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**Nasaan si Nanay?: A Phenomenological Analysis of  
Household-Level Disaster Risk Management in Pama  
Sawata, Caloocan City, Philippines**

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**"Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and He will establish your plans" – Proverbs 16:3**

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## **Abstract**

Considering the subjectivity of the Philippines into different number of calamities, the distribution of vulnerabilities among men and women remains unequal. Although men and women are equipped with different skills and capabilities, women are still seen as vulnerable with regards to environmental disasters. The upheaval of this phenomenon can be attributed to the absence of gender integration in disaster risk management. Particularly, women become socially excluded in the planning, designing, and implementing knowledge about disaster in the community that leads them in being more vulnerable as compared to men. With that, this study looks into the forms of management that women take to address their vulnerability in the (a) pre; (b) during; (c) post-disaster management in the household-level. Specifically, this study inquires (a) indicators of disaster vulnerability in the community; (b) how is it a driving force for migration (c) impact on women's domestic work; (d) access and control over economic resources.

Keywords: gender roles, disaster, household-level management, environmental migration

## **Introduction**

According to the International Disaster Database, there are 281 environmental and geophysical events accounting to 10,788 deaths and about 60 million casualties across the world (Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disaster, 2018). Asia and the Pacific in particular, are more vulnerable to disaster than their western counterparts as determined by the increasing rate of disaster risk (Asian Development Bank, 2019). In addition to this, flooding remains the leading contributor in the category of frequent natural disasters (World Disaster Report, 2015 & 2016). Disaster (WHO, 2002; UNISDR, 2009; Lindell, 2011), as defined by the Oxford dictionary, is sudden occurrence of events or natural catastrophe that causes severe damage that might lead to death. Consequently, Perry (2006), mentioned that there are 3 classifications defining disaster, (1) classic; (2) hazards; and (3) socially focused. Fritz (1961 as cited by Lindell, 2011) addressed disaster as an event that is concentrated in time and space in which the society or one of its subgroups may undergo both physical and social impacts, such that some societal functions are compromised. In particular, disaster in the lives of Filipinos are inevitable (Lopez, 2016). The Philippines is no stranger to disaster, being subjected to a number of calamities throughout its history. The Philippines is demographically placed in the border of the Pacific Ring of Fire along with Western Pacific Typhoon belt (NDRRMC, n.d; Lopez, 2016), which makes the Philippines prone to natural disasters, catering an average of 20 tropical cyclones annually (PAGASA, 2016). Drastic weather changes and livelihood disruption has been in recent trends, a driving force for people to move from one place to another in search of home and financial security resulting to an evident displacement of population (Krishnamurthy, 2012). In a study conducted by Cruz (1991) over 4 million live in upland communities, 30 percent of the country's population

in 1980. In addition to this, Cruz' (1991) study, discusses that job opportunities are often the key purpose of migrating to a destination. One of the most notable impacts of climate change, also could be detrimental is migration pressures. As livelihood is affected so is the population, causing a displacement of a large number of people. Disruption in agricultural cycles and the ever increasing frequency and intensity of weather events lead to human displacement. Prominent debate suggest that droughts, storms and floods critically damage livelihood that ultimately leads to migration all over the world (Bogardi & Warner, 2008 as cited by Krishnamurthy, 2012). Exposed populations are more vulnerable to these climate-related disasters (Krishnamurthy, 2012). Vulnerability in the social dimension relates human distribution, culture, education and earning capacity. Generally poor communities or population are more vulnerable than their middle class counterparts, suffering in every aspect of a disaster, such as planning, warning, during, and after disaster strikes (Reza & Alatas, 2012)

With this, Filipinos are exposed to different states of risks and vulnerabilities. According to Enarson (2006), social determinants such as gender, class, race and ethnicity, age, and physical abilities should always be recognized in understanding these disastrous events. However, in the context of disaster management, gender integration is not recognized which leads to unequal distribution of vulnerability especially among poor and marginalized communities. Enarson (2001) also argued that gender blindness constitutes as one of the determining factors during a disaster. These are evident when natural calamities unfold having women and children as victims greatly affected once struck (UNDP as cited by Lopez, 2016). This problem is seen as an outcome of the continuous social exclusion (Mercado, Havemann, Sami, & Ueda, 2007 as cited

by Vergara, 2018) of women in the planning, designing, and implementing knowledge about disaster in the community. Rather, women play a productive and constructive role in the family similar as to how they handle disasters disregarding their respective capabilities (Global Platform for DDR, 2017). In addition, the lack of women's participation is a bigger challenge for developing countries. Thus, making the distribution of vulnerabilities among men and women remain unequal. Although men and women are equipped with different skills and capabilities (Hamidzada & Cruz, 2017), women are still considered vulnerable when facing disasters.

In this regard, this study will focus on the forms of management that mothers do in addressing disasters in the household-level. This research then argues the active involvement of women, in this context, mothers, into domestic space has greatly influenced their response to disaster reconstruction in the household level.

This study focuses on the following themes: (a) disaster risk management, (b) community-based management, (c) gender integration, (d) domestic space and (e) environmental migration

*(a) disaster risk management*

Countries all over the world, including the Philippines (Asian Development Bank, 2013) call for continuous improvements for the disaster risk management (BMZ, 2015). It is highly expected for the respective national governments to take initiative in this regard (Ishiwatari, 2013). Policies and laws that will govern disaster risk management are to name a few. Aside from that, international agencies also take part in supporting the capacities of institutions in leading disaster management through preparedness and response (IEG World Bank, 2011 as cited by ADB,

2013). Having well established institutions provides a decrease in the number of casualties such as mortality and economic losses (Cannon 2008; Raschky 2008).

In the Philippines, a 2010 Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act or commonly known as the Republic Act 10121 (NDRRMP, 2011) was created. This provision became a transition strategy to implement a then passive to reactive response of Filipinos. The National Disaster Risk Management Reduction and Council or NDRRMC is an organization in which serves its purpose as an adviser in times of disaster management through the programs they implement. These programs, which are operated by both government and private sectors, caters from disaster preparedness to rehabilitative and disaster operations. However, their main purpose is to secure public safety through different approaches starting from communities to multi facets of individuals. According to Doroteo (2015), the focus of all programs they implement aims to preserve life.

*(b) community-based management*

Involved governance or a participatory governance has changed through decisions that are more fit and effective, done by inviting citizens to participate in decision making. Participatory governance deals with tangible problems, includes all that are affected by those problems, and hopes to come up with solutions that will please everyone (Schneider, 1999; Fung & Wright, 2001, as cited by Kearney, 2007). Community-based management (CBD) is the most common form and widely used participatory government. (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999, as cited by Kearney, 2007). It is important to strengthen the community based disaster risk management organization

by forming volunteer teams or disaster management committees to lead implementation of action plans (CBDRM, 2010).

*(c) gender integration*

Disaster affects all genders. Gender inequalities are caused by cultural beliefs, socioeconomic conditions and traditions, which have put women in disadvantaged positions. There is an “unequal distribution of power”, sense of agency and economic opportunities. In countries where women are socio-economically challenged, there is a higher mortality rate than that of their male counterparts.. Promoting equal involvement of genders in the development of disaster risk management (Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015). Disaster risk management is the responsibility of everyone in the community, it is important to recognize community-based participation (CBDRM, 2010).

Women are excluded from response programs and constantly state that they are not made aware of disaster management programs nor do they understand the entitlements and resources available through government programs (CBDRM, 2010)

Women in less developed countries play a constructive and productive role in disaster risk reduction yet, women perceived as vulnerable and are victims when disaster strikes, failing to recognize women’s capabilities in times of calamity (Hemachandra et. al., 2017). The lack of women’s participation in disaster risk reduction planning is a bigger challenge in developing countries (Hamidzada and Cruz, 2017), thus there is a need to address gender and women’s issues, because men and women are equipped with their own skills and capabilities in disaster risk management. Another theme that leaves women susceptible to disasters are the promotion of

roles (Ece, n.d.). Women's roles usually play after the occurrence of disasters (Vasudha Gokhale, 2008).

*(d) domestic space*

In comparison to the allocation of areas, women's space is limited than men because of the correlation of roles and responsibilities that affects the employment rate. (Johnson, 1990). This dilemma leads to men being seen as greater in power economically speaking. According to Burn (2005), the importance of women in the domestic space is appreciated in terms of values that are said and characterized to be natural for them (i.e., Laundry, food preparation, motherhood etc.).

According to Militzer (2006) the oppression of women is rooted on the basis of their gender and the underlying patriarchal ideology (Steward, 2003, as cited by Militzer 2006). Fraser's (1993, as cited by Macalandag, 2013) feminist critique on the notion of Habermas' public sphere is what comes to mind in analyzing gendered disaster discourse. DRRM practices power relation in terms of the various power position where men usually take the leadership roles while women are reduced to secondary roles, if they are present at all (Macalandag, 2013). According to Enarson (2017) disaster sociology and feminist theory go well together and should have a closer relationship because of their similar concepts.

Liberal feminist argue that gender difference are mostly socially constructed, and women are no stranger to human rights just as much as men, they associate social inequality to education opportunities and achievement, gendered division of labor, gender violence, and reproductive choice limitation (Lorber, 1998 as cited by Enarson, 2017).

### *(e) environmental migration*

Drastic weather changes and livelihood disruption has been in recent trends, a driving force for people to move from place to another in search of home and financial security resulting to an evident displacement of population (Krishnamurthy, 2012). In a study conducted by Cruz (1991) show that over 4 million live in upland communities, 30 percent of the country's population in 1980. In addition to this, Cruz' (1991) study, discusses that job opportunities are often the key purpose of migrating to a destination.

Rural poor flock urban areas in search of better environmental opportunities and uninhabited land to settle in, commonly in areas where there is livelihood readily available such as riverbanks and industrial areas where workers are needed, considering as well that in the 1980s there is a decrease in per capita income in the Philippines resulting in a 25.91% increase in urban population (Amancher & Hyde, 1996; Flieger, 1996).

## **Methodology**

### ***Research Design***

For this study, a qualitative research approach (Della Porta and Keating 2008; Marvasti and Silverman 2004 as cited by Vergara 2018) is employed through Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological research design (Morrow et al., 2015) in order to break down determinants emerging in the study. As qualitative researchers (Blundell, 2015) including Colaizzi (1978; 1973), argue that descriptive phenomenology requires a focus on a 'lived' experience and is a detail-oriented description of universally essential experience of co-researchers (Shosha, 2012; Spinelli, 2005 as cited by Blundell, 2015).

Phenomenological research further asserts the particular experiences of unique individuals in a given situation thus exploring not what is reality but what it is perceived to be (Burns and Grove, 1998 as cited by Vilakati). Additionally, this research design is characterized by short duration of field visits with intensive collection of data (Knoblauch, 2005 as cited by Vergara, 2018). With that, the data gathering process will be a total of one month. By using Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenology, it allows the researcher to look into the lived experiences of the residents regarding their narratives on addressing disasters.

### ***Study Setting***

This research was conducted in barangay 20 which is located in Caloocan City near the border of Navotas. Pama Sawata may be recognized as a barangay yet it still considered as an informal settlement (Vergara, 2018). According to the UN-Habitat (2007), the characteristics of an informal settlement are (1) insecure property tenure; (2) inadequate participation in government, resulting to lack of basic social services, registration and infrastructure; and (3) exposure to vulnerabilities. Pama Sawata is situated near North Bay Boulevard South along the cross section of Navotas river and Estero de Manila which is often the reason of flooding in the area.

### ***Sampling technique***

This study made use of purposive sampling technique in selecting the co-researchers. Snape and Spencer (2003), stated that this sampling technique is mainly used in choosing possible key informants based on the objectives of the researchers as well as the knowledge and experience of

the co-researchers in the particular topic. Where as, this study focuses on selecting mothers as co-researchers in the community.

The following are the criteria for choosing the co-researchers for this study:

**Inclusion:**

- a. Mothers;
- b. 25 years and above;
- c. Resident of Pama Sawata for 15 years and above; and
- d. Experienced disasters in line with the objectives of the researchers

**Exclusion:**

- a. Woman with no parental responsibilities;
- b. Below 25 years old; and
- c. New resident of Pama Sawata (span of 5-10 years and below)

***Data gathering techniques and tools***

Conducting a descriptive phenomenology research, the data gathering for this study will be based on a field work. During the field visits, the researchers employed participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Accordingly, Della Porta and Keating (2008) mentioned that participant observation is frequently used by other research designs. Kvale (1996 as cited by Groenwald, 2004) asserts the importance of interview as an exchange of views between the researcher and co-researcher as well as revealing meanings from the world view of people's experience. In this regard, the researchers chose semi structured interviews to allow a somehow

free-flowing interchange of experiences and ask additional questions if necessary (Snape and Spencer, 2003).

### ***Data analysis***

In this study, the interviews were transcribed through Google Docs for the convenience of both researchers. Correspondingly, the data was coded and analyzed through MaxQDA 2018 version that was accessed through a 1-year subscription by the researchers. The idea of using this software were based on observation to other researchers as well as professors. Apart from that, this software is equipped in analyzing the narratives (Vergara, 2018) and enabling researchers into having a more organized presentation of data (MAXQDA, 2018). Furthermore, a bibliographical software called Mendeley was used in consolidating the reference used from a wide variety of books, journal articles, and internet sources.

### **Preliminary Suppositions and Implications**

The existence of gender-based violence was accounted during a disaster according to the previous conducted research. As women and children are more vulnerable to disaster, mortality of women during these times are high (Hamidzada & Cruz, 2017). This phenomenon can be traced back into the lack of women's integration in Disaster Risk Reduction. Furthermore, society depicts women as a constructive and productive actor in rebuilding post disaster communities, with these the implication of women's roles are needed to be addressed.

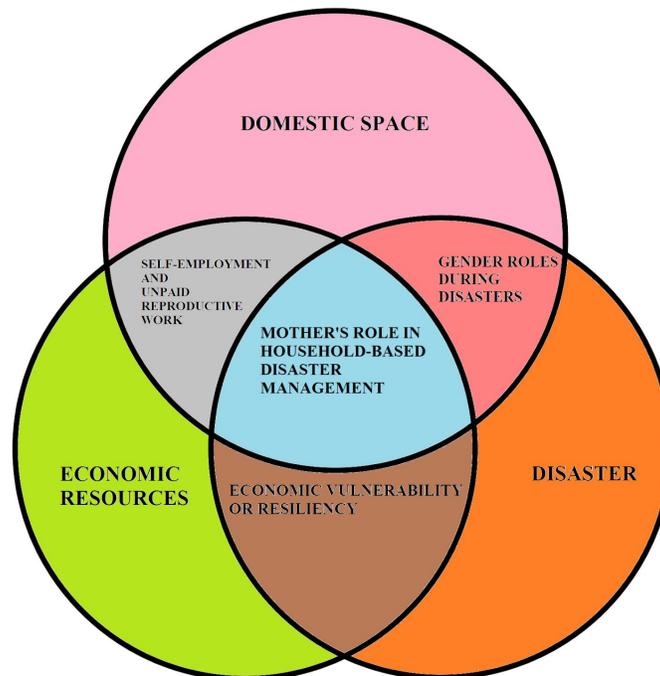
The result of this study will bring to light possible roles women can play in disaster planning, this could mean that new recommendations can arise from the study and have legislative impact to women, so workplace and overall environment would improve. This study aims to have a drastic change in women's work environment and to have more legislative changes when it comes to women's role in disaster risk reduction programs. Given also the constant encounter with disaster, researchers will look into the co-researchers daily endeavors to see the implications of migration due to disaster.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This research utilizes feminist political ecology as its theoretical framework. In the context of sociology, environmental changes are better understood using political ecology (Hempel as cited by Robbins, 2012). Particularly in this study, feminist political ecology is a framework based on ecological issues through the lens of political economy. This integrates ideas that examines gender relationship in a specific environmental context which later gives emphasis on women's practical environmental knowledge and connection of gender inequalities, environmental degradation, and disaster vulnerability (Rochealeau, Thomas-Slayter, & Wangarai, 1996 as cited by Enarson & Philipps, 2004). Feminist political ecologists suggest that gender is considered as an important variable in providing access to knowledge and control over natural resources. Furthermore, studies in the field of feminist political ecology illustrates how social identities are constituted through interaction with material practices and nature (Sundberg, 2015).

In this study, feminist political economy is amended in understanding different roles of mothers as a form of management in addressing household-based disaster.

## Conceptual Framework



*Figure 1. Household-based disaster management*

Following a feminist political ecology framework, this conceptual framework concentrates on the underlying themes which defines mother's role in the household-based disaster management. As shown in the figure, domestic space, disaster, and economic resources serve as the main determinants of household-level form of management. In addition, the figure shows the emergence of sub-themes in between the main determinants such as self-employment and unpaid

reproductive work and unpaid reproductive work, gender roles during disasters, and economic vulnerability or resiliency.

**Self-employment and Unpaid Work.** The first sub-theme for this would concentrate on the context of employment of mothers. This study looks into how the mothers, influenced by their domestic space and work, acquire economic resources such as employment to provide for the family. Although, employment becomes an issue as it creates a duality in the roles of women. In which, this will help prove that mothers are capable of addressing household-based management in times of disaster. Additionally, this aims to tackle the productive and reproductive work of mothers which will highlight specific roles mothers play in disasters.

**Economic Vulnerability or Resiliency.** The lack of economic resources serves as the driving force for employment in the abovementioned theme for the mothers. In this regard however, domestic work should continue. Correspondingly, Pama Sawata community is an informal settlement where in the sources of income are limited. In addition to this, they are surrounded by two bodies of water, namely, the Navotas River and the Estero de Maypad which makes them vulnerable to disaster. Thus, this study seeks to find out the factors that make the mothers economically vulnerable and on the other hand, resilient.

**Gender Roles.** The next theme that emerged is the gender-based roles in disaster management. In this study, this theme involves the division of roles individuals in the household play

according to gender, specifically mothers for this matter. Moreover, this looks into the different roles of mothers which they play in their daily lives and in disaster in particular.

In understanding the complexity of roles of women as a form of management in Pama Sawata, this research identifies three themes that emerged from the accounts of the mothers. Accordingly, this looks the experiences of addressing disaster through the following themes at (a) Role of Mothers and how efficiently they perform their roles given their (b) economic resources that overall made them (c) economically vulnerable to respond to disasters.

## Findings

**Table 1: Sample Dendrogram Transcriptions of the Respondents**

Significant Statements	Meaning of Statement	Code	Theme
We just watch TV and wait for the community leaders, like miss Percy to tell us about the incoming storm – R2	Residents watch out for weather updates and tell their neighbors to prepare for it.	Bayanihan	Homemaker as a Community Member
<i>Bayanihan</i> , helping each other with the fire so we could save most of the household. – R6	Resident helping each other put down a nearby fire.	Bayanihan	Homemaker as a Community Member
Like I’ve said earlier, we really help each other out here – R8	Communal unity is strong	Bayanihan	Homemaker as a Community

			Member
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**Role of Mothers**

Mothers in the community play different roles, many taking on not just their roles as mothers but also the father role. They also play roles in their respective social groups and also to the community. In the household level the women note that they prepare themselves prior to disasters such as arranging basic necessities for the risk of evacuating. As mentioned by one of the respondents

*“tapos yung mga bata pinapaakyat ko na. Maaga akong nagluluto talaga” (Then I tell the children to go upstairs. I cook really early) – R3.*

Many a times time you find the mother not only in the household but also in community activities, where the respondents met most of their respondents, a community engagement with UST education students. The research brought out that the mothers are responsible for making sure that the children are prepared for anything and that basic necessities are also ready in case of disaster. Mother then are providers as well, the work to bring food to the table.

**Self-Employment**

The mother takes on the role of the father as provider to increase their economic resources, making sure they have enough economic resources to prepare for a disaster, like having medical kits and stocked food and water. Residents who are not that well off are less likely to have medical kits of their own, and have no means of upgrading their houses in preparation for impending danger. One respondent said

*“kami diyan kami nakatayo sa upuan” (We stand on the seats) - (R5),*

it is also worth noting that unlike the others who have better economic resources, respondent 5 doesn't have a second floor to her house.

### **Economic Vulnerability**

The lack of resources made the residents of Pama Sawata very vulnerable to disaster, as aforementioned some don't have the means of upgrading their households and having enough money to prepare other things like water and food in case of a disaster. Nonetheless, one respondent notes

*“although kami ay squatter, mas maganda pang tumira rito kasi iba ung pagiging solid ninyo, magkakaibigan, dito mo makikita yun” (Although we are informal settlers, we still want to settle here because our friendship is strong, and it is evident here) - (R9),*

they live and stay together because despite their vulnerability they see strength in Pama Sawata.

### **Gender-Based Roles on Disaster Management**

#### ***Women as Mothers***

##### **a. Security of Members**

Mothers make sure that every member is ready for whatever disaster, making sure that everyone is packed and ready to go. Part of these are making sure that there is enough food, water and other basic necessities for each member. Every member is also taught to stay alert

during disaster, disaster became routine for the Pama Sawata community. Mothers keep an eye out for updates on disaster.

b. Substitute Fathers

Most of these mothers are without a husband, and for a few that have theirs, the father figure in their household are often not present. As a response of one mothers,

*“wala siya lagi dito eh” (He is not always here) – R5.*

For this reason, these mothers not only play their roles as mothers but they also take on the father role as protector and provider for the family.

***Mother as a Homemakers***

Mothers do everything they can to make all things come together. They make sure that their belongings are secure and everything is where it should be. Mothers are known for their constructive roles, and it shows well in this community. As discussed the mothers not only take on their role as a mother but also the father role, and they do these very well and it shows by they way they gather they children, secure their belongings and make sure that their family is well provided. Respondents narrate how they handle disasters and how long they have overcome this situation. Household work is considered as an essential element and homes are what symbolizes the characteristics of the homemaker (Jayapriya, n.d.). Every homemaker is characterized with different skills and resources. In this study mothers as homemaker helped them in securing the things needed in times of disasters. In employing data techniques, it shows that mothers were able to makeshift shelves in order to store their belongings.

### *Homemakers as Community Members*

These mothers don't remain inside the household they go out and contribute as community leaders. Community leaders in Pama Sawata, are those who keep an eye out for weather updates and make sure other residences are informed. Leaders are also responsible for gathering residences and taking them high rise areas during floods.

### **Discussion**

In the community of Pama sawata, mother's role varies during disasters and in their daily lives. Child caring is one of the examples for this variation. According to a study by the Social Issues Research Centre (2011), the tendency of mothers to be involved in child caring is two times higher as compared to fathers. However, it is also stated in the same study that the caring depends on the age of the child. Same goes during disasters, mothers also care for their children through securing them. In this case however, they are pushed by environmental conditions to care for their family members more than their nature as mothers call for. In an informal settlement such as the study setting, women especially mothers during disaster carry most of the number of responsibilities (Lopez, 2106; Enarson, 2000). In other developing countries, women only have access to their domestic work such as taking care of the household and the responsibility of looking after the family, especially the children (Yonder et al., 2005).

Another role that mothers take part is being a father in terms of providing for their household. In a research published by the National Defense College of the Philippines, it is stated that women have a higher life expectancy as compared to men (NDCP, 2016). Most number of households do not have a father figure present, reasons revolve in either (1) working away to provide for the family; (2) got separated; or (3) deceased. As a result, mothers take the role as substitute father figure of a certain household. In a research published by the National Defense College of the Philippines, it is stated that women have a higher life expectancy as compared to men (NDCP, 2016). Most number of respondents described their experiences during disaster without her husband at home. According to Olah et al., (2014), father's role only revolves around the idea of providing food in the household. This traditional perspective showcases the biased division of labor among genders. This results to the preference of having wives who stays home and doing domestic work without pay. As such women do not assume position even in the community they belong to (Olah & Kotowska, 2014). As gender roles differ now in the modern era, most of the women in Pama Sawata assumes a community positions aside from being mothers such as Ladies Brigade or also known as Brgy. Tanod, teacher, and social help worker. This employment of mothers whether in the productive and reproductive field is a representation of the shift of roles of both genders.

To summarize using the feminist political ecology approach, the shift in environmental patterns has affected the society in the following:

(1) Change in roles of mothers, (2) vulnerability, in the case of Pama Sawata, where father figures are not present and mothers are more bounded in their domestic work that they resort to

alternative ways to earn money while still fulfilling their roles in the household, that is why they resort to (3) self-employment.

## **Conclusion**

The results of the study show that a mother is bound by her domestic space portrayed in her household roles which paved way in responding to disasters. They could be the nurturing mother or the providing father or even the leader who gathers the community to safety, roles have shift inside and outside of the household. The mother is a mother, is a homemaker, and also a community member. Household-based management depends on economic resources the household lives by, their preparedness and how they are during disaster depends on the economic resources that they have, it dictates whether or not they could have safety kits or house improvements in preparation for a disaster which can make the household economically vulnerable having not being able to prepare for. In this research, disaster management became a routine for the mothers of Pama Sawata. Especially, they have established the manner in which they prepare prior to the event. They have formed a system of handling the adversity brought by disaster. Their inclination in their domestic work has helped them establish their roles not only on the household but also in the community.

To answer the question imposed in the research title “Nasaan si Nanay?” or “where is mother?” researchers found the mother inside the household, playing her role as a mother, inside the workplace, to bring food to the table and play the father role as provider for the family and in the

community, helping each other member out and making sure that they all respond to the adversity brought by disaster.

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