

**SMALL FARMERS' ADOPTION OF RICE COMBINE HARVESTERS IN
BINALBAGAN, NEGROS OCCIDENTAL**

KATE ASHLEY S. BAYONA
MIRJANA ANTOINETTE SOLANO

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ABSTRACT

The use of Rice Combine Harvesters (RCH) is currently pushed as part of the country's mechanization program in agriculture. Much of the literature assessing the adoption of RCH only focuses on the tangible determinants of their adoption, but not the in-depth sociological lived experience of farmers following their adoption, including their nuanced rationalization amidst the process. This study investigated the RCH adoption among small farmers in Binalbagan, Negros Occidental, specifically delving into the (1) characteristics of farmers, (2) drivers of RCH adoption, (3) challenges faced during adoption, (4) nature of frequency and consistency of RCH use, and (5) adjustment strategies in using the RCH pursued through descriptive phenomenology and an in-depth interview of 12 participants through purposive sampling. Thematic analysis revealed that the small farmers belong to the early majority adopter category whose adoption is highly facilitated by membership in Irrigators' Associations and lack of manual laborers. The regularity of their usage also depended on climate, laborers, topography, and farm systems and confronted issues with wastage, additional cost and labor, and field damage to RCH that was mitigated through mediating previous and current farm set ups and maintaining affirmative social relationships within the community. These findings depict the complexities in small farmers' RCH adoption and the intricacies of their receptivity in each region calling for larger analysis of RCH adoption in the country to know its general status and underscores the need for the implementation and development of national policies like technology diffusion to be contextually sensitive and pro-farmers.