Editorial

Introduction to the Journal of Human Ecology and Sustainability (JHES)

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Abstract

Research in human ecology and sustainability holds significant importance in addressing global challenges related to the environment, society, and the well-being of the current and future generations. There is an urgent need for a platform to inform new knowledge, practices, policies, and behaviors that contribute toward a more sustainable, resilient, and harmonious coexistence between humans and their environment. The Journal of Human Ecology and Sustainability (JHES) aims to publish interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary research on all aspects of human-environment interactions, community development, and other fields of social science that link with the people, organizations, and government to achieve human-ecological security. This note, which summarizes the contributions in the first volume of the journal, provides a brief background of the transformation of the Journal of Human Ecology to JHES, the official academic publication of the College of Human Ecology, University of the Philippines Los Baños.

Keywords— *environment; human ecology; JHES; SDG; sustainability*

1 Introduction

In the last century, our world has faced several challenges, including environmental degradation, public health issues, and climate change. Addressing these issues requires interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary interventions, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the intricate connections between human societies and the environment. Although introduced in the early 20th century from various origins such as home economics, urban sociology, town planning, and among others, the concept of human ecology was revitalized in the 1970s and 1980s as motivated in part by the advent of the environmental movement and by the establishment of several academic degree programs in human ecology worldwide [1]. It evolved as a branch of demography, sociology, and anthropology to address the social and cultural contexts of disease, health risks, and human behavior [2]. Today, human ecology studies the interrelationships among people, other organisms, and their environments [3]. It paves the way for informed decision-making and sustainable practices in dealing with challenges related to the environment, human well-being, and the preservation of ecosystems [4].

In the Philippines, human ecology started as an emerging discipline at the University of the Philippines Los Baños [5]. In 1974, the College of Human Ecology (CHE) was established as the Institute of Human Ecology, anchored on the conceptual and organizational framework with human ecology system domains in four levels: individual, family, community, and larger ecosystem, as shown in Figure 1. These domains are reciprocal and interacting, draw resources from, and impact one another. Human decisions and actions impact all levels of their environment, while humans are affected by the resulting conditions of the environment at all levels [6].

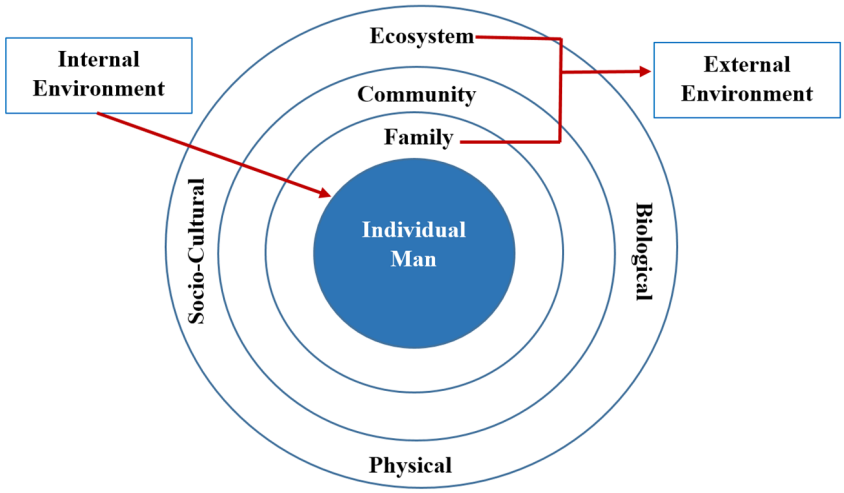

Figure 1.
Broad Concerns of Human Ecology. source: Eusebio [5]

The conceptual framework of human ecology by CHE was expanded, first by looking into man's adaptive mechanisms to his near and far environments, to reiterating the human interactive system at and between the individual, family, and community with the environment (bio-physical, socio-cultural, economic, and technological) defining the human ecological system [6] as shown in Figure 2. Humans act as stewards of the environment while the environment sustains human systems, ensuring the attainment of the goals of human ecology in the Philippines context. Lastly, the framework in Figure 1 was expanded to explicitly incorporate the end goals, including environmental integrity, food and nutrition security, empowered organizations and institutions, and developed human potentials, as shown in Figure 2.

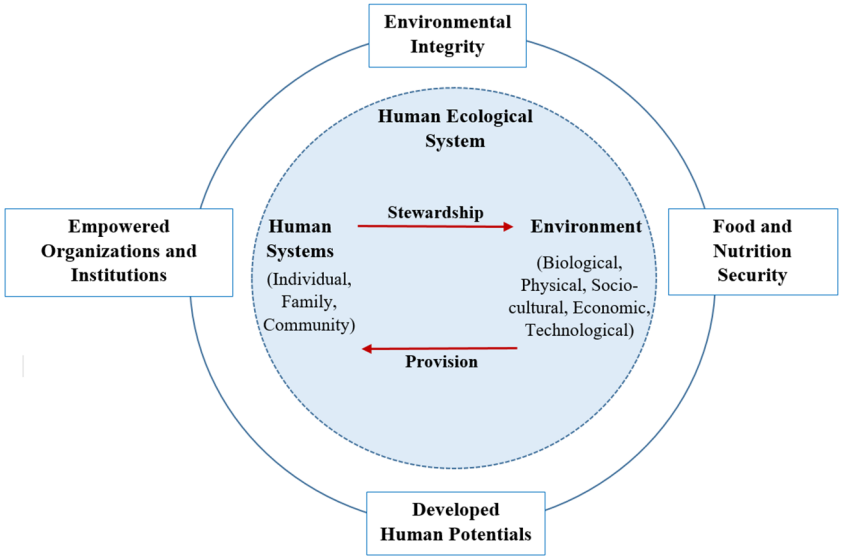

Figure 2.
Expanded Conceptual Framework of Human Ecology. source: Visco et al. [6]

The need to articulate, express, and exemplify the uniqueness of human ecology and its main contribution to national development paved the way for the establishment of the Journal of Human Ecology (JOHE) as the official publication of CHE. JOHE hoped to make known the potentials and capabilities of human ecology while affirming its global relevance. Contributions to this journal covered all the complex concerns of human potential development, human health and nutrition, social development, and human settlements planning that are viewed as interrelated concerns in improving the quality of human conditions.

In 2015, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a set of 17 interconnected goals addressing various social, economic, and environmental challenges [7]. Addressing the SDGs in research is a crucial and impactful way to contribute to global efforts to achieve sustainable development [8]. Hence, sustainability studies have become relevant across multiple domains, offering solutions to contemporary challenges while promoting the well-being of current and future generations. The inclusion of sustainability in human ecology is essential because it recognizes the interconnectedness of human societies with the natural environment and aims to foster a harmonious and balanced coexistence.

By incorporating sustainability principles into human ecology, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners aim to create systems that support human needs, respect ecological limits, promote social equity, and ensure the planet's long-term health. This integrated approach contributes to a more holistic understanding of human-environment interactions and facilitates the development of solutions that are both environmentally sound and socially just.

In response to this call, the JOHE was revitalized and rebranded to become an internationally recognized Journal of Human Ecology and Sustainability (JHES) in 2021. JHES develops a more comprehensive medium of dissemination of interdisciplinary, innovative, collaborative, inclusive, and holistic research studies toward building sustainable, resilient communities and food and nutrition security, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). JHES aims to create a far-reaching journal with authors, peer reviewers, and Editorial Board members across the globe with

the same breadth, which best believes in interconnecting linkages to individuals and government-wide systems. With this, the journal has transitioned from print to online and digital content, continuously indexing suitable repositories for broader reach.

JHES aims to publish original articles, case studies, short communications, and review papers in the fields of human ecology and sustainability science. Specifically, JHES publishes interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary research on all aspects of human-environment interactions, community development, and other fields of social science that link people, organizations, and the government to achieve human-ecological security. Topics of interest include but are not limited to the following subjects:

Human nutrition and food. This involves a multidisciplinary approach addressing the complexities of nutrition and food systems that are essential for informing dietary guidelines, shaping public health policies, and improving individuals' and populations' overall health and well-being.

Social development services. Interdisciplinary studies explore the social, economic, cultural, and political dimensions of development that contribute to developing policies, programs, and interventions to assist human organizations and social institutions for sustainable human-environment interaction.

Human development and family studies. Contributions encompass a wide range of topics related to human growth, relationships, well-being, and developmental processes and dynamics within families and individuals across the lifespan.

Human settlements planning. Anchored in SDG 11, contributions provide bases for developing evidence-based policies, improving the quality of life in urban and rural areas, and creating safe, sustainable, resilient, and inclusive environments.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This includes understanding the progress, challenges, and pathways toward achieving sustainable development on a global scale and providing valuable insights, evidence, and recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders involved in the implementation of the SDGs.

2 An Overview of the Contributions

The first volume of JHES received nine contributions covering nutrition and food, family studies, human settlements, social development, and interdisciplinary in human ecology.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a drastic increase in the use of telenutrition allowed the provision of nutrition services despite the physical restrictions. Cruz and Bernardo [9] analyzed the acceptability of telenutrition among the Institute of Human Nutrition and Food (IHNF) Nutrition Wellness Clinic patients from 10 semi-structured interviews. The qualitative analysis showed high satisfaction of the participants with their telenutrition consultations and found that it was an acceptable alternative to in-person consultations due to its thoroughness, convenience, accessibility, cost, and time efficiency. Despite the participants' concerns about the need for a doctor's referral for the consultations as well as the stability of internet connectivity and other accessibility barriers, the positive experiences provide implications for emerging aspects of telehealth, particularly in improving access to health care for working adults, those with comorbidities, limited financial capacity, and access to transportation.

In another contribution related to the pandemic, Mirasol and Gordoncillo [10] correlated the factors of competency of Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS) with the implementation of the Family MUAC Approach. The mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) is an anthropometric measure taken at the midpoint of the upper arm, between the tip of the shoulder (olecranon process) and the tip of the elbow (acromion). This approach was recognized as a "reduced physical contact" method for detecting malnutrition among children during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using the case of 18 BNS from Cabuyao, Laguna, the result found that the majority of the respondents had a moderate level of competency (72.2%), that competency was negatively correlated with age, and positively correlated with household size, monthly family income, last MUAC training, supervisory visits, refresher training, and availability of selected supplies. These results provide a basis for recommendations on reinforcing strategies to improve BNS's competency in implementing the Family MUAC approach during and beyond the pandemic.

Early undernutrition is still highly prevalent in developing countries with an estimated 249 million children under five years old at risk of not being able to realize their developmental potential [11]. In the case of the Philippines, children's nutrition is a major health concern in which one-third of children under five are stunted, one-fifth are underweight, and improvements have been slow [12]. To evaluate how various factors influence the weight, height, and body mass index, dela Luna and Talavera [13] utilized 1689 data of school-age children from farming households from the 2015 Updating of the Nutritional Status of Filipino Children and Other Population Groups of the Food and Nutrition Research Institute. The study found that household wealth index, household size, and food security status affected the weight of school-age children in farming households; dietary diversity, in addition to the above factors, affects the height; and the wealth index, the age of children, and the number of 0-10 years old children in farming households significantly affect their body mass index. These results provided implications to guide policymakers and program planners in crafting various interventions that target this vulnerable group.

Meanwhile, Albitos and Barrion [14] analyzed the association of food neophobia (a reluctance to eat novel foods) with nutritional status and diet quality in children ages 2 to 5. Applying a cross-sectional study involving 88 parents and caregivers, the study found that children with food neophobia had fewer intakes of legumes and non-vitamin A-rich vegetables while having excessive intakes of food rich in phosphorus, vitamin A, and riboflavin. Additionally, snacks and discretionary foods were also frequently consumed as they were readily available and accessible, and the innate preference of children for sweet and salty foods over bitter and sour flavors. The contribution suggested interventions to address neophobia in children such as supporting healthcare professionals in developing food-based recommendations and techniques to address the nutritional deficits of this population and for parents in identifying if their children have a predisposition to developing or are already exhibiting food-neophobic behavior. In family studies, Botor [15] explored the lived experiences of 10 children of overseas Filipino workers on family resilience using Froma Walsh's Family Resilience Framework. Applying a Deductive Qualitative Analysis of the in-depth interviews, the study found that families adjust their belief systems to accommodate the unsettling realities of international labor migration; their roles change to compensate for the responsibilities fulfilled by the parent before migrating; and if tensions arise, members serve as moderators to maintain a pre-migration relationship. The contribution proposed a resilience-focused model for addressing psychosocial needs.

For studies on human settlements, there were two contributions related to vulnerability to the hazards of climate change and the role of place attachment in addressing environmental problems. In one contribution, Tablate [16] applied a mixed method using a community-participatory

approach to analyze the experiences and perspectives of selected coastal communities on their livelihood vulnerability, exposure, and sensitivity to the impacts of climate change in the past ten years. The results found that the selected coastal communities in Virac, Catanduanes have experienced typhoons frequently for the past ten years with varying sensitivity in biophysical and socioeconomic aspects. Yet, the coastal communities have an extremely high adaptive capacity. The study recommended policies on providing sustainable livelihood programs to coastal communities since they are extremely vulnerable to climate change hazards, and at the same time, increase their capacity through disaster-risk reduction training and participatory planning, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of disaster risk interventions. In the other contribution, Constantino et al. [17] explored the place attachment of the residents of Calauan, Laguna, characterized their degree of place attachment, identified their environmentally responsible behavior, and explained the role of place attachment in building community-based solid waste management (SWM) practices in the locality. Applying a 5-point Likert scale, the results found a high level of place attachment, implying a positive role in building SWM practices. The findings showed that decision-making influenced by active citizenry and participatory planning triggered a more holistic and ecologically sound intervention toward the environment.

Regarding social development studies, Malonzo et al. [18] compared the awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and practices (AKAP) of 225 university students on sustainable fashion. Results showed that the respondents from the first cohort (students who have not yet taken the Sustainability Science course) showed a moderate level of awareness. In contrast, the respondents from the second cohort (students who already finished the Sustainability Science course) showed a high level of understanding. Both cohorts had a high level of knowledge of sustainable fashion and their attitudes towards sustainable fashion. On the other hand, they had moderate practice towards sustainable fashion. There were significant differences in awareness and knowledge between the two cohorts, while there were no significant differences in attitudes and practices. These implied that a high level of awareness and knowledge of sustainable fashion did not automatically lead to frequent practice of sustainable fashion.

The last article is a contribution from the Special Issue of JHES entitled "Interdisciplinary in Human Ecology: Pathways to Sustainability in the New Normal". In this study, Cempron and Gocotano [19] outlined the process of designing the "I See, I Think, and I Feel" capability-building project based on the results of a qualitative inquiry of 10 gay preschool teachers whose experiences yielded resiliency with the themes as persona duality, vicarious experiences as an anxiety trigger, innate creativity, adaptability, the need to feel respected, the difficult choice of living alone and dealing with children's gender typing. The study offered the rationale and the scaffolds for developing a project to reduce gender inequalities in line with the UN SDG-10 on Reduction of Inequalities towards the empowerment and promotion of the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, regardless of age, sex, or other status. The capability-building method covered five main topics: (1) intensifying the utilization of arts in gay preschool teachers' pedagogy, (2) effective handling of children's curiosity about gays, (3) positive use of resiliency in dealing with the challenges of being gay preschool teachers, (4) self-love, and (5) the importance of positive mental health. The findings resulted in the prototyping of transforming the struggles of gay preschool teachers into positive psychology through a capability-building project inspired by SDG-10 for empowerment and social support network where they can express their genuine selves in a safe environment and intensify their creative talents in their pedagogy.

3 Conclusion

The aim of the Journal of Human Ecology and Sustainability is to create a comprehensive platform for research and discussion. It promotes a holistic connection between humans and the environment, and aims to provide valuable insights to address global challenges in a sustainable and harmonious way.

The first volume of the journal drew some key conclusions from its contributions, which are summarized below:

1. Global Relevance
The studies highlighted the global relevance of the identified problems. This emphasized the practices, challenges, and lessons that offer shared solutions across the globe.

2. Diverse Research Contributions Reflecting Current Challenges
Each contribution covered various topics, addressing contemporary challenges in human nutrition, social development services, human development, human settlements planning, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These are timely and relevant societal issues.

3. Knowledge Platform for Research
The Journal is an interdisciplinary research hub that highlights the need for an all-inclusive platform to facilitate diverse research approaches and subjects, and collaboration among researchers who share a common objective. The aim is to find ways forward to complex world issues.

4. Human Ecological Security and Sustainability
The compilation of the studies focuses on two key dimensions: security and sustainability. Security implies protection from various threats and risks to communities, while sustainability involves practices that support long-term environmental health and resilience to obtain ecological balance.

5. Transformation of the Journal
The Journal of Human Ecology (JOHE) has transformed into Journal of Human Ecology and Sustainability (JHES). This aims to elevate its standards and influence as an international scholarly publication that serves as a reputable source for cutting-edge research in human ecology and sustainability. The addition of "Sustainability" deepens its commitment to fostering research contributions to sustainable policies.

6. Practical Implications and Policy Recommendations
The summary of contributions includes specific case studies, particularly related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on nutrition services, competency of Barangay Nutrition Scholars, child undernutrition, food neophobia in children, family resilience among overseas Filipino workers, vulnerability to climate change, place attachment, sustainable fashion awareness among university students, and an interdisciplinary project addressing gender inequalities among gay preschool teachers. Each contribution provides practical implications and policy recommendations derived from research findings.

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Conflicts of Interest
The author declares no conflict of interest.

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