fisherfolk's:

- 1.1 school attendance;
- 1.2 academic performance

Examine the impact of the goby (*ipon*) fry season on student-fisherfolk's personal growth in terms of:

- 2.1 wants (desires, goals, and aspirations);
- 2.2 needs (essential requirements for well-being and development)

Identify the forms of support received by student-fisherfolk during the goby (*ipon*) fry season from:

- 3.1 friends;
- 3.2 teachers;
- 3.3 school administrators;
- 3.4 family members;
- 3.5 community members?

Develop recommendations for school intervention programs based on the experiences of student-fisherfolk during the goby (*ipon*) fry season.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The experiences of Senior High School student-fisherfolk who balance schooling and seasonal livelihood activities are increasingly recognized as important for understanding student development and academic performance. This literature review highlights the challenges and opportunities faced by students engaged in family-based livelihood work, particularly during the goby (*ipon*) fry season. It draws on local and international studies to examine how employment, absenteeism, and personal growth intersect with educational responsibilities.

Student Employment in the Context of Economic Constraints

Student employment has become an increasingly common experience, particularly among learners who face financial constraints and must contribute to their educational and household needs. Work plays a vital role for students who lack sufficient financial resources, as it enables them to sustain their schooling and daily needs (Canto et al., 2023). In this context, employment becomes closely connected to students' educational lives rather than existing as a separate obligation. This experience is often described as navigating a "tidal rise and fall" where students must constantly balance their dual identities to stay afloat (Colet et al., 2024).

The growing number of students who combine work and schooling reflects broader economic conditions that encourage part-time, seasonal, or informal employment. Students engaged in work while studying have become a familiar occurrence in many educational settings, particularly during periods of economic difficulty (Faizuddin, 2018; Vicencio & Banaag, 2019). Economic pressures have increased the demand for part-time work, requiring students to divide their time and energy between academic responsibilities and livelihood activities (Mohd Nazr, 2017). Within the Philippine K-12 education program, students' perceptions of these challenges are deeply tied to their lived experiences of navigating both school requirements and socio-economic expectations (Siason et al., 2025). While some students view employment as a means to gain experience, explore future careers, or earn additional income, this dual role often presents significant challenges (Carnevale & Smith, 2018).

Academic Challenges and Role Conflict Among Working Students

Balancing academic responsibilities with work demands remains a major difficulty for working students. When students struggle to manage both roles effectively, they may eventually invest minimal effort in either school or work (De Guzman & Francisco, 2021). The concern is not employment itself but the time and physical effort required, which may reduce students' attentiveness in class and their ability to complete academic requirements (Vicencio & Banaag, 2019). Research into the "resilient journey" of student-workers highlights that many face significant dual burdens that require immense effort to reconcile with their academic goals (Malinao & Liquido, 2025).

These competing demands often result in academic and personal challenges such as limited time to complete schoolwork, increased stress, lack of sleep, and reduced opportunities for rest and family interaction (Beer & Bray, 2019). Some students attempt to cope by sacrificing sleep to meet both school and work responsibilities, which may lead to fatigue and decreased academic engagement over time (Barone, 2017; Chiang, Arendt, & Sapp, 2020). As a result, physical exhaustion may influence students' regular school attendance.

Absenteeism and Seasonal Employment

Absenteeism among working students is commonly associated with the intensity and scheduling of their work. Students who devote extended hours to employment tend to spend less time on school requirements and may struggle to attend classes consistently (Vicencio & Banaag, 2019). This situation becomes more evident in seasonal forms of work, where opportunities are limited to a short period and require sustained participation. During such seasons, students may temporarily prioritize work over school attendance, especially when the livelihood activity significantly contributes to household income.

This pattern is evident at the Ilocos Norte Regional School of Fisheries (INRSF), where many Senior High School students come from fisherfolk families and actively participate in goby fry fishing during the *ipon* season.

Most of these students engage in catching *ipon* alongside their families or community members, as the activity serves as an important source of livelihood. The time-bound and labor-intensive nature of goby fry fishing requires students' presence during early mornings or extended hours, which often overlaps with regular class schedules. Consequently, some Senior High School students at INRSF experience temporary absences from school during the *ipon* season as they fulfill family and economic responsibilities.

Family Obligation and Livelihood Participation

Within family-based livelihood settings, students' absenteeism is further shaped by a strong sense of obligation to contribute to household income. Students may view their participation in livelihood activities as a shared responsibility rather than an optional task, particularly when family survival depends on collective effort (Abenoja, 2019). In this context, absences from school are often perceived by students as necessary sacrifices made in support of their families, rather than as a lack of commitment to education.

Personal Growth and Skill Development Among Working Students

Despite these challenges, working while studying also provides opportunities for personal growth and skill development. Employment allows students to develop time management, responsibility, discipline, and workplace behavior that may support future career success (Graves et al., 2017). Early work exposure may also positively influence students' future employment outcomes (Public Agenda, 2016). As emphasized by Kocsis and Pusztai (2019), the experience of being a working student is characterized by both difficulty and growth, making it a complex phenomenon worthy of deeper exploration (Siason et al., 2025).

The Context of Goby (*Ipon*) Fry Fishing at INRSF

This pattern is evident at the Ilocos Norte Regional School of Fisheries (INRSF), where most of these students engage in catching *ipon* alongside their families or community members, as the activity serves as an important source of livelihood. The time-bound and labor-intensive nature of goby fry fishing requires students' presence during early mornings or extended hours, which often overlaps with regular class schedules. Consequently, some Senior High School students at INRSF experience temporary absences from school during the *ipon* season as they fulfill family and economic responsibilities.

Unexplored Dimensions of Student-Fisherfolk Experiences

However, existing literature largely focuses on working students in general and gives limited attention to students engaged in seasonal, livelihood-based work such as goby fry fishing. This gap underscores the need to explore how Senior High School fisherfolk students at INRSF experience absenteeism, academic challenges, and coping strategies during the *ipon* season. Examining these lived experiences can provide valuable insights into how schools and communities may better support students who balance education with family livelihood responsibilities.

Research Questions

To guide this study, the following research questions were formulated:

How do student-fisherfolk describe the influence of participating in the Goby (*ipon*) fry season on:

- 1.1 school attendance;
- 1.2 academic performance?

How do student-fisherfolk view the impact of the Goby (*ipon*) fry season on their personal growth regarding:

- 2.1 wants (desires, goals, and aspirations);
- 2.2 needs (essential requirements for well-being and development)?

What forms of support do student-fisherfolk receive during the Goby (*ipon*) fry season from:

- 3.1 friends;
- 3.2 teachers;
- 3.3 school administrators;
- 3.4 family members;
- 3.5 community members?

What school intervention programs can be developed based on the experiences of student-fisherfolk during the Goby (*ipon*) fry season?

Scope and Limitation

This research explored the lived experiences of senior high school student-fishermen from Grades 11 and 12, typically aged 16 to 18 years, at the Ilocos Norte Regional School of Fisheries (INRSF) during the goby (*Ipon*) fry season in School Year 2025–2026. Specifically, the study examined how participation in this seasonal fishing activity influenced students' academic engagement, personal growth, and social development.

The study involved senior high school students who were enrolled at INRSF and who actively participated in goby fry fishing during the specified period. Participants had a minimum of three years of goby fishing experience to ensure depth and relevance in their accounts. They were able to communicate in English, Tagalog, or Ilocano and provided informed consent; parental or guardian consent was secured for minors. The research was conducted in alignment with the school calendar and activities stipulated in Division Memorandum No. 443, s. 2025. Data were gathered using qualitative methods, particularly semi-structured interviews that elicited participants' perceptions, experiences, and meaning-making processes related to goby fry fishing.

The study focused exclusively on senior high school participants and excluded junior high school students, graduates or former students, individuals without sufficient goby fishing experience, and students experiencing severe psychological distress that could have been aggravated by participation. The inquiry did not include an in-depth examination of school attendance policies, nor did it employ quantitative measures to assess absenteeism.

Key limitations include the purposive sampling of twelve participants from a single specialized institution, rendering findings context-specific to INRSF's senior high school aquaculture student-fisherfolk population and not generalizable to other coastal regions, different types of seasonal student labor, or broader student-fishermen populations. The exclusion of certain groups may have limited the range of perspectives captured, and language requirements may have further constrained participation. Moreover, the qualitative and narrative nature of the data rendered the findings interpretative rather than universally applicable. As the study relied primarily on self-reported interview data, responses may have been influenced by social desirability bias, wherein participants could have presented their experiences in ways they perceived as favorable or socially acceptable. Additionally, the study did not quantitatively track the specific number of school days missed during the *ipon* season, as it focused on exploring lived experiences rather than measuring absenteeism statistically.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design grounded in descriptive phenomenology to examine the lived experiences of senior high school student-fisherfolk during the goby (*Ipon*) fry season. Descriptive phenomenology emphasized the careful depiction of experiences as they were directly encountered by the participants, aiming to identify their essential features without imposing interpretation or external explanation (Englander, 2016). Data were collected through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews guided by an *aide-mémoire*, which ensured consistency while allowing participants to freely share their experiences (De Guzman & Tan, 2007, as cited in Minimo et al., 2018). Through this approach, the study gained insight into how students understood and managed their roles, identities, and challenges within the school setting (Francisco et al., 2024).

Participants

The study involved twelve senior high school students from the Ilocos Norte Regional School of Fisheries (INRSF), the sole fisheries school within the Schools Division of Laoag City offering the Aquaculture strand from Grade 7 through Grade 12. Participants were evenly distributed between Grade 11 and Grade 12 students and had a minimum of three years of active goby fry fishing experience. The selection process considered variation in gender and socio-economic background to capture diverse perspectives. To ensure a representative selection of participants, purposive sampling was employed, following approaches used in previous local aquaculture research (Agandao, 2026). Participant recruitment and data collection continued until additional interviews no longer yielded new themes or meaningful variations, indicating data saturation (Campbell et al., 2020; Nikolopoulou, 2023). While purposive sampling provided depth appropriate for phenomenological inquiry, findings remain context-specific to this specialized fishery educational jurisdiction.

Instrumentation and Data collection

The study was conducted during the 2025–2026 academic year in alignment with the school calendar outlined in Division Memorandum No. 443, s. 2025. The researchers collected data through face-to-face semi-structured interviews with senior high school students who participated in goby (*ipon*) fry fishing during the season at the Ilocos Norte Regional School of Fisheries (INRSF) in La Paz, Laoag City. The researchers developed the interview guide based on a review of relevant literature and refined it through expert validation and pilot testing to ensure clarity, relevance, and consistency in exploring the participants' lived experiences.

Data collection proceeded in three phases. In the pre-administration phase, approvals were obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent and the school head, and consent forms were prepared. During the administration phase, interviews were scheduled with advisers' guidance to accommodate students' responsibilities. Each interview lasted 20–30 minutes in a private setting and was audio-recorded with participants' consent. The post-administration phase included transcription, preliminary coding, and up to three follow-up interviews per participant for clarification as needed. Sampling continued until data saturation was reached, when no new themes emerged (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Creswell, 2013; Campbell et al., 2020; Nikolopoulou, 2023).

Formal approval was secured from the Schools Division Research Committee (SDRC), the Schools Division Superintendent, and the School Head in compliance with DepEd Research Management Guidelines (DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2017). Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and for minors, from their parents or guardians. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty (Hennink, Kaiser, & Weber, 2019). Confidentiality was maintained using pseudonyms and secure storage of data, with audio recordings and transcripts deleted after verification (TutorChase, 2023). Interviews were conducted in private settings, and participants could skip questions or pause if needed. A school nurse was present to provide support if necessary.

Data Analysis

Data were systematically organized and analyzed using Colaizzi's seven-step method (Morrow, Rodriguez, & King, 2015), which is well-suited for descriptive phenomenological studies. The steps included:

1. Familiarization – Reading all transcripts multiple times to gain an overall understanding of participants' experiences.
2. Identifying significant statements – Highlighting statements directly related to the phenomenon being studied.
3. Formulating meanings – Interpreting the significant statements to uncover underlying meanings.
4. Clustering themes – Organizing formulated meanings into clusters reflecting shared patterns.
5. Developing an exhaustive description – Writing a detailed account of the phenomenon incorporating all clusters.
6. Producing the fundamental structure – Condensing the exhaustive description into a concise statement that captures the essence of the experience.

7. Validation of the findings – Returning the results to participants for verification and feedback to ensure accuracy and credibility of interpretations.

This approach was chosen for its ability to capture participants’ experiences deeply while maintaining trustworthiness and rigor (Colaizzi, 1978; Morrow, Rodriguez, & King, 2015).

Additionally, relevant participant information, including age, academic level, and years of fishing experience, was integrated with thematic findings. This contextual data allowed for a more nuanced interpretation and a richer understanding of the phenomenon.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This part summarizes the findings of the study, presents the conclusions and recommendations.

Lived Experiences of Student-Fisherfolk of Ilocos Norte Regional School of Fisheries (INRSF)

QUESTION 1. “Describe your experiences balancing fishing activities and school responsibilities.”

The question captured students’ essential interpretation of how participation in fishing activities influenced their school life, attendance, academic performance, and personal growth. The themes and significant responses are shown in Table 1.

Impact of Fishing on School Attendance

Students’ participation in fishing activities often affected their regular attendance. Many reported missing classes during peak fishing seasons to help their families. Juan shared, “*Kapag panahon ng ipon, hindi ako nakakapasok sa klase...*” demonstrating how family obligations sometimes outweighed school attendance. This reflects the challenge of balancing livelihood responsibilities with school obligations and highlights a need for flexibility in academic expectations. Research indicates that work commitments and external duties draw time and effort away from school activities, leading to higher absenteeism and lower engagement in academic tasks (Staff, Schulenberg, & Bachman, 2010). School attendance has a direct positive effect on academic outcomes; missing lessons is linked to lower achievement (Keppens, 2023).

The data also show that students were aware of the academic consequences of absenteeism. Missing classes often caused them to fall behind, which created anxiety and pressure to catch up. Evidence shows that reduced homework and class engagement is a key mechanism by which outside work commitments negatively affect learning and academic performance (Kalenkoski & Pabilonia, 2012).

Research with Grade 12 students in the Philippines showed that working while studying influences time management, attendance, and academic outcomes (Coronas et al., 2026).

Table 1. Lived Experiences of Student-Fisherfolk in School Life

Theme Emerged	Codes	Significant Responses
Impact of Fishing on School Attendance	absenteeism, family responsibilities, balancing obligations	“Kapag panahon ng ipon, hindi ako nakakapasok sa klase dahil kailangan kong tumulong sa aming pamilya.” – Juan
Effort to Maintain Academic Engagement	resilience, self-time allocation	“May mga araw na hindi ako nakakapasok sa klase dahil sa panghuhuli ng ipon, pero sinisikap kong bumalik agad sa paaralan pagkatapos mangisda.” – Luis
Concern for Academic Recognition	anxiety, academic standing, motivation	“Ako po ay consistent na honor student noong first at second quarter, pero pakiramdam ko ay hindi na ako makakasama sa may honors dahil marami na akong absent.” – Ramon

Hope for Teacher Understanding	support, empathy, teacher responsiveness	“Sana po ay maintindihan ng mga guro ang sitwasyon ko dahil hindi kayang tustusan ng pamilya ko ang lahat ng kailangan ko sa paaralan.” – Mark
Difficulty in Completing Requirements	fatigue, workload, academic performance	“Kapag pagod na ako sa pangingsda, nahihirapan na akong magpokus sa mga takdang-aralin ko.” – Arnel
Need for Academic Support	access to materials, instructional guidance, continuity	“May ilang guro na hindi nagbibigay ng mga gawain kapag ako ay absent, kaya sana ay mabigyan din kami ng pagkakataong makumpleto ang mga missed activities.” – Renato

Effort to Maintain Academic Engagement

Luis emphasized, “*May mga araw na hindi ako nakapasok sa klase dahil sa panghuhuli ng ipon, pero sinisikap kong bumalik agad...*,” highlighting students’ resilience and efforts to manage both school and fishing duties. Students often developed strategies such as self-study, review of notes, or coordination with classmates to keep up with lessons, indicating a growing independence and personal responsibility. Research on student work–study balance shows that effective self-management and self-regulation skills are essential for students juggling multiple roles and improve their academic outcomes when well developed (Zhao, Ren & Yang, 2024).

Concern for Academic Recognition

Ramon shared, “*Ako po ay consistent na honor student...*,” showing that maintaining academic standing remained a significant concern. This concern demonstrates that students value recognition and achievement despite competing responsibilities. Literature suggests that persistent engagement and the motivation to maintain academic identity can serve as internal drivers that help working students persist in their education (Kalenkoski & Pabilonia, 2012).

Hope for Teacher Understanding

Mark expressed, “*Sana po ay maintindihan ng mga guro ang sitwasyon ko...*,” illustrating the students’ reliance on teacher empathy and support for catching up.

These responses highlight the need for responsive educational practices. Students benefit from teachers’ flexibility and proactive support, which can positively influence attendance, engagement, and overall learning outcomes during periods of high family responsibility (Serikov, 2025). Teacher emotional and academic support increases learning engagement, academic self-efficacy, and resilience (Guo, Wang, & Wang, 2025). Teacher support strongly predicts students’ homework behavior and overall academic performance (Ansong et al., 2023).

Difficulty in Completing Requirements

Arnel noted, “*Kapag pagod na ako sa pangingsda, nahihirapan na akong magpokus...*,” and Renato stated, “*May ilang guro na hindi nagbibigay ng mga gawain kapag ako ay absent...*,” emphasizing the importance of academic support and continuity. Research shows that employment obligations can significantly reduce the time and energy available for academic tasks such as homework and assignment completion, which in turn can adversely affect academic performance (Kalenkoski & Pabilonia, 2012).

Need for Academic Support

Renato stated, “*May ilang guro na hindi nagbibigay ng mga gawain kapag ako ay absent...*,” emphasizing the importance of access to learning materials and guidance for continuity.

Students’ reflections demonstrate that structured support systems, such as providing missed activities or flexible deadlines, can significantly enhance learning continuity. This shows the critical role of teacher responsiveness in supporting students’ dual responsibilities. Parental involvement, especially emotional and basic support,

correlates with higher student motivation and engagement (Opima et al., 2025). Social support from parents, peers, and teachers predicts higher academic performance via self-efficacy and engagement (Zhang & Qian, 2024).

Question 2. “Describe your experiences learning responsibility and discipline while participating in fishing activities.”

The question captured students’ essential interpretation of how fishing activities shaped their personal growth and life skills. The themes and significant responses are shown in Table 2.

Development of Responsibility and Discipline

Students reported learning to manage time between school and fishing while prioritizing tasks. Carlos shared, “*Natuto akong mag-manage ng oras sa pagitan ng pag-aaral at pangngisda...*,” demonstrating that participation in fishing fostered life skills such as discipline, responsibility, and effective decision-making. Research on students engaged in work alongside school shows that employment responsibilities can enhance time-management, accountability, and discipline, which contribute positively to students’ development (Begashaw, 2022). Research with Grade 12 students in the Philippines showed that working while studying influences time management, attendance, and academic outcomes (Coronas et al., 2026).

Table 2. Lived Experiences of Student-Fisherfolk in Personal Growth

Theme Emerged	Codes	Significant Responses
Development of Responsibility and Discipline	time management, task prioritization, accountability	“Natuto akong mag-manage ng oras sa pagitan ng pag-aaral at pangngisda para magampanan ko pareho ang responsibilidad ko sa pamilya at sa school.” – Carlos
Challenges in Balancing School and Fishing Responsibilities	fatigue, physical and mental strain, commitment	“...Minsan, kapag pagod na ako sa pangngisda, nahihirapan na akong mag-focus sa pag-aaral sa bahay.” – Ernesto
Emotional Resilience	perseverance, positive mindset, stress coping	“...Natuto akong maging matatag sa stress at pressure ng parehong pag-aaral at pangngisda.” – Carlos
Application of Aquaculture Learning in Real Life	support, empathy, teacher responsiveness	“Sa klase sa Aquaculture, natutunan namin ang iba't ibang paraan ng pagkuha ng isda, at ngayon sa pangngisda, ginagamit ko ang mga natutunan ko...” – Ramon
Difficulty in Completing Requirements	practical skills, knowledge application, hands-on learning	“Kapag pagod na sa fishing, nahihirapan akong mag-focus sa mga takdang-aralin” – Arnel
Financial Responsibility	budgeting, allocation, family support	“...Ang kinikita namin sa pangngisda ay ginagamit sa bigas sa bahay at sa allowance sa school.” – Hernando

Challenges in Balancing School and Fishing Responsibilities

Ernesto stated, “...*Minsan, kapag pagod na ako sa pangngisda, nahihirapan na akong mag-focus sa pag-aaral sa bahay...*,” showing that students experienced physical and mental fatigue yet remained committed to fulfilling responsibilities. Studies indicate that work commitments competing with school tasks can cause increased stress and fatigue, adversely affecting students’ focus and academic engagement (Ithy, 2024).

Emotional Resilience

Carlos emphasized, “...*Natuto akong maging matatag sa stress at pressure...*,” highlighting that student developed perseverance and maintained a positive mindset despite challenges. Literature on work–study balance

notes that coping mechanisms and resilience are outcomes of students managing overlapping responsibilities, and these can be important in maintaining well-being and commitment (Tecson, 2025).

Application of Aquaculture Learning in Real Life

Ramon shared, “*Sa klase sa Aquaculture, natutunan namin ang iba't ibang paraan ng pagkuha ng isda...*,” demonstrating how students could apply theoretical knowledge in actual fishing activities. This aligns with evidence that students can integrate academic learning with real-world tasks, deepening understanding and relevance (Begashaw, 2022).

Financial Responsibility

Hernando expressed, “*Ang kinikita namin sa pangingisda ay ginagamit sa bigas sa bahay at sa allowance sa school,*” reflecting how students managed earnings responsibly to support family needs and school expenses. Research suggests that working while studying enhances practical financial literacy as students learn to handle money and budgeting (Tecson, 2025).

QUESTION 3. “Describe your aspirations and future goals while balancing school and fishing responsibilities.”

The question captured students’ essential interpretation of how their current experiences shaped future ambitions and personal desires. The themes and significant responses are shown in Table 3.

Motivation and Goals

Students expressed determination to graduate, help their families, and use their Aquaculture knowledge. Mark shared, “*...Gusto ko pong makatapos ng pag-aaral at makatulong sa pamilya ko...*,” illustrating strong motivation despite challenges. Empirical research notes that working students often develop career-oriented goals and self-efficacy, linking present hardships with future aspirations and resilience (Tecson, 2025).

Table 3. Lived Experiences of Student-Fisherfolk in Aspirations

Theme Emerged	Codes	Significant Responses
Motivation and Goals	graduation, family support, knowledge application	“...Gusto ko pong makatapos ng pag-aaral at makatulong sa pamilya ko...” – Mark
Personal Desires	career planning, business ambitions, self-improvement	“...Gusto ko pong magkaroon ng sarili kong fishery business balang araw, kaya importante po ang mga natutunan namin sa school.” – Ramon

Personal Desires

Ramon shared, “*...Gusto ko pong magkaroon ng sarili kong fishery business...*,” showing students’ desire to apply academic learning to future livelihood goals. The combination of academic ambition and practical aspirations reflects findings that work experiences can shape career planning and self-confidence (Begashaw, 2022).

Question 4. “Describe the forms of support you receive from teachers, family members, peers, school administrators, and community members during the Goby (*ipon*) fry season.”

The question captured students’ essential interpretation of how support from different stakeholders helped them manage fishing and school responsibilities. The themes and significant responses are shown in Table 4.

Teacher Support in Academic Continuity

Students noted that teachers provided learning materials and guidance to help them catch up after absences. Luis shared, “*Nagbibigay naman po ang mga guro ng activities, pero hindi lahat. Kaya gumagamit po ako ng*

artificial intelligence para masagot ang mga activities, lalo na kung ibinibigay lang at hindi ipinapaliwanag nang Mabuti.” This response illustrates that while teacher-provided activities can facilitate continuity of learning, gaps in explanation or inconsistent follow-up can leave students struggling to fully understand the content. Research indicates that responsiveness and timely support from instructors are critical for working or multi-tasking students, as it helps them balance academic commitments with external responsibilities, such as part-time work or family duties (Serikov, 2025).

Table 4. Lived Experiences of Student-Fisherfolk Regarding Forms of Support During Goby (*ipon*) Fry Season

Theme Emerged	Codes	Significant Responses
Teacher Support in Academic Continuity	guidance, provision of materials, empathy	“Nagbibigay naman po ang mga guro ng activities, pero hindi lahat. Kaya gumagamit po ako ng artificial intelligence para masagot ang mga activities, lalo na kung ibinibigay lang at hindi ipinapaliwanag nang mabuti.” – Luis
Family Support in Balancing Responsibilities	encouragement, supervision, well-being	“Napaka-supportive po nila, pero talagang kailangan kong lumiban sa klase para makatulong sa aking pamilya at sa aking pag-aaral.” – Hernando
Peer Encouragement for School Attendance	reminders, motivation	“Ang mga kaibigan ko lang ang nagsasabi sa akin na pumasok na ako dahil marami na akong naiwang Gawain.” – Juan
Limited Support from School Administrators	oversight, institutional support	“Wala po, hindi ko nga alam ang mga pangalan nila.” – Renato
Community Acknowledgment of Absences	inquiry, recognition	“Kapag tinatanong po ako kung bakit nandito ako (pangisdaan), sinasabi ko na nag-absent ako.” – Ernesto

Family Support in Balancing Responsibilities

Hernando shared, “*Napaka-supportive po nila, pero talagang kailangan kong lumiban sa klase...*,” reflecting that families helped students manage both schoolwork and fishing duties. Studies confirm that family support plays a fundamental role in helping students cope with stress and maintain motivation in the face of competing responsibilities (Tecson, 2025). Parental involvement, especially emotional and basic support, correlates with higher student motivation and engagement (Opima et al., 2025).

Peer Encouragement for School Attendance

Peer support was mainly motivational. Juan shared, “*...kaibigan ko lang ang nagsasabi sa akin na pumasok na ako...*,” indicating that friends reminded and encouraged students to attend school after absences.

While peers did not provide direct academic assistance, their social reinforcement helped maintain student engagement and connection with school despite frequent absences. Social support from parents, peers, and teachers predicts higher academic performance via self-efficacy and engagement (Zhang & Qian, 2024).

Limited Support from School Administrators

Students reported little to no support from school administrators. Renato said, “*Wala po, hindi ko nga alam ang mga pangalan nila,*” showing minimal interaction or guidance from school leadership during fishing periods.

The absence of administrative support highlights a gap in institutional assistance for students balancing livelihood and school, suggesting a need for more structured oversight.

Community Acknowledgment of Absences

Community support was mainly social recognition. Ernesto shared, “*...tinatanong po ako kung bakit nandito ako (pangisdaan)...*,” showing that while community members acknowledged their situation, practical support was minimal.

Even if this does not directly impact academic performance, it provides emotional validation for students navigating multiple responsibilities.

CONCLUSIONS

The study on Senior High School student-fisherfolk at INRSF during the goby (*ipon*) fry season revealed how participation in seasonal fishing activities affects their schooling and personal development. Findings show that students experience occasional absences and difficulties in keeping up with lessons and requirements, emphasizing the importance of teacher understanding and opportunities to recover missed work. The dual responsibility of school and fishing fosters the development of personal skills such as responsibility, discipline, time management, and emotional resilience. Students also reported applying theoretical knowledge from Aquaculture classes in practical fishing tasks, which enhances the relevance of their learning. Earnings from fishing allow them to support family needs and manage personal expenses, demonstrating financial responsibility. Despite the challenges of fatigue, missed lessons, and academic pressures, students remain motivated to complete their education, assist their families, and achieve personal aspirations, reflecting their perseverance and determination in balancing school and livelihood responsibilities.

To better support these students, the school should implement "structured catch-up mechanisms," such as modular learning packages or flexible assessment deadlines during the peak *ipon* season. It is suggested that the institution formalize "Teacher-Student-Family" support circles to more closely monitor academic progress when students are active in fishing. Future researchers could expand this study into a longitudinal project to see if the resilience gained from seasonal fishing translates into higher career success after graduation. Finally, incorporating the perspectives of teachers and parents in a multi-informant study would provide a more holistic view of the support ecosystem.

Action plan as recommended as an intervention to address the participants mentioned

Based on the findings of the study, a contextualized intervention titled the “**Seasonal Learning Recovery Program**” is proposed to address the academic needs of Senior High School student-fisherfolk at the Ilocos Norte Regional School of Fisheries during the goby (*ipon*) fry season. The program aims to promote academic continuity and flexibility through the implementation of structured catch-up lessons, alternative learning activities, and adjusted academic schedules for missed classes.

Furthermore, the intervention emphasizes the importance of integrating students’ fishing experiences into aquaculture instruction, while strengthening support systems through teacher guidance, peer collaboration, and family involvement. By aligning school practices with the lived realities of student-fisherfolk, the program seeks to sustain student engagement, reduce learning gaps, and support the successful completion of academic requirements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Implement structured catch-up mechanisms, including modular learning packages and flexible assessment deadlines, to address absences during the peak *ipon* season.
2. Formalize teacher–student–family support circles to ensure continuous monitoring of academic progress during fishing activities.
3. Encourage teachers to proactively provide guidance, feedback, and supplementary learning resources to absent students to reduce learning gaps and strengthen academic confidence.
4. Develop a Catch-Up Activity Guide tailored to the schedules and needs of student-fisherfolk, offering organized tasks for missed lessons while recognizing their role in family livelihood.
5. Integrate practical exercises and field-based learning in Aquaculture classes to strengthen the connection between classroom instruction and real-life fishing experiences.
6. Conduct longitudinal and multi-informant research to examine long-term academic and career outcomes of student-fisherfolk and to generate a more comprehensive support ecosystem analysis.

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