



NO PLASTIC POLICY: PERCEPTIONS, ADAPTATION STRATEGIES AND IMPACT ON DAILY OPERATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This mixed-method study examined the market vendors' perceptions of the No Plastic Policy, their adaptation strategies, and the policy's impact on daily operations in relation to the implementation of the said policy by the Local Government Unit of the Municipality of Dingle, Iloilo. It explored the policy's rationale, regulatory framework, and environmental effects, focusing on how vendors perceive and adjust to the policy through material substitutions, operational changes, and customer engagement. The study also assessed the policy's effects on costs, sales, efficiency, and customer satisfaction. Challenges and benefits of compliance were identified, and recommendations for improving the policy were provided. Data were collected from 93 respondents using a researcher-developed questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data. Findings suggest that the policy's success relies on both enforcement and shifting public attitudes toward plastic reduction for environmental and health benefits.

Keywords: *No Plastic Policy, Perceptions, Adaptation Strategies, Impact on Daily Operations*

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INTRODUCTION

Plastic pollution has become a global environmental crisis, particularly driven by the excessive use of single-use plastics. Markets, which are central to local economies, especially in developing countries, are among the largest contributors to plastic waste due to their high consumption of plastic bags and packaging (United Nations Environment Programme, 2021). According to a report by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), 80% of plastic waste in the environment is attributed to mismanaged plastic waste in markets and commercial areas which not only clogs waterways and exacerbates flooding but also significantly harms marine ecosystems (WWF,2020).

In response to the growing plastic pollution problem, various local governments have enacted policies aimed at curbing the use of plastic, particularly in public markets to phase out single-use plastics like bags and straws, encouraging the use of eco-friendly alternatives in public markets, which are major contributors to plastic waste. This initiative aligns with global efforts, including the United Nations' 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to mitigate waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling, reuse, and achieving the environmentally sound management of chemicals and waste (Kantai, 2020).

The municipality of Dingle in the Province of Iloilo, like many other small towns in the Philippines, is grappling with a serious waste management issue, particularly with the overwhelming amount of plastic waste. An average of 10,105 kilograms of garbage is collected per week, with approximately 290.34 kilograms of plastic which is not only harmful to the environment but also contributes significantly to local flooding, blocking drainage systems and

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waterways (Silarde, 2016, as cited in Perez & Garcia, 2023). The problem escalated when the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) issued a closure order for Dingle's local dumpsite, leaving the town with no immediate waste disposal facility. Consequently, at present, Dingle must transport its waste to Passi City dumping site facility, a situation that has further strained the municipality's resources (DENR, 2020).

In light of this growing challenge, the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Dingle introduced a *No Plastic Policy* which aimed at eliminating single-use plastics. This initiative is aligned with the broader national efforts to reduce plastic consumption and mitigate environmental damage, as plastic pollution has been a major contributor to environmental degradation, particularly in coastal and rural areas (Espinosa et al., 2022). The LGU passed Ordinance No. 2012-009, known as the Environmental Code of the Municipality of Dingle. One of the provisions of the code, under the Solid Waste Management section is the No Plastic Policy, which was implemented in 2021. The relevant enactment of this ordinance is to discourage the use of plastic bags for carrying items purchased from stores. This means that customers are required to bring their own carrier or eco-friendly bags whenever they go to the market. Thus, all business establishments are required to pack dry and wet goods in biodegradable materials such as recycled products, carton boxes, and paper bags. The municipality envisions becoming an ecologically and economically sustainable waste management LGU by enhancing the effectiveness of the No Plastic Policy through the necessary control and mitigation of the negative environmental impacts attributed to solid waste.

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Being an employee of the municipality of Dingle, the researcher felt the need to assess the impact of the No Plastic Policy on the most affected sector within the municipality, the market vendors. The findings of the study generated appropriate feedback for LGU Dingle, Iloilo.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter discusses the research design, research method, respondents of the study, sampling design, research instrument, data gathering procedure, data analyses and statistical tools.

Research Design

According to Calderon (2010), descriptive evaluative research design should be employed to gain a detailed understanding of market vendors' experiences by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. This approach aimed to describe a specific phenomenon, situation, or problem. It involved gathering data to analyze vendors' perceptions of the No Plastic Policy, evaluate the strategies they adopted in response to the policy, and assess its overall impact on their daily operations.

Research Method

The researcher used a mixed-method approach, combining surveys and interviews to gather data. The application of this method involved purposeful data consolidation, which allowed the researcher to gain a broad view of the study by enabling to view a phenomenon

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from different perspectives (Shorten & Smith, 2017). A researcher-made questionnaire collected quantitative data through closed-ended questions, providing measurable insights into vendors' experiences and offering a clear, structured understanding of their attitudes, practices, and the impact of the No Plastic Policy on their operations. While the open-ended questions and interviews provided qualitative insights, allowing for a deeper exploration of the vendors' perspectives and offering a detailed understanding of the challenges they faced and the strategies they employed to adapt to the policy. Moreover, interviews facilitated open-ended discussions, enabling the researcher to explore specific issues that may not have been captured in the questionnaire.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study consisted of 93 individuals, including a census of 85 market vendors from Dingle, along with 8 key informants. These key informants included the Municipal Environmental and Natural Resources Officer, Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator, Market Inspector, Sangguniang Bayan Member, President of the Liga ng mga Barangay, School Heads, and a Garbage Collector Personnel. Including both market vendors and local government officials enabled the study to provide a comprehensive understanding of the policy's effects on various stakeholders, offering a well-rounded perspective on the No Plastic Policy.

Sampling Design

The researcher used a Census Design, surveying all market vendors at Dingle Public Market. According to MacDonald (2017), a census design involves collecting information from

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all units within the population or conducting a complete enumeration of the population. A census is typically used when accurate data is needed for various subdivisions of the population. Such a survey usually requires a large sample size, and in many cases, a census provides the best solution. This approach allows for the comprehensive collection of data from every vendor involved in the implementation of the No Plastic Policy, offering a thorough understanding of the policy's impact on daily market operations.

Research Instrument

A researcher-made survey questionnaire and interview questions were used to collect data. These research instruments were validated by experts before they were administered to the respondents.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part focused on the demographic profile of the respondents, which aimed to gather essential information about the market vendors. This data helped analyze how various demographic factors may influence their perceptions, adaptation strategies, and experiences related to the No Plastic Policy.

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of survey questions that addressed the core objectives of the study. This section focused on understanding the vendors' perceptions of the No Plastic Policy, their adaptation strategies, the impact on their daily operations, as well as the challenges and benefits they have encountered.

The researcher also adhered to the interview protocol for key informants and followed ethical guidelines in conducting the interviews. This involved asking questions related to the

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main issue, as well as other relevant inquiries to assess the sustainability plans of the Local Government Unit of Dingle.

The questionnaires and interview questions were also translated in Hiligaynon for the convenience of the respondents. Transcripts of the interview were translated to English for the benefit of future readers of this research.

Validity of the Research Instrument

To ensure valid results of the study, the researcher conducted a content validation of the questionnaire by submitting a draft to the research adviser for feedback. The draft was presented to a panel of expert jurors in the field of research, whose suggestions were carefully considered before the pilot testing for reliability. The eight-point criteria for content validation were applied to ensure the accuracy, relevance, and credibility of the information presented. All recommended corrections and adjustments from the jurors were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire prior to assessing its reliability.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher prepared a letter of request, which was duly noted by both the Research Adviser and the Dean of the PHINMA University of Iloilo Graduate School. This letter was submitted to seek permission and approval from the Local Government Unit of Dingle to conduct the study.

During the planning discussion, the researcher took ethical aspects into consideration to protect the informants. An information letter to persons involved in the study was written, and all participants were informed orally and in writing about the study before being included.

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The participants were guaranteed confidentiality and were informed that their participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw their data from the study at any time without affecting their relationship with the researcher.

Furthermore, the researcher took the necessary precautions to protect the identity of the respondents. In the recorded interviews with the key informants, numbers were assigned to refer to the respondents.

The survey questionnaire form was distributed to all 85 market vendors in the Municipality of Dingle. The researcher allowed the respondents to answer the survey questionnaire and guided them in answering the said form but with the premise of avoiding her own influence on the respondents' answers and opinions.

The researcher also assisted the respondents in clarifying some terms so they could answer the questionnaire with full knowledge of their responsibility as the respondents of the study. After the respondents had answered the questionnaire, the researcher collected and tallied the data for interpretation and analysis of results. The researcher sought the expertise of a statistician in determining the appropriate statistical tools to be used in interpreting the data. Based on the data and results gathered, the researcher drew conclusions and made recommendations for the study.

Data Analyses

Using a mixed-methods approach was highly effective for analyzing significant aspects of the data gathered. This technique combined quantitative analysis and thematic analysis to provide a comprehensive view. Descriptive analysis was appropriate for the quantitative data

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gathered from closed-ended questions, as it summarized and quantified essential survey data.

Frequency Count and Percentage were used to measure the demographic profile of the respondents, providing insight into the distribution of characteristics such as Age, Sex, or Vendor Category. Meanwhile, the Mean and Standard Deviation measured how respondents perceive the policy, with the Mean indicating the average response and the Standard Deviation showing the variability or consistency of perceptions across the sample.

To measure and interpret the quantitative data, the researcher used the Mean scores obtained from the responses to the five-point Likert-type questions in the questionnaire by using Guilford's frequency distribution table to come up with a conversion table to interpret the means (Lazarte, 2000). The lowest weight of one (1) was subtracted from the highest value of five (5) to determine the range which was four (4). The range was divided by five (5) since there were five categories of responses. The quotient of 0.80 was used as the step interval to categorize the means into class intervals as shown below:

Mean Scale	Description	Interpretation
4.21 - 5.00	Strongly Agree	Highly Significant
3.41 - 4.20	Agree	Significant
2.61 - 3.40	Neutral	Moderately Significant
1.81 - 2.60	Disagree	Marginally Significant
1.00 - 1.80	Strongly Disagree	Not Significant

Moreover, open-ended questions and interviews were analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis. Narrative insights provided valuable understanding into why certain vendor types may have exhibited varying levels of adaptation or satisfaction with the policy. Additionally, the perspectives of key informants from various sectors were incorporated,

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including the Municipal Environmental and Natural Resources Officer, Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator, Market Inspector, Sangguniang Bayan Member, President of the Liga ng mga Barangay, School Heads, and a Garbage Collector Personnel. Interview questions from these individuals covered a range of topics related to the policy's implementation, enforcement, and its broader impact on the community. This thorough examination not only facilitated a clearer understanding of the overall impacts of the No Plastic Policy but also helped identify areas for further investigation or support.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This research was conducted in December 2024 to gather perceptions, adaptation strategies, and the impact on daily operations of market vendors in the Municipality of Dingle, Iloilo toward the No Plastic Policy. Descriptive evaluative research design was used to acquire a detailed understanding of the market vendors' experiences. A mixed-methods approach was used: surveys for the quantitative data and open-ended questions and interviews for the qualitative insights. The total number of participants involved in this study was 93, which comprised of 85 market vendors and 8 key informants from the different offices of the local government, employees and other stakeholders. Since all market vendors were involved, the census design was used to ensure complete data collection. Pilot testing was done for research instruments, including survey questionnaires and interview questions to ensure their reliability and validity. Data was collected ethically, with confidentiality assured, then analyzed descriptively and thematically. Frequency Count, Percentage, Mean, and Standard Deviation

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were used to analyze the quantitative data, while Thematic Analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data from open-ended questions and interviews. The findings of the present study are as follows: Generally, majority of the respondents who participated in the study were in the age bracket of above 50 years old, who were female, and were operating in business for 7-10 years with food items as products sold with large stalls (4x4 meters) mostly self-owned business and having 1-2 employees who were college graduates.

The No Plastic Policy is seen as a crucial step in addressing plastic pollution, with significant features in its rationale, regulatory framework, and environmental impact. The rationale behind the policy is to reduce plastic waste which harms ecosystems. The regulatory framework includes bans on single-use plastics, enforcement measures, and incentives for eco-friendly alternatives. Respondents viewed the policy as a key initiative in reducing plastic pollution, recognizing its potential environmental impact. However, they believed that it is only one part of a larger set of actions needed to effectively tackle plastic waste.

In terms of perceptions, the respondents generally viewed the No Plastic Policy favorably, seeing it as a useful initiative for reducing plastic waste. However, while they recognized its positive impact, they have reservations about its ability to address all environmental issues, viewing it as an important step but not a complete solution.

Moreover, Respondents viewed the No Plastic Policy as adaptable, with market vendors showing a strong willingness to adjust. They were open to material substitutions, operational changes, and customer engagement to reduce plastic usage. However, vendors may face challenges or have some reservations about fully adapting to the policy.

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The respondents regard the policy as essential, and they were willing to comply with it. However, they will need time to adapt or possibly be concerned over the convenience or accessibility of alternatives.

The respondents generally viewed the No Plastic Policy positively, particularly in terms of sustainability and customer satisfaction. However, moderate challenges were noted, especially regarding cost, sales, and efficiency in daily operations. The policy was considered useful, but the concerns about its total implementation and burden on finances still exist.

For the challenges and benefits that the market vendors experienced in adhering to the No Plastic Policy Respondents viewed the No Plastic Policy as offering high benefits but also presenting challenges. Vendors acknowledged moderate difficulties in transitioning to plastic alternatives but recognized improvements in customer relations, cost savings, and environmental impact.

To improve the No Plastic Policy, respondents suggested that the LGU should offer financial incentives for sustainable packaging, run informational campaigns, allow time for vendor adjustments, create centralized packaging hubs, reward sustainability leaders, monitor the policy's impact, and establish a feedback mechanism for ongoing improvement.

CONCLUSIONS

In view of the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

Respondents viewed the No Plastic Policy as a crucial initiative in the fight against plastic pollution. They acknowledged its potential to make a significant difference in reducing

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plastic waste but also believed it should have been part of a wider and more comprehensive approach in addressing plastic pollution. This suggested that while the policy was an important step, further actions were necessary to fully mitigate the environmental impact of plastic.

The majority of respondents expressed strong support for the No Plastic Policy, recognizing its valuable environmental benefits, particularly in minimizing plastic waste. While they acknowledged the challenges related to the costs of alternative materials and sourcing difficulties, they believed that with proper support, education, and access to resources, market vendors would have been able to adapt effectively and contribute positively to the policy's success.

Respondents demonstrated a clear commitment to the No Plastic Policy, having made strides in transitioning to alternative packaging. Despite facing logistical and sourcing difficulties, they remained dedicated to complying with the policy. Challenges such as higher costs, limited alternatives, and insufficient support indicated that adaptation had been moderate. Additionally, while vendors actively promoted the policy's benefits to customers, there were still some resistances from consumers. Progress had been made, but overcoming customer hesitation and operational barriers remained a challenge for full implementation.

The policy had resulted in a moderate increase in costs, particularly due to the adoption of alternative packaging materials. However, vendors did not view these costs as excessively burdensome, recognizing the broader environmental value. Vendors saw both positive and negative impacts on sales—some had experienced stable or even increased sales, while others struggled with customer preferences for plastic and the associated packaging costs. Despite

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these challenges, customer satisfaction had improved overall due to the eco-friendly shift, although some customers still preferred plastic. The policy had clearly contributed to advancing sustainability goals, with penalties for non-compliance playing a significant role in encouraging environmental responsibility, despite the financial strain vendors faced.

The study emphasized that while businesses faced difficulties in transitioning away from plastic—such as finding affordable, sustainable alternatives and managing operational disruptions—the No Plastic Policy had brought significant benefits. Benefits included an improved business reputation, higher customer loyalty, and lower waste disposal costs. While some concerns still existed about the availability and costs of alternative materials, vendors saw the positive effect of the policy on sustainability and customer satisfaction. Overall, despite ongoing operational challenges, the long-term environmental benefits of the policy far exceeded these challenges, emphasizing its purpose.

To further strengthen the No Plastic Policy, financial support should have been offered to businesses, partnerships with local suppliers should have been encouraged, and the policy's effectiveness should have been regularly assessed. Moreover, collaboration between public and private sectors would have helped share resources, while educational campaigns and training would have provided vendors with the tools to implement sustainable practices. Additionally, establishing a monitoring team and feedback mechanisms would have ensured accountability and allowed for continuous improvement, addressing challenges and driving long-term success in sustainability efforts.

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