



## REVIEW ARTICLE

## PHILIPPINE RESPONSE TO COVID- 19 AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS TO PEOPLE, WORKPLACE, AND BUSINESSES

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## ABSTRACT

The Philippines has been profoundly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in loss of lives and livelihoods. As we support the response to the pandemic, we also need to support economic revival through ensuring the safety of people. This study aimed to analyze the effectiveness of Philippine response to COVID-19 to people, workplace, and businesses through the duty of the government to set policies that aim to alleviate the impact of an outbreak to public. This paper focused on the discussion of the Philippine response to COVID- 19 and its effectiveness to people, workplace, and businesses using related review of literatures and research articles from year 2020 to 2022. Results show that eighty two percent of respondents from brackets A, B, and C were satisfied with the pandemic response with the government approach to combat the pandemic received an above-average approval rating of 83%. However, in spite of the satisfaction ratings of the COVID - 19 Response, evidence does not point to a flattening of the COVID-19 curve in the Philippines. The researchers recommend that government may continue setting public protocols to further prevent the spreading of viruses, continue holding a vaccination program to at least be protected the citizens from viruses around us, prioritize food systems as an essential service that will continue to operate during periods of lockdown, emergency or other health containment measures, and counter the impact of the pandemic, especially on the poor and the most vulnerable.

## KEYWORDS

Economic Revival, Effectiveness, Protocols, Viruses, Pandemic

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Corona Virus disease (COVID-19) has thrown the world's, regional, and national economies into disarray. To protect people's health and curb the spread of the virus, people's lives and economic activities have been severely restricted. Quarantines have been accompanied by travel prohibitions, temporary school and workplace closures, and social isolation. Meanwhile, private-sector companies have reduced output and service delivery and have been obliged to lay off workers temporarily. They were unable to continue operating due to a shortage of working capital. Long-term COVID-19 containment raises the likelihood of business failure and insolvency. Micro, small, and medium-sized businesses are particularly vulnerable to supply chain disruptions and circumstances tightening financial.

The Philippines swift action to battle the virus and mitigate its effects. To combat the spread of COVID-19, it enforced an Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) in the National Capital Region and other high-risk areas. It offered a comprehensive package of assistance measures to help households and businesses navigate the ECQ, including an emergency subsidy program for Filipino families and wage supplements for small-business employees. Only companies participated in the value chain of necessities operated during the peak of the pandemic, therefore the rest of the industries determined how they reacted to unique business circumstances. COVID- 19's rapidly changing characteristics were not adequately addressed by the current business continuity plans. The epidemic has affected how businesses are run by groups. According to the comments gathered, majority of the participating businesses are gradually giving employees more perks and assistance, nonetheless, it is an effort of

the employers to lessen the pandemic's effects on their operations and workforce in the Philippines. Eighty percent of the businesses surveyed have already done or are planning to do so by paying employees' prorated 13th month wages in advance, awarding more bonuses, providing hazard pay for skeleton staff, and maintaining leave benefits.

Leaders must move swiftly to address immediate systems resilience issues and lay the groundwork for the future as businesses juggle a variety of new system priorities and challenges, including business continuity risks, abrupt changes in volume, real-time decision-making, workforce productivity, and security risks. For instance, executives in the chemicals sector are starting to acknowledge resilience as a crucial success factor. Once we have recovered from this epidemic, it will be crucial to develop long-term plans for increased resilience and to use the knowledge gained to develop a system and talent roadmap that will better position your business for future disruptions.

## 2. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study focused on the discussion of the Philippine response to COVID-19 and its effectiveness to people, workplace, and businesses using related review of literatures and research articles from year 2020 to 2022.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The novel coronavirus disease, COVID-19, has brought significant change to peoples' lives and business activities nationally, regionally, and globally. The Philippines swift action—including enhanced community quarantine (ECQ)—to contain the pandemic and launched an emergency subsidy

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program with massive public spending to support disrupted households and businesses. The strict lockdown ran from mid-March to the end of May 2020 in the national capital region and high-risk provinces, causing huge economic losses. Six months after the March lockdown, the Philippine economy has moved to the recovery stage, but micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) are continuing to confront a sharp drop in demand and revenue. We examine the initial impact on MSMEs of the ECQ and lockdown measures using evidence obtained from a rapid nationwide survey conducted from the end of March to the middle of April 2020 and derive policy implications.

Responses of subnational government units are crucial in the containment of the spread of pathogens in a country. To mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Philippine National Government through its Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases outlined different quarantine measures wherein each level has a corresponding degree of rigidity from keeping only the essential businesses open to allowing all establishments to operate at a certain capacity. Other measures also involve prohibiting individuals at a certain age bracket from going outside of their homes. The local government units (LGUs)—municipalities and provinces can adopt any of these measures depending on the extent of the pandemic in their locality. The purpose is to keep the number of infections and mortality at bay while minimizing the economic impact of the pandemic. Some LGUs have demonstrated a remarkable response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this study is to identify notable non-pharmaceutical interventions of these outlying LGUs in the country using quantitative methods.

Workplace transmission of COVID-19 continues to be a challenge in the Philippines and dedicated efforts are needed to break the chains of transmission to save lives and livelihoods. To enhance workplace safety, the World Health Organization (WHO) Country Office in the Philippines, in partnership with the Department of Health (DOH) Center for Health Development Metro Manila and in collaboration with the Occupational Safety and Health Center (OSHC) of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) conducted a session on 'COVID-19 Response in the Workplace' for safety officers of Local Government Units (LGUs) on April 30, 2021. "The Philippines has been profoundly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in loss of lives and livelihoods. As we support the response to the pandemic, we also need to support economic revival though ensuring safety of workplaces. The health and safety of our entire workforce is of paramount importance," said Dr Rabindra Abeyasinghe, WHO Representative to the Philippines. "To protect those at risk, it is imperative that local health systems redouble their efforts to implement effective infection, prevention and control strategies in all settings including workplaces.

Measures to protect workers from exposure to and infection with COVID-19 depends on exposure risk. That risk varies based on the type of work, the level of interaction with people, and contamination of the work environment. To assess and mitigate these factors, employers should conduct a thorough risk assessment and implement robust infection, prevent and control strategies, including contact tracing, to keep workplaces open and operational. Building capacity and strengthening information sharing practices with respective local health offices is crucial to these efforts and will allow for a more coordinated and effective response. Additional measures to ensure physical distancing, improve ventilation and strengthen occupational health safety protocols in the context of COVID-19, enhance early detection and isolation of cases and quarantining contacts, and protect workers in their dormitories and family homes are all important to bring back production capacity in a safe and sustainable manner.

The workplace session was attended by commissioned safety officers from different LGUs nationwide and supplemented the 40-hour mandatory course on Basic Occupational Safety and Health Training Course of the Occupational Safety and Health Services of the DOLE. World Health Organization (WHO) will continue to provide support to the DOH and response partners to make workplaces healthier and safer by strengthening prevention and response systems to prevent, detect and respond to COVID-19 cases and establish information sharing across LGU boundaries and settings to enhance response efforts. One of the world's tightest and longest lockdowns, the Philippine response to COVID-19 has been compared. The wearing of masks and social seclusion were tightly enforced, while entire provinces and cities were placed under lockdown, mobility was limited, and all communications were prohibited. There were consequences for violations. The police and military were largely relied upon by the government to maintain law and order and to guarantee that all safety precautions were taken. This has caused some observers and academics to label the government's response as "draconian," "militarized," or "police-centric" (Maru, 2020). According to the

government, each of these actions was a component of the country's "war" against COVID-19. Why did the Philippine government mainly rely on oppressive methods in its "fight" against COVID-19? And how was the debate used to inform the framing of its response against the virus?

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Philippine Department of Finance collaborated in business survey between April 28 and May 15, 2020. The questionnaire was created to look into the effects of Coronavirus sickness (COVID-19) on Philippine businesses and the impact of it in the businesses in the Philippines lockdown measures, such as the government's enhanced community quarantine (ECQ), regionally, in the National Capital Region (NCR). Additionally, it attempted to support the government's economic development ways for recovering from a crisis. Businesses were unexpectedly impacted by the disaster therefore quick data collection was required. Hence, unconventional the selection of sample techniques was inevitable. Facebook was used as the primary social media platform for the online survey. Other websites accessible via the networks of the Bankers Association and the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry Philippines Association. The data structure was contrasted with an alternative because the sampling frame wasn't employed. To examine any potential data bias and instruct the reader on how to understand the results of an existing Philippine company survey findings The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) used a list of businesses it polled in 2018 for this study comparison.

The securitization of COVID-19 led to the government's harsh response. The virus was viewed during this process as an existential threat that warranted the employment of extreme methods to handle it. By framing the pandemic response as a war against an alleged "unseen enemy," in which the government needed unprecedented powers and the unwavering cooperation of the Filipino people, the securitization of COVID-19 was produced. As a result, this conflict-like story gave rise to oppositional archetypes. These archetypes were thought to aid or hinder state efforts to win the war. Healthcare professionals, frontline workers, law enforcement officers, military personnel, so-called "home liners," and law-abiding people all contributed to the conflict by being examples of the virtuous archetype. The "pasaway," a name from the Filipino language that broadly refers to a person who is importunate, persistent, or obstinate, was the errant archetype, on the other side. The term "pasaway" was used to describe persons who were going outside the law in terms of health regulations during the lockdown. The "pasaway", which was feared to be a vector for the virus, ended up becoming the bane of the government's pandemic response. In a lot of respects, the government's fight against COVID-19 has also aimed to "save" the good from the "pasaway". This salvaging process has taken the form of policing and disciplining the "pasaway".

PHILIPPINES, April 21, 2020 — With the implementation of the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) covering the entire island of Luzon in the Philippines, the majority of organizations in the country have also implemented policies to ensure employee welfare and business continuity to minimize impact during the ECQ period, according to a recent survey conducted by Willis Towers Watson (NASDAQ: WLTW), a leading advisory, broking, and solutions company. Work-from-home arrangements were implemented primarily for corporate office-based employees across industries, while those in operations used a skeletal workforce or split operations arrangement. 35 percent of these firms are primarily from the Shared Services Outsourcing and Financial Services industries "COVID-19 has had a significant impact on our communities and the Philippine economy." As more people are forced to work remotely, many organizations' operational effectiveness is being put to the test in unprecedented ways. "A strategic approach to the use of technology has become an enabler of resilience and competitive advantage," said Patrick Marquina, Talent and Rewards Leader, Philippines, Willis Towers Watson.

Most organizations with operations employees are still conducting 'business as usual.' Employees are typically supported by shuttle or transportation services (86 percent), lodging (70 percent), and meals (77 percent) (transportation and accommodation as required by the government especially for BPO companies). The pandemic has changed the way organizations do business. According to the responses gathered, the majority of the participating companies are gradually providing additional benefits and support to employees in order to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on their business and workforce in the Philippines. Eighty percent of the companies polled have implemented or are considering providing additional support to employees through the proration of 13th month pay, the awarding of additional bonuses, hazard pay for skeleton workforces, and the continuation of leave benefits (Lara, 2021).

States that the Philippines was among the fastest-growing economies

averaging the 6.5 percent GDP growth in the past five years. However, the COVID-19 crisis brought major disruptions to the Philippine economy as growth, employment, and overall productivity fell into recession levels along with the declaration of a nationwide lockdown. Karl Hapal (2021), states that The Philippine response to COVID-19 has been described as being one of the longest and strictest lockdowns in the world. This article argues that the government's reliance on draconian measures resulted from securitizing COVID-19, appreciating the virus as an "existential threat." The securitization of COVID-19 was reinforced with a narrative characterizing the situation of the country as being at war against an "unseen enemy." (Jaimee Felice Caringal-Go, 2021).

States that Physical crafting strategies include managing time, managing work tasks, and managing the workspace. Cognitive crafting strategies include enforcing health-related self-care practices, and embracing the fluidity between work, rest and leisure. Relational crafting strategies include spending time with family and virtually connecting with co-workers. Results suggest that the strategies used by employees to achieve WLB during the COVID-19 pandemic are reflective of the physical, relational, and cognitive WLB crafting strategies found in earlier literature, albeit nuanced by the effects of the pandemic in the work and family/life domains (Agarao, 2005).

Educating may not be the most well-known calling on the planet; however, it is, without a doubt, the most populated. In reality, precisely 57 million teachers on the earth, around 66% of whom work in the creating scene. Throughout the long term, the educator and the instructing calling in the Philippines have been stood up to by different issues and worries that are legitimately or in a roundabout way influence them. The elements of the calling offer a fruitful ground for discussions and conversations. On its official website, the Philippine Government showcased the coping guideline designed to help educators cope with the shift and transition to the new normal (Philippine Government, 2020). Guidance and counseling are still virtually available for students and teachers alike disturbed by the pandemic. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of cases has already surpassed 82 million by the end of 2020. The number of cases in the Philippines surpassed 473,000. As countries around the world continue to face the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, national governments and health ministry's develop, implement, and revise health policies and standards based on WHO recommendations, other countries' experiences, and on-the-ground experiences. Early health interventions were primarily aimed at preventing and reducing transmission in vulnerable populations. The scale and speed of these measures vary by country, as some have more resources and are better prepared in terms of healthcare capacity and the availability of stringent policies.

In the Philippines, the national government convened the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) in January 2020 to monitor a viral outbreak in Wuhan, China. On March 7, 2020, the first case of COVID-19 local transmission was confirmed. Following this, the entire country was declared to be in a state of public health emergency on March 8. The IATF issued a National Action Plan to combat the spread of COVID-19 on March 25. Starting March 13, 2020, a community quarantine was implemented for the national capital region (NCR), and it was later expanded to the entire island of Luzon by March 17. The initial quarantine period has been extended until April. Following that, several quarantine protocols were implemented.

- Community quarantine (CQ) refers to mobility restrictions between quarantined areas.
- Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) imposes strict home quarantine and restricts residents' movement to access essential goods and services. Public transportation has been halted. Only essential and utility services-related economic activities are permitted. Uniformed personnel are present in greater numbers to enforce community quarantine protocols.
- (MECQ) Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine is used as a transition phase between ECQ and GCQ. Strict home quarantine and public transportation suspension remain in effect. For work-related activities, mobility restrictions are relaxed. Government offices operate with a skeleton staff. Manufacturing plants are permitted to employ up to 50% of their workforce. Transportation is only permitted for essential goods and services.
- Individuals from less vulnerable age groups and without health risks are allowed to move within quarantined zones under General Community Quarantine (GCQ). Physical separation allows public transportation to operate at reduced vehicle capacity. Government offices may be fully staffed or have alternate work arrangements. Work permits up to 50% of the workforce in industries (except

leisure and amusement).

- MGCQ (Modified General Community Quarantine) is the transition period between GCQ and the New Normal. Everyone is permitted to leave their homes. Socioeconomic activities are permitted if public health standards are met.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

A recent non-commissioned survey by OCTA Research Philippines found that 88% of Filipinos in the National Capital Region (NCR), 79% from Luzon, 92% from Visayas, and 80% from Mindanao approved of the national pandemic response. Eight in ten Filipinos are satisfied with the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This response has always been led by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte in conjunction with the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) and the National Task Force (NTF) against COVID-19, according to the Secretary of Health, Francisco T. Duque III. Eighty – two percent (82%) of respondents from brackets A, B, and C were satisfied with the pandemic response. The lower-middle class contributed 85%, while our marginalized population contributed 68%. The whole-government and whole-society approach to combating the pandemic received an above-average approval rating of 83%. In addition, 91 percent of Filipinos expressed willingness to receive vaccinations. In the same category, NCR respondents rated it positively at 94%, Luzon at 90%, Visayas at 83%, and Mindanao at 94%.

In spite of the satisfaction ratings of the COVID – 19 Response, evidence does not point to a flattening of the COVID-19 curve in the Philippines as of 30 August 2020. The prospects for the nation's economy, labor market, and production remain uncertain. Recent data indicates that the pandemic's effects are beginning to be seen in important economic and labor market indices. According to estimates, COVID-19 will certainly disrupt 25% of all employment, either through reduced pay and work hours or total job loss. of which around two fifths are women. A more thorough sectoral study reveals that the industries with the highest concentrations of at-risk workers include construction, wholesale and retail trade, transportation and storage, and lodging and food services. Nationally, regionally, and internationally, the novel coronavirus disease COVID-19 has had a substantial impact on people's lives and business operations.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based from the findings that eighty two percent (82%) of the respondents from brackets A, B, and C were satisfied with the pandemic response, this study recommends that the government continue setting public protocols to further prevent the spreading of viruses, continue holding a vaccination program to at least be protected the citizens from viruses around us, prioritize food systems as an essential service that will continue to operate during periods of lockdown, emergency or other health containment measures, and counter the impact of the pandemic, especially on the poor and the most vulnerable. With 91 percent of Filipinos expressed willingness to receive vaccinations, it is recommended that a more urgent, systematic and visible information dissemination on the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccination shall be explained. Health policies should uplift and increase public's knowledge that vaccination will protect the people from getting the virus.

This information should be conveyed promptly through public campaigns that would reach marginalized population as well as rural areas. In addition, public awareness plays critical role in response to COVID-19 by providing timely and accessible information that increases awareness, understanding of the disease, and take steps to protect ourselves and our family, explains prevention, and what to do if symptoms developed and addresses misinformation about the disease. Businesses can play a vital role in amplifying the public and humanitarian response to the crisis such as implementing best practices to keep employees safe and preventing further transmission of the virus and allow other employees to work from home, while supporting recovery and driving strategic growth going forward, and setting the stage for "building back better" post crisis. Further, they may create a detailed continuity plan and cash flow forecast will help them sustain ongoing operations, albeit at a lower capacity, and facilitate recovery once the crisis is over.

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