

Lived Experiences of Local Handicraft Artisans in Gubat, Sorsogon

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the lives of local handicraft artisans in Gubat, Sorsogon, specifically those engaged in pottery, basket weaving, and shell craft production. Employing a descriptive qualitative research design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with nine artisans and analyzed using thematic analysis. Ten overarching themes emerged. The findings indicated that handicraft production functions as their primary and reliable source of livelihood for many artisans, enabling them to meet their daily needs and support their families as well. Beyond its economic significance, handicraft-making serves as a source of their personal fulfillment and cultural identity, along with the skills that are being traditionally transmitted across generations. Despite this cultural and economic value, artisans face persistent challenges such as limited access to raw materials, climate-dependent production processes, fluctuating market demand, and the current diminishing youth interest when it comes to traditional crafts. Nonetheless, artisans expressed their aspirations for stronger institutional support, organized community structures, and expanded opportunities for sustaining their craft. Overall, the study underscores the importance of handicrafts as both cultural heritage and potential drivers of local tourism development. It also emphasizes the need for more targeted interventions to ensure the continuity, resilience, and long-term sustainability of Gubat's traditional handicraft industry.

Keywords: *Artisans, Handicraft, Live Experiences.*

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In every community, traditions and culture play a vital role when it comes to shaping the identity and sustaining the community's livelihood. As societies continue to evolve, these traditional practices, such as handicraft making, face challenges of modernization and globalization. This study will focus on the lived experiences of handicraft artisans in Gubat, Sorsogon, highlighting the Gubatnons' cultural, economic, and social realities amid today's changing times.

➤ *Lived Experiences*

Lived experiences refer to the person's firsthand knowledge and direct involvement in life events. According to Ona and Solis (2017), modernization influences the lifestyle and livelihoods, leading many to neglect their own cultural traditions. And despite limited government and institutional support, some people, like the Ibaloy people of Benguet in Baguio, envisioned their crafts as viable tourism products, which shows that cultural practices can thrive with proper backing. Similarly, Khan et al. (2023) examined the lived experiences of women artisans in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, revealing financial hardships, low wages, and limited livelihood opportunities. These findings really emphasized the importance of understanding the artisans' voices in terms of shaping sustainable cultural development.

Thus, exploring the lived experiences provides a meaningful insight into how the local artisans in their respective arts cope with the economic and cultural challenges while they strive to protect and preserve their craft traditions.

➤ *Handicraft*

Handicrafts are those products that are made entirely by hand or with the use of simple tools; they often require traditional skills that are being passed down through a series of generations. They embody the cultural identity, showcasing the community's creativity, values, and traditions of a specific community. Ibrahim et al. (2024) highlighted the handicrafts industry's socioeconomic importance in Rajasthan, India, though these artisans still face challenges in reaching a much wider market. Similarly, in the study of Yang et al. (2018), they stressed that while the importance of handicrafts is widely acknowledged, there remains a scarcity of literature on preserving traditional crafts. The persistence of handicraft industries worldwide demonstrates that their dual role in terms of economic resources and cultural symbols is reinforcing the need for their preservation and support in local development contexts.

➤ *Challenges of Handicrafts Artisans*

Artisans worldwide face challenges such as limited market access, inadequate financial resources, and today's declining youth participation (Yang et al., 2018; Upadhyay, 2020). In the Philippines, studies on buri weaving, woodcarving, and other traditional crafts reveal having the same concerns, such as having weak government support, commercialization risks, and reduced youth involvement (Beheshti & Navato, 2019; Leynes, 2023; Asilum, 2024). Cañete et al. (2023) also found that the artisans in Davao Oriental lacked access to government interventions, yet many of them still continued their work with perseverance and fulfillment. These recurring challenges that are being faced by the local artisans illustrate the systematic issues that threaten not only the artisans' livelihoods but also the continuity of the cultural heritage, underscoring the urgency of support mechanisms for crafts communities.

➤ *Cultural Context in the Philippines*

Culture plays a vital role when it comes to shaping identities, and handicrafts remain among the most tangible expressions of cultural heritage. In the Philippines, crafts such as pottery, basket weaving, and shell work embody the intergenerational knowledge while serving as both sources of livelihood and cultural anchors. In Gubat, Sorsogon, these crafts reflect the Gubatnons' creativity and their way of life. However, today's modernization, globalization, and spread of mass-produced goods threaten their survival (Uy, 2022). Today's younger generations are showing less interest in pursuing these traditional crafts, while most of the artisans struggle with financial constraints and limited market opportunities (Alokya, 2024). Understanding this cultural context provides a foundation for examining the experiences of Gubats' artisans and highlights their need to preserve such practices as part of their national identity.

➤ *Legal and Policy Frameworks*

The Philippines has established policies to safeguard the country's cultural heritage. The Republic Act. No. 7355, or the *Manlilikha ng Bayan Act*, recognizes and honors the *National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009*, which provides mechanisms to protect traditional knowledge and practices. These laws reinforce the importance of handicrafts not only as a local tradition but also as a national heritage that is aligned with the global commitment to cultural sustainability. These legal frameworks serve as the backbone for the initiatives that aim to protect artisans and their crafts, ensuring the transmission of cultural knowledge to future generations.

➤ *Need for the Study*

The handicraft industry in Gubat, Sorsogon, faces unstable income, limited institutional support, and weak technological integration (Recebido, 2023; Cañete et al., 2023). Yet, these artisans' reliance on the indigenous and recycled materials reflects the sustainable practices that are consistent with ecological responsibility (Bradley, n.d.; Ashray Foundation, 2024). Documenting their

lived experiences is not only academically significant but also practically useful, providing insights for policymakers, community leaders, and tourism stakeholders.

This study also supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG no. 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG no. 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). At the regional level, it complements the Bicol Regional Development Plan, which promotes the culture-based industries as a driver of growth. At the institutional level, it also aligns with Sorsogon State University's research and development agenda on cultural preservation, sustainability, and community empowerment. Therefore, this research study seeks to bridge the gap between traditional livelihood and modern development frameworks, which demonstrates how artisans' lived experiences contribute to sustainable cultural and economic progress.

➤ *Synthesis*

By examining these lived experiences of handicraft artisans in Gubat, Sorsogon, this study emphasizes cultural sustainability, strengthens local development, and contributes to the national and global effort in heritage preservation. This research will highlight artisans' voices in navigating economic, social, and cultural challenges, while it also identifies strategies that will hopefully ensure the continuity of a heritage that is both historic and evolving. Altogether, the subtopics form a coherent basis for understanding the research problem, establishing the relevance and the necessity by exploring the lived experiences of handicraft artisans as key contributors to cultural preservation and community development.

➤ *The Frameworks of the Study*

This section presents the theoretical framework and the conceptual framework that frame the research study, clarifying the theories and key concepts that guide the research questions and analysis. It will then show how these constructs are defined, related, and measured within the study's context.

➤ *Theoretical Framework.*

This study is anchored on theory. This theory explains the significance of the artisans' lived experiences and their contribution to cultural preservation. The Cultural Sustainability Theory (Soini & Birkeland, 2014). This theory, it emphasizes the role of culture as a "fourth pillar" of sustainable development, alongside economic, environmental, and social dimensions. It argues that cultural practices such as handicrafts must be preserved because they embody traditions, values, and identity. In this study, the theory supports the exploration of the local artisans' lived experiences as an essential role in sustaining the cultural heritage of Gubat, Sorsogon.

In the context of this research study, the local handicrafts such as pottery, basket weaving, and shell crafts are viewed as a form of cultural heritage that carries the identity, creativity, and traditions of the people in Gubat, Sorsogon. This theory explains how these local practices are being sustained through the everyday lives of these local artisans. Guided by this theory, Cultural Sustainability Theory by Soini & Birkeland (2014), this study examines the lived experiences of local handicraft artisans by focusing more on their economic realities, personal meanings that are attached to their crafts, their social interactions with the community, and the challenges that they encounter.

Lastly, by grounding this research study in Cultural Sustainability Theory, this research underscores the role of the local artisans not only as income earners but also as cultural bearers of the long-term sustainability of Gubat, Sorsogon's cultural heritage.

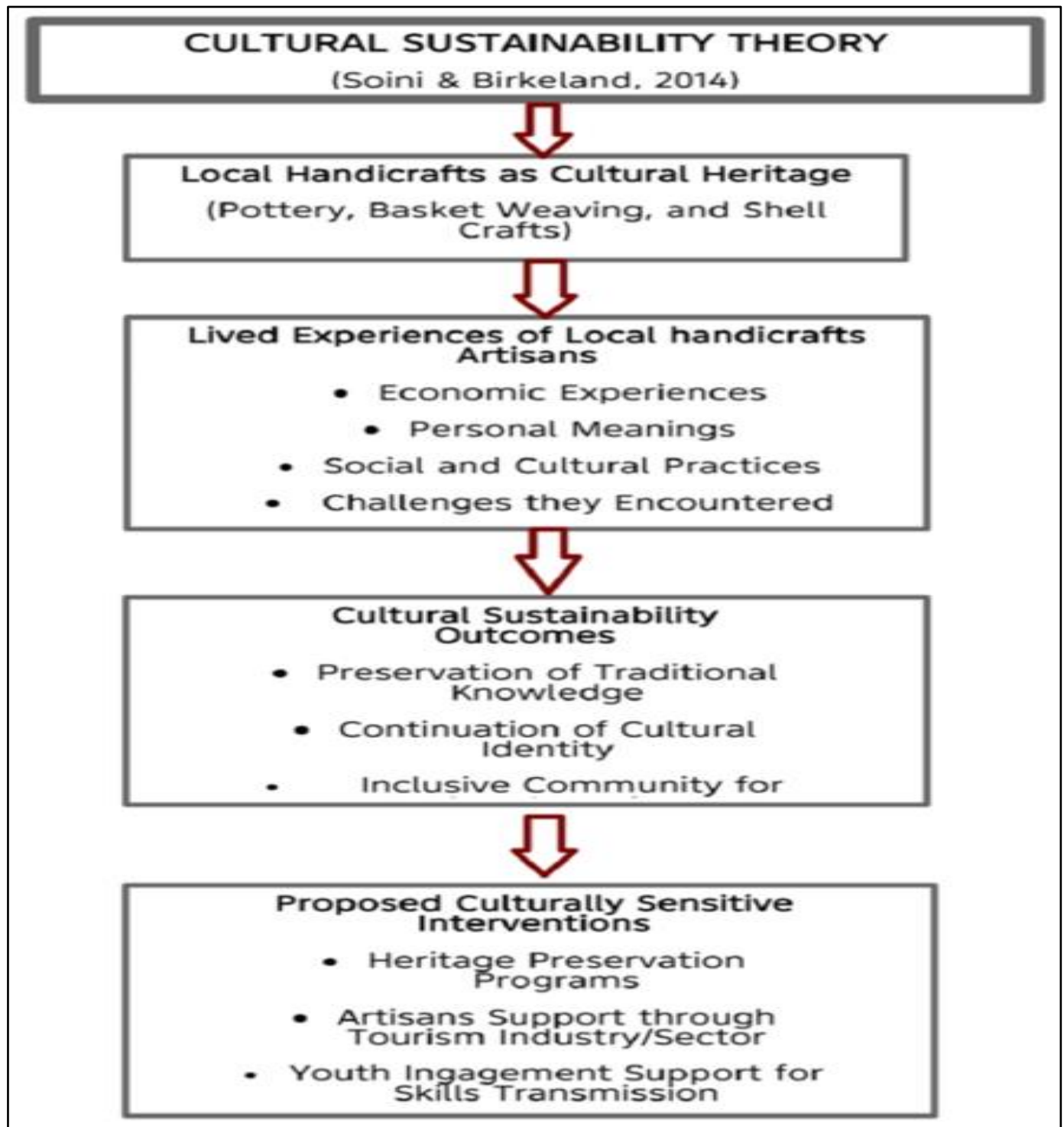


Fig 1 Theoretical Paradigm

➤ *Conceptual Framework.*

This research study is guided by a conceptual framework that connects the local artisans' lived experiences, the challenges that they encounter, and the proposed interventions that may support the preservation of handicrafts in Gubat, Sorsogon.

The first component focuses on the lived experiences of the local artisans, which include their economic, personal, and social aspects. Through their personal narratives, the study seeks to understand how local handicraft production can contribute to their daily lives, community relationships, and their sense of identity.

The second component addresses the challenges faced by the artisans in terms of sustaining their crafts. By examining these obstacles, the study aims to reveal the factors that hinder the continuity and growth of their local handicraft industry.

The third and last component focuses on the proposed interventions, which will be formulated based on the insights gathered from the artisans' experiences and challenges. The goal is to provide culturally sensitive and practical recommendations that will help the local artisans to sustain their livelihoods, while protecting the community's cultural heritage.

In summary, this research framework illustrates the logical flow of the study, from documenting the artisans' lived experiences, identifying the challenges that they faced, and proposing interventions that will strengthen both their cultural and economic sustainability. It will also ensure that the study will remain grounded in the voices of the artisans.

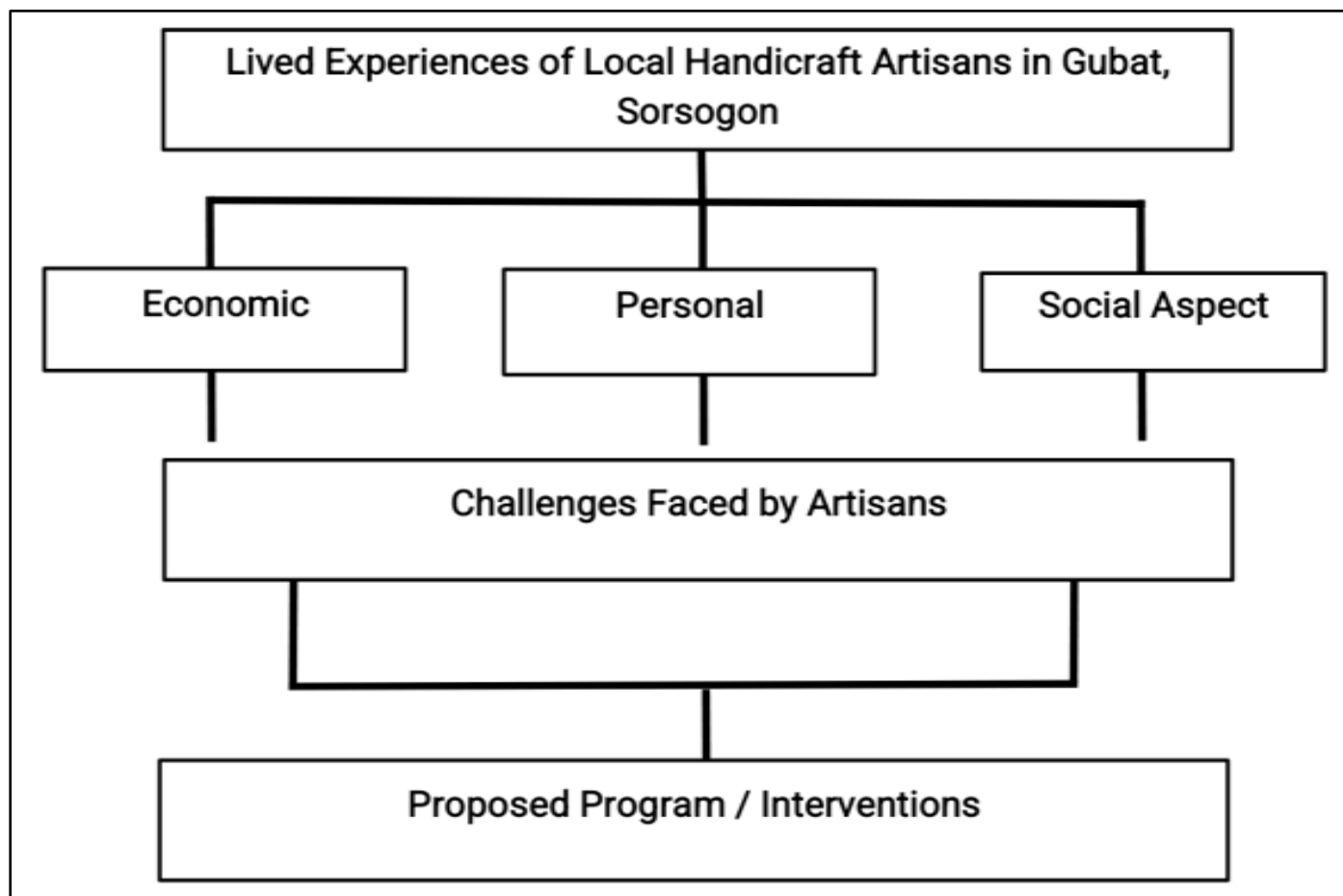


Fig 2 Conceptual Paradigm

➤ *Significance of the Study*

This research study is important for several stakeholders, such as;

Artisans, by enhancing their voices and highlighting their experiences, will contribute to providing strategies that will further improve their livelihoods. Community leaders and Policymakers by providing insights into the needs of local artisans in Gubat, Sorsogon, the findings of this study can help to inform local programs and cultural preservation efforts. Tourism Stakeholders, by recognizing these local handicrafts as a part of cultural tourism, this study will support the efforts in promoting authentic cultural products. Lastly, Academic Institutions, by documenting an underrepresented community, this research will help to strengthen the link between education, culture, and sustainable development.

By centering on the local artisans' lived experiences, this study aims to hopefully bridge the gap between traditions and modern challenges, as it offers solutions that could help the preservation of cultural identity while supporting the local economic growth of Gubat, Sorsogon. Ultimately, the study's results are expected to contribute to academic literature, cultural policy planning, and the empowerment of artisan communities through a much more sustainable and inclusive cultural preservation.

➤ *The Present Study*

Previous studies have underscored the significance of local handicrafts as cultural symbols and as a source of livelihood across different regions. Common themes in some reviewed literature include the socioeconomic importance of crafts, artisans' challenges, and the need for cultural preservation in the face of modernization. Various local and international studies emphasized that local

handicrafts embody identity and creativity while it contributes to tourism and community development. However, despite their value, artisans often struggle with unstable income, limited market access, and diminishing interest among younger generations.

Similar to these exciting studies, the present research acknowledges the dual role of local handicrafts in terms of preserving culture and sustaining local economies. However, it diverges by focusing on a more specific community context, in Gubat, Sorsogon, where traditional crafts such as pottery, basket weaving, and shell works are integral to their cultural identity. Unlike other broader studies that are being conducted at the national or regional level, this research captures personal narratives that reveal how local artisans balance tradition with today's changing market conditions, limited institutional support, and technological challenges. The emphasis on these lived experiences" further adds to qualitative depth that previous works have not extensively explored.

➤ *Gap Analysis and Research Novelty*

While other existing studies have contributed valuable data on local handicrafts and artisans' livelihoods, there is still limited literature that specifically documents the lived experiences of local artisans in small municipalities like Gubat, Sorsogon. Most available research focuses more on economic analysis, policy reviews, or large-scale crafts industries, leaving a research gap in understanding the human and cultural dimensions of handicraft making in some rural communities. The present study fills this gap by providing qualitative evidence that is being directly drawn from artisans' voices. Its novelty lies in combining cultural documentation with the sustainability perspectives, illustrating how these local artisans preserve their identity while they strive to adapt to socioeconomic pressures. The study's need arises from the urgency to document and promote these traditional crafts that are now at risk of extinction due to modernization and declining generational interest.

➤ *Scope and Delimitations*

This research study was limited to artisans who are only residing in Gubat, Sorsogon, who are at least twenty (20) years old and have been engaged in handicraft production, specifically handicrafts like pottery, basket weaving, and shell work for at least one year.

It excludes artisans from other municipalities of the Bicol Region, as well as the perspective of government agencies, buyers, or other stakeholders in the current supply chain. These research studies only focused on artisans' personal experiences, cultural significance, and challenges, rather than conducting an economic valuation. Data collection was carried out during Academic Year 2024-2025. This scope ensured that the findings of these studies were specific, manageable, and reflective of the lived realities of the local artisans within Gubat, Sorsogon. The delimitations clarify that while the research does not cover external market forces or consumer perspectives, it will still offer an in-depth insight into the artisans' cultural and economic experiences.

➤ *Objectives of the Study*

Furthermore, this research study aimed to explore the lived experiences of local artisans in Gubat, Sorsogon, and focused on their craft-making practices, the challenges they face, and their role in cultural preservation. This study specifically aimed to (1) describe the lived experiences of local handicraft artisans in terms of (a) economic, (b) personal, and (c) social aspects; (2) identify the challenges encountered by artisans in sustaining their crafts; (3) propose relevant interventions and strategies to preserve handicrafts and strengthen artisans' livelihoods. These objectives are designed to provide a holistic understanding of artisans' realities, linking their cultural roles with sustainable community development.

➤ *Definition of Terms*

To ensure clarity and uniform understanding of concepts used in this study, the following key terms are both conceptually and operationally defined.

➤ *Artisans.*

This refers to skilled individuals who create products by hand (Bratinica, 2025). As used in this study, artisans refer to residents of Gubat, Sorsogon, who produce traditional handicrafts such as pottery, baskets, and shell works, and pass down their craft through generations.

➤ *Cultural Aspects.*

This refers to beliefs, practices, customs, values, and artifacts that shape a community's identity (Fiveable, 2024). As used in this study, it refers to the culture and identity of Gubat, Sorsogon, as reflected in handicrafts, which showcase local creativity and help preserve cultural heritage.

➤ *Handicrafts.*

This refers to handmade products created through skills such as weaving, pottery, and embroidery (Collins Dictionary, 2025). As used in this study, handicrafts specifically refer to pottery, basket weaving, and shell works that are made by Gubat artisans, representing both livelihood and cultural identity.

➤ *Preservation.*

This refers to the act of maintaining something in existence (Dictionary, 2025). As used in this study, it refers to strategies that ensure the continuity of traditional handicraft knowledge and practices, enabling them to be passed on to future generations.

➤ *Sustainable Development.*

This refers to development that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2025). As used in this study, it refers to the process of promoting the economic growth and local handicraft industries in Gubat, Sorsogon, while preserving cultural heritage and supporting community well-being.

➤ *Tradition.*

This refers to practices or customs that have continued across generations (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025). As used in this study, it will refer to the crafting practices of Gubat, Sorsogon, local artisans, such as pottery, basket weaving, and shell works, which are handed down from one generation to the next to be able to ensure cultural continuity.

CHAPTER TWO METHODOLOGY

This chapter presented the research design, sources of data, research ethics, instruments, data collection, and data analysis employed in the study. It described how the research was systematically conducted to ensure that the objectives of the study were achieved.

➤ *Research Design*

This research study employed a descriptive qualitative research design using thematic analysis as outlined in the theories by Braun and Clarke (2006). A descriptive qualitative design was appropriate because the study aims to provide a straightforward, detailed account of the artisans' experiences without the need for a deeper philosophical exploration required in phenomenology. It focused on capturing participants' narratives in their own words, highlighting their economic, personal, and social realities. It also explored the challenges that are being encountered by the artisans in sustaining their crafts, and lastly, it also focused on the proposed relevant interventions and strategies to preserve their handicrafts and strengthen their livelihoods.

Through the use of thematic analysis, the study systematically identified the patterns and themes from the data, enabling the researchers to present a clearer description of the artisans' lived experiences, the challenges that they encountered, and their perspectives on sustaining handicrafts. This specific design was suitable as it allows for rich, contextualized insights while remaining flexible and practical.

➤ *Source of Data*

The primary source of data for this research study was the local artisans from Gubat, Sorsogon. The study used purposive sampling, in which the informants for this study were deliberately selected based on their relevance to the study. The researchers selected nine artisans: three basket weavers, three potters, and three shell craft makers.

The researchers made sure that the informants for this study are currently residing in Gubat, Sorsogon. Specifically, the informants for pottery are from the barangay of Paradijon in Gubat, Sorsogon, for shells are from barangay Rizal, Gubat, Sorsogon, and lastly, for the informants of basket, the informants are from the barangays of Nazareno, Benguet, and Rizal, Gubat, Sorsogon. They are at least 20 years old. Actively involved in handicraft production for at least one year. And lastly, they are willing to voluntarily participate in the study. And for the exclusion criteria, it excluded those artisans who are no longer active in craft-making and individuals who are unwilling to participate.

Table 1 Participants' Profile

Participant	Pseudonym	Years of Experience	Area of Specialization	Key Characteristics of Informant
P1	Jasmin	More than 10 years	Baskets, bags, nito crafts, shell works, coin purses, buri handbags	Early exposure to basket weaving, multi-craft expertise using indigenous materials
P2	Lerma	25 years	Abaca bags	Extensive experience specializing in abaca- based products
P3	Aimee	5 years	Karagumoy and buri baskets, hats, cellphone cases, pen holders	Emerging artisan with diversified small-scale handicraft production
P4	Nora	45 years	Shell souvenirs (bracelets to large items)	Veteran shell craft maker with progressive skill development
P5	Bing	47 years	Shell-based handicrafts	Long-standing practitioner with sustained production
P6	Nora (2)	Nearly 30 years	Shell bracelets, keychains, necklaces, chandeliers	Experienced artisan with product diversification
P7	Vina	Long-term (since younger years)	Clay pots and jars	Intergenerational knowledge of pottery making
P8	Tuyay	20 years	Plant pots, jars, water jars, charcoal stoves, souvenirs	Skilled potter with functional and souvenir products
P9	Raul	40 years	Traditional clay pottery, figurines, and native pots	Master pottery specializing in traditional forms

➤ *Research Ethics*

This research study ensured the safety, privacy, dignity, and well-being of the informants. Ethical considerations such as informed consents, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were strictly observed to ensure that the informants of these studies would be treated with respect and that their stories would be handled with utmost integrity. The researchers-maintained integrity and transparency in terms of data collection and data analysis. The researchers sent a letter requesting permission to conduct a

survey that was signed by the research adviser. During the data collection, the researchers introduced themselves and explained the purpose of the study and asked for their permission for their consent in terms of the collection of data. The data were stored securely and will be accessible to the researchers only. Furthermore, no informants were identifiable in the publication of the study.

➤ *Research Instrument*

In this study, the researcher utilized a semi-structured interview guide as a major tool upon gathering data from local artisans who make baskets, mold pottery, and shell works, particularly in the Municipality of Gubat, Sorsogon.

The instruments were designed to address the Lived Experiences of Local Handicraft Artisans in Gubat, Sorsogon, as well as the research questions, and it consists of four main sections: the artisans' background, lived experiences, challenges, and lastly the hopes and strategies. The interview guide contained open-ended questions that allowed the informants to freely share their narratives in their own words, enabling a much deeper insight into their lived experiences. The guide for this research study was researcher-made.

➤ *Data Collection*

This research study was set in the municipality of Gubat, Sorsogon. Before the researchers engaged with the respondents of this study, they first sought permission through a formal letter, which was addressed to the Municipal Government of Gubat. Formal communication was presented to the barangay officials, specifically the barangays of Paradijon, Rizal, Benguet, and Nazareno, Gubat, Sorsogon and were identified by the local artisans to seek approval and consent to conduct interviews and observation.

Additionally, the researchers personally visited the key areas in Gubat in which the handicraft activities are prominent. The researchers personally asked for permission from the prospective informants the day before they conducted the interview. The visits were personally conducted to observe the crafts that are being made, to interact with local artisans, and to gather firsthand insights. During these visits, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with the informants. Field observations may also be conducted alongside the interviews to provide an additional context and enrich the understanding of the artisans' experiences. The data collection started on November 5, 2025 and ended on November 26, 2025.

The researchers ensured that all the informants were well-informed about the purpose of this study, and their participation was purely voluntary. Interviews were conducted in the local language of the informants, and responses were translated into English for analysis. The researchers ensured that all procedures respected the informants' comfort, culture, and time availability.

➤ *Data Analysis*

The data collected from the interview by the researchers with the local artisans in Gubat, Sorsogon, were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for thematic analysis. The process began with familiarization, where the researchers transcribed the interview recording verbatim and read through the transcripts multiple times to gain a deeper understanding of the content. Initial codes were then systematically generated, and they identified meaningful data segments that are relevant to the research questions.

These codes were examined and organized into broader themes that captured the patterns and insights across the dataset. The researchers carefully reviewed the emerging themes to ensure that they accurately represent the data and to maintain coherence both within individual interviews and across the dataset. Once finalized, each theme was clearly defined and named to encapsulate its essence and its relevance to the study.

The final report presented the key findings, supported by the direct quotes that came from the informants, and it was included in the practical recommendations based on the identified themes. Throughout the analysis, the researchers made sure to maintain trustworthiness by engaging in peer debriefing, keeping an audit trail, and practicing reflexivity to reduce bias, while they strictly safeguarded the informant's confidentiality and data security.

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

This study explored the lived experiences, challenges, and aspirations of the local artisans in Gubat, encompassing pottery, basket weaving, and shell crafts. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis based on the interviews with the informant of this study. As a result of the data gathering, five major themes emerged to explain the life experiences of local handicraft artisans in Gubat, Sorsogon. These findings reflect the craftsmen's experiences in terms of their financial security, personal passion towards their arts, the importance of community interactions in molding their perspectives, the challenges that they encounter in making their crafts, and their hopes and strategies for the sustainability of their handicrafts.

After analyzing the data, the researchers identified ten major key themes that emerged from the lived experiences of the local artisans in Gubat: it revealed that their handicraft making has become their main source of income/ livelihood, it can give them financial contribution, pride and fulfillment, gives them memorable experiences, the influence of their family and the inspirations that they shared, the challenges for their production and resources, seasonality of their handicrafts, the decreasing generational interest, their hope for proper support and lastly, their dreams for the future sustainability of their handicrafts. The researchers interviewed nine local artisans from Gubat, Sorsogon. Artisan 1 has five years of experience, followed by artisans two, three, four, and five with more than 20 years of experience. Artisan six, with 30 years of experience, while artisans seven, eight, and nine have more than 40 years of experience in making local handicrafts.

These local artisans shared insights into how economic conditions, social dynamics, personal motivations, challenges, hopes and strategies influence their work and livelihoods, reflecting both the challenges and rewards of their craft journey.

➤ *Theme 1: Handicraft Making Has Become Their Main Source of Income/Livelihood*

The first cluster in the study revealed that artisans often engage in handicrafts as their main source of income or their main livelihood. Many of these local artisans regard their handicraft making as their means of living that can provide them with their day-to-day living expenses because it provides them with a stable and regular income.

- *One Key Informant Said:*

"Halos karamihan dito sa amin yun lang talaga ang hanap-buhay. Ako ini lang talaga ang hanap-buhay ko... sako nyan sa pamilya ko. Ito talaga yung ano namin ipinag-aral sa kanila. Pambuhay yun.. pag may kaipuhan sa sulod san balay.. yun.."

["Almost everyone here, that's really their only source of income. This is really my only source of income for my family. This is really what helps us to send them to school. It's for everyday use, and it also helps us to meet our household needs."]

These statements from the informants reflect their sense of contentment and the practicality that they get from their handicraft as their main source of income. The local artisans express their satisfaction with having a stable job that can provide them with a regular income. This income allows them to meet their daily basic needs, such as being able to feed their family, and being able to send their kids to school because of their handicraft making.

➤ *Theme 2: Handicraft Making Gives Them Financial Contribution*

Another one is that it is also revealed that one of the contributors to why local artisans engage in making handicrafts is the financial contribution that it gives to them.

- *One Key Informant Highlighted:*

"Mao sa ano.. Kasi halimbawa ngayong araw talagang walang wala ka mamayang hapon may pupunta rito, mamimili at least meron ka nang mga ano mga kaylangan mo sa bahay. Makakabili ka na. Dako-dako na sya na danon sa amo, lalo ma sa pag pa eskwela ko sa mga bata."

["Yes, so... because, for example, when you really have nothing today, this afternoon, someone will come here to the shop, so at least you'll have what you need at home. You'll be able to buy things. That was a huge help to us, especially in sending my children to school."]

This statement from the informant really shows how their handicrafts can provide them with the financial contributions that they need for their life and their family. It emphasizes the routine nature of their job and their reliability in managing a budget for their everyday expenses. It also suggests a sense of stability and predictability for them, which is very important for many people.

➤ *Theme 3: Being Artisans Gives Them Pride and Fulfillment*

The personal experiences of the local artisans in Gubat, Sorsogon, reveal their complex experiences of challenges, pride, and job satisfaction. Many local artisans express the physical and emotional experiences that they got in making handicrafts, and

alongside this, they also express their sense of fulfillment and pride that they get from their crafts and also the significance for them of being an artisan.

- *Two Key Informants Shared:*

"Maugma kay mayon ako sin kakayanan maghimo san basket, naka danon ako sa ako asawa, para saako bilang sayo na parahimo maski papano pride ko man ini."

["I'm happy because I can make baskets, which has helped my husband. For me, as a maker, it's my source of pride."]

"Ano ah parang ano para sa ako.. mao na ini ang parang buhay ko бага. Sabi ko ngani bata pa ako nag batug na ako sini hanggang sa nag asawa ako, nagkabata nan niyan na gurang na ako, kaya para sa ako mao na ini an buhay ko."

["For me, this has become my life. Ever since I was young, I have been making these until I got married and had children, and now I am older. So, for me, this work has been my life."]

These statements really show how local artisans value their crafts, how it gives them the feeling of fulfillment and how their crafts become part of their lives.

➤ *Theme 4: Their Handicraft Making's Memorable Experiences*

Aside from the fulfillment and significance that these local artisans feel, they also faced some challenges and memorable experiences that really honed their journey in making their handicrafts. These memorable experiences have become their treasure and their stepping stone on their journey in making traditional handicrafts.

- *One Key Informant Shared:*

"Minsan may problema kasi kung minsan nahahabol, tapos pag nag luluto san buri mayon talaga ako san diri ko malilimutan san nahilaw ang pag luto kay diba inalabunan yon tapos hinaon ko tulos o yon pag ano nasayang inapabakal pa naman namo yon kasi hilaw pag siya diri maputi, mao yun an diri ko malimutan sadto pinangisgan ako ni mamay.."

["Sometimes we face problems, because sometimes I get cuts. And when we cooked the buri, I had one experience I'll never forget. When the buri I cooked turns out to be undercooked. Well, I was supposed to boil it properly, but I served it too early. It ended up undercooked, since we bought those materials, they all went to waste because they looked pale instead of white. I'll never forget that experience because my mother scolded me for it."]

These statements reveal the physical risk that can be associated with local artisans when they are doing their work. Sometimes, the intensive nature of their work often results in minor injuries and accidents; these risks of their work underscore the demanding physical environment that these local artisans must navigate daily. It shows that despite these difficulties that local artisans experience, many artisans still view their works as a labor of love, driven by their desire to support their families.

➤ *Theme 5: The Influence of Their Family and the Inspiration They Shared*

The study revealed that local artisans in Gubat, Sorsogon, are heavily impacted by their social and family duties. The cooperative effort that they receive from their family or the community is essential during their labor-intensive stages, and sometimes they also inspire other people in their community to engage in their handicraft making.

- *One Informant Said that:*

"Naiimpluwensyahan ko man an ako mga kapit-bahay an mga kamag-anak ko na maghimo basket para mayon man sira sin mapagkakitaan, makadanon man sa kanira pang uruadlaw."

["I also influence my neighbors and my relatives to make baskets so they can have an income that can support their everyday expenses."]

This statement shows how local artisans from Gubat, Sorsogon, can affect their relationship with their community, inspiring them to take part in their tradition in making these handicrafts.

Another is that many of these local artisans see their crafts as more than simply a source of income, but also as their family tradition that is frequently passed down through generations.

- *Two Key Informants Said:*

"An ina ko mao an nag tukdo sun saako maghimo basket, dati nag irog-irog lang ako hanggang naimod ko kun paano na talaga maghimo basket mao na nakaaram na ako"

["My mother, she was the one who taught me to make baskets. I just kept imitating until I saw how to truly make a basket, that's when I learned."]

"An ano ko an lola ko nan mama ko mao an nakatukdo, dun ako nakaaram."

["My grandmother and my mother taught me, and I learned from them."]

These two statements emphasize the significance of family traditions in the skill of handicraft making. Beyond the skills, these local artisans inherit ideals and duties that are profoundly ingrained in their social systems. This transfer of knowledge highlights the importance of the family when it comes to the preservation of skills, as well as their great pride in passing down both the trade and its cultural relevance.

➤ *Theme 6: Challenges in Production and Resources*

In the handicraft industry, struggles and challenges serve as an integral component in documenting one's life journey. All the informants encountered challenges in their pursuit of making their traditional handicrafts.

Local artisans commonly face a range of challenges in their endeavor to pursue their handicraft making, including issues that are related to their limited production materials and resources, the seasonality of their products, and the decreasing generational interest.

• *One Key Informant Shared:*

"Minsan wara sing shells tapos may mga gamit na mahirap hanapin. Kasi minsan mapagal man an shells pag kuha kaya yun. Minsan may mga buwan na wara shells or mapagal mag hanap tapos may order syempre nakakahiya din na di namo yun mahimo syempre e cancel mo kay wara ka man ning shells. Kaya minsan mapagal talaga."

[" Sometimes there are no shells, and sometimes there are materials that are hard to find. Because sometimes it's really hard to find them, and there's an order; of course, it's also embarrassing that you can't fulfill it, of course, you'll cancel it because you don't have any shells. So, sometimes it's really difficult."]

This statement shows that the lack of materials and resources is a very big challenge to artisans, especially in the process of making their handicrafts. These challenges could also lead them to lose their potential buyers. Rural artisans often lack access to quality raw materials. Due to the low volumes required, they have low bargaining power and are forced to buy sub-standard materials at a higher price.

➤ *Theme 7: Seasonality of Their Handicrafts*

Another challenge that these local artisans face is the challenge of the seasonality of their products.

• *Two Key Informants Said:*

"Malakas na bentahan namin simula siya ning April hanggang June tapos yun mahina naman July tapos August.. September. Ngayon naman malakas kasi sem break tapos malapit na ang All Souls' Day. Sa tawo talaga, pagdaghan an tawo syempre daghan man an benta namo."

["We have strong sales from April to June, then it was slow in July, and then in August, and September. Now it's strong because it's sem break and All Souls' Day is coming up. When there are many people, of course, we also have many sales."]

"Mao na yun pag tag-uran kasi mga buri ingagamit, pag wara adlaw nasisira yon tapos diri maputi kay inpapaputi pa yun inalabahan an mga buri."

["During the rainy season, the buri we use gets damaged because there's no sunlight, and it doesn't turn white. We still have to whiten it, and we even have to wash it first."]

These two statements show that the volume of visitors/ tourists and the weather really affect the production and sales of the local artisans. These changes lead to environmental issues such as the loss of local plants used for natural dyes, the spread of invasive plant species, and rising salt levels in the soil used by potters. These changes are causing economic losses in the district.

➤ *Theme 8: Decreasing Generational Interest*

Another challenge that emerges is the current decreasing generational interest of youth participation in making handicraft making in Gubat, Sorsogon.

➤ *Two Key Informants Shared:*

"Sa palagay ko malin diri na kay puro na lang cellphone, wara na sira sin ano dina nira duman sira maaram mag arano sun na mga basket kay sigi lang san cerellphone. Maski papano nahihinayang man ako kay pag kami gurang na syempre di na maka padagos sini pag arug suon badi wara na mag padagos. Mawawara na ini."

["In my opinion, it seems not anymore because it's always just a cellphone, they don't have it, they don't know how to weave baskets anymore because they are always on their phones. I somehow feel regret because when we're old, of course, we won't be able to continue this, and it's like, there might be no way to carry it on. This will disappear."]

"Diri na, puro na niyan cellphone an mga kabataan, ini nga na mga kabataan ko nahahangit sa ako kay grabe an kalat ko pag nag hihimo ako sini pero diri nira aram mao ini an inkukuhaan namo pang gastos."

["Probably not, this generation is all about gadgets these days. Even my own children get angry with me because I make such a mess doing this, but they don't know, this is how we get money for expenses."]

These statements reveal that today's generation doesn't have the interest to inherit their parents' traditional handicraft making. Most of the younger generation is now into modern technology.

➤ *Theme 9: Their Hope for Proper Support*

The study reveals that almost all the informants don't receive any support coming from the government, NGOs or any organizations. That's why many of them wanted to have the support that they needed for them to be able to continue their handicraft making.

• *Two Key Informants Said:*

"Magayon kuta kung may I provide sira na materyales para diri na kami mahanap kung diin-diin pa na lugar, kaso wara man son awaton na ako sin kahihimo wara man talaga san kuan son, sadiri lang talaga namo."

["It would have been nice if they had provided materials so we wouldn't have to look for them all over the place, but they didn't. I've been doing this for a long time, and there's really nothing like that. It's just us."]

"Matagan kuta kami san ano an munisipyo san san daghan na ano himoon na project tas puhunan, nan buyer kunta para an amo mga hinimo mabenta tulos. Nan sana kung kaya makahimo ning grupo dini sa Gubat para sa mga parehas namo para pag may ano daghan kami na madadanunan nan maka sabi man kung nano an mga pangangaipuhan namo sa paghimo."

["I hope the municipality could give us many projects to do and capital, and hopefully a buyer so that the things we make can be sold immediately. And hopefully, if possible, a group can be formed here in Gubat for people like us, so that when there is something, many of us can be helped, and we can also tell what our needs are for making."]

These statements from the informants revealed the importance of having proper support for the local artisans. To address their needs and give them the help that they truly need for their crafts.

➤ *Theme 10: Dreams for the Future Sustainability of Their Handicraft Tradition*

Lastly, aside from the support and program that these local artisans ask for, they also have their dreams and hopes for their crafts. Many of them dreamed of the continuation of their traditional handicraft process and the betterment of their handicraft industry in Gubat, Sorsogon.

• *Two Key Informants Shared:*

"Ito.. ano halos ano na tradisyon na ini para sa amon, saako kaya sana ano na di na sya matanggal parang pang habang-buhay na sya. Nan sana di na kami dito ma alis kasi saday pa an mga bata ko yaa na ako kaya parang ano ko na ini kaupod na sa ako. Kaya sana di man sya mawara."

["This is almost a tradition for us, for me, so I hope it won't be taken away from us, that it will be permanent. And I hope we won't have to leave here because when my children are still young, we're already here, so it's like this is already part of me. So I hope this doesn't disappear."]

"Ano tangkilikon kan mga Pilipino an himo nato na mga basket ta san kalo tas an mga handicrafts na ano na gawa sa buri kay ang ibang ano ngani lahi intatangkilik an ato mga himo na basket tas kalo yun na mga butangan cellphone case, para diri mawara sato man kunta an pag yun mga handicraft."

["Well, that Filipino will also patronize the basket and the hats and the handicrafts made from buri palm that we make, because other races are the ones patronizing the basket and the hats and the cellphone case holders that we make, so that the handicraft will not disappear from us."]

Local handicrafts in Gubat, Sorsogon are part of their tangible traditions, and to be able to survive in today's modernization, support and help could really benefit these local artisans. And if this support could happen, the future and the continuity of these traditional handicrafts can really continue and can be their pride nationwide.

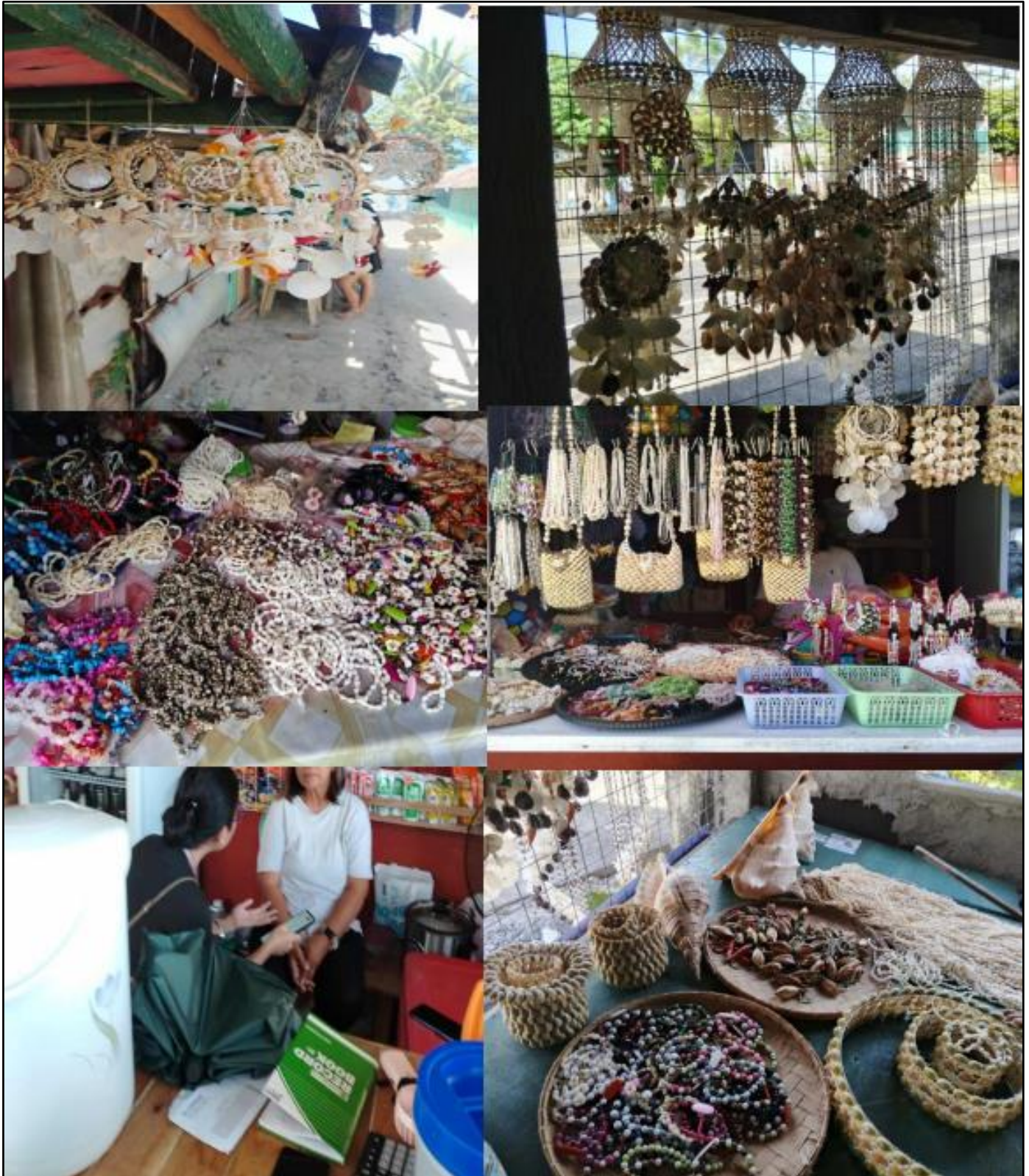


Fig 3 Shell Craft Makers



Fig 4 Basket Weavers



Fig 5 Potters

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION

The present study explored the lived experiences of local handicraft artisans in Gubat, Sorsogon and has identified ten themes: handicraft making has become their main source of income/ livelihood, it can give them financial contribution, pride and fulfillment, gives them memorable experiences, the influence of their family and the inspirations that they shared, the challenges for their production and resources, seasonality of their handicrafts, the decreasing generational interest, their hope for proper support and lastly, their dreams for the future sustainability of their handicrafts. These themes reflect the multifaceted reality of artisans in their journey of handicraft making.

Economically, the findings of this study confirm that many artisans in Gubat, Sorsogon, consider that their handicraft making serves as their primary and stable livelihood. Their testimonies revealed that their craft production supports their daily needs, the education of their children, and their family welfare, consistent with Entsua-Mensah (2021), who states that handicrafts generate essential employment and enhance rural well-being. Similarly, Garcia (2024) documented how weaving can sustain a family financially, demonstrating the economic resilience that their crafts can offer. Aligning with Munda (2024), who emphasizes that artisanal crafts serve as catalysts for local economic growth in many tourism destinations.

On a personal level, many artisans expressed their pride, fulfillment, and their strong emotional attachment to their respective crafts. This supports the finding of Cañete, Marcelo, & Mendez (2023), who contend that crafts-making enhances personal satisfaction, reduces stress, and reinforces the artisan's identity. The emotional and cultural value that is placed on artisans' craft work suggests that these local artisans can play a significant role in terms of cultural tourism storytelling, adding to the authenticity that most of the tourists seek.

Socially, handicrafts were shown to be deeply rooted in terms of family lineage and community influence. The transmission of knowledge, mostly from mothers and grandmothers, corresponds with MorrocoArtisans (2024), which highlights how handicrafts education from family members fosters cultural continuity. These local artisans also encourage their neighbors and their relatives to engage in craft-making, which strengthens community cohesion. However, the issue of declining youth interest caused by digital distractions supports the claim of Lopez (2022), who found similar trends in Eastern Visayas, where modernization reduces the younger generation's involvement when it comes to heritage crafts. This represents a significant threat in cultural and tourism sustainability of the handicraft industry.

The study also documented some major challenges, including the scarcity of some raw materials, in terms of seasonality in demand, and inconsistent weather patterns affecting the local artisans' production. These identified challenges parallel the findings of Rahman (2023), who notes that the artisans globally face material limitations, climate disruptions, and unstable markets. Seasonality is particularly relevant in the tourism industry, as the increasing number of tourists' arrivals influences the sales and income of tourism products.

Finally, these local artisans from Gubat, Sorsogon, expressed their clear hopes for government support, organized cooperatives, and opportunities that can sustain their crafts. These desires align with the perspective of the Sustainability Directory (2025), which states that government assistance is vital to protect intangible cultural heritage and enhance community well-being. Such support is essential for integrating the handicrafts in Gubat's tourism development strategies, such as financial support, a sure buyer that can accommodate their products, and local product branding.

Overall, the findings underscore that handicrafts in Gubat are not merely for economic activities but also cultural assets with strong potential for tourism integration. Strengthening this support for artisans' systems is very necessary for them to be able to sustain these traditions amid modernization and climate-related pressures.

The implications of these results for tourism and future research are: first, it could help the youth participation and heritage continuity. Future studies may examine the motivations, barriers, and attitudes of younger generations towards handicraft participation in Gubat. By doing this these can also help the tourism industry in Gubat by ensuring more participation from the local community. Second, tourism integration and market development, through further research, can analyze how local handicrafts can be strategically integrated into Gubat's tourism industry, including the visitors' perceptions, product competitiveness, and the feasibility of establishing the artisans' hubs or craft-based tour circuits. Third, the impact of climate and environmental changes, by considering the artisan's concerns about the seasonality and weather disruptions, future research should investigate how climate change affects the effects of local raw materials for artisans. Lastly, the role of government and stakeholders' partnerships, additional studies could explore the effectiveness of government initiatives in supporting handicrafts' sustainability. Knowing all these sides of local artisans' lived experiences, their challenges that they faced in their journey on their handicraft making, and their hopes and dreams for their crafts can be very helpful in terms of the survival and continuity of their tradition

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This research study explored the lived experiences of local handicraft artisans in Gubat, Sorsogon, revealing that their works reflect a deep integration of economic necessity, personal fulfillment, social traditions, and their cultural identity. Their handicraft-making provides them with a stable income that helps them to sustain their family needs, while also serving as their source of pride and emotional satisfaction. Their practices have been strongly tied to intergenerational knowledge that is often passed down from their parents and grandparents, highlighting its cultural importance within the community. However, some artisans also face significant challenges, including material scarcity, climate-dependent production processes, inconsistent market demand, and the declining interest among younger generations. Despite these obstacles, they remain hopeful of having support that can help them in their craft-making process, such as increased government support, stronger market linkages, and strategies that can help with the preservation of their craft traditions.

Given these findings, the researchers recommended that the Local Government Unit of Gubat and some other relevant institutions should strengthen their support for artisans through much more improved access to raw materials, financial assistance, and skill development programs that can enhance both the production and business strategies. Forming an official cooperative where the priority is to help streamline the right resources that the local artisans need and improve the collaboration not only with the government and potential buyers, but also with all artisans in the community. To sustain the tradition, youth engagement is very crucial; programs in school and barangay communities can be very helpful to introduce and to help to revive their interest in craft-making. Training in product innovation, branding, and digital marketing is also essential to expand artisans' market reach, especially during those seasons when sales are low. Finally, exploring sustainable harvesting practices and climate-adaptive production methods can help to reduce the impact of environmental limitations on their craft production. Overall, these recommendations aim to support the continuity and growth of the handicraft industry in Gubat, Sorsogon and at the same time to strengthen its role in cultural preservation and tourism development. The researchers believed that with proper coordination among artisans, the local authorities, and community stakeholders, these traditional crafts in Gubat can definitely continue to thrive and serve as one of the meaningful components of the community's cultural identity and local economy.

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