



PHILIPPINE SOCIAL
SCIENCE COUNCIL
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SOCIAL SCIENCE INFORMATION

Special Issue (2020)



Life in Lockdown

Learnings and Stories from Filipino Social Scientists

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Learnings and Stories from Filipino Social Scientists

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THIS ISSUE

What have our Filipino social scientists been doing vis-a-vis COVID-19?

This special issue of the PSSC Social Science Information responds to this question. It focuses mainly on the works of social scientists related to the deadly viral disease, which is medically categorized as a “pandemic” and globally known as the “COVID-19.” It features Filipino social science organizations and their scholars, who are offering alternative perspectives in knowing and understanding COVID-19 and its impact, and ultimately, in adopting effective approaches in dealing with the deadly disease.

Our Filipino social scientists are thus in the midst of the fight, so to speak. They have neither been quiet, nor apathetic. They have been involving themselves actively—by word and deed—in the multifaceted struggle to cope with the seemingly inevitable onslaught of COVID-19. Like their counterparts in the physical sciences—medical doctors, nurses, pulmonologists, biomedical experts, pathologists, virologists, infectious disease experts and other clinicians—our social scientists are also offering their knowledge and expertise, which are definitely in great demand in our present crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic may primarily be a medical or health concern, but it is undeniably related to “non-medical” issues as well. This is seen quite obviously in our country’s politics, economics, governance, communication structures, social welfare, health and environmental issues.

Hence, our overall treatment and prevention protocols, to be effective, would not depend solely on the hard sciences, but, also, on the social sciences, proffering their socially valid analysis and solutions. Only collectively, then, can we hope to truly contain or stave off the rapid spread of COVID-19 and/or mitigate the dire consequences accompanying the disease.

More particularly, the Philippine Social Science Council (PSSC) member-associations’ initiatives, as depicted in this issue, show them providing mental

health counselling, releasing infographics for wellness and a list of go-to centers, probing into the economic and political impact of the pandemic, enlightening us about risk communication and highlighting the need for digital teaching and learning during this crisis. There are those who collect narratives and life stories during these difficult times, as well as those who tackle the imperatives for leadership, governance and innovation at the time of the “new normal.” Series of webinars on how to develop resilience, self-care, peace, well-being and collaborative social practices during the pandemic hog the FB pages, Zoom and Google meets. Other social scientists are engaged in outreach programs as ways to respond to the pandemic by providing assistance to frontliners as well as to communities severely affected by the lockdown and quarantine.

The above-mentioned are but snippets of the activities that PSSC’s member-associations conduct in the time of COVID. Many have not been reported, with others still to be recounted as we go to press.

The PSSC itself has conducted a survey on our people’s resilience in this COVID-19 time as an extension of its advocacy during its recently concluded National Social Science Congress with the theme, Resilience in our Time. It also incessantly supports its members in conducting and disseminating their particular webinars.

Also, we in the PSSC have embraced the “new normal,” and adapted accordingly to the new situation. We have adopted a work- from-home schedule and have been conducting regular online meetings. Work stoppage never became an option for us as we implemented a “continuity” plan and a strict health protocol at the PSSC Center.

We, as Filipino social scientists, hereby dedicate our earnest efforts to the holistic struggle of our scholars, researchers, government and non-government workers in serving our local communities and the Filipino people.

We are here to join the rest of our countrymen in fighting COVID-19.

Lourdes M. Portus
Issue Editor

SOCIAL SCIENTISTS IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

by **WILSON C. VILLONES**

*Head, Project Development and Management Section
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The past 120 days have been unlike anything we could have imagined. Across the world, many institutions, businesses, academe and civil society organizations, including PSSC, have been greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of our events and meetings have been cancelled or postponed as part of our shared social responsibility to mitigate the spread of the virus. COVID-19 has affected PSSC's institutional and financial positions, and we lament the reduced opportunities to connect and facilitate the exchange of ideas between and among our Filipino social scientists. Together with the Filipino social science community, however, PSSC strives to come to terms and adapt with the disruptions. But while PSSC's capacity to gather and support Filipino social scientists seems to have been disrupted, if not diminished, new and better ways to operate and communicate have emerged. In this special issue of the *PSSC Social Science Information*, we will show in higher resolution what we have learned in working with the Filipino social science community in the time of COVID-19 and how these innovative ways in connecting social science knowledge to public policies have thrived despite the pandemic restrictions.

COPING AND WELLNESS

To begin with, in the area of coping and wellness, the Psychological Association of the Philippines (PAP) has released a list of centers providing free online

psychological services to cater to those who were affected by COVID-19. This is posted in its Facebook page, shared by DOH and WHO Philippines and published by *The Philippine Star*. Several materials on mental health during COVID-19 have also been developed by PAP (e.g., a guide in taking care of our mental health in Tagalog and English versions, and an infographic to lessen stress and anxiety to better care of ourselves and others, in Tagalog and English versions as well). PAP has also conducted a webinar on positive psychology and happiness.

While getting used to the new normal, our work in the area of addressing gender-based violence (GBV) has also evolved. The Women and Gender Studies Association of the Philippines (WSAP), through the work of its members, has been conducting numerous research and initiatives that focus on GBV-related issues and concerns arising during the pandemic. Also, several online psychosocial assistance and counseling programs to support GBV survivors and individuals with an emerging need for reproductive health advice are currently being implemented by members of WSAP. More recently, during the commemoration of the Pride Month, the Philippine Sociological Society (PSS) has conducted an online discussion—*Baklaan sa Lakdawn: Pride, Prejudice and Perils*—with activists and academics making sense of sexual and gender inequalities being experienced by our LGBTQI community.

INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY DIVISION

With the entire Luzon placed under Enhanced Community Quarantine, employees have been working from home. Here are some tips to maintain productivity:

Maintain routines. Have psychological sequels like taking a bath or having coffee before facing the laptop. By having these routines, it signals your brain to be ready for work.

Communicate your capacity. Working at home means less productivity as compared to working at the office. Set realistic deliverables with your superior to ensure productivity within your capacity.

Create modified schedules. Being at home, you can be enticed to do domestic chores rather than work. Create a schedule so you can dedicate time for work and your chores.

Technological creativity. Use various applications to remotely connect with your colleagues. Just remember to calendar these so you won't forget them.

Exercise your body. Use exercise apps to keep in shape even at home. Remember, a healthy mind in a healthy body means better productivity. Do exercises even with the whole family!

Prolonged isolation impacts productivity. Translate office activities (such as birthdays) into online interactions. Spend time with the family or your favorite pet to unwind, provide connection, and create stability in these trying times.

Infographics by:
SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY UNIT

The Benefits of EXERCISE on WELL BEING

SELF ACCEPTANCE

Exercise can improve self acceptance by giving an individual a more positive view about himself

AUTONOMY

Exercise can increase your autonomy by making you feel more confident in the decisions that you make

POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Exercise can improve your health and body image which lead to a more positive attitude

GROWTH

Exercise can improve personal growth by giving you more new challenges

MASTERY

Through exercise, you can develop mastery by feeling in charge of the situation in which you live.

POSITIVE RELATIONS

Exercise leads to more positive social interactions

MENTAL HEALTH

Exercise can improve your mood and help reduce depression and anxiety

HOW MUCH EXERCISE DO YOU NEED ?

- Get at least 150 minutes per week of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes per week of vigorous aerobic activity (or a combination of both).
- Get up and move throughout the day. Any activity is better than none.
- Include moderate to high intensity muscle-strengthening activity like weight training at least twice a week.
- As you get used to being more active, increase your time and/or intensity to get more benefits.

RESOURCES: How can exercise improve well being, BelievePHQ, How much physical activity do you need?, American Heart Association

PANGANGALAGA SA MENTAL HEALTH SA PANAHON NG COVID-19

Ibans ang stress at pagkabahala upang mapangalagaan ang sarili at mga mahal sa buhay.

Pagtuunan ng pansin ang mga bagay na nasa iyong kontrol. Sundan ang mga rekomendasyon ng Dept. of Health at iba pang lokal na ahensya

Mag-ingat sa fake news. Iwasan ang pakikipagtagalo sa social media. Magtakda ng oras at limitasyon sa iyong pagbabasa o panonood ukol sa COVID-19.

Panatiliing malusog at malakas ang resistensya ng iyong katawan. Kumain ng tama. Uminom ng tubig. Matulog ng hindi bababa sa 6 na oras. Mag-ehersisyo.

Manatiling konektado sa mga importanteng tao sa iyong buhay gamit ang cellphone, videos, o online apps. Kamustahin at bahagyan sila ng emosyonal na suporta.

Humingi ng karagdagang tulong o suporta kung patuloy ang pag-aalala ukol sa COVID-19. Komunsulta sa mental health provider sa inyong lugar para sa online/tete-counseling.

Magpakita ng malasakit sa ibang nangangailangan ng tulong at suporta ngayong panahon ng krisis.

Magpakita ng malasakit sa ibang nangangailangan ng tulong at suporta ngayong panahon ng krisis.

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- Marami ang gagaling sa mga nagkakasakit sa COVID-19.
- Ang mga dalubhasa ay kasalukuyang naghahanap ng lutas at bakuna para dito.
- May tulong mula sa gobyerno at mga ahensyang NGO at pribadong sektor.
- Magkakasama tayo sa pagpapatibay ng bawat isa!

CARING FOR OUR MENTAL HEALTH IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

Lessen stress & anxiety to better care for ourselves & others

Focus on what you can control. Follow the recommendations of the Dept. of Health and other local agencies.

Be cautious about fake news. Avoid arguments online. Limit exposure to news & social media to only specific hours/times of the day.

Maintain good health & increase your resistance to illness. Eat healthy. Stay hydrated. Get enough sleep. Exercise.

Adopt a regular routine at home or at work to give a sense of purpose and order to your day.

Stay connected to people whom you value. Use phone, video, or online tools to check on them & to share emotional support.

Do things that you enjoy and make you feel good.

Reach out to a trusted person or seek mental health support from mental health/counseling services in your area if you find it difficult to cope.

Practice empathy & compassion. Find ways to help those who need the most support in this time of crisis.

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- Majority of people who contract COVID-19 recover.
- Scientists are working on a cure & vaccine.
- There is help from the government, NGO, & private sectors.
- We are together in keeping each other well!

LIST OF CENTERS OFFERING FREE ONLINE PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**Note: This list is not an endorsement. The Psychological Association of the Philippines (PAP) is providing this information so that the public may decide and choose to avail these services in this time of crisis. The PAP has no information about the quality or extent of the services provided by these centers.*

National Center for Mental Health Crisis Hotline (NCMH-USAP)

Provides mental health support for all affected by COVID-19
Mobile: 0917-899-USAP (8727) or 7-989-USAP (8727).

Philippine Mental Health Association, Inc. (PMHA) Online Support

Provides mental health support for all affected by COVID-19
<https://www.facebook.com/PMHAofficial>
Mobile: 0917-565-2036
Email: pmhaacds@gmail.com or pmha.eard@gmail.com

UP Diliman Psychosocial Services (UPD PsychServ)

Provides telepsychotherapy services for healthcare frontliners.
Mobile: 0906-374-3466
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfBzNIOFg8spmK25FVEhQ_djE5TN0r0S3vhvqUyA-BAASHw/viewform.

Ateneo Bulatao Center for Psychological Services

Provides online counseling and Psychological First Aid with priority given to frontliners
Email: bulataocenter.ls@ateneo.edu
<http://ateneobulataocenter.com/>

GrayMatters Psychological and Consultancy, Inc. Philippines

Provides online counseling for all affected by COVID-19
www.graymattersportal.ph
Mobile: 0917-709-6961 or 0997-561-8778
bit.ly/gmfrontliners

PsychConsult, Inc.

Provides online counseling for all affected by COVID-19
www.bit.ly/PCI-COVID-19
Phone: 84212469

OUR SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH AND PUBLIC POLICY

In linking social science knowledge to public policies, the University of the Philippines Population Institute (UPPI), in collaboration with the Demographic Research and Development Foundation (DRDF), is sharing results of its demographic studies to provide information on the possible effects of the coronavirus disease pandemic. Found in both the UPPI (www.uppi.upd.edu.ph) and DRDF (www.drdf.org.ph) websites, are series of research briefs—*Beyond the Numbers: COVID-19 and the Philippine Population*—focusing on various aspects of Filipino lives that are affected by COVID-19, in both the short and long terms. Some of our social scientists are likewise involved in policy-making to alleviate the situation of the country in the midst of the pandemic: Dr. Nathalie Africa-Verceles of the Women's and Gender Studies Association of the Philippines (WSAP) works with the UP Resilience Institute COVID-19 Policy Group and Dr. Maria Sheilah G. Napalang of the UP School of Urban and Regional

BEYOND THE NUMBERS: COVID-19 and the Philippine Population

Research Brief 1: COVID-19 and the Older Filipino Population How Many Are at Risk?

Research Brief 2: COVID-19 and the Economic Vulnerability of Older Filipinos

Research Brief 3: Promoting hand washing in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic

Research Brief 4: Reliable data needed to address COVID-19

Research Brief 5: "Balik Probinsya" in time of COVID-19

Research Brief 6: Moving Force: Factors Affecting Mobility of Filipinos



Planning (SURP) serves as the secretariat for the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases of the Department of Transportation.

In the area of social forecasting, the Social Weather Stations (SWS) has utilized mobile phones as an alternative to its face-to-face home-interviews. SWS has also redesigned its Social Weather Report Survey questionnaire to focus on the effects of the pandemic on people while still maintaining many key SWS indicators of well-being, such as Hunger and Trends in Quality of Life, for linkage to their historical series. The findings are internally analyzed and released in the SWS website (www.sws.org.ph). Among SWS key findings are the following:

- Hunger among families doubles to 16.7%;
- 84% say strict stay-at-home measures due to COVID-19 are worth it;
- COVID-19 crisis brought stress to 9 out of 10 of Filipinos;
- 83% of Filipinos got worse off in the past 12 months – the worst trend in survey history, and
- Record-high 43% of Filipinos expect their life to worsen in the next 12 months.

As many social scientists have pointed, failures of governance and accountability mechanisms are all too evident in many parts of the world as countries organize their response to the pandemic: from Brazil, to the US, India and the UK, the coronavirus has exposed the self-absorbed, uncaring and incompetent populist leaders for what they really are. The same is true in the Philippines. As we have experienced the world's longest (and most useless) lockdown, it is equally important that we are reminded of the gaps and issues that COVID-19 is continuously exposing: dangers of the wildlife trade, increasing police brutality and human rights violations, and even the fragility of our food systems and supply chain despite emergency powers and government loans. As the country scrambled to put in emergency measures to address the pandemic, the Philippine Political Science Association (PPSA) has launched a series of webinars entitled "Call out: Politics and Governance in the Age of COVID-19 Pandemic" to feature discussion and dialogue around the institutional responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications to Philippine democracy. Four aspects are examined:

- Re-centralization of power as the national government asserts authority over LGUs on emergency measures taken;

- Localized cases of COVID-19 pandemic response that look at networks, bridging and social capital formation between governments, private sector and civil society, and frameworks used;
- The role of police and military in implementing emergency measures nuanced by LGU strategies, and
- Gendered effects of the pandemic and government's policy response.

OUTREACH INITIATIVES

Most of our social scientists are playing critical roles not just in reflecting the inherent flaws in our social structures and calling out these inefficiencies, but also in organizing initiatives to help alleviate the struggles of those in urgent need.

Kaisa para sa Kaunlaran (KAISA) has been busy soliciting donations in cash and kind to supply the dearth of lifesaving medical supplies of frontliners in hospitals. In partnership with The Outstanding Women in the Nation's Service (TOWNS), KAISA has sourced much needed medical supplies locally and abroad, like face masks, personal protective equipment (PPE), gloves, shoe covers, head caps, face shields, goggles, rubbing alcohol, infrared thermometers, adult diapers, and clear acrylic boxes for those who are intubating COVID-positive patients. The distribution of these medical supplies to hospitals as far south as Jolo, Basilan and Tawi-tawi and as far north as Baguio, Benguet and Kalinga-Apayao was not possible without the assistance from the Philippine Navy. TOWNS has also organized a very systematic aid request online platform via *AirTable* for hospital registration and for aid requests to target those hardest-hit by the nationwide quarantine. KAISA also provided rice and other staples to the urban poor community in Basco, Tondo.

Like KAISA, the UST Research Center for Social Sciences and Education (RCSSSED) has put into practice the idea of collaborative work and multisectoral cooperation during this time of distress, where relief at the quickest time possible is the marching order of the day. RCSSSED supported the initiatives of the Dominican Family COVID-19 Response Project by distributing PPE and rosaries to medical frontliners in hospitals and medical centers in the country, food assistance to poor families, distribution of essential items such as toiletries, alcohol, and sanitizers, and livelihood assistance for affected communities.



LIWAYWAY MARKETING CORPORATION

and

KAISA PARA SA KAUNLARAN, INC.

in cooperation with

TOWNS FOUNDATION, INC.

UP MEDICAL FOUNDATION, INC.

PHILIPPINE NAVY

#KaisaKontraKorona 華菲抗疫 同舟共濟



Bahay Isinoy
Museum of Chinese
in Philippine Life
菲華歷史博物館

TOWNS

The Outstanding Women in the Nation's Service



菲律賓華裔青年聯合會
KAISA PARA SA KAUNLARAN, INC.

#KaisaKontraKorona
Distribution Update
April 4, 2020

810 DISINFECTANT	103,500* SURGICAL MASKS	20 N95 MASKS
12,000 HYGIENE ESSENTIALS	9,250 KG OF RICE	200 DISPOSABLE BEDSHEETS

HOSPITALS AND COMMUNITIES SERVED

141

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疫**



Kaisa para sa Kaulanran's (KAISA) initiatives in response to COVID-19 pandemic

The ‘Sustainable Organic Agricultural Project’ (SOAP) team of RCSSED has meanwhile taken a proactive stance towards the issue of food security most especially during a state of public emergency created by COVID-19.

The SOAP initiated an outreach project dubbed as “*Pak na pak Pakbet*.” This aimed to alleviate the sufferings of affected families by giving them free vegetables, which are sourced from farmers belonging to several barangays in Nueva Ecija, including Barangay Pinili, which is the partner community for the project. The Pinakbet packs were distributed to the university security and utility personnel; and nurses at the UST hospital. Families in Sampaloc, Manila, Tatalon, Quezon City, Dagat-Dagatan, Navotas City also received food packs from this project.

It is also worth mentioning that the *Pak na pak Pakbet* project is participated by persons deprived of liberty from the provincial correctional facility of

Nueva Ecija, with prior permission from the warden and officials of the facility. The inmates were responsible for the repacking of the vegetables prior to distribution to COVID-19-affected communities. The SOAP team collaborated with the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) of San Jose District Jail in Nueva Ecija and coordinated with Gratia Plena Social Action Center of the Diocese of San Jose. The participation of the reformatory/correctional institution would be to augment the income of the inmates. However, more than financial support, this project empowers the inmates, who are deprived of opportunities to freely undertake activities outside of their cells.

Universities all over the country have likewise initiated their own programs to respond to needs arising from the ongoing pandemic and the Enhanced Community Quarantine. Member-institutions like the Ateneo Social Science Research Center of the Ateneo de Naga University (ADNU), the Social

The ***Pak na pak Pakbet* project of the UST Research Center for Social Sciences and Education (RCSSED)** will not be possible without the support of participating organizations through the leadership of Rev. Fr. Napoleon Sipalay, Jr., O.P. (Prior Provincial, Dominican Province of the Philippines), Rev. Fr. Victor Calvo, Jr., O.P. (Dominican Family JPCC-Philippines Promoter) Prof. Belinda de Castro, Ph.D. (Director of UST RCSSED), Bishop Roberto Mallari, D.D. (Diocese of San Jose, Nueva Ecija), and Rev. Fr. Bartolome Sagadal, M.D.M. (Regional Chaplain of BJMP Regions 1,2,3, & CAR).



Pinakbet pack which contains tomatoes, bitter gourds, sweet potatoes, and eggplants



Farmers in Brgy. Pinili, Nueva Ecija, harvesting their produce



Beneficiaries of Pak na Pak Pakbet

Research Training and Development Office (SRTDO) of the Ateneo de Davao University, the Center of Strategic Research of Miriam College, the University of the Philippines School of Urban and Regional Planning, University of the Philippines Population Institute, and Silliman University Research and Development Center have reported activities done by their respective universities.

ADNU, for its part, formed the University Incident Management Team for COVID-19, which coordinated with LGUs in conducting immediate response actions. These include ferrying stranded students to their respective hometowns, provision of food and non-food assistance to students staying in dormitories and boarding houses, provision of free shuttle service to frontliners within the city, and production of PPE for frontliners. Some university employees (faculty and staff members) also volunteered to do administrative and logistical work for the Naga City Incident Management Team, whose work includes food distribution, handling communication lines, and other clerical tasks, aside from contributing cash donations for these efforts as well as for efforts of other private groups.

Using online platforms and video conferencing, the SRTDO continues its collaboration with its faculty members in its research and training initiatives. They revised their training modules in order to address both the synchronous and asynchronous learning mechanisms being required by the virtual system.

Miriam College, meanwhile, continues its mission of helping others in need through its *bayanihan* activities. Its centers and offices launched a vlog series “From Breakdown to Breakthrough” to help people build resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic; the conduct of online spiritual retreat and coordinated Eucharistic celebrations (by the HEU Campus Ministry Office) for frontliners, the healing of those who are COVID-19 positive and the dearly departed. Miriam College also launched a donation project to help support partner communities in need, outsourced personnel (security, janitorial and maintenance, ICTO staff), street dwellers and frontliners during the Enhanced Community Quarantine. For health and wellness of its employees, it likewise rolled out the “Telecounseling and Online workout” program; and continues to provide access to online talks and webinars on mental health and learning continuities during these difficult times.

Still on the subject of *bayanihan*, faculty members of the University of the Philippines School of Urban and Regional Planning (UP SURP) have responded to the pandemic through their own initiatives by providing professional assistance to institutions involved in COVID-19.

In the area of innovation, Silliman University’s College of Nursing in Dumaguete, Negros Oriental produced DIY PPE for the hospitals and nearby health centers. The Technology Business Incubation (TBI) under the Research and Development Center meanwhile developed a Facebook page that links fish sellers and buyers at the time of the Enhanced Community Quarantine. As an added effort, the Director of Silliman University Research and Development Center, Dr. Enrique Oracion, dedicated his weekly columns in *Dumaguete Metropost* to discussing COVID-19-related topics.

NARRATIVES

The importance of telling stories is further highlighted in times of distress and limited physical interaction. In an effort to fully understand how the pandemic affects Filipino lives, a number of PSSC member-organizations have launched projects to solicit narratives from their respective audiences.

Ugnayang Pang-Aghamtao (UGAT), for instance, has launched “TALAARAWAN: A Collection of Autoethnographic Diaries in the Time of COVID-19” where it invited the social science community to share



TALAARAWAN
call for COVID-19 Diaries

Send your submissions to
ugat.talaarawan@gmail.com

Use #talaarawanCOVID19 or
tag us @ugat1978

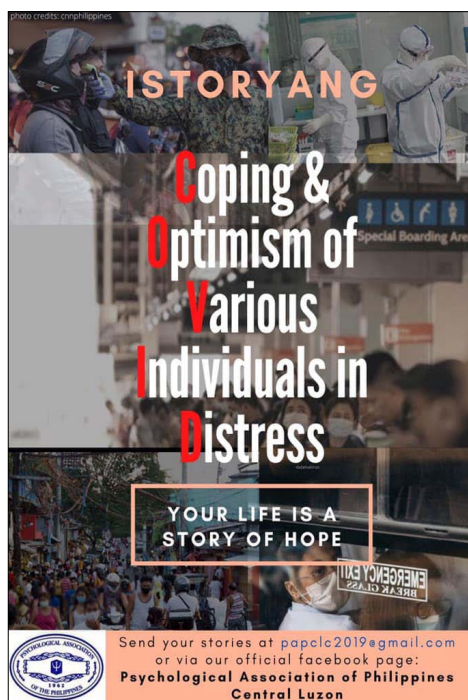
It can be in any Philippine language
or in English.

UGAT's Call for Autoethnographic Diaries on COVID-19

autoethnographic diaries. These “experiences, reactions, feelings, and observations during the COVID-19 lockdown” will be shared, featured, collated, and edited for possible publication.

Likewise, the Philippines Communication Society has launched the “Share your COVID-19 stories” campaign, where members can submit stories and experiences during the pandemic.

The Psychological Association of the Philippines – Central Luzon Chapter (PAP CLC) for its part launched the “Istoryang COVID (Coping and Optimism of Various Individuals in Distress)” project to collect pandemic-related stories for a coffee table book.



PAP's Call for Stories on COVID-19

ADAPTING TO THE NEW NORM

As the world battles this pandemic, organizations also learn to explore alternative platforms to continue delivering important services and disseminate information. Social science organizations have learned to adapt, even going further as immersing themselves into the digital world. Work-from-home arrangements have become the status quo and instant-messaging and video-conferencing have become the new norm. And while the world simultaneously tries to define the boundaries of ‘the new normal’, the social sciences continue to thrive in effecting change despite the restrictions brought about by the pandemic. The ingenuity of organizations is evident now more than ever.

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PSSC's COVID-19 Initiatives

by **ENA RAZAELE L. TAGUIAM**

PSSC Publications and Media Officer

Just like its resilient member-organizations, the Philippine Social Science Council (PSSC) continues to courageously trodden on the unfamiliar trail that COVID-19 has paved.

Since the start of the Luzon-wide lockdown in March, PSSC has adopted a flexible and remote work arrangement for all its staff. With its weekly online meetings, PSSC has incessantly pursued its engagement with social scientists and has initiated discourses on the role of social sciences amidst the pandemic. PSSC has also extended support to its staff and outsourced personnel (security, janitorial and maintenance) through financial and in-kind assistance. In preparation for the lifting of the community quarantine, PSSC implemented necessary continuity plan and health protocols in the PSSCenter to ensure the safety of the secretariat and building tenants upon returning to work. Reporting employees are required to go through temperature checks, shoe disinfection, and alcohol hand sprays upon entrance into the building and a strict physical distancing is observed.

To understand Filipinos' unique ways of dealing with the coronavirus, PSSC has conducted an online survey "Resilience in the Time of COVID-19," the results of which are presented in the next article. Meanwhile, the ethics review services of the PSSC Social Science Ethics Review Board for undergraduate and graduate students, as well as foreign and local researchers, have been unfazed by the global pandemic and proceeded to review research protocols.

Apart from its own initiatives, PSSC has also supported the Philippine Migration Research Network (PMRN) in hosting its Migration Dialogues webinar series that focused on the role and situation of Filipinos working, studying, or residing abroad during the pandemic.

PSSC has taken major steps in collaborating with local partners from various sectors and the Department

of Education through the Philippine Forum for Quality Basic Education (Educ Forum) to prepare the country's Learning Continuity Plan (LCP) for our school children. In the international scene, PSSC has also started collaborating with the Indian Council for Social Science Research to implement academic, research and training collaboration. Another collaboration was finalized by PSSC and Hallym University in South Korea to strengthen research capabilities, innovative instruction and encourage quality work in South Korea and in the Philippines through interactions with scholars and institutes in both countries and establishing collaborative research relationships and cultural development with them.

Consultations on digital approaches to learning and teaching were also held with experts from the UP Open University. PSSC is investing in better technology and rethinking ways to further strengthen its offline and online structures to support its learning initiatives while building a more relevant social science knowledge resource platform.

The activities of PSSC and its member-organizations have proven that the Filipino social science community is not just surviving, but thriving. In order to remain resilient and relevant in the context of a dire and desperately uncertain future, PSSC, together with its vast social science network, must commit to deliberate and support context-specific and time-bound social science researches and policy recommendations. Considering that not enough is known about COVID-19 to predict its future course, PSSC and its roster of social scientists must be more proactive in reminding leaders and policymakers of the importance of evidence-based decisions and identification of gaps in response to this public emergency. This is PSSC's response to COVID-19 and together with the Filipino social science community, it will continuously support the collaboration of global and local experts to fight this pandemic.

Surveying Resilience during the Pandemic

by **ENA RAZAELE L. TAGUIAM**

Over the course of the past four months, the Philippines and the entire world have been brought to a halt by the COVID-19 pandemic. Seemingly overnight, the pandemic swept over the globe and changed how people were living.

In the midst of all this, the Filipino spirit of resilience becomes more evident than ever. As Filipinos try to get a grasp of their 'new normal', they develop their resilience even more. The Filipino people have found creative ways of dealing with the virus and the subsequent lockdown.

Incidentally, at the onset of the pandemic, the Philippine Social Science Council (PSSC), managed to conduct its 9th National Social Science Congress in February with the theme, "Resilience in our Time." The Cogress revealed the way Filipinos display their survival devices, be it in disaster, food security, health problems, poverty, national security, socio-ecological systems and human development, among others.

Little did PSSC know, that this theme—resilience—will be further challenged and come to life with the devastating effect of the COVID-19. It is timely that PSSC could further strengthen its advocacy of promoting resilience among Filipinos. It recently conducted a survey that aimed to understand the coping mechanisms and creative ways of dealing with the virus in the Philippines. A total of 153 respondents answered the online survey from 24 April to 20 May 2020.

HEARING THE NEWS

On March 14, President Rodrigo Duterte declared a nationwide lockdown in an effort to mitigate the spread of the virus – borders closed, business limited to essentials, and community quarantines imposed. There were varied reactions to the lockdown, but one thing was certain –

the virus was a lot more serious than people originally thought.

People grew cautious hearing the news. Contrary to the usually reported "pasaway" narrative, Filipinos' priority was safety. Ninety percent of the survey respondents opted to stay home when they heard the news. However, when they did go outside, 83% said they practiced physical distancing with other people and 82% said they wore face masks and washed hands. Evident in the survey, prescribed health and safety protocols were strictly followed by Filipinos (Figure 1).

ACTIVITIES AFFECTED BY THE LOCKDOWN

More than three months into the community quarantine, a lot of activities that were done pre-lockdown are still inhibited. The activities most affected were, of course, highly social in nature. People were encouraged to stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as much as possible as social distancing was prescribed.

In the recently conducted survey by PSSC, respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 the difficulties and challenges they have encountered since the imposition of lockdowns and community quarantine measures. It was found that highly social activities such as meeting friends ($\bar{x}=3.89$), eating out ($\bar{x}=3.74$), and meeting family members/relatives ($\bar{x}=3.67$) were the activities that they had the most difficulty with since lockdowns have started. Meanwhile, activities that do not necessarily involve social interaction such as

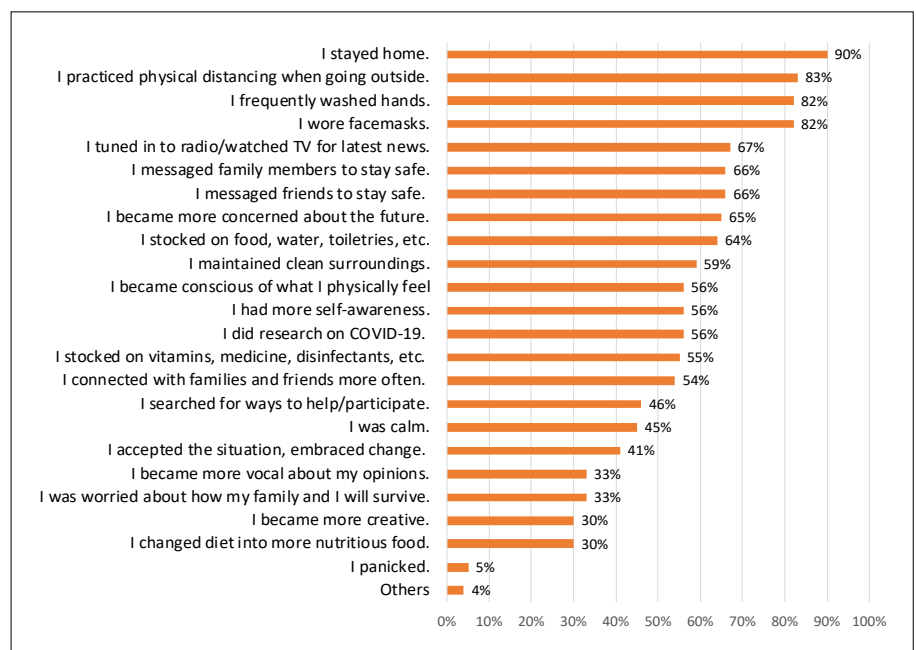


Figure 1. What did you do when you learned about the lockdown?
(multiple response, n=153)

doing hobbies (\bar{x} =2.43), watching a movie (\bar{x} =2.03), and contributing to household chores (\bar{x} =1.75), scored the lowest in the scale (Figure 2).

As a way to cope with the new normal, there were some habits developed by Filipinos that did not require them to leave the comfort of their own homes. When asked of the changes in their activities after lockdowns were imposed, 47% answered having more time for hobbies. These hobbies included reading, watching movies and series, and gardening. Forty-six percent also answered that they were doing self-care activities and exercising more often. A significant number (45%) also mentioned that they started doing more household chores since lockdowns have started (Figure 3).

FILIPINO CHARACTER TRAITS THAT EMERGED FROM THE COVID-19 EXPERIENCE

In the same survey, the top two manifestations of Filipino character traits that emerged were donating goods or money (79%) and sending information to others (74%) [Figure 4]. The Filipino “*bayanihan*” spirit is more evident and more alive now more than ever. Moreso, they came up with creative ways to help without leaving the comforts of their own home. The Filipino concept of *bayanihan* is a familiar one, it is something that has always been present in our upbringing.

Another character present in the Filipino upbringing is religiosity, which remains strong in times of adversity. Time and time again, the faith of the Filipino people has been tested, and it emerged ever stronger. 74% of the respondents found themselves praying more frequently because of the COVID-19 experience.

THE DIFFERENT FACETS OF RESILIENCE

Resilience is multidimensional; it can manifest in different activities. Life in quarantine has changed our behaviors, probably forever. The survey shows the different facets of resilience and how people adapt to this unique time we are at now. Resilience is shown in how we build and develop our ‘new normal’. We establish a semblance of normalcy in the little habits that we cultivate in the middle of the quarantine, be it in simple tasks such as cooking and gardening; in going back to our long-forgotten hobbies like reading a book and sewing; or in health and safety measures we try to practice to protect ourselves from the virus. In doing these things, we build our resilience in the midst of all this chaos we are experiencing. With resilience, we learn to adapt to grueling and overwhelming conditions. Ultimately, resilience is about surviving.

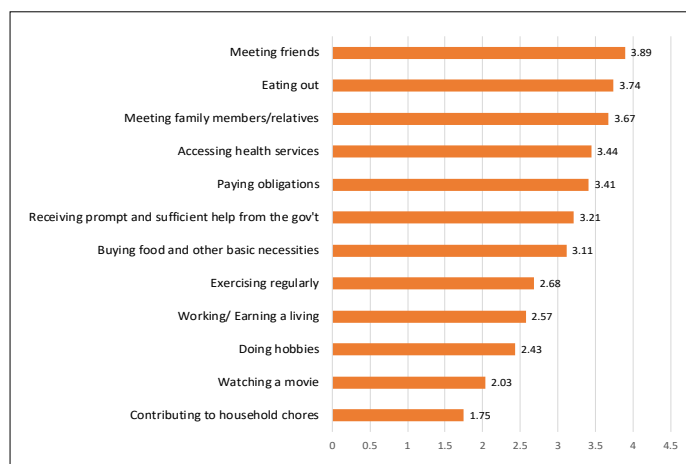


Figure 2. Activities affected by lockdowns
mean score (5-point scale, n=153)

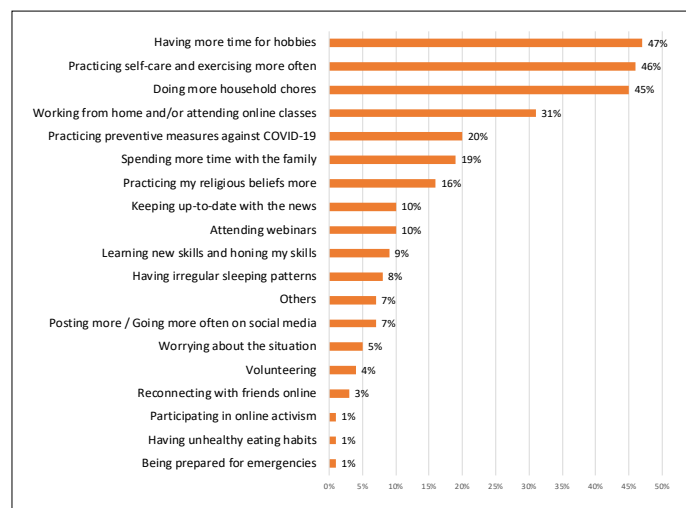


Figure 3. Activities during lockdowns
(multiple response, n=153)

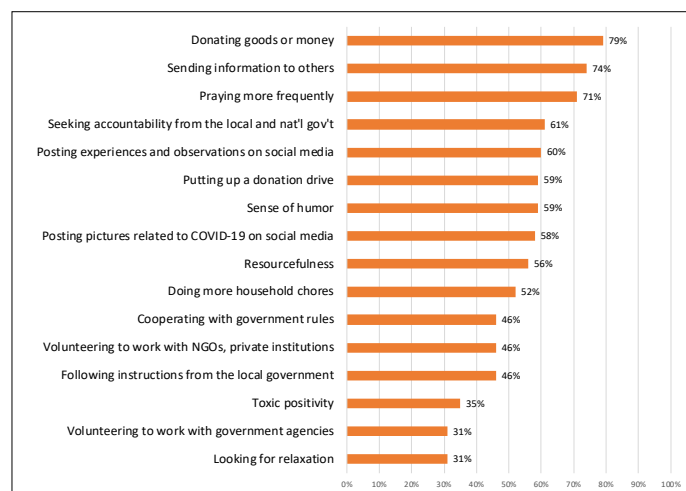


Figure 4. Manifestations of Filipino character traits during the lockdown
(multiple response, n=153)

PMRN holds Migration Dialogues webinar series amidst COVID-19 pandemic

by **ENA RAZAELE L. TAGUIAM**

The first quarter of the year 2020 brought about some major changes in the way people live. Across the globe, people were forced to quarantine in their homes by the COVID-19 pandemic. This prompted the rise of digital platforms as a means for people to get to their 'new normal'.

Coping with the situation, the Philippine Migration Research Network (PMRN) and Philippine Social Science Council (PSSC) conceptualized and hosted webinars for the 2020 Migration Dialogues. Launched in 2019, the Migration Dialogues is a series of conversations among scholars, experts, policymakers, planners, and stakeholders to discuss trends, issues, and challenges in migration. Still keeping with its advocacy of discussing migration trends while addressing the current issue at hand—the COVID-19 pandemic—the PMRN launched a series of webinars on its Facebook page that discusses the diverse situation and experiences of overseas Filipinos in the midst of the global health crisis.

The first Migration Dialogues webinar, held on 20 April 2020, focused on the topic, "Overseas Filipinos and the Pandemic." The webinar aimed to answer the question of how the COVID-19 pandemic impact Filipinos overseas

and their remittances and how the government should address these impacts. PMRN invited Dr. Alvin Ang, Director of the Ateneo Center for Economic Research and Development, and Mr. Jeremaiah Opiniano, Assistant Professor of Journalism at the University of Santo Tomas, to discuss the economic impacts of the pandemic on overseas Filipinos. The webinar was moderated by Dr. Jean Encinas-Franco, Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science of the University of the Philippines Diliman and Deputy Secretary General for Research of PMRN. The event focused on the general situation of overseas Filipinos in the pandemic and zeroed in on Filipinos in the Middle East.

One popular feedback from the first webinar was the need to discuss the situation of Filipinos in Europe, especially in the UK. Catering to this demand, the second Migration Dialogues, held on 13 May 2020, featured Filipinos in the UK and their situation vis-à-vis the COVID-19. Filipinos who were working, studying, and residing in the United Kingdom were invited. They were Mr. Gene Alcantara, journalist and immigration consultant; Ms. Cielo Romero, senior urgent care

Philippine Migration Research Network

MIGRATION DIALOGUES:
OVERSEAS FILIPINOS AND THE PANDEMIC

How does the COVID-19 pandemic impact Filipinos overseas and their remittances and how should the government address these impacts?

Join our webinar on **20 April 2020, 3:00-4:00 PM**
via Facebook Live:
Philippine Migration Research Network
fb.com/migrationPH

Resource Speakers:

Alvin Ang, PhD
Director, Ateneo Center for Economic Research and Development
Professor (Economics), Ateneo de Manila University

Jeremaiah Opiniano
Assistant Professor (Journalism), University of Santo Tomas

Moderator: Jean Encinas-Franco, PhD
Associate Professor (Political Science), University of the Philippines
Deputy Secretary General for Research, PMRN

PMRN Migration Dialogue 1

Philippine Migration Research Network
with the support of
Philippine Social Science Council

MIGRATION DIALOGUES:
FILIPINOS IN THE U.K. AND COVID-19

Join our webinar on **13 May 2020, 5:00-6:30 PM (GMT+08:00)**
via Facebook Live: **Philippine Migration Research Network**
fb.com/migrationPH

Register here: bit.ly/migrationdialogues2

For inquiries:
pmrn@pssc.org.ph

Resource Speakers:

Gene Alcantara
Journalist, Storyteller,
Community Leader
& Immigration Consultant

Cielo Romero
Senior Urgent Care Practitioner
Medway On Call Care (MEDOCC)

John Dale Dianala
DPhil Candidate
University of Oxford

Nadine Opiniano
Matron (Elderly Care)
University Hospital of North Midlands
Hospital Trust

Amuerfina R. Reyes
Labor Attache to the United Kingdom
Department of Labor
and Employment

Moderator: Maruja M. B. Asis
Executive Director
Scalabrini Migration Center

PMRN Migration Dialogue 2



PMRN Migration Dialogue 3

practitioner at Medway on Call Care (MEDOCC); Mr. John Dale Dianala, a graduate student at Oxford University; and Ms. Nadine Opiniano, matron for elderly care at the University Hospital of North Midlands. Additionally, Ms. Ameurfina Reyes, labor attache at the Philippine Overseas Labor Office in London, was invited to speak. Moderated by Ms. Maruja B. De Asis, executive director of Scalabrini Migration Center, the resource speakers talked about how Filipinos in the United Kingdom are coping with the global pandemic and how the Philippine and UK government are helping them.

The third Migration Dialogues, held on 25 May 2020, shed light on the state of Filipino seafarers amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. PMRN invited Atty. Dennis R. Gorecho, junior partner and head of Seafarers' Division of SVBB Law Offices; Fr. Paulo Prigol, chaplain and director of Stella Maris-Manila; and Prof. Lucia P. Tangi, faculty member at the Department of Journalism, College of Mass Communication, UP Diliman. The event was moderated by Ms. Ellene A. Sana, Executive Director of the Center for Migrant Advocacy.

The fourth installment of the Migration Dialogues webinar series was held on 16 June 2020. With the title, "*Babalik ka Rin?*," the event focused on the challenges of return and reintegration of overseas Filipino workers, who were repatriated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The event was jam-packed with experts on the field acting as resource speakers, namely, Usec. Sarah Lou Y. Arriola, undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs of

the Department of Foreign Affairs; Mr. Roel B. Martin, OIC-Director of the National Reintegration Center for OFWs; Mr. Rex Marlo Varona, National Project Director of Safe and Fair Program under the International Labour Office-Philippines; and Dr. Thetis Abrera-Mangahas, social scientist and former Deputy Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific of the International Labour Office. The event was moderated by Prof. Stella P. Go, convenor of PMRN.

By shifting its Migration Dialogues online, PMRN was able to achieve not only continuous program delivery but also a wider reach for relevant discussions on migration issues. For each webinar session, the peak number of live viewers range from 80 to more than 110, much higher than the usual audience size for PMRN's recent face-to-face fora and roundtable discussions. Through the comment section of each live video, viewers were able to join the discussion and ask questions to the resource speakers. Additionally, the webinars were recorded and were made available on PMRN's Facebook page after each session, so that viewers may still watch and listen to the discussions even after the live sessions. As of 30 June 2020, the video views for each webinar recording range from 2,500 to more than 5,000. Viewers come not only from the Philippines but even from other countries.

As of press time, the last installment of the webinar series, titled "*Quo Vadis ASEAN? The Future of International Migration in ASEAN Amidst COVID-19*," is scheduled on 23 July 2020, 3:00-4:30 p.m.



PMRN Migration Dialogue 4

PSSC member-organizations conduct Webinars

by **WILSON C. VILLONES**

Given the physical gathering restrictions triggered by the pandemic, webinars have become the go-to platform of many Filipinos when it comes to discussion, learning, and information dissemination. Below are some of the webinars that PSSC member-organizations have launched to spark discussions on the pandemic and its effects on the lives and well-being of Filipinos.

First to mount a webinar are the Ugnayang Pang-Agham Tao (UGAT) and the Ateneo de Manila's Institute of Philippine Culture (IPC). Titled "Mahirap ang maging Mahirap: How are the Poor coping with COVID-19," the webinar aimed to share anthropologists' observations and insights on COVID-19, as well as the urban poor experiences during the nationwide quarantine, public health and medical interventions, and local and global responses.

IPC also hosted a series of webinars entitled, "Ako at ang COVID-19" that aimed to shed light on gender issues.

The Philippine Economic Society (PES), in partnership with the UP School of Economics and the ADMU Department of Economics, has also conducted a webinar that discussed Congress' economic stimulus package crafted to address the expected economic decline due to the global pandemic. The lawmakers' proposal hopes to ensure the continuity of businesses and retention of workers amidst the devastating effects of the pandemic.

The PES webinar has been featured in *Business Mirror* and *BusinessWorld*.

On the governance discourse, the Philippine Political Science Association (PPSA) has prepared a series of webinars entitled "Call out: Politics and Governance in the Age of COVID-19 Pandemic" to feature discussions and dialogues on institutional responses to the pandemic and its implications to Philippine democracy. The first webinar was held on 25 June 2020.

The Philippine Sociological Society (PSS) hosted a series of "Socio-Caravan Online" or online discussions titled Sociologists in Times of Crisis and Baklaan sa Lakdawn.

The Philippine Communications Society's (PCS) series of webinars, for its part, focused on risk communication, social distancing and non-verbal communications. Their recent webinar on communication and technology in the cyber classroom received over 2,000 registrations.

The Linguistic Society of the Philippines (LSP) has also been busy delivering online lectures on the global and Philippine Englishes, the basics of ethical research and publishing, English language teaching, as well as teaching English in the new normal. Some of their forthcoming online lectures feature topics on migration linguistics and a sociolinguistic analysis of the globalized accountant experience.

Webinars hosted and co-hosted by the Institute of Philippine Culture

The Institute of Philippine Culture and Ugnayang Pang-Agham Tao
invite you to a webinar entitled:

WE CAN!! KUWENTONG KALUSUGAN SA KOMUNIDAD UKOL SA COVID-19 (KKK-COVID19) WEBINAR SERIES

**MAHIRAP MAGING MAHIRAP:
HOW ARE THE POOR COPING WITH COVID-19?**
Sustaining the conversations from the COVID-19 and Me Webinar Series

**21 APRIL 2020, TUESDAY
1:30 PM TO 3:00PM**

**REGISTRATION LINK:
bit.ly/kkkcovidpart3**
Reminder: Link is case-sensitive

Webinar Description:
This webinar seeks to share anthropologists' observations and insights about COVID-19 and the urban poor experiences during the nationwide quarantine, public health and medical interventions, and local and global responses.

Presenters:
Marita Concepcion Alejandro, PhD
Assistant Professor, University of Santo Tomas

Joshua San Pedro, MD
Co-convenor, Coalition for People's Right to Health
Community Physician, Council for Health and Development

Gideon Laxo, MD, PhD
Senior Lecturer, University of the Philippines Diliman
Research Fellow, Ateneo de Manila University

Facilitator:
Mary Racelis, PhD (honoris causa)
Research Scientist, Institute of Philippine Culture
Senior Lecturer, University of the Philippines Diliman
Senior Lecturer, Ateneo de Manila University

Organized and Presented by:

Co-presented by:

**Ako at ang COVID-19:
ANG NAKATAGONG
PANDEMYA NG
KARAHASAN LABAN
SA KABABAIHAN**

REGISTRATION LINK bit.ly/June17eTURO

**17 JUNE 2020 (WEDNESDAY)
12:00 NN - 1:30 PM**

RESOURCE SPEAKERS

DR. NATHALIE AFRICA-VERCELES
Chairman, Women's and Gender Studies Association of the Philippines
Associate Professor, Center for Women's and Gender Studies
University of the Philippines

ASST. PROF. SABRINA LAYA GACAD
Founder, Laya Collective
Assistant Professor, Department of Women and Development Studies
College of Social Work and Community Development
University of the Philippines

FACILITATOR

DR. ENRIQUE NINO LEVISTE
Chairman, Institute of Philippine Culture
Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology
School of Social Sciences
Ateneo de Manila University

Presented by:

Co-Presenters:

**Ako at ang COVID-19:
USAPANG SEKS
AT KASARIAN**

REGISTRATION LINK bit.ly/June19eTURO

**19 JUNE 2020 (FRIDAY)
12:00 NN - 1:30 PM**

RESOURCE SPEAKER

MICHAEL L. TAN, DVM, PH.D.
Professor of Anthropology, College of Social Sciences and Philosophy,
University of the Philippines - Diliman
Clinical Professor, College of Medicine, University of the Philippines - Manila
National Academies, National Academy of Science and Technology

FACILITATOR

MARITA CONCEPCION CASTRO-GUEVARA, PH.D.
Associate Professor, Department of Interdisciplinary Studies
Research Associate, Institute of Philippine Culture
Ateneo de Manila University

Webinars of PSSC member-organizations

Philippine Economic Society

LEGISLATIVE MEASURES ON ECONOMIC RELIEF AND RECOVERY FOR COVID-19
May 4, 2020, 10:00 AM | Join via Zoom - ID: 880 8057 4851 Password: 753421

SPEAKERS

Rep. Sharon Garin
Party List - AAMIS-OWA

Rep. Stella Quimbo
Marikina City, 2nd District
Co-Chair, H.R. Defeat COVID-19 Committee (DCC)
Subcommittee on Economic Stimulus Package

REACTORS

Dr. Dante Canlas
Professor Emeritus
UP School of Economics
Former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary

Mr. Manny Pangilinan
Managing Director & CEO
First Pacific Company Limited

Dr. Renato Reside
Professor
UP School of Economics

Dr. Alvin Ang
Professor
Ateneo Department of Economics

Philippines Communication Society

APCoRE in partnership with PCS
WEBINAR SERIES
RISK COMMUNICATION DURING COVID 19: MANAGING LIFE
MAY 04, 2020 | 01:30PM
REGISTRATION IS FREE!
Deadline of Registration: May 2, 2020

DR. GYANMUDRA
APCoRE International Advisory Board Member
Professor & Head, National Institute of Rural Development
Panchayati Raj, Hyderabad, India

Mr. JIM DURAN
Moderator, Assistant Secretary-PCS
Faculty, Department of Communication
Far Eastern University, Manila

PHILIPPINES COMMUNICATION SOCIETY
taking the plunge:
communication and technology in the cyber classroom
JUNE 22, 2020
2PM TO 4PM

JOSE REUBEN O. ALAGARAN II, PhD
Member, CHED Technical Committee for Communication
LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR TEACHING COMMUNICATION COURSES VIRTUALLY

GRACE JAVIER ALFONSO, PhD
Professor Emeritus, UP College of Mass Communication
DIGITAL COMMUNICATION FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

For registration, visit
f @philcomsoc

LIVE WEBINAR

Philippine Sociological Society

PHILIPPINE SOCIOLOGICAL SOCIETY
SOCIO-CARAVAN ONLINE
JUNE 10 (WED) | 6 PM
VIA FACEBOOK LIVE

SOCIOLOGISTS IN TIMES OF CRISIS

HOSTS

Nicole Curato, Ph.D.
University of Canberra

Jaycel Cornelio, Ph.D.
Ateneo de Manila University

GUESTS

Filomin Gutierrez, Ph.D.
University of the Philippines Diliman
Vice President for National Associations, International Sociological Association (ISA)

Mario Aguja, Ph.D.
Mindanao State University
President, Philippine Sociological Society (PSS)

REGISTER AT
bit.ly/SC01-Reg

PHILIPPINE SOCIOLOGICAL SOCIETY
SOCIO-CARAVAN ONLINE
JUNE 24 (WED) | 6 PM VIA FACEBOOK LIVE

SOCIOLOGISTS IN TIMES OF CRISIS

HOSTS

Dr. Nicole Curato
University of Canberra

Dr. Jaycel Cornelio
Ateneo de Manila University

Prof. Mary Racelis
Ateneo de Manila University

Prof. Randy David
University of the Philippines Diliman
emeritus member

REGISTER AT
bit.ly/SC02-Reg

PHILIPPINE SOCIOLOGICAL SOCIETY
SOCIO-CARAVAN ONLINE
BAKLAAN SA LAKDOWN:
Pride, Prejudice, and Perils
JUNE 30 (TUE) | 6 PM
VIA FACEBOOK LIVE

HOST

Andoy Evangelista
University of the Philippines Diliman
Sociology Department Faculty

GUESTS

Tellhard Paradela
University of British Columbia
History Department PhD Candidate

Mylene De Guzman
University of the Philippines Diliman
Geography Department Faculty

Bryan Celeste
Central Mindanao University
Behavioral Sciences Department Faculty

Beatrice Torre
University of the Philippines Diliman
Psychology Department Faculty

REGISTER AT
bit.ly/SC03-Reg

Linguistic Society of the Philippines

Fan Gabriel Fang, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Shantou University, China

GLOBAL ENGLISHES:
Development, Issues, and Pedagogical Implications
June 6, 2020 | 10-12 nn (PST)
via ZOOM

Moderator:
SHIRLEY N. DITA, Ph.D.
Director, LIDER
Past President, LSP

DLSU-LIDER and LSP invite you to ...

THE WHYS AND THE HOWS OF ETHICAL RESEARCH AND PUBLISHING

Dr. LEAH E. GUSTILO
(De La Salle University)

JUNE 11, 2020 (THURSDAY) | 10-12 NN
VIA ZOOM

Linguistic Society of the Philippines & Southern Luzon State University-Tiaong Campus
invite you to a Special E-lecture on

The Legitimacy of Philippine English
30 June 2020 | 10:00-12:00 nn (PST) | via ZOOM

Shirley N. Dita, PhD
Director, DLSU-LIDER
Associate Professor, Department of English and Applied Linguistics, DLSU
Immediate Past President, Linguistic Society of the Philippines

Ariane Macalinga Borlongan, PhD
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Japan

Scan to register

or follow this link to register <https://lingust.com/9h5f1eo>

Webinars of PSSC member-organizations

Philippine Society for Public Administration

Public Administration and Governance Webinar

IMPERATIVES OF LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE AND INNOVATIONS AT THE TIME OF THE NEW NORMAL: A KNOWLEDGE CO-CREATION & CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

TOPIC 1: HEALTH GOVERNANCE ON EXPANDED COVID-19 TESTING

May 2, 2020, 10 AM via ZOOM

INTERNATIONAL WEBINAR

IMPERATIVES OF LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE, AND INNOVATIONS AT THE TIME OF THE NEW NORMAL: A KNOWLEDGE CO-CREATION IN THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION ERA

Perspectives, Innovations, and Lessons from Country Experiences on COVID-19 Crisis

16 MAY 2020 | 3:00 PM (PH TIME)

CHAIR
Dr. Liza E. Perante-Calina
President, Philippine Society for Public Administration

CO-CONVENOR
Mr. Dedy Holidin
Faculty Member, Universitas Indonesia

RESOURCE PERSONS
Hon. Peter Wapner
Deputy Mayor, Seoul City, South Korea
Hon. Wapner, Chief Executive Officer, Seoul City, South Korea

PANEL OF REACTORS
Dr. Alex Brillantes, Jr.
President, Asian Association for Public Administration

Dr. Gabriel Lita
Head of International Cooperation, Indonesian Association for Public Administration

Dr. Elio Prasjo
Chairman, Asian Group for Public Administration

Organized by: **AAPA** In cooperation with: **AGPA**, **GAAP**, **PSA**

INTERNATIONAL WEBINAR

GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION ISSUES AND CONCERNS AMIDST COVID-19 PANDEMIC: COUNTRY EXPERIENCES AND IMPERATIVES FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION

CHAIR
Prof. Agus Pramono
Chairman of Indonesian Association for Public Administration (IAPPA) and Indonesian Civil Service Commission

OUR SPEAKERS
Prof. Alex Brillantes
President of Asian Association for Public Administration and Professor at National College of Public Administration and Governance (NCPAG) of the University of the Philippines Diliman

Prof. Elio Prasjo
Chairman of Asian Group for Public Administration and Dean of Faculty of Administrative Sciences, University of Indonesia

Prof. Jose Chen
Professor of Public Administration, National University, President, Asian Association for Schools of Public Administration and Affairs

Prof. Woonhwan Tschai
Secretary General, King Pridelock's Institute

Organized by: **AAPA** In cooperation with: **AGPA**, **GAAP**, **PSA**

Philippine Association of Social Workers, Inc.

PHILIPPINE ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

BRAINX

A SPECIAL ONLINE SEMINAR FOR SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE FRONTLINES

HOW TO DEVELOP RESILIENCE?

MAY 9, 2020, 10-11AM
ZOOM Meeting ID: 971 440 3236

ROB RANCES
Occupational Neuroscience Specialist
Fellow, IOC, Harvard Medical School Affiliate
Marshall Goldsmith Executive Coach, Business/Social Innovator

POSTER BACKGROUND BY MINDOVI

FREE ONLINE SEMINAR
brought to you by:

BRAHMA KUMARIS in cooperation with **PHILIPPINE ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS, INC.**

Pause Muna Peace Muna
a Self-Care and Peace Initiative of BK Philippines is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Time: May 14, 2020 08:00 PM PH

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86534578830>

Meeting ID: 865 3457 8830

Topic: Lusog Diwa Series Webinar
1. Thriving in Covid-19: Stories of Inspiration from our Social Workers Guests: Selywyn Chuckie de las Alas and Halima Sanguilan from PASWI.
Panelists: Rebecca Ortega and Merle Pimentel
Hosted by: Deanie Mahaan and JL Pimentel

Philippine Association of Social Workers, Inc.

Free Webinar

Saturday, May 23 2020
10AM - PH Time

Taking Care of Our Well-being in Current Adversity: COVID-19 Pandemic

Zoom ID Meeting: 813 4193 8555

Resource Person:
Agnes Buzon-Hajek, LCSW
Behavioral Health Clinical Practitioner
San Diego, California

FREE WEBINAR

PHILIPPINE ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS, INC.

Understanding and Managing Stress, Fears and Loss

MAY 30, 2020
10AM - PH Time

ZOOM ID Meeting
895 8250 3827

Resource Speaker:
Victor Viray, RSW
Accredited Mental Health Social Worker
Traumatic Stress Clinic, Traralgon, Victoria
Gippsland Consulting Suites, Sale, Victoria
Field Placement Educator and University Liaison, Master of Social Work (Qualifying), Federation University Australia

PHILIPPINE ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

ONLINE WEBINAR SERIES

COLLABORATIVE SOCIAL WORK & BEST PRACTICES IN TIMES OF CRISIS. THE PASWI PAMPANGA EXPERIENCE.

Dr. Elena C. Tesoro
MSW, MSW, PhD
CHAPTER PRESIDENT

Zoom ID: 885 0227 5471
password: 925081

JUNE 6, 2020
9:30AM - 11:30 AM - VIA ZOOM

TO REGISTER VISIT:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/88502275471>

PASWI WILL ISSUE E-CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDANCE

PHILIPPINE ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS, INC.

LOCATING THE MILLENNIAL SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE COVID19 PANDEMIC

With RIO GRACE OTARA of UNFPA and DON GUERRERO of IOM-UN MIGRATION

JUNE 12, 2020
WEBINAR SESSION 1PM - 3PM

PHILIPPINE ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS, INC.

JUNE 13, 2020
9:00AM PH Time
zoom id: 813 6136 6773
password: 925392

SURVIVING WHILE SERVING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC: ADDRESSING THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF SOCIAL WORKERS AND MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Guia Calicdan-Apostol, DSW is an Associate Professor of Social Work at Stockton University. She teaches Race, Ethnicity, and Diversity, and Advanced Cultural Competence in the MSW Program. Her areas of concentration are spirituality and mental health, human trafficking, immigration, and cultural diversity issues.

FREE WEBINAR

PHILIPPINE ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

ONLINE WEBINAR SERIES

COLLABORATIVE SOCIAL WORK & BEST PRACTICES IN TIMES OF CRISIS. THE PASWI PAMPANGA EXPERIENCE.

Dr. Elena C. Tesoro
MSW, MSW, PhD
CHAPTER PRESIDENT

Zoom ID: 885 0227 5471
password: 925081

JUNE 6, 2020
9:30AM - 11:30 AM - VIA ZOOM

TO REGISTER VISIT:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/88502275471>

PASWI WILL ISSUE E-CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDANCE

PHILIPPINE ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS, INC.

FREE WEBINAR

JUNE 20, 2020
9:00AM TO 10:45AM PH Time

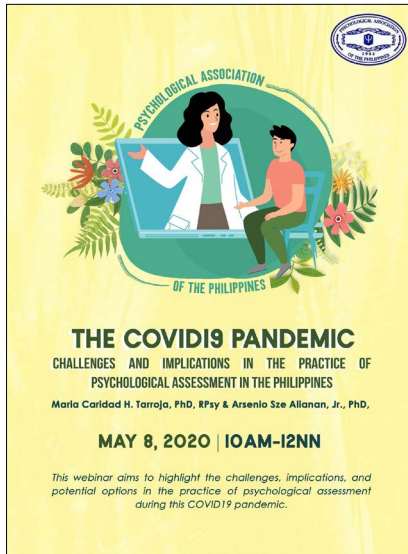
ENSURING YOUNG PEOPLE'S SAFETY & PROTECTION DURING UNCERTAIN TIMES: CHALLENGE TO SOCIAL WORKERS

Zoom ID: 895 8716 9677
Password: 491840

ELVESSA B. PINEDA
YOUTH SUPPORT WORKER AND ADULT RESIDENTIAL SUPPORT WORKER
Shine Living Society, Burnaby, British Columbia

Webinars of PSSC member-organizations

Psychological Association of the Philippines

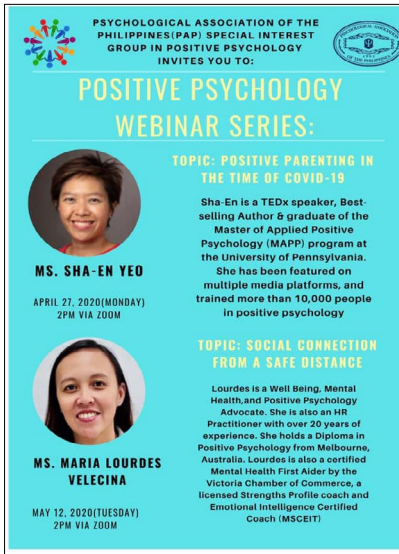


THE COVID19 PANDEMIC
CHALLENGES AND IMPLICATIONS IN THE PRACTICE OF
PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES

Maria Caridad H. Tarroja, PhD, RPsych & Arsenio Sze Allanan, Jr., PhD.

MAY 8, 2020 | 10AM-12NN

This webinar aims to highlight the challenges, implications, and potential options in the practice of psychological assessment during this COVID19 pandemic.



PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES (PAP) SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP IN POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY INVITES YOU TO:

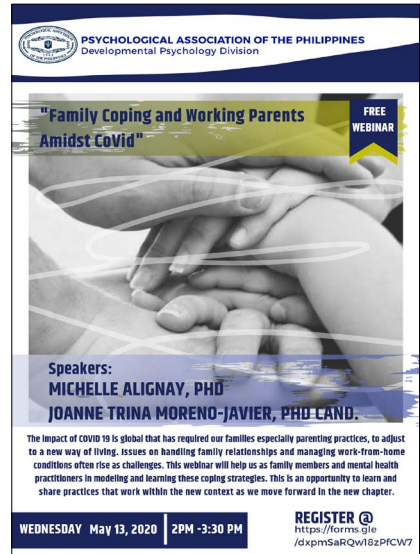
POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY WEBINAR SERIES:

TOPIC: POSITIVE PARENTING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

MS. SHA-EN YEO
APRIL 27, 2020 (MONDAY) 2PM VIA ZOOM

TOPIC: SOCIAL CONNECTION FROM A SAFE DISTANCE

MS. MARIA LOURDES VELECINA
MAY 12, 2020 (TUESDAY) 2PM VIA ZOOM



PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES
Developmental Psychology Division

"Family Coping and Working Parents Amidst Covid"

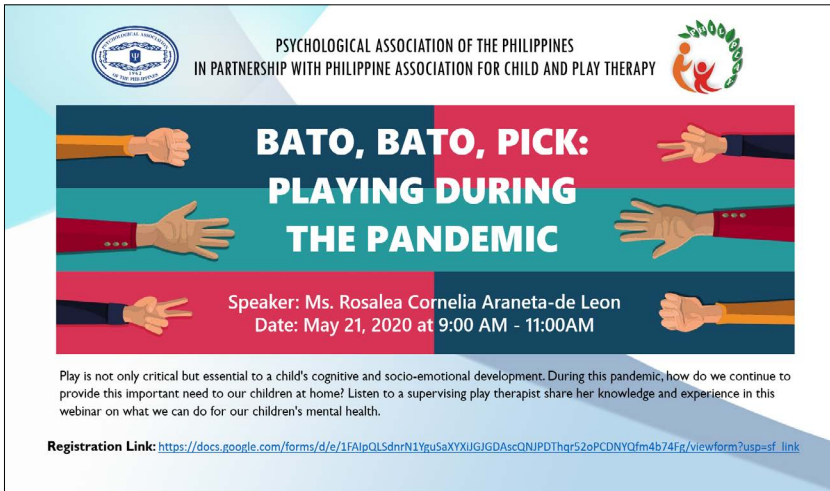
FREE WEBINAR

Speakers:
MICHELLE ALIGNAY, PhD
JOANNE TRINA MORENO-JAVIER, PhD-LAND.

The impact of COVID 19 is global that has required our families especially parenting practices, to adjust to a new way of living. Issues on handling family relationships and managing work-from-home conditions often rise as challenges. This webinar will help us as family members and mental health practitioners in modeling and learning these coping strategies. This is an opportunity to learn and share practices that work within the new context as we move forward in the new chapter.

WEDNESDAY May 13, 2020 | 2PM - 3:30 PM

REGISTER @
<https://forms.gle/dxpm5aRQwI8zPFCW7>



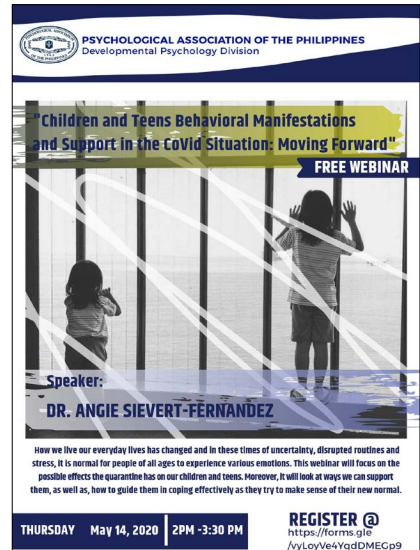
PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PHILIPPINE ASSOCIATION FOR CHILD AND PLAY THERAPY

BATO, BATO, PICK: PLAYING DURING THE PANDEMIC

Speaker: Ms. Rosalea Cornelia Araneta-de Leon
Date: May 21, 2020 at 9:00 AM - 11:00AM

Play is not only critical but essential to a child's cognitive and socio-emotional development. During this pandemic, how do we continue to provide this important need to our children at home? Listen to a supervising play therapist share her knowledge and experience in this webinar on what we can do for our children's mental health.

Registration Link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQL5dNrN1Yq5aXYUGIGDAscQNIJDT7qr25aPCDNYQfM4b74Fg/viewform?usp=sf_link



PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES
Developmental Psychology Division

"Children and Teens Behavioral Manifestations and Support in the Covid Situation: Moving Forward"

FREE WEBINAR

Speaker:
DR. ANGIE SIEVERT-FERNANDEZ

How we live our everyday lives has changed and in these times of uncertainty, disrupted routines and stress, it is normal for people of all ages to experience various emotions. This webinar will focus on the possible effects the quarantine has on our children and teens. Moreover, it will look at ways we can support them, as well as, how to guide them in coping effectively as they try to make sense of their new normal.

THURSDAY May 14, 2020 | 2PM - 3:30 PM

REGISTER @
<https://forms.gle/jyLoYVe4YqdDMECP9>

Development Academy of the Philippines



development academy of the philippines

WEBINAR SERIES ON INDUSTRY 4.0 AND EMERGING TRENDS

Part 1: Understanding Industry 4.0 and its Implications
Towards a Future-Ready and Resilient MSMEs

Resource Speakers

Dr. Rafaelito M. Aldaba
Undersecretary for Competitiveness and Innovation,
Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)

Mr. Pablo Yambot
Lecturer, ADMU
and UP, Managing Director, UBQTV

Dr. Jose Ramon G. Albert
Senior Research Fellow, Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS)

Ms. Tonilyn Lim
Representative,
UNIDO Country Office Philippines

Brief Description:
These online learning sessions aim to give the participants a basic understanding of the concepts, frameworks, requirements, and current trends on Industry 4.0 and possible effects on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) operations. It also intends to discuss the country's current situation and efforts on the adoption of Industry 4.0 for MSMEs.

June 26 - July 31, 2020

To watch the webinar series session, please subscribe in the DAP CIRC-OMO Youtube Account. Also, click the bell button to get notified on our upcoming webinar series session.

WEEK 1
June 26, 2020
(10:00am - 12:00pm)
• Session 1: Laying the Context: Strengthening the Future Readiness and Resilience of MSMEs in the Age of Disruptions

WEEK 2
July 3, 2020
(10:00am - 11:30am)
• Session 2: Understanding Industry 4.0 for MSMEs
• Session 3: Leveraging Smart Technologies for the Manufacturing Industry and MSMEs

WEEK 3
July 10, 2020
(10:00am - 11:30am)
• Session 4: Leveraging Smart Technologies Across Industries and MSMEs

WEEK 4
July 17, 2020
(10:00am - 11:30am)
• Session 5: Evaluating Industry Maturity/Readiness

WEEK 5
July 24, 2020
(10:00am - 11:30am)
• Session 6: Maximizing SMART Technology for MSMEs Amidst Emergency Situations

WEEK 6
July 31, 2020
(10:00am - 11:30am)
• Session 7: Building an Agile and Industry 4.0 Public Sector Organization
• Webinar Closing

Philippine Political Science Association



PPSA
COVID-19
Webinar Series 1.0

25 June 2020

Call out Politics and Governance in the Age of COVID-19 Pandemic

SPEAKERS

Gender and Pandemic
MA LOURDES VENERACION-HALLUNZA, PhD
Rector de Manila University

What is the current Military Role in COVID-19 Response in Mindanao?
ROSALIE ARCELA-HALL, PhD
University of the Philippines Visayas

Challenges to Local Initiatives against COVID-19 Pandemic in General Santos City
ANDERSON VILLA, PhD
Mindanao State University - GSC

IGF responses to the COVID-19 health crisis in Metro Manila
FRANCISCO MAGNANO, PhD
De La Salle University

COVID-19 Narratives: What is your story?



COVID-19 CHRONICLES Sharing Stories, Caring for Communities

by **ARIEL C. SEBELLINO**
Philippine Press Institute

In these critical times of pandemic when vetted information and content are necessary for survival, journalists, as frontliners have become both instruments and messengers of facts and truths. They brave the odds amidst scare of the contagion and proliferation of disinformation, despite being demonized by some segments of the society for their stories perceived to be critical by those in power and position.

But what happens when they are constrained to write and file stories due to restricted mobility brought about by the lockdown and government-required accreditation so they can go about their usual routine? More importantly, what happens when their already-struggling news outfits have ceased printing or publication?

That is exactly what is happening now with most community newspapers in the Philippines, which are members of the 56-year old print media organization, the Philippine Press Institute, whose reporters go to communities to cover the pandemic, and now experiencing the brunt of the loss of livelihood.

At least eleven publications (3 from Mindanao, 7 from Luzon, and 1 from the Visayas) have ceased printing temporarily and shifted since then to digital format. These are: *Mindanao Times*, *Mindanao Gold Star Daily*, *Mindanao Observer*, *Baguio Chronicle*, *Mabuhay*, *Pahayagang Balikas*, *The Northern Forum*, *Palawan News*, *Sun.Star Baguio*, *Ilocos Times*, and *Negros Daily Bulletin*. Two multi-awarded community papers, *Baguio*

Midland Courier and *Visayan Daily Star* have resumed publishing printed editions but with reduced circulation and number of pages.

“Under ECQ, there are no street sales and few ads. We are struggling to keep afloat and pay salaries,” said Carla Gomes, an editor of Bacolod-based *Visayan Daily Star*. But her paper had not stopped publishing online during most of the quarantine time. She added that this enabled the readers to continue to get the news daily even while under quarantine. “We also continued to bring the news to our readers as events happen on our Facebook page.”

In the case of *Samar Weekly Express*, senior reporter and editor Ricky Bautista said his paper encountered delays in the delivery of hard copies “but we are able to activate our digital medium whose followers and online readers increased by seventy percent.”

In Northern Mindanao, particularly in Cagayan de Oro City, by far, only two twin-papers, *Mindanao Daily News* and *Business Week Mindanao* have unimpeded operations both in print and online. Iloilo-based and widely-circulated *Panay News* takes pride in being the last standing community newspaper in Region VI in both print and online.

Herbie Gomez, editor-in-chief of *Mindanao Gold Star Daily* in CDO reported to PPI (through its informal survey during the first week of May) that the paper will resume printing any time soon,

With scarce or meager resources to get by, they persisted to hound for news to serve the publics who hunger for journalistic pieces. But journalists, whose newspapers are off newsstands, would never have their stories see print and are left with no choice but to seek for opportunities to peddle their stories. Most of the community papers were in transition during lockdown. “There were no ads, no newsstands, no delivery,” said Frank Cimatu from *Baguio Chronicle*.

For seasoned investigative journalist and PPI training director Tess Bacalla, it is difficult to imagine the impact of local papers folding up on the communities since the national media cannot be relied upon to pick up the slack. “I hope online editors are continuing though,” she said.

Recognizing these enormous problems on economic survival and changing newsroom dynamics brought about by the spread of the Wuhan virus—and in keeping up with its mandate of “Building Better Communities Through Civic Journalism,” the Philippine Press Institute, also known as the national association of newspapers

since 1964, has embarked on a pivotal and landmark project, mainly to: have more narratives coming from the ground in the absence of some community newspapers, give print journalists the legitimate platform for release of their outputs, and thereby provide compensation for their articles to help them survive in these difficult times.

Titled *COVID-19 CHRONICLES*, the www.ppinewscommons.net was initially introduced in December 2019 and came into full operation first quarter of 2020 for the sole purpose of collecting community stories from its members in the regions under one common website. It took a different turn in March this year when stories about the Wuhan virus inundated all media platforms. For March alone, it has posted more than two hundred stories from journalists all over the archipelago. “We have reviewed the stories and some of these authors will get remunerations for as long as they pass the standards and criteria set forth via the civic journalism framework of the PPI,” said Rolando Estabillo, PPI chairperson and president.

Web administrator Kier Labrador said more stories are still being uploaded in the website for the months of April, May, June and up to December of this year.

“It is a work in progress and we cannot thank enough our partners Nickel Asia Corporation and Hans Seidel Foundation, for taking on the challenge with us for the sake of journalism and altruism on the side,” said Ariel Sebellino, PPI executive director and head of training operations and special projects. He further added that the PPI cannot pay for all stories written but will award most with modest fees that passed the criteria on a monthly basis.

The multi-faceted projects will take many forms: it can organize webinars, forums, awards, and exhibits, as the organization deems fit to stay relevant and addresses the so-called “new normal.”

On 12 June 2020, it conducted for the first time a webinar on “*When Reporting Duty Calls*,” which gathered via Google Meet some of the best community journalists in the country as speakers and panelists. It was the opening salvo that would set the tone for future activities of the overarching project, that gave the opportunity for media practitioners in the regions to share problems and concerns affecting their papers and immediate communities.

Seasoned reporter Julius Mariveles from *Digital News Exchange* (DNX) in Bacolod City, a new player in local media, highlighted the problem over access to information in view of the mobility restrictions and lack

of transparency in government offices. “Perhaps we also have to consider that government offices are on skeletal-force set up and they may not have enough people to cope with work demands. But then, that should not be an excuse,” he said.

One of the good things COVID-19 pandemic has brought upon us is, as Mr. Estabillo said in his opening remarks, “we were forced to embrace technology and learn how to use the digital tools to be able to keep doing our job.”

Another creative approach in turning challenges to opportunities is what Mindanao Times editor-in-chief Amalia Cabusao termed as co-branding, or working with schools to offer a program such as a newspaper education, or using the newspaper as part of the curriculum. She said, this would not only help increase subscription but also make the students aware of what is happening around them and to help the students develop a sense and culture of media and information literacy.

For Tita Valderama, former head of the The Manila Times School of Journalism and now editor of *Vera Files*, the problem with disinformation exists and has grown bigger. “While we are expected to churn out accurate information, the problem gets worse when official sources present inconsistent or incoherent data, information, or policies.”

Media organizations, like PPI, which depend on grants and donations, also struggle to keep the organization alive and kicking during this pandemic. In the absence of physical gatherings, it has found ways to gather media practitioners to continue discussing and sharing various issues affecting the media industry, like it always did in its past regular workshops and conferences. As if nothing changed, but that only the technology required a whole new skill and approach to deliver the message and service.

After all, no matter what, journalism is about saving and changing lives, one story at a time.



Ariel C. Sebellino is the Executive Director of and Trustee at the Philippine Press Institute. He also heads its training operations and special projects. He was the former President of the Philippines Communication Society, a regular member of the Philippine Social Science Council.

Outgunned but Undettered: Struggles of the Press during Pandemic

by **PATHRICIA ANN V. ROXAS**
PSSC Research Ethics Officer

Adapting to the “new normal” could be easy for young reporter Neil Mercado who has been working with online news site *Inquirer.net* for more than a year now. But sometimes, he feels powerless.

“There is this feeling of disconnect...” said Mercado.

“Sometimes I ask, ‘who am I to speak on their behalf? Am I giving the story justice when I could not even talk to them in person?’” he added, recalling how distance affected the way he empathized with an interviewee whose relative succumbed to COVID-19.

In a time of crisis, information is a tool for survival. But like any other sector nowadays, the Philippine media industry took a serious blow from the COVID-19 pandemic, making it harder for media workers to deliver news that matters.

Associate professor in journalism at the University of the Philippines Danilo Arao said that aside from the anxiety journalists may experience nowadays, other news-gathering limitations could make it harder for them to report the truth.

For one, government officials could easily use the remote coverage of most media outfits to “elude” or “dilute” hard-hitting and critical questions. He said this is evident with the pre-taped, late-night speeches of President Rodrigo Duterte where journalists have no chance to ask questions, and during press briefings where questions are often screened.

And in a time of the pandemic, a free and critical press is crucial to watch the government and take them into account, according to Arao.

“Based on experience in various countries, those that did a good job [in fighting COVID-19] generally have a free and vibrant press like New Zealand, just to cite an example,” he added. New Zealand officials recently reported that it had eliminated community transmission of the coronavirus.

MISINFORMATION

While mainstream media try to be critical, the proliferation of false information, especially by some government officials, adds to the difficulty of informing the public and getting rid of their distrust.

In May, the National Bureau of Investigation subpoenaed Overseas Workers Welfare Administration deputy administrator Mocha Uson over an erroneous Facebook post crediting the government for the distribution of Personal Protective Equipment, which have been donated by the SM Foundation. Uson, a known staunch Duterte supporter, and detractor of media has drawn the ire of the public for sharing false information on her blogs even before the coronavirus crisis. She has a following of over 5.8 million in Facebook alone.

The blunders of public officials, together with the spread of online trolls and political propaganda online, have increased the public’s concern about misinformation.

Survey results from the 2020 Reuters Institute Digital News Report have shown that global concerns about misinformation online remained high at 56 percent, with most people holding domestic politicians responsible (40 percent). The survey was conducted from the end of January to the first week of February 2020, when the coronavirus crisis was starting.

“Media should always be there to expose the preponderance of fake news,” said Arao. “But it is not just about factual accuracy.”

“What we need is also contextual accuracy. The context is the key here to ensure that we can have an informed citizenry,” he added.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS

The difficulty of giving a face to COVID-19 stories could be a daunting task due to the Luzon-wide lockdown and various government quarantine restrictions. This situation gets harder for some, whose companies’ coffers have dried up.

While many media workers have been suffering from contractualization even before the crisis, things have gone worse now, according to Arao. He said many media workers received no pay without the operation of their outfits. A *Rappler* report also said some newspapers have implemented cuts in the allowances of their employees.

Arao said the print media and community press are worst-hit by the economic blows of COVID-19.

This, unfortunately, has been the trend globally.

For instance, the Poynter Institute’s list of media closures, layoffs, furloughs, and pay cuts across various media platforms in the US has been growing. As of June 16, over a hundred newspapers, weeklies and alt-weeklies alone have suffered from these financial shocks due to the coronavirus.

Now that advertising cannot be fully depended upon in terms of revenue generation, Arao said newsrooms should revamp their business models to adjust to the uncertain times.

True enough, “the coronavirus crisis and its knock-on impact on print and advertising revenues is already putting a new focus on publisher strategies for subscription, membership and donations,” according to Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2020.

“Our data from January already showed significant increases in the percentage paying for any online news in a number of markets – including a jump of four percentage points in the United States to 20% and eight points in Norway to 42%,” the report said.

“We have seen increases in other parts of Europe as well as Latin America and Asia,” it added.

PRESS FREEDOM

Behind the daunting task of fighting misinformation, and managing the news-gathering limitations and economic impacts of the coronavirus lies the equally dangerous attacks on press freedom.

On May 5, broadcast giant ABS-CBN was shut down by the National Telecommunications Commission after the House of Representatives, dominated by President Duterte’s allies, failed to tackle bills renewing the network’s 25-year franchise. At least a dozen of ABS-

CBN franchise bills have been pending at the chamber since 2016.

It can be remembered that President Duterte had repeatedly threatened to block ABS-CBN's franchise renewal due to alleged swindling and unfair reporting. Even House Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano admitted he has personal issues with the network over alleged unfair airtime given to vice presidential candidates during the 2016 election campaign.

The largest media conglomerate in the country was first closed in 1972 during the martial law under late dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Its closure this year has left the future of the company and its over 11,000 employees in limbo.

This, despite the fact that the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Bureau of Internal Revenue, the Department of Labor and Employment, and the Department of Justice had clarified during a February Senate hearing that ABS-CBN did not breach any law or its franchise terms.

In a statement, the UP Diliman Executive Committee composed of all the deans of the various degree-granting units of UP, lamented that ABS-CBN's closure was a "disservice to the Filipino people."

"We cannot stress how important and critical a role mass media plays during this time of crisis," it said. "As COVID-19 spreads and worsens at the national and global scale, it is wrong to silence a vital channel of information such as ABS-CBN, which has become, after years of public service, a significant pillar of the media establishment."

Arao said ABS-CBN's closure, Section 6 the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act (Republic Act 11469) as well as mainstream media's inherent commercialism, "may explain why other media just scratch the surface and not ask the hard questions anymore."

"We need to have a critical look at how things are happening [during the pandemic] and we can only do that through contextual accuracy which, I'm sorry to say, is very much lacking right now," he said.

The provision punishes "individuals or groups creating, perpetuating, or spreading false information regarding the COVID-19 crisis on social media and other platforms, such information having no valid or beneficial effect on the population, and are clearly geared to promote chaos, panic, anarchy, fear, or confusion."

Under the law, violators may face imprisonment of two months or a fine P10,000 to P1 million, or both, depending on the discretion of the court.

The National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) has warned that the provision may threaten freedom of the press and freedom to expression.

"While we acknowledge the need to fight discrimination in this time of crisis, we fear the Bayanihan We Heal as One Act will only end up criminalizing free speech," the NUJP said in a statement. "We assert that the best way to fight disinformation is through education and the truth."

"In times of crisis, when the swift delivery of accurate information to our people is vital, we need more, not less, independent reporting," it added.

Last June 15, a Manila court has found *Rappler* CEO and Executive Editor Maria Ressa and writer-researcher Reynaldo Santos Jr. guilty of cyber libel charges over an article that was published even before the Cybercrime Law (RA 10175) was enacted. *Rappler* is known for its critical reportage of the Duterte administration.

In a statement after the conviction, the online news site said the court based its decision on a "flimsy ground" that a corrected typographical error could be considered a republication of an article. This "creative reinterpretation and twisting of the law became grounds to prosecute this case, filed 5 long years after the publication of a story about the late former chief justice Renato Corona and his ties to businessman Wilfredo Keng," it added.

Rappler warned that the verdict sets a "dangerous precedent not only for journalists but for everyone online," as it "weakens the ability of journalists to hold power to account" because the decision extends the one-year prescription period of libel to 12 years.

"This ruling, coupled with the cybercrime law, has made the space for a free press, free speech, and free expression even tighter and narrower," it added.

The decision came as no surprise for *Rappler* journalist Mara Cepeda. After all, this case is just one of the many lodged against *Rappler* since Duterte came into power. In 2018, the Securities and Exchange Commission even ordered the closure of *Rappler* for allegedly violating the Constitution's restriction on foreign ownership of local media.

But these recent legal setbacks are far from shaking *Rappler's* commitment to truth, according to Cepeda.

"Personally, it just motivated me to do better in my work, to strive to be excellent in my reporting every day because apparently, it pisses off this administration so much that they are willing to skew the law in their favor," she added.

The global pandemic may continue to be a make or break moment for the press. The media industry has been rocked by many issues and challenges, compounded by the difficulty of covering the ever-changing nature of COVID-19 data. But their role to report accurate and contextual information is needed now more than ever.

Mercado has acknowledged this crucial task, as he vowed to fight for press freedom.

“... The moment journalists choose to be silent is the moment press freedom dies,” Mercado said. “This is the time for journalists to work together.”

Despite the seemingly endless challenges blocking Rappler’s way, Cepeda chooses to courage on.

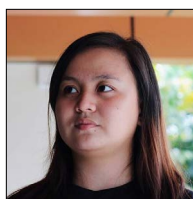
“Incompetence is deadly...” she said. “I do hope that the government sees that even if the truth is inconvenient, it’s still the truth and it has to be reported...”

“Because Filipinos deserve better, deserves a government that serves at the pleasure of the people, not at the pleasure of the president,” she added.

The press may have been outgunned but, it remains undeterred.

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Living in the Time of COVID

by **MARIA CECILIA LOPEZ-ABITANG**

Blogger, SnapHappy Foodie

On 31 December 2019, the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission in China raised the alarm about a cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan, Hubei Province. On 13 January 2020, Thailand reported the first recorded case of COVID-19 outside China.

On 30 January 2020, the Department of Health (DOH) of the Philippines disclosed the first case of COVID-19 at San Lazaro Hospital in Manila. On 7 March, the country learned about the first case of COVID-19 local transmission. Days later, on 16 March, President Duterte placed Luzon on “enhanced community quarantine” effective immediately. Since then, different parts of the country have been under various forms of quarantine, including Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ), General Community Quarantine (GCQ), Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) and Modified General Community Quarantine (MGCQ).

With COVID-19 cases on the rise despite lockdown efforts, fear and anxiety have been the prevailing mood among people. COVID-19 is a new disease that no one knows how to cure. There are no medicines and no vaccines to combat the virus. For some reason, coronavirus is like a stealthy little beast – it keeps mutating and changing its method of attack. News reports would make it appear that the experts have figured it out, only to be proven wrong by cases that defied their earlier assumptions.

Everyone continues to wait at home with bated breaths, not knowing who will fall next. It was like playing a horrifying game of musical chairs. No one knows who will get eliminated. All the uncertainty continues to take its toll on everyone’s mental and physical health. Staying at home, while usually a relaxing endeavor, is proving to be a tense and nerve-racking thing to do. The fight is out there, and we do not know if and when it would hit close to home, hoping against hope that everyone we know will be spared.

MASKING IT OUT

For the longest time, the authorities were advising people to wash their hands to avoid getting COVID-19. But the recommendation was too simple and too straightforward to be taken seriously. Honestly, it seemed like a joke. We are in the middle of battling a deadly virus and our best defense is washing hands? Yet science, of course, has shown how handwashing does help in preventing the spread of disease. The brilliance of handwashing as a preventive method was in its simplicity. Wash the germs away and keep infections at bay!

Then came the next question that most people were concerned with for the longest time: “do we need to wear a mask or not?” Was it mandatory? Was it necessary? We all learned that N95s would do a good job of protecting us from the virus, so everyone rushed out to buy N95s until the demand far exceeded the supplies, and people ended up getting disappointed with no mask to show for it.

On 2 March, DOH posted “Do I need a mask to protect myself against COVID-19?” on their website:

“No. People with no respiratory signs and symptoms do not need to wear a medical mask. DOH recommends the use of medical masks only for the following:

- For people who are presenting with symptoms of COVID-19;
- Those caring for individuals who have symptoms such as cough and fever, and
- Health workers.

“DOH, together with WHO, advises the rational use of medical masks to avoid unnecessary wastage of vital resources and mis-use of masks.

“The most effective ways to protect yourself and others against COVID-19 are to frequently clean or wash your hands, cover your cough with a tissue or the bend of the elbow, and maintain a distance of at least one meter from people who are coughing or sneezing.

Eventually, they simplified the recommendation – wear a face mask. It doesn't have to be an N95. Just put something on your face, cover your nose and mouth and be done with it. Some protection is better than no protection at all. It took some time before we learned that N95 and surgical masks were for health workers. Everything else – cloth masks, neoprene masks, dust masks – were for us common folks. We should leave the N95s and surgical masks for frontliners to use in the battle versus COVID-19.

“Stay safe! Don't forget your mask!” would have been a weird thing to tell someone pre-pandemic. But we are living a different reality, so nowadays, it is actually an expression of care and concern.

ALTERED STATE OF BEING

At the start of quarantine, we were all given a simple directive – stay at home. Naturally, with such an order in place, never has the world outside look so appealing.

Staying at home changed so many behaviors during the lockdown. For starters, our day-to-day routines all took a hit. Suddenly, there is no structure in our lives. We wake up, eat breakfast, start working, eat lunch while working, have a snack while working, continue working until it is time to eat dinner and keep working past that. There are no more boundaries between work and life.

Most people lost their concept of time. We lose track of dates and times. The days and weeks pass by in a blur because the hours just go by until we have no idea what is going on out there. People spend the day wearing sleepwear or loungewear even while working, then once we are ready to call it a day (or night, as the case may be), we turn our attention to Netflix, iFlix, HOOQ and other streaming services (our quarantine nighttime best friends) and the Filipino movies that local production houses have made available for free. There are no more boundaries between day and night.

What is tougher is how difficult it is to concentrate and sleep. Getting enough proper rest is crucial to protect our bodies from COVID-19, yet getting proper sleep goes out the window, no thanks to the erratic sleep schedules brought on by the fear and anxiety over COVID-19. For me, going to bed between 3AM to 7AM is the new, not-so-good normal. Other people have given in to either eating too much or not eating at all, eating unhealthily and snacking endlessly. Some have been smoking more. Those who wanted a stiff drink had to contend with the liquor ban. While it curbed the ability to buy alcoholic drinks, it did not suppress the desire to drink.

Even worse, every cough, sneeze, headache, sore or itchy throat is suspicious enough to make one feel uneasy, “is this COVID? I hope not!”

Then again, some people have been using their time productively, polishing up their musical skills and learning new languages. A few neighborhood kids play basketball, volleyball and frisbee from the safety of their homes.

Hygiene-wise, more people are now more self-aware that they need to wash their hands properly, use alcohol-based hand sanitizers, practice proper cough etiquette, wear masks and maintain safe physical distances from other people.

SOCIALLY DISTANT SOCIALIZING

There is nothing like a pandemic to make you realize how true it is that “no man is an island.” It is hard not to feel lonely and isolated when you are at home. Family members living in separate homes find themselves unable to visit each other, and they try their best to cope with the separation via video chats just to see one another.

All of a sudden, you find yourself agreeing to meet up online with people you haven't seen in decades. The video chats even go on for hours! People are now celebrating special occasions in socially acceptable, socially distant ways – e-numans, virtual parties to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, etc. In the USA, people are having drive-by parties. Some play online games together, while others do Netflix Watch Parties, a way to watch movies and chat as a group at the same time. It is not really something you would like or do normally, but these are crazy times and the need to feel connected has never been stronger.

Using video conferencing apps like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, even Facebook Messenger Rooms, plus Facebook Messenger and FaceTime are at an all-time high. There are friendships I thought were over and done with that are, all of a sudden, revived in the time of COVID-19.

Perhaps coronavirus made people realize how truly fleeting life can be. In the face of the unknown, people are feeling sentimental, remembering others and wanting to be remembered by others. The pandemic has definitely given everyone the time to do that.

THE RISE OF BAKERS, COOKS & GARDENERS

With all the fear, stress and anxiety happening right now, so many people have been busily baking, cooking

and gardening their way through this pandemic as those are surefire ways to relieve stress and anxiety. Being quarantined during a pandemic is the perfect time to learn new skills. With baking and cooking, you can end up with food items that you can sell easily to augment income. People have discovered the joys of baking from scratch or even baking from a mix, as evidenced by the shortage of flour, yeast and other baking ingredients in grocery stores. Gardening is also another way people have found comfort at this time. Some people tend to their gardens, giving away excess plants, and even selling some of them. Besides, gardening is an enjoyable aerobic exercise.

NANO-BUSINESSES: THE LITTLE ENGINE THAT COULD

Ever since the pandemic began, people who work on a “no work/no pay” basis have come up with creative solutions to make a fast buck. Nano-businesses that are mostly food-related have been popping up on Facebook. The market has responded positively in support of these home-based businesses. After all, Filipinos love food and we are always on the lookout for something tasty. Who can resist the desire to help small businesses? While big businesses are in a rush to get back on track, it is the small businesses that might not survive the pandemic. Unfortunately, the big companies that should have been treating their customers well, especially right now, are the ones charging exorbitant amounts without being considerate of those who actually did not earn anything during the quarantine period.

In the true spirit of *bayanihan*, many businesses have diverted their services into something that will help during the pandemic – producing PPEs, providing meals for the frontliners, and donating bicycles and bike accessories, among others.

ARMCHAIR ACTIVISM

In the ongoing confusion about whether to prioritize public health versus the economy, neither one is currently in the lead. It has been politics that has actually been winning out.

While I was hoping that fake news and misinformation would be held at bay in the face of something far deadlier, I was saddened to notice that COVID-19 was being used as a front to further political agenda. What is even sadder? Having Filipino public officials displaying their tone-deaf antics, or worse, expecting and getting VIP treatment.

Yet it becomes important to channel annoyance and indignation into something helpful and productive. Virtual protesting allows you to do it from the comfort of your home and that is something the people have truly taken to heart – from donating to the various institutions that are doing their best to help right now as a show of support to using social media in calling out pandemic-inappropriate behavior, vague guidelines and offensive practices.

With almost everyone at home, there is an increased use of social media, especially in expressing discontent over various issues like the Maria Ressa cyber libel conviction, the ABS-CBN shutdown, the Anti-Terrorism Bill, mass testing and VIP testing. The people have been expressing their displeasure and frustration using hashtags like:

#IStandwithMariaRessa
#DefendPressFreedom
#JunkTerrorBillNow
#FreeCebu7
#ActivismNotTerrorism
#JusticeForWinstonRagos
#NoToMartialLaw
#ProtectVico
#BigasHindiRehas,
#TulongHindiKulong
#LetLeniLead
#NoToABSCBNShutDown
#MassTestingPHNow
#NoToEmergencyPowers
#NoToVIPTesting and #KokoResign

People are at home, so now they have the time to challenge and engage with online trolls and they were actively doing so.

#CHECKYOURPRIVILEGE

No one knows how long this pandemic will go on. While we are all going through the same thing, people react differently. There will be those who will keep pointing out the silver linings. Some have “the sky is falling!” mindset that would be ideal in planning how to deal with the pandemic. Still a few are trying to go about their business as usual sans masks, acting as if the virus is gone, holding parties and going to beaches.

If you are one of the fortunate ones who can stay at home, then thank your lucky stars. If you need to deal with the people out there, be kind. While it is easy to get mad at people for going out there, lining up at

supermarkets, grocery stores and pharmacies, it would be good to remember one's privilege. More so when you have to deal with frontliners – they should be at home, yet they are at work. Staying at home is the least we can do to allow the frontliners to do what they need to do without overburdening them.

Fast forward to today, the COVID-19 cases in the country continue to be on the rise.

While this is a battle against COVID-19, let us not forget that the best weapons we can have in our arsenal to deal with the pandemic, as proven by the experiences of other countries, include extensive mass testing, comprehensive contact tracing, sufficient PPEs, adequate accredited COVID-19 testing laboratories nationwide, ample laboratory supplies and extraction kits, plus satisfactory cash assistance to those in need.

COVID-19 has brought out the best and worst in people, changing all of us in many simple yet compelling ways. We adapt, adopt, hope and pray that all of us will make it safely to the other side of this pandemic.



Maria Cecilia Lopez-Abitang, or Ces/Cez for short, is the blogger behind the food blog SnapHappy Foodie (www.snaphappyfoodie.com) created in 2013. In the U.S., she worked with PR firms to review restaurants, and attend food-related press trips, media

dinners and food festivals. She was the photographer behind Red Caramel Photography, a Connecticut-based photography business she co-owned with her husband, while working full-time in various industries for corporate and non-profit organizations.

With an MA in Corporate Communications and PR from Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, CT and a BA in Broadcast Communication from the University of the Philippines, she was also a member of The Association for Women in Communications and the Professional Photographers of America.

She is currently in Quezon City with her husband and two rescue furbabies. When she is not writing, she is usually busy baking up a storm or binge-watching on Netflix.

Managing COVID-19 in Ifugao through Social Media Response and Resilience in the Highlands

by **GEORGINA D. LUMAIG**

HISTORY

Ifugao is one of the provinces of the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR). Formerly part of Mountain Province, it was established on June 18, 1966 by virtue of Republic Act No. 4695, where four (4) provinces were created: Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga-Apayao, and Mountain Province. It has 11 municipalities: Aguinaldo, Alfonso Lista, Asipulo, Banaue, Hingyon, Hungduan, Kiangan, Lagawe (the capital town), Lamut, Mayoyao, and Tinoc.

Although considered a 4th class province (based on classification scheme by the government to determine

income categories of local government units; in this case, the average annual income of ten million pesos or more but less than fifteen million pesos), Ifugao is considered rich in natural resources, mountainous areas, forest and pasture land, and blessed with a temperate climate. It also boasts of 11 major rivers and 45 existing and potential tourist attractions, including the renowned UNESCO World Heritage rice terraces cluster sites: Nagacadan terraces in Kiangan, Hungduan terraces, Mayoyao terraces, Bangaan and Batad terraces in Banaue.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) puts the population of Ifugao at a little over 200,000 as of 2018,

with a literacy rate of 95.7%, and registered voters at almost 125,000 for the 2019 elections. Although many in Ifugao are farmers, woodcarvers, and weavers, there are also professional workers such as teachers, medical workers, doctors, lawyers, and small and medium entrepreneurs (SMEs).

COVID-19 LOOMS

When the SARS coronavirus COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) early this year, the Philippine government created the Inter Agency Task Force (IATF) on Emerging Infectious Diseases. On March 8, 2020, with the recommendation of the Department of Health (DOH), the Office of the President declared a State of Public Health Emergency, which will help facilitate mobilization of resources, ease processes including procurement of critical logistics and supplies, and intensify reporting.

The entire country was placed under a State of Calamity due to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 on March 16, and the entire Luzon was placed under Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ).

IFUGAO RESPONSE TO PANDEMIC

Ifugao immediately started its groundwork to implement measures for the ECQ, study its protocols, and educate the healthcare workers in the province, and at the same time inform and update the residents. One of the first things the local government did was to set up a Facebook page “COVID-19 Updates Province of Ifugao” on March 17. Dr. Joseph Bulayungan, Chief of the Ifugao General Hospital, first posted the Executive Order by Ifugao Governor Jerry Dalipog declaring the province under a State of Calamity due to Coronavirus 2019.

The Facebook page also posted the Executive Order of Governor Dalipog declaring Community Quarantine over the entire province and further guidelines for the management of the coronavirus situation. Together with the EO was the establishment of the Ifugao Provincial COVID-19 Task Force, with the Governor as the Chair, the Vice Governor as Vice Chair, the Board Members, Municipal Mayors, and Heads of offices as members of the Task Force.

Thus, began a regular engagement between the Task Force and Ifugaos who wanted to know more about the health crisis. Links to WHO and other reliable websites giving information on proper protocols during the ECQ were regularly shared.

Each municipality also took care of regularly posting on their own Facebook pages, pertinent information that were cascaded to their constituents, who were appreciative that their local government units were giving updates from the ground, including from national government agency sites.

One of the best practices for social media information dissemination has been from the Facebook page of the municipality of Banaue, with the name “Doc Wes”. Its mayor, medical doctor (with public health as background) Doc Wes, even before the Presidential Declaration of State Calamity due to COVID-19 and its lockdown, decided to announce on March 9, the cancellation of its Municipal Town Fiesta scheduled in April. This was to protect its residents from the then-new coronavirus from getting into their town. Three days later, he announced that the Banaue PNP and its Rural Health Unit (RHU) personnel would conduct simulation exercises of lockdown or worst-case scenarios, again, in anticipation of a real case entering Banaue. On March 13, he signed an Executive Order temporarily suspending all tourism related and several crowd drawing activities in Banaue, and setting guidelines in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

On the day the Philippine President announced the creation of the IATF, Doc Wes made a call for volunteers who may want to help the town fight COVID-19 together, with the plea, “Banaue needs you.” This prompted many townsfolk to lend their service and help Banaue be clear of the virus. In the FB post, he had also reminded his townsman “To fight COVID-19, use your HEAD (Handwash, Everybody, cooperate! Avoid crowds, and Do not panic). There was a constant reminder to “please read, understand, cooperate, and share information,” referring perhaps, to those not on social media or have no capacity even to listen to radio, watch television or read the newspaper.

Weekly market days are sacred in Ifugao. Usually on a weekend (Saturday or Sunday), this is when people get to buy from local farmers the freshest vegetables and meats. But amidst the lockdown, there had to be guidelines for Market Days as well. Doc Wes came out with clear regulations on March 20, in anticipation of the upcoming market day. Though it was not cancelled then, only 20-30 people were allowed at a time, for a maximum of 30 minutes. It was then that a HOTLINE was also posted, for any concerns regarding the coronavirus.

PLGU AND OTHER FACEBOOK PAGES

Noteworthy to mention were the early efforts of the Provincial Government led by Governor Jerry Dalipog, through its Facebook page “Office of the Provincial Government – Ifugao,” as early as March 10. It announced that the Ifugao Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council is a step forward to prevent and mitigate effects of the coronavirus, to help them in implementing plans for disaster risk reduction and management. At the same time, the post showed the complete list of each municipality’s Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (MDRRM) office and contact number, as well as the Municipal Health Office (MHO) hotlines. This became a good reference for those who had queries as to what exactly was going on.

The regular updates on the Ifugao Provincial FB page were carried over by the COVID-19 Ifugao page, which was helpful especially for those unaware of either page’s existence. It also reposted each municipality’s FB page posts. On March 13 for instance, Aguineldo Mayor Gaspar Chilagan announced the cancellation of its town fiesta, saying “prevention is always better than cure,” that despite zero case of COVID-19 in Ifugao, it was but prudent to cancel altogether any crowd-drawing activities.

In Kiangán, the Facebook pages “Kiangán LGU” and “MHO Kiangán” were actively posting news and information relevant to its residents. From the beginning of the ECQ, their tagline, “Your family’s health is Kiangán’s wealth,” held true as these pages made sure that information posted on these pages were relevant to helping disseminate important news, guidelines, reminders, both from local and national agencies. The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) posts from national office were constantly being shared, especially when the website lguvscovid.ph was launched, a portal in response to the COVID-19 prevention. It encouraged readers to go to their website for updates, and to explore best practices, download guidelines and templates that may assist in managing the pandemic.

On a non-government site, the Facebook page Ifugao Cyberspace Watchdog (ICW), which has been in existence for several years, and with 30,000+ followers, also became the go-to page for issues and concerns related to Ifugao management and information on the pandemic. Most members of this group are Ifugaos, living either in Ifugao, outside of Ifugao (in different parts of the Philippines), or outside of the Philippines.

Out of this page, a group of volunteers was founded, which created a Facebook Messenger groupchat (GC), which discussed issues relating to stranded Ifugaos outside of the province, brought upon by the ECQ.

The discussion arose from concerns that hundreds of Ifugaos, wanting to go back to the province, were helpless as the travel restriction had been implemented, making them stranded and “trapped.” Most of them were students, factory workers, construction workers, security guards, call center workers, and even professionals working out of Ifugao. Many of them had their jobs “on hold,” pending the lifting of the lockdown, or outright jobless as they were considered “No Work, No Pay” (NWNP) employees. The ICW volunteers agreed to first get a list of the “stranded,” classify them per municipality for easy monitoring, or per area of location (Baguio, Nueva Viscaya, Isabela, NCR {subdivided into different cities}, and Calabarzon). Next was to appeal for food donations and volunteer drivers to send the donations. It was a daunting task, but it somehow became not as difficult as anticipated, given the desire to lend assistance to their fellow province mates.

This author, who was one of the first to heed the call in the ICW GC and was able to gather donations from friends, asked permission to write about the plight of the stranded Ifugaos. A few days hence, an article in *Rappler* came out on April 2, 2020, “Stranded Ifugao Workers Plead for Assistance during Luzon Lockdown.” This prompted many more generous friends, fellow Ifugaos here and abroad, even strangers, to reach out to the volunteer group and lend assistance – both in kind and in cash.

A feature on PTV-4 *Cordillera* was also shown, on the current plight of those stranded outside of Ifugao, and the plea for them to be allowed to go back home.

The Office of Ifugao Congressman Solomon Chungalao coordinated with the ICW volunteer group to help distribute the food packs for those stranded in NCR, where volunteer drivers went house to house to make sure their “*kabobleyans*” (fellow Ifugaos/kababayans) were doing alright, and that they personally receive the food packs – rice, canned goods, noodles, hygiene kits. Over the course of the weeks, several “waves” of distribution were done, mostly from personal donations or even from NGOs who gave cash or food pack donations. The cash donations were evenly distributed among the stranded Ifugaos, sent via Palawan Express, bank transfer, or Gcash. In total, over P2 million worth

of cash and kind were given to the “kabobleyans” from whence it started its relief operations until the group “disbanded” its operations in mid-May.

LISTENING TO CALLS

The case of the stranded Ifugaos did not go unnoticed by the Provincial LGU (PLGU) as well as the municipal LGUs (MLGUs) as it became an issue between the PLGU and the concerned volunteers, as well as the stranded “kabobleyans” themselves. The PLGU had decided during its Task Force meeting in mid-April to not yet allow the stranded men and women to travel to the province. Ifugao at this point had still remained Covid-free, and the PLGU and MLGUs had been convinced that this was due to their strict measures in place in their respective municipalities. Lamut, the gateway to most towns of Ifugao, had decided to have a total lockdown in their borders, allowing only those with travel permits and quarantine passes to enter or pass through the towns.

Vegetable farmers from Tinoc were only allowed to pass through three times a week – Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and only with permits issued by the IATF. The farmers traded their produce at the Nueva Viscaya Agriculture Trading posts (NVAT).

These became the hot topics in the various Facebook pages where citizens were giving their opinions and why, or why not, their fellow Ifugaos should be allowed to go back to their respective municipalities. Aside from the lack of financial resources, they were jobless, away from their families, anxious and scared of the health crisis situation. Worse, there were at least two of the stranded who were “taken” by barangay officials where they were staying, because of violations on curfew or the required wearing of face mask.

This prompted the PLGU and MLGUs to step up their efforts to extend assistance to those who have been stranded. The Bayanihan Grant for provinces, aside from procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE), medical supplies, testing kits, and other related purchases, also included assistance to those who have been stranded. Some municipalities, like Banaue, realigned their budget to be able to quickly send P1000 each to the stranded students in Baguio and Nueva Viscaya, then later on to those in NCR and Calabarzon. Kiangnan also did the same, sending cash assistance to those stranded, through the efforts of LGU, NGOs and other donors.

All these activities were being posted in the various Facebook pages of the Ifugao provincial and municipal

government units, health units, the ICW Page, which were then being shared by many concerned, and thankful citizens.

REGULAR GOVERNMENT UPDATES

The Philippine Information Agency (PIA) – Ifugao also has had its Facebook page, with about 18,000+ followers, which posts mostly government-related news and information. The Laging Handa daily briefing by the Philippine Communications Operations Office (PCOO) is posted real time in this page, and Executive Orders by the Office of the President, by the Provincial Government, or by Municipal Mayors are also immediately shared in this page. Donations to government and health units, and to the citizens, accompanied by photos, are posted in PIA-Ifugao page.

On April 25, 2020, the IATF and the President of the Philippines announced the lifting of the ECQ only in certain parts of the country effective May 1. NCR remained under ECQ, but Ifugao (and most of CAR except Benguet) would be shifting to a general community quarantine (GCQ). GCQ meant gatherings may be allowed up to maximum 10 people, public transport may be allowed with safe distancing, but not between ECQ areas, a skeletal workforce may be put in place in government and private offices.

NCR and other regions will remain under ECQ until May 15th.

IFUGAO RECORDS FIRST COVID-19 CASE

It was this same day that Ifugao recorded its first COVID-19 patient, a 65 year old male from Lamut, with no immediate travel history, but had contact with a positive COVID-19 patient previously. This news came on the heels of the province gearing up to accept stranded Ifugaos to travel back to the province, announcing that quarantine facilities were being prepared and the health units anticipating a surge of PUMs (persons under monitoring) due to the required 14-day mandatory quarantine.

Having the first COVID-19 positive patient in Ifugao prompted the PLGU and its Task Force to announce, after consultations, to temporarily suspend travel of the stranded Ifugaos back to the province, as Lamut had immediately requested to implement another total lockdown. All the MLGUs and its municipal disaster risk reduction management (MDRRM) offices made sure they disinfected public areas and posted reminders to do the safety and health protocols: frequent handwashing

(for 20 seconds), use of face mask in public, practice physical distancing, and staying home.

Within the next two weeks, however, the PLGU and MLGUs, which had been earnestly preparing their quarantine facilities, posted announcements that the stranded citizens outside of the province would be allowed to go home, through efforts of both the government and the ICW volunteers. It was, at first a logistical nightmare, especially since NCR was still under ECQ, and no public transport was available. Volunteers had to pick up those going home in their respective areas. Hotlines were set up and posted in the various Facebook pages, for both Globe and Smart phones, where they had to call or text to first register their names, location, and contact numbers, and in turn, these information had to be verified.

The first set of stranded Ifugaos were able to reach the province on the first week of May, and the succeeding days saw groups of stranded men and women going back to their respective municipalities, for the mandatory quarantine in select quarantine facilities, closely monitored by healthcare workers, with free food and lodging. The province called this *Oplan Gawid* (gawid meaning to “go home”). Guidelines for the Oplan Gawid were frequently posted, with a Municipal Directory for concerns and inquiries.

As ECQ was lifted in NCR on May 12, placing it under a Modified ECQ (MECQ), where gatherings will be allowed but highly restricted (maximum of five), public transport still not allowed, schools are closed but government offices may allow skeletal work force and Work From Home (WFH) employees, the second COVID-19 case in Ifugao was reported on the same day. A Philippine coast guard member based in Manila, arrived in Lamut on May 1. He had symptoms, was tested, and found positive for COVID-19.

COVID-19 CASES SLOWLY RISE

Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) had also started coming back to the Philippines, as there was a projected 300,000 who were to lose their jobs abroad. Government, through the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), coordinating with IATF, had the daunting task to repatriate waves of OFWs back into the country.

As per the IATF protocols, returning residents of the country from abroad are also required to do mandatory 14-day quarantine, undergo testing, and upon negative results, may be allowed to go back to their respective provinces, in close coordination with the PLGUs.

When travel restrictions were eased (but not lifted) to Ifugao, the OFWs also started going home. Despite the mandatory quarantine in Manila, three OFWs were found to be positive (from various dates in June). As of June 18, the first two COVID-19 patients have recovered, and three remain in stable condition in hospital facility.

None of the stranded Ifugaos – from Baguio, NCR, Calabarzon, and other parts of the country, were found to be COVID-19 positive.

EFFECTIVE INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

What were the information portals that were most important and effective during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Aside from the Facebook pages mentioned, the Department of Health Cordillera for Health Development Center maintained a website (caro.doh.gov.ph) that regularly tracked COVID-19 cases in the region. Cordillera is one of the regions that reported very few cases of COVID-19; its first one was in Abra on March 14. As of June 18, a total of 108 cases have been reported in the Region, with only one death.

The Ifugao Provincial DOH Office maintains a Facebook page, which echoes what DOH Cordillera posts on its website. Although informative as it posts “New Normal” guidelines, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), COVID-19 Tracking, it is not as active as the DOH website, as well as the PLGU and MLGU FB pages.

The Facebook pages of the Official Provincial Governor, with almost 9000 followers, and the COVID-19 Updates Ifugao, with 3600 followers, followed by the pages of Mayor Wesley Dulawan of Banaue (Doc Wes) with 2300 followers, and the Kiangnan LGU with 3100 followers, have been consistent in posting regular updates, information, reminders pertaining to the pandemic. Engagement from followers in these pages, from questions, to sharing of photos, to appeals for assistance, show that this method of information dissemination have been effective.

With the restrictions on physical distancing, these social media portals have become a necessary tool for government officials to reach out to their constituents. Governor Dalipog and a few mayors have been interviewed on local channels (both television, Facebook, and radio) as their way of communicating with the people. ICW volunteers’ relentless efforts to push government into sending assistance to the stranded Ifugaos were heeded, allowing representatives to attend

their Task Force meetings to give suggestions. The list of those who have been stranded were shared to the Task Force, making their work much easier in tracking them down.

BRIDGING SOCIAL DISTANCE WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

Relationship-building through social media became necessary and was welcomed. Authenticity of those in government, of the volunteers, of the other citizens were scrutinized, as what emerges during this ongoing health crisis is the compassion of both the citizens and its elected officials and leaders. Access to information – immediately in social media and other digital forms – is key to any crisis. Good leaders are said to be honest, competent, inspiring and forward-looking. They are adaptable to change. In this case, Ifugao leaders dealing with the health crisis were able to somehow step up and have been able to effectively lead the people.

Immediacy (to inform), proactiveness (to allay fears), responsiveness (to show concern), clarity in communication, and genuineness give people confidence and strength to weather the crisis. Being good examples – wearing of face mask, practicing physical distancing, discouraging mass gatherings – inspire the people to do the same.

It is said that Ifugao, with its rich culture and traditions, kind, compassionate, and caring people, is mostly protected from the pandemic, not just because of the climate, location, and healthy eating habits, but also because they are faithful followers and intelligent citizens who know better than to risk their lives, and the lives of their loved ones. They grasp news and information easily, share and discuss with others, and discern which are worth accepting and adapting. The resolve to minimize the incidence of COVID-19 in their hometowns remain, as they continue to guard their turf, while at the same time easing into the new normal.


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Georgina “Gina” Lumauig is a freelance Communications Specialist, doing mostly public relations, media relations, and Events Management. She is also a writer, contributing to various online media organizations. She sits on the board of the University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication Alumni Association (UPCMCAA) where she previously served as President. She is member of the Freelance Writers Guild of the Philippines (FWGP) where is chairs the Media and Communications Committee. She was former Executive Director of the UPCMC Foundation, Inc. She worked as Director of Communications for Neuro, Inc, a Singapore-based Neurotechnology startup, advocating brain health. For six years she was Communications Director of Peptarsus, Inc, a trade events company. She is also a mother, educator, perennial volunteer, and Proudly Ifugao.

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Due to restrictions brought about by the pandemic, the Philippine Social Science Council has decided to update its call for papers and open a call for extended abstracts instead.

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One Social Science Journal is accepting extended abstracts of scholarly works in the fields of political science, linguistics, psychology, sociology, public administration, communication and other related disciplines. For the initial volume, the Journal is inviting contributions from researchers, professionals, and students on any aspect of ethics and data privacy, including, but not limited to the following:

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ABOUT THE PHOTO

This picture was taken on August 4, 2020, a day before the return of stricter quarantine protocols and five months since the Enhanced Community Quarantine was first announced in March. The MECQ has triggered many to brave the outside world and patiently line up in supermarkets, with physical distancing that makes the queues snake for hours, just to stock up on essentials to get them through for the two-week lockdown. But this is just one of the many scenes and realities that "Life in Lockdown" has brought upon the lives of Filipinos. Many have been struggling to balance the need to stay safe at home and earn a living. Most of them do not actually have an option but to risk their lives, as depicted in this cover, so that they could survive.