

Lagmay Ronessa Ann, July 2023, Fight for Change, Change Means Safety: A Case Study on the Single-Use Plastic Policy

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on the effect of unprecedented issue on the Single-used plastic policy to the Canteen Owners in Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College – Santa Maria Campus. Specifically, it is also sought to determine the stand of the Canteen Owners or Helpers on the Single-used Plastic Policy with regards to (a) Stand on the policy, (b) Reason for the Implementation, and (2) Mechanisms to Adhere with the Policy and also to identify the participants general responses to either Affirmative or Denial.

This study is a Qualitative Research in nature with Case Study as the design that outlined the totality of the research guided with the second tier of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs which is Safety. Based on the collated responses from the semi-structured interview guide sheet and face to face interview, Canteen owners really adheres to the Single-use Plastic policy for they affirmed that the policy was beneficial not only to the environment but also to human health. Moreover, tallied and summarized data from the participants' responses justifies the initial result with 91.67% as the computed percentage of the responses that affirms the policy which only shows that the Canteen owners were really looking forward to the implementation of the policy.

Furthermore, it is recommended that the results of the study will be communicated to the implementers for a more consumer friendly Implementing Rules and Regulations for a policy. And also, a follow up study shall be conducted to triangulate the results to the effect of the same policy to the students and administrators.

Keywords: single-use plastic policy, canteen owners, effect of Single-use plastic

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

The economic impacts of plastic pollution stem from unsustainable production and consumption patterns and are closely linked to poor management of plastic materials, a growing global pollution problem. The environmental, social, and economic consequences of poor plastic waste management are transboundary, forcing governments to adopt a variety of intervention strategies to address and mitigate the globalized, complex issues arising from high rates and volumes of plastic waste generation. This review examines the current state of the plastic economy, which has developed linearly, using large quantities of primary resources and preventing a healthy recycling market from collecting plastic waste and returning it to the consumer market. The paper provides a timeline of government initiatives to tackle plastic pollution, outlining global, regional, and local efforts to reduce plastic waste. The paper explores the applicability of extended producer responsibility to better manage plastic waste and require industry to take responsibility for waste collection and recycling (Diggle & Walker, 2022).

Plastic waste in the environment is a major concern for all living things. Plastic is being produced and accumulating in the environment at a rate never seen before because of its careless use, insufficient recycling, and landfill deposits. The world produced 370 million tons of plastic in 2019. Only 9% of plastic waste was recycled, 12% was burned, and the rest was dumped in landfills or left in the environment. Plastic waste is entering terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems at an unprecedented rate. Researchers, legislators, citizens, and other stakeholders are concerned about how to manage plastic waste (Kumar et al., 2021).

Banning single-use plastics or moving toward zero-waste plastic use is surely a positive step for the environment and humanity, but we should evaluate everything that would be affected. Plastic bag bans are a popular policy solution to reduce plastic bag litter, but debate continues over their effectiveness and validity. The purpose of this research is to review the literature on the reasons, advantages, and unforeseen consequences of banning plastic bags. The review concludes that a ban on plastic bags will be only partially successful because of a lack of adequate alternatives, the state's limited capacity to control and implement the ban, a thriving black market, and the plastic industry's structural and instrumental strength. The industry demonstrated its resilience by avoiding consumer responsibility and pushing business-focused solutions, such as a tendency toward self-regulation. The study focused on plastic shopping bags but also on the need for a global treaty to address the ephemeral nature of plastic bag litter and the environmental impact of all sorts of plastics, including straws, foamed plastics, bottles, and caps. The literature agrees that the plastic shopping bag is here to stay for its practical qualities. The long-term implications of this study include a circular economy based on ecological modernization, sustainable plastic-bag manufacturing, and recovery methods such as recycling (Muposhi et al., 2021).

The cabinet passed a bill banning the use of any non-biodegradable polythene bags in the country, confirming that Rwanda has produced, imported, used, and sold polythene bags since 2008. When the law came into force, industries that manufactured and traded plastic bags, and the exporters, firms, and individuals that imported them for sale and profit, expressed concerns. They now face a major problem with packaging costs (Xie & Martin, 2022).

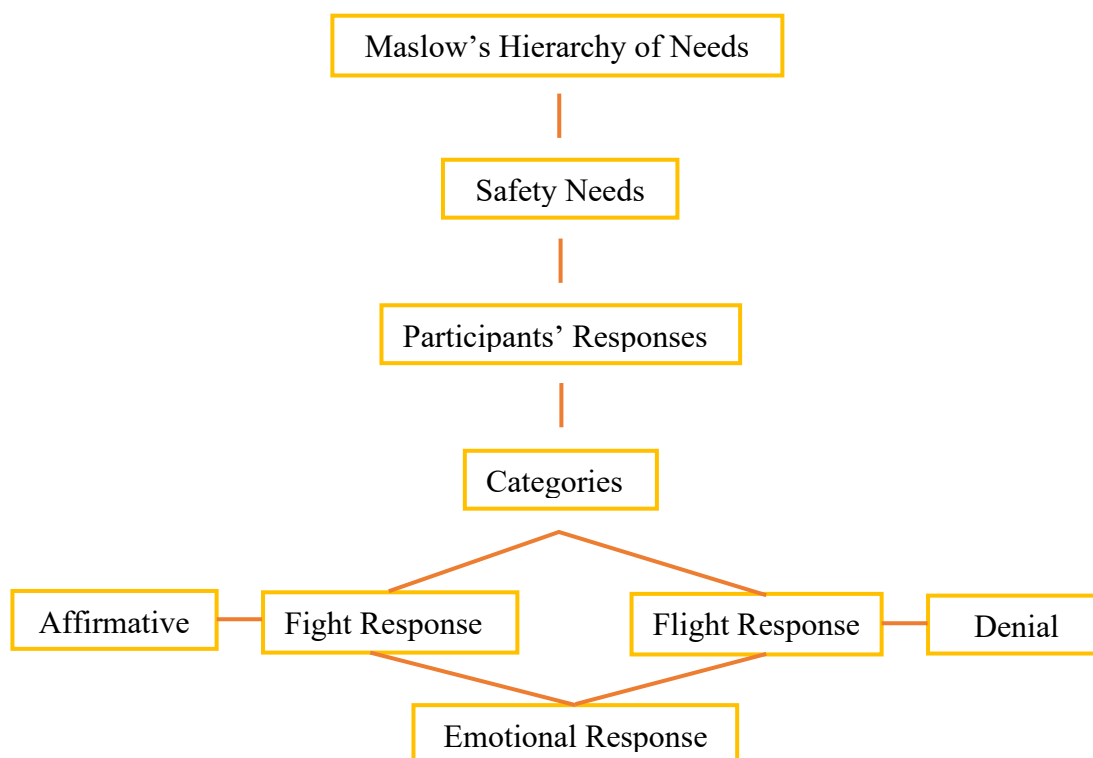


Figure 1. Relationship of the Theory and Response

The figure above, entitled Relationship of the Theory and Response, shows how participants' responses were categorized and the theory that governed the categorization of the gathered data. Moreover, when responses were categorized as "flight," participants affirmed the policy because they want to change the current environmental situation and feel safe while flying. Others deny the possibility and will turn tail and not follow the policy, meaning they will stick to the current situation, which is a threat in general. Even across the response categories, the responses are still linked by a common theme.

In addition, the underlying theory guiding the study is Maslow's Theory, more commonly known as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, specifically the second level: safety. In an article by Andreas Kumninis entitled "Safety:



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs" (2017), the author states that Safety is an evolutionary need, often manifested in what we call the "fight or flight" response. Environmental information is used to determine whether we are safe – in which case we will usually stay – or unsafe – which will typically encourage us to leave (i.e., flight) or attempt to change our current circumstance (i.e., fight). When environmental information suggests a potential threat to us, our family, loved ones, our property, or something else we hold dear, we experience an emotional response that sensitizes us and prepares us for action. While the stakes might not be as high, we are no different from early man in this respect.

I am driven to pursue this study because Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College, Santa Maria Campus plans to implement a policy on single-use plastics. Clearly, canteen owners and helpers will be the first affected because plastics are their primary packaging for goods and services. That is why this study focuses on the main question: how canteen owners are affected by the unprecedented single-use plastic policy.

Specifically, it is guided with two main objectives and are as follows:

- What is opinion of the Canteen Owners or Helpers on the Single-used Plastic Policy with regards to:
- Stand on the policy
- Reason for the Implementation; and
- Mechanisms to Adhere with the Policy
- Identify the participants' general responses to either Affirmative or Denial

The significance of the study suggests that the collected data will be further analyzed and interpreted to produce results, which will be communicated to the administration to reconsider the voices and perceptions of the business sector within the institution. In fact, the rents from those business spaces are considered an income-generating project of the school.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This chapter discussed the methods used to collect and analyze data to answer the following study questions, primarily and secondarily. It explained the research design, identified the data collection methods used, and described how the data were collected and analyzed. However, the overall approach was qualitative because it focuses on the views of the people involved and attempted to understand the reasons behind certain behavior descriptions. The literature review justified the results of the data gathered, while questionnaires were used to collect qualitative data.

Research Design

The researcher followed a case study design and conducted an in-depth, one-on-one, semi-structured interview with key informants. Thematic analysis will involve an inductive approach to generate descriptive and explanatory themes that emerged from the data.

Data Collection Methods

Interviews were conducted on-site using self-developed questions listed in the Interview Guide. However, participants were free to talk about their experiences in whatever way they felt comfortable.

Literature Search

The principal sources of this information include the official web pages of authors and researchers who have conducted similar studies. The researchers also cited textbooks and published literature to support the problems involved in this study. However, some reviews of library collaborations came from the researchers' own experiences while conducting this study.

Target Groups

This study focuses on four (4) canteen owners at ISPSC Santa Maria Campus because they were greatly



affected when the single-use plastics policy was implemented, as their services depend mostly on single-use plastics.

Reliability and Validity of the Study

Data collection is an important phase in a research project. As stated by (Taherdoost, 2021), it gives the researcher the chance to uncover answers to research questions. Data collection is the process of collecting data to gain some knowledge about the research issue. There are many types of data; thus, there are different ways to collect them. However, depending on the kind of data used in the study, researchers may struggle to choose the most appropriate data collection method.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Data

This chapter presents, analyses and interprets the data gathered relevant to the problems raised in the study. Based on the problems and the research instrument, three themes emerged and were used to present the gathered data, analyze its relevance, and interpret it for justification.

It is Generally Beneficial!

The interpretation of the data gathered from the participants was somewhat surprising, as it turned out to be consistent across participants. The theme summarized participants' thoughts, showing that they considered the benefits of banning single-use plastics and its positive effects on the environment and the campus surroundings.

Table 1. Presents the participants' responses with regard to their stand on the policy as they are categorized in the Affirmative Column

Participants	Affirmative	Denial
Canteen Owner #1	"Ti makuna mi daytoy nga policy ket mayat met ta maiwasan tayon ti agusar ti plastics santo makissayanin ti maiwaran nga plasplastic."	
Canteen Owner #2	"Ti makunak ket maymayat."	
Canteen Owner #3	"Ket nu isu iti maipatupad ditoy ayan tayo nga campus ay ket sumurot kami a, mannugot kami latta nga sumurot a ta pagsayaatan tayo met amin."	
Canteen Owner #4	"Agree ken disagree, apai?Iwas-iwasan iti agusar ti plastics, bawas-bawsan. Adda gamin pagsayatanna, adjay gamin plastic ado met pakausaran na sunga agree ken disagree ajay, disagree met kasla koma nu sabaw, nu isupot mo dijay sabaw adda met pag madyan na ta adda met maalam nga chemical, nu dadduma met gamin nagadu iti way na nga pakausaran jay plastic, di ba aan la nga napudot mabalin met nga pagkargaam koma iti basura, iti madi lang dijay yanti plastic ket nu nabara ket agmoist, nabangles nga insigida sunga disagree ken agree."	



Basically, Canteen Owner #4 points out the positive and negative effects of plastics on food and the person who consumes it; for example, plastics are used as go-to bags for bought food and eventually become waste packets for leftovers. And he added that hot food placed immediately in plastics would do harm to you because of its harmful chemical composition that is deleterious to human health and could also be a reason for food spoilage.

(Panou & Karabagias, 2024) The purpose and originality of this review were to provide a thorough analysis of the literature, focusing on the latest safety and migration issues of plastic food packaging materials, and to advise the use of safer, biodegradable alternatives. Traditional food-packaging materials have several problems, including the migration of micromolecular chemical compounds embedded in the packaging material into the packaged food. But after analyzing the statement, the canteen owner explicitly pointed out the first-line declaration that plastic use should be disregarded or reduced. By that remark, it absolutely adheres to the guideline. Thus, it is considered affirmative even if the responder said the situations were considered regarding when to use or not use plastic. Moreover, Canteen Owners #1, #2, and #3 also justify that following the policy will benefit the campus, particularly its environment and surroundings. This means canteen owners will adhere to the policy upon its implementation because it is generally beneficial, especially to the campus, as it reduces the plastics used and consumed and later littered when improperly disposed of. In an article cited at <https://sdgactionawards.org/plastic-free-july/>, instead of focusing on cleanups and recycling, the idea that people can "choose to refuse" single-use plastics in their daily lives shifted the conversation about individual plastic consumption and empowered communities. To "turn off the tap" of plastic waste, the movement serves as a starting point for raising public literacy and encouraging behavioral change.

Stewards of the Environment

Heart-flattering and uncontained happiness will be felt when an environmentally concerned individual hears and reads about these canteen owners' perception of why the school will implement the Single-use Plastic Policy. All canteen owners foresee why the school wants to implement such a policy; specifically, they mentioned the harmful effects of plastics when improperly disposed of and incinerated, which is an observable issue today.

Table 2. Presents the participants' responses with regard to their reason for implementation as they are categorized to Affirmative Column

Participants	Affirmative	Denial
Canteen Owner #2	"Ket di nasaysayat nga awan iti plastics ata ta madi gamin iti plastiken."	
Canteen Owner #3	"Bawal magsunog ng plastic. Aan met latta nga mabalin nga maikkat ta depende met jay companya nga agdeliver kanya mi nu agsupply da iti plastic, sunga adda latta plastic nga makwa tayo."	
Canteen Owner #4	"Atoy ket mabalin tayo ng pagmulaan, mabalin nga recycle tayo tatta atleast makissayan iti plastic. Agusar da iti kwa iti paper bag wennu brown paper. Ngem haan mo insigida nga maikkat iti panagusar iti plastic ta adda met agitay namanteka ken napudot nga sabaw nga kasapulan nga mai-plastic latta."	

As Canteen Owner #1 said, reducing plastic reduces pollution in the environment, and that is entirely true because, as cited on <https://nrcp.dost.gov.ph/the-growing-threat-of-microplastics-and-plastics/>, Plastic pollution is a major problem in the Philippines. According to World Bank estimates, the Philippines uses 163 million sachet pieces daily. Every year, the nation produces an astounding 2.3 million tons of plastic waste.



Regretfully, only 28% of these plastic resins are recycled; the rest are thrown away. What happens to the other 72% of these plastics, then? One can now locate it by opening their refrigerators instead of going to the closest scrap shop. In addition, Canteen Owner #2 said that it is better because nowadays plastics are prohibited, and her statement goes with Speaker of the House Allen Velasco, who said, "The Philippines is one of the top five countries in the world that contribute to plastic waste causing marine pollution," according to the local newspaper The Manila Standard. Therefore, to protect the environment for future generations, it would be wise for our nation to start outlawing the use and distribution of plastics.

On the other hand, Canteen Owners #3 and #4 support the policy by pointing out its positive effects on the environment, stating that no burning would occur and that plastics could be recycled, such as being used as planting pots, respectively. Canteen Owner #3 said that plastics could not be prohibited because it would still depend on the company that delivers the products.

Supporting this claim is an article by Jed Alegado, published on March 7, 2019, which found that cities and municipalities deal with more branded plastic waste (at least 54% of total residual waste) than unbranded waste. Ten companies account for 60%, and four multinational companies account for 36% of all branded waste collected at the sample sites.

Furthermore, Canteen Owner #4 mentioned the difficulty of not using plastic because some foods are preferably placed in plastic, especially when it is hot or oily. Dr. Ashok K Rathoure supports this claim, noting in his article that plastic bags were designed to meet a need. Thin plastic can do many things that paper, a recommended substitute for plastic, cannot. Indeed, there are ways in which thin plastic may be more useful than paper. For example, plastic bags are widely appreciated for their use in wrapping food, and holding water and other wet goods. They are also useful as a protective lining for rubbish bins, as a protective wrap for delicate clothing material, or as a way of temporarily sealing roof and tap leaks.

Reduce the Usage of Plastic

Uncertainty really arose at first due to the fact that the policy will really affect the participants greatly upon its implementation. Surprisingly, the data gathered from the participants mostly are in connection and relation to one another except for one whom it is her right to comment nothing with regards to the interview question.

Table 3. Presents the Participants Responses with regards to their mechanism to adhere with the Policy as they are mostly categorized to Affirmative Column

Participants	Affirmative	Denial
Canteen Owner #1	"Ti mabalin mi nga ubraen ket bawasan min ti agusar i plastics."	
Canteen Owner #2		"No Comment."
Canteen Owner #3	"Ket sumurot a nakung, sumurot ka kasjay tapno maiwasan met ti kwa, tapnu maprotektaran tayo iti aglawlaw tayo ken nadalus."	
Canteen Owner #4	"Bawas-bawas plastic, ngem ajay nu take out lang gamin ket ikabil met gamin ti styro."	

Focusing on the remaining data gathered, they all agree that reducing plastics is their priority way to adhere to the policy because they mostly swear to follow orders and reduce plastic use. And their endeavor is easily achieved because many schools in the Philippines had already implemented the plastic banning in canteens like the school in Bacolod City, In an article written by Erwin P. Nicavera entitled Cauayan school promotes



plastic-free culture last June 5, 2019, he cited there that a public high school in Cauayan town has pioneered the establishment of "Wala Usik" canteen in Negros Island, an initiative positioned to promote plastic-free culture in the community. The Bulata National High School (BNHS) in Barangay Bulata, southern Negros Occidental, unveiled the canteen on Monday, June 3, in time for the opening of classes and the celebration of World Environment Day and World Oceans Day this week.

It is now high time that Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College – Santa Maria Campus implements the single-use plastic policy, as its nationwide implementation is gradually taking hold. And now that the canteen owners have the go-ahead signal and also have this eagerness to change for everyone's welfare, it is indeed a must that the fast-tracking of the necessary papers to be accomplished will be done and the necessary measures will be considered.

Lastly, analyzing the data in a specific manner helps uncover the meaning behind every word uttered by the participants; analyzing what the participants meant in general justifies their answers, and that is the purpose of the table below.

Table 4. Tallied responses of the participants

Criteria	Canteen Owner#1			Canteen Owner#2			Canteen Owner#3			Canteen Owner#4		
Stand on the policy	☺			☺			☺			☺		
Reason for Implementation	☺			☺			☺			☺		
Mechanism/s to adhere to the Policy	☺			☺			☺			☺		
	A	D	U	A	D	U	A	D	U	A	D	U

Legend: A –Affirmative D – Denial U - Uncategorized

The table summarizes the three prior tables, and the responses are tallied to identify participants' affirmation or denial of the policy that ISPSC will implement next semester. The summary table includes three (3) criteria and four participants. Moreover, the tallied data show eleven (11) responses in the affirmative column (91.67%), zero (0) in the denial column (0%), and one (1) in the uncategorized column (8.37%).

Based on the percentages of the tallied responses, it is evident that participants really adhere to the policy because, as cited by Andres Kumninos, flight response means the participants' attempts to change the current situation. The current situation these participants want to change is the rampant use and consumption of plastics in ISPSC. Even if they are affected by the policy's implementation, they still want to change it because it is what they felt. Like the second tier of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Safety Needs involve health and security, which is why participants felt safe changing their current situation.

In conclusion, Emotional Response is clearly evident in the results because participants considered the welfare of their fellow and their surroundings; that is why they wanted change for everyone's safety.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION

This section presents the summary of conclusions formulated from the analyses and interpretation.

Summary

Single-use plastic policy is an environmental policy, and it is also linked to the economic status of certain areas, like schools, because consumers widely use single-use plastics and canteens distribute them, as most of



their services depend on them. The study uses Maslow's second layer, safety needs, and classifies it as a fight-or-flight reaction, as Andres Kumminos notes. Category: Flight Response includes participants' responses that seemed to dispute the policy or did not desire change, while Category: Fight Response includes responses related to attempts to change the existing condition.

Most participants' responses were categorized as affirmative, meaning all canteen owners adhere to the Single-use plastic policy because, after interpretation and analysis, they accepted the positive effects of regulating single-use plastics. Canteen owners also had an environmental heart because, when analyzing their responses, they focused on maintaining environmental cleanliness and protecting human health. This is why, after the summing and tallying of the facts, it is then justified that the Canteen owners are open for change, change that may be unbeneficial to their business and services but highly beneficial to the entirety of what is in their surroundings. Therefore, it is determined that the Single-use Plastic Policy evokes the fighting response of the canteen owners, as they will want to change the present scenario. That means they needed safety not for themselves but for everyone and everything in it.

Conclusion

Based on the data presented, the conclusions are as follows:

Canteen owners stand on the Single-Used plastic policy with regards to the following are as follows:

Stand on the Policy

Analysis have pointed out that Canteen Owners have positive stand with regards to the policy for they have seen the benefits of it to the campus, to the people and on its general aspects.

Reason for Implementation

Result shows that Canteen owners had foreseen the reason for the implementation of the policy they had all identified that when plastics will be reduced then environmental pollution could also be reduced.

Mechanisms to adhere with the policy

Data gathered shows that Canteen Owners adhere to the policy for they swear that they would follow the order and will be reducing the plastics that they will be using when the policy will be implemented.

1. Result showed that 88.89 % or 8 out of 9 participants' responses were all affirmative meaning they would adhere to the policy when it will be implemented, 0% or none of their responses were categorized as Denial and 11.11% or 1 out of 9 participant's response was uncategorized for it does not fit to the two categorization.

Recommendation

The researcher recommended that the result of the study would be communicated to the implementing body for the perceptions of the canteen owners with regards to the policy will be considered in the making or amending of the Implementing Rules and Regulation of the policy. In addition, it is also recommended that a follow-up study would be conducted to triangulate the result of the study with regards to the effect of the single-used plastic policy on ISPSC to administrators and students.

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