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## Acquisition-Amelioration-Aspiration: Examining the Interwoven Paths of Traditional Weavers

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### Abstract

*This study explored the skill acquisition of the current weavers in Argao, Cebu. Through a Descriptive-Qualitative approach, the researchers interviewed ten informants selected using purposive sampling. Data was gathered through interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings highlighted three main themes that shaped skill acquisition: Acquisition, Amelioration, and Aspiration. Weaving, in this context, was not merely a form of employment—it sustained community culture and economy. The study concluded that weaving is a skill transmitted through families, with supportive environments enhancing proficiency and economic viability, underlining its dual significance as a source of livelihood and a valuable cultural tradition. The researchers recommend community-based programs that offer training and resources for weavers. In addition, weaving should be integrated into the art curriculum to recognize its cultural and artistic significance. Such initiatives would ensure the sustainability of traditional weaving practices while offering greater economic opportunities for weavers and their families. By investing in these approaches, Argao can preserve its cultural legacy while providing vital livelihood opportunities for its people.*

**Keywords:** Weaving, Skill Acquisition, Interwoven Paths, Traditional Weaving, Process of Weaving

### Introduction

The acquisition of weaving skills has played a crucial role in fostering individual expression, preserving heritage, and strengthening communities (Eakin, Joanne, 1996). From vibrant tapestries to sturdy baskets, this ancient craft holds not only utility but also profound culture (Eakin, Joanne, 1996). With this, the

researchers will become acquainted with Weaver's perspective by understanding the process of acquiring skills in weaving.

Weaving is creating fabric by intertwining two sets of threads, typically at right angles, using either a manual or mechanical loom.

Weaving is considered an art because it involves the skilled manipulation of threads to create intricate patterns and designs. It requires both technical expertise and creative vision to produce unique and aesthetically pleasing textiles (Hamam, 2013). Gaining insight into the complexities of weaving from the weaver's viewpoint helps maintain traditional craftsmanship and ensures the survival of cultural heritage (Martin, 2021). In the Philippines, weaving is deeply ingrained in historical, cultural, and traditional contexts, and it has gained global popularity as handcrafted souvenirs, gifts, and similar items. However, weaving is declining as an art form. Learning how weavers acquire weaving skills will help the culture to stay alive. It might also close the knowledge gap between theory and practice, promoting a more thorough comprehension of skill development and acquisition. The research may add to broader discussions on embodied cognition and experiential learning theories by examining weaving from the perspective of weavers.

Skills in weaving is one of the most known practices in the Philippines since it is part of the cultural and heritage aspect of the country and its people (Sorilla, 2017). Learning to weave is a worthwhile endeavor for individuals. Skill acquisition refers to the process of learning and mastering the skills and practices involved in the making of woven textiles (Harlow, 2017). As per (Agatha, 2012) in acquiring skills in weaving, learning new craft skills offers up new possibilities, providing fruitful ground for innovative ideas and one-of-a-kind designs. By that, traditions of weaving must be upheld and maintained via parental instruction to children as the nation's next generation. Families and parents play a major influence in shaping individuals who benefit themselves, their parents, society, and the nation (Terry et al., 2022). Skill acquisition in weaving is an ongoing process that lasts the weaver's existence (Harlow, 2017). Weaving culture needs to be maintained because apart from being an inheritance from the forefathers (Terry et al., 2022). The outcomes of the weaving custom are useful for the community, specifically being worn as clothes, particularly for females.

Skill is the capacity, typically acquired via training, that allows someone to perform a task well. One could refer to acquiring these abilities and knowledge as acquisition (Ogundele, 2013). Given that we are more closely involved with the processed materials, this may make weaving skills less feasible. When it comes to processing speed, craft skills are far slower than technology. Additionally, the ones constructed using craft skills cost more than their factory- or machine-made counterparts, which have cheaper acquisition costs and are more widely accessible and well-publicized (Abante, 2024).

Weavers in Argao, a Philippine municipality recognized for its rich weaving heritage, continue to practice and retain their talents for a variety of reasons, including cultural, economic, and social issues.

In Argao, weaving is more than a craft; it is a cultural heritage that has an unbreakable connection to the community's identity. Skills and techniques passed down through generations are considered as a way to preserve their cultural identity and legacy (Managbanag, 2024). One of the many reasons why the individuals of Argao are taking part in this legacy is because of their Economic livelihood: Weaving is a source of income for many families in Argao. Their craft creations, including mats, bags, and other woven objects, are sold locally and sometimes globally, contributing to the local economy. The continuation of weaving in Argao is driven by a mix of cultural preservation, economic living, social camaraderie, and

tourism growth. These aspects work together to ensure that this traditional craft continues to be a vital part of the community's identity and legacy, as well as a source of revenue.

Acquiring clothing and textile skills may be a viable technique for human capacity development for family subsistence and social and economic advancement (Viola et al., 2022). Studying skill acquisition in weaving is crucial for several reasons. It enhances craftsmanship and innovation in the field. With this, this study aims to understand the skill acquisition of today's weavers in Argao. As per Hou (2023), embodied cognition includes creating and exhibiting skills. The creation and manifestation of craftsmanship cannot occur outside of labor activities. It also refines weaving teaching methods, promoting the preservation and advancement of techniques throughout generations.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study described the process of skill acquisition of weaving in Argao, Cebu.

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following:

1. How do weavers acquire the skills needed in weaving?
2. What influences their learning progress in acquiring skills in weaving?
3. What are the skills needed in weaving?

## **METHODOLOGY**

The researchers adopted a qualitative approach, viewing it as a systematic, multi-step process. This process entailed identifying knowledge gaps, selecting appropriate data collection methods, gathering rich data, interpreting and analyzing the data, and finally validating the results. By following these steps, the research aimed to generate potential solutions to the identified gaps.

### **Design**

The study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to investigate the complexities of skill acquisition in weaving. This methodological approach allowed for an in-depth exploration and description of experiences without predefined categories or theories. Through the collection and analysis of non-numerical data, such as textual or visual information, the research provided a detailed understanding of the subject (Chisel, 2022).

### **Informants and Sampling Technique**

The researcher interviewed a subset of the population chosen for the study, usually consisting of 10 informants, employing a non-probability sampling technique called purposive sampling to gather data on skill acquisition from Weaver's perspective. The sampling continued until there were no more informant-generated themes or insights—data saturation.

Purposive sampling involved the deliberate selection of key informants based on the possession of particular attributes that were required for the study sample. This criterion was used to choose the key informants: (a) the informants ought to have worked as craftsmen for a duration of 5 to 10 years, (b) informants needed to have spent at least ten years living in Argao City, Cebu, (c) informants were required to possess these acquired skills in the field of weaving, (d) informants were above 18 years old, (e) informants ought to have been practicing weaving at the moment, (f) informants were able to express themselves clearly while responding.

Furthermore, the approach to sampling technique used results in the suggestion to invite informants in the study who met the previously indicated criteria.

### Locale

This study was conducted in Argao, Cebu. Argao, in the southern part of Cebu, was

well-known for its weaving industry. Weaving was once considered a "sunset industry," but when local government agencies, private citizens, community organizations, and academic institutions banded together to revitalize indigenous art, weaving was given another shot (Libby, 2019).

The island province of Cebu had the coastal municipality of Argao. The city made up 3.87% of Cebu's total area with its land area of 191.50 square kilometers, or 73.94 square miles. 78,187 people were living there as of the 2020 Census. This was equivalent to 2.35% of the province of Cebu's entire population or 0.97% of the Central Visayas region's total population. These numbers were used to calculate the population density, which came out to 408 people per square kilometer or 1,057 people per square mile.



Fig 1: The map of Cebu

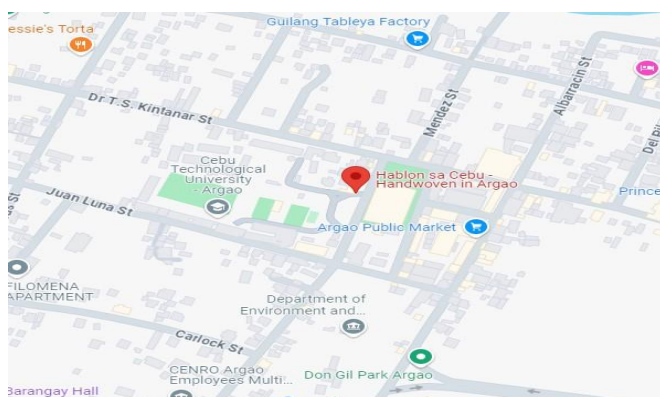


Fig 2: Map of Hablon Weaving in Argao City, Cebu

### Instrument

Given the nature of the study, the researcher functioned as the instrument for data collection (Creswell, 2017). Initially, through observation, they paid close attention to get a distinct picture of their family's educational background and the upholding of weaving customs. In addition, by interview, specifically where the researchers and informants exchanged thoughts and information using meaningful questions and answers. Finally, documentation was an account of past events' outcomes (Terry et al., 2022).

### Data Gathering

The researchers submitted all the requirements for ethical permission from the Research Ethics Committee. A transmittal letter was then sent to the dean of the College of Teacher Education Department at Cebu Normal University. A transmittal letter was issued to the tourism office and the mayor for authorization to conduct the study in the municipality of Argao, Cebu. After the approval of the town mayor and acknowledgment of the research adviser, the informed consent was distributed to the informants, and an in-depth interview was then conducted.

### Data Analysis

The gathered data was examined using the Thematic Analysis by Braun and Clarke. The stages of conducting a thematic analysis included becoming acquainted with the collected data, creating the initial codes, gathering data to support the codes, grouping the codes into themes, evaluating and enhancing themes, and writing a narrative about the study that was conducted.

*"Because this is what we were skilled at, in weaving. When I was young, I used to substitute for my mom."* (K11)

*"I didn't receive formal training, I learned this from our elders, especially my grandmother. But I haven't had any training to improve my skills."* (K19)

*"because my mother taught me how to weave already. I could actually recall everything my mother had taught me."* (K13)

This statement highlights how early involvement in weaving not only fosters skill development but also strengthens familial bonds and cultural identity.

Traditional weaving is one of the cultural expressions. This art as knowledge has been passed down from generation to generation (Brahma & Subrahmanyam, 2023). Weaving in Argao has experienced a remarkable revival, transforming from a declining industry into a thriving enterprise. Local government initiatives and educational institutions have played crucial roles in revitalizing this traditional craft, providing resources and training to ensure that weaving techniques are preserved and adapted to meet contemporary market demands. As a result, many weavers have found new opportunities for income and creative expression. The process of learning to weave is often rooted in observation and practice, as many weavers noted. One participant stated,

*"Here, I have been here for four years. But I've been weaving for a long time, and learned from my elders. Back home, I started when I was 14 years old."* (K17)

This reflects a common narrative among weavers where knowledge is transmitted through direct engagement with experienced artisans. Such mentorship not only preserves the craft but also fosters community solidarity as younger generations learn from their elders. Weaving is also integrated with culture, knowledge, beliefs, and practices. It is a way of living for some groups of people. (Andk & Rao, 2014). Weaving is said to have economic importance too. For such groups of people weaving is a source of livelihood and they also secure socio-economic advantages from it. (Chaudhary et al., 2015).

The intergenerational transmission of weaving skills in Argao exemplifies how cultural practices can thrive through community engagement and familial support. As Schmidt-Hertha (2014) notes,



the experiences, attitudes, and viewpoints of many generations influence how they interact with one another and must be mirrored in the learners. The stories shared by local weavers underscore the significance of mentorship and observation in skill acquisition.

#### **Amelioration**

In the town of Argao, hablon is a by-product of a traditional weaving method. This art as knowledge has been passed down from generation to generation (Brahma & Subrahmanyam, 2023). As per (Hwang et al., 2024), the main challenges in the inheritance of weaving skills are the loss of daily life opportunities for traditional weaving. Interaction with your team through man-on-man in weaving is also a way to practice and acquire knowledge in weaving.

*“We used to do weaving at home, but we could only make one design there. When we came here to CTU, we learned many different designs. We didn’t know much before, so we had to undergo training, and that’s how we learned what to do. We’ve learned so much here at CTU’s weaving center, and it’s different from what we were used to doing at home.” (KI2)*

*“I only learned simple techniques. When I was younger, my grandmother taught me to use abaca fibers. Since I started here, I’ve only learned the techniques used here: diamond patterns, zigzags, and various stitches.” (KI3)*

*“Ang sukad sa akong pagsugod ani maam sa amoa, ang amoang gi hablon is kanang “labaka”. Nakakita mig hiring diri sa CTU ni apply mi kay ang amoang kuan sa among kaugalingon kay on/off. Mao nang nibalhin ko sa CTU, diri ako nakakat on ug daghang design. Nga cotton na ang finish product nga tela na.”*

*(I had previously started utilizing LABAKA/ABACA to practice hablon at home. We applied after CTU posted a job posting for weavers because depending solely on ourselves is insufficiently reliable. That is the reason I moved to CTU, where I am now learning certain designs and producing cotton-based goods.) (KI9)*

In the provinces, where electricity is limited, weaving was done by hand. Utilising the current staff and equipment at the lowest possible cost to each “habloneras” would seem to be wise. In light of this, emphasis will be placed on modern, affordable hand looms and other equipment, (Wallace, 1953). This offers a chance for traditional handwoven textiles, most of which are made using environmentally friendly techniques passed down from previous generations, (Abola et al, 2020).

*(It has been more than 5 years. I started weaving at home when I was still a child because my parents and grandparents knew how to weave, and that was the livelihood of the elders in our family. It’s also the job that I wanted to do. I enjoy it because there are many designs to be found in weaving, especially here where there are many orders for different designs.)*

*(Here, I have been here for four years. But I’ve been weaving for a long time, and learned from my elders. Back home, I started when I was 14 years old.)*

*(I got skilled at weaving because my mother-in-law is a weaver. My children are still young. I was around 30 years old)*

As a craft originating from cultural customs that have been transmitted from one, Handloom weaving’s cultural significance and products must be passed down from one generation to the next. Be taken into consideration, particularly in light of the more recent market factors they must deal with, , (Abola et al, 2020). It would seem reasonable to support a supplemental industry to give the person more interest in his nation and community in addition to additional income. Due to the fact that they would be able to meet the requirements of the country by weaving goods like clothing and furnishings for home use while also facilitating trade. As the market for hand-woven goods grows, it is hoped that hand weaving will be introduced and supported in new regions. Hand weaving is one of the current auxiliary industries, (Wallace, 1953).

For such groups of people weaving is a source of livelihood and they also secure socio-economic advantages from it. (Chaudhary et al., 2015). Learning only the single basic design of weaving is not sufficient among weavers. The assistance of the experienced weavers provides transformative knowledge and experience for the less capable weavers. The access to materials and resources creates a shift to the set of designs for the weavers to display their skills. Proficiency and community effort in the workplace play a crucial role and have connectivity with the quality outcome of their weaving product.

This only highlights the transformational significance of improvement in weaving, which serves not just as a source for revenue but also as a lively representation of culture and a treasured inheritance passed down through generations. Weaving techniques improve with time, improving not only the craft’s quality and efficiency but also preserving and promoting cultural identity (Smith, 2019). This improvement is more than just a technical upgrade; it represents a continual dialogue between generations, fostering the transmission of tradition while adapting to modern needs (Jones & Patel, 2021). As a result, the art of weaving goes beyond its useful purpose and becomes a living witness to a community’s history, beliefs, and inventiveness. By refining and innovating in this skill, weaving will continue to be not only a source of income but also a valued symbol of identity and tradition, passed down as a treasured inheritance down the ages (Brown et al., 2022)

#### **Aspiration**

The ability of the weaving families of Argao, Cebu, to reconcile the demands of weaving as a means of subsistence with their familial obligations was critical to their economic survival. Many families in Argao depend on traditional weaving, particularly those whose members work in the trade, for their primary source of income (Cebu Technological University, 2019)

*“Nakapaskwela mi sa among bata, ingnon nako sila nga paningkamot jud mo kay maningkamot pud mi ug trabaho para naa moy mahuman.”*

*(Because of my employment as one of the habloneras in Argao, my children were able to complete their education. I have always encouraged them to go after their goals because we will also keep working for them.)KI*

*“Nagapursige jud kay kani gyung estudyante, mga anak jud. Kay unsaon man nga ug usa rapud and mangita di man jud mo silbi. Kinahanglan jud naa pud koy ikakuan*

*kay lisud man jud kayo mao nang nga mangita jud kog pamaagi aron naa pud koy makwartahan. Labi na allowance perting lisuda. Mao nang hantud jud karun nahuman akong mga anak.”*

*(I continued to practice hablon just to let my kids attend school. If only one member of the family puts in a lot of effort, it won't work. I therefore really need to figure out how I can help. It's very challenging, particularly about the student allowances. However, my two kids had already received their diplomas.) (K6)*

*“makatabang sa pag-paeskuyla sa akong mga anak“ (It helps with sending my children to school) (K4)*

Weaving is a primary or secondary source of income for many people (Cebu Insights, 2023). The family is more reliant on the sale of woven goods in homes where weaving is the primary source of income, thus weavers must discover innovative ways to boost their income, such as producing in-demand, high-value products. Weaving families in Argao rely on their abilities to strike a difficult balance between upholding their weaving legacy and taking care of their families for financial survival (Cebu Technological University, 2019). Weaving families may continue to make a living while preserving their cultural legacy by embracing flexible labor arrangements, increasing market accessibility, and leveraging government and community assistance. Programs that empower women and offer financial support are essential to maintaining this balance, but access to education, training, and e-commerce platforms can help them manage their household responsibilities and earn more money (Cebu-Insights, 2023). Thus weaving holds a cultural significance and social roles as it is a form of passing of tradition from one generation to the next. Children were taught to practice weaving at a very young age which could also be a way of preserving cultural heritage and a way of family bonding (Cebu-Insights, 2023)

*“5 years na kapin. Sa balay sa bata pako ga kat on nako kay akong ginikanan og apohan nako kabalo man mang hablon mao jud na ang panginabuhian sa katigulangan sa amoa. Mao juy ganahn pud nako na trabaho. Malingaw kay daghan design makit an sa hablon ilabi na diri daghan order na lain lain design”*

*(It has been more than 5 years. I started weaving at home when I was still a child because my parents and grandparents knew how to weave, and that was the livelihood of the elders in our family. It's also the job that I wanted to do. I enjoy it because there are many designs to be found in weaving, especially here where there are many orders for different designs.) (K10)*

*“dinhi, ika-upat nako ka tuig dinhi. nya apan daan kong ga hablon sa akong mga katigulangan. sa amoa, katorse pay edad.”*

*(Here, I have been here for four years. But I've been weaving for a long time that I learned from my elders since I was 14 years old.)*

Family obligations have been influenced by weaving in a variety of ways by cultural backgrounds. In addition to being a way to build skills, it has been a way to make money, foster relationships, and preserve culture. We may recognize the weaving's ongoing value and contribute to society's fabric by fully appreciating its relevance in family life (Cebu-Insights, 2023).

The weaving traditions of many indigenous tribes in the Philippines date back centuries, and the craft has undergone numerous transformations in terms of its purpose, significance, and worth throughout the years. Weaving has been an essential means for many indigenous peoples to practice and represent who they are and what they believe. (Yuchengco Museum, 2014). In the Philippines, handloom weaving originated as a traditional craft that is frequently connected to the spirits' ability to connect with them and grant them protection and well-being while they are on Earth. (Labrador, 2016). The use and export of weaves increased after the Spanish arrived in the Philippines. (Ventura, Samarista & Ulo, 2018). The underlying framework of weaving in the Philippines has been drastically altered, and the idea of textiles as consumer items has been introduced, thanks to the effects of industrialization, commerce, colonialism, and interventions. In many communities, weaving has become a means of subsistence, and the weavers themselves are no longer the final consumers of their creations. (Labrador, 2016). Handwoven textiles continue to be markers of Indigenous group membership in the face of these changes, but depending on the wearer's desire, they may also take on the role of a social and political statement of their ethnicity within the context of a more expansive national identity. (Labrador, 2016).

Argao, Cebu has a traditional weaving industry. Hablon is a family-run business that has been around for many years. Natural fibers like polyester, cotton, and abaca are used to make it. Making hablon is a difficult procedure that calls for patience and talent. Attempts have been made recently to revive the hablon business in Argao. These initiatives include educating weavers through training sessions and advertising Hablon goods. (*Hablon in Argao / Learn about Cebu's Iconic Weaving Industry*, 2022b). The goal of hablon weaving in Argao, Cebu, is to raise awareness of the customs and culture of the region, particularly among the next generation. Learning to weave helps a community preserve its cultural legacy in the twenty-first century by revealing its social and cultural origins and teaching about its rituals and traditions.

## CONCLUSION

The results indicate that weaving is a learned ability that is passed down through families. Weavers who work in a supportive environment improve their abilities and have the opportunity to earn a living. This link between knowledge, family, and practical experience highlights the importance of weaving as a means of subsistence and a cultural tradition.

## RECOMMENDATION

The weavers in Argao, Cebu must continue to provide community programs that offer training and resources for artisans. Weaving should be incorporated into the art curriculum, as it is a recognized form of artistic expression. These programs should improve skills, support fair trade, and help artisans access markets for their products. Awareness campaigns can also highlight the cultural importance and economic benefits of weaving, attracting more customers and encouraging local businesses. By investing in these initiatives, we can provide good job opportunities and sustain traditional weaving practices.