

**PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY THE BARANGAY FRONT LINERS ON THE ONSET OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**Shirley P. Ayeo-co\***

Faculty, College of Criminology, Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology

**Elenita R. Paet\***

Faculty, College of Management and Business Technology, Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology

**Lynsthe M. Repoyo\***

Faculty, College of Criminology, Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology

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**ABSTRACT**

The Study determined the problems encountered by barangay front liners on the onset of COVID-19 pandemic and actions taken to address such problems. It is directed during the pandemic and accumulated information through precaution interviews. It is directed to investigate the lived encounters of front-liners in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija, and how they acclimated to the radical change in the workplace, wellbeing hazard openness to Coronavirus, and the danger of threat brought about by various components during local area isolate. It additionally decides the particular difficulties in the workplace and the progressions in policing systems, and how they adapt. In conclusion, this study is directed to delineate what these encounters and means will improve arrangements and the advancement of policing methodologies in future emergencies.

It uses qualitative research in a narrative approach, which examines how stories are told to understand how participants perceive and make sense of their experiences. The respondents were 45 barangay front liners composed of; 18 barangay tanods, 9 barangay chairman, 9 barangay secretary, and 9 barangay health workers from selected barangays of Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija, Philippines. Those front liners of selected barangays were faced with challenges brought up by residents' reactions and responses during the pandemic, and such challenges were positively addressed by the barangay front liners.

The barangay should continue enforcing their practices on safety protocols and strengthen barangay front liners knowledge, skills, and attitude in dealing with challenges encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic as recommendations.

**Key Words:** Pandemic, COVID19, Front-liners, Challenges, Intervention, Barangay Front-liners.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Under the Philippines Covid-19 Response Plan, On 30 January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) for novel coronavirus after the Chinese authorities confirmed that they identified a novel (new) coronavirus (COVID-19) in Wuhan City.

The most prompt reports of a Covid disease in individuals happened in the last part of the 1920s when intense respiratory contamination of tamed chickens arose in North America. Arthur Schalk and M.C. Hawn in 1931 made the primary point by point report which portrayed another respiratory contamination of chickens in North Dakota. The disease of new-conceived chicks was

described by heaving and sluggishness with high death paces of 40–90%. Leland David Bushnell and Carl Alfred Brandly confined the infection that caused the contamination in 1933. The infection was then known as an irresistible bronchitis infection (IBV). Charles D. Hudson and Fred Robert Beaudette developed the infection without precedent for 1937. The example came to be known as the Beaudette strain. In the last part of the 1940s, two more creature Coviids, JHM that causes mind illness (murine encephalitis) and mouse hepatitis infection (MHV) that causes hepatitis in mice were found. It was not understood at the time that these three distinctive infections were connected.<sup>2</sup>

Human Coviids were found during the 1960s utilizing two distinct strategies in the United Kingdom and the United States. E.C. Kendall, Malcolm Bynoe, and David Tyrrell working at the Common Cold Unit of the British Medical Research Council gathered a novel regular cold infection assigned B814 in 1961. The infection couldn't be developed utilizing standard strategies which had effectively developed rhinoviruses, adenoviruses, and other known normal cold infections.<sup>3</sup> In 1965, Tyrrell and Bynoe effectively developed the novel infection by sequentially going it through the organ culture of human early-stage windpipe. The new developing strategy was acquainted with the lab by Bertil Hoorn. The segregated infection when intranasal vaccinated into volunteers caused a cold and was inactivated by ether which showed it had a lipid envelope. Dorothy Hamre and John Procknow at the University of Chicago secluded a novel cold from clinical understudies in 1962. The detached and developed the infection in kidney tissue culture, assigning it 229E. The epic infection caused a cold in volunteers and, as B814, was inactivated by ether.

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic was first announced in Wuhan, China in December 2019. Around the world, more than 8 million individuals had been determined to have the infection and more than 439,000 had kicked the bucket as of the eighteenth of June 2020 (Hopkins 2020).<sup>4</sup> As the novel infection continues to spread, medical care experts across the globe are confronted with the remarkable circumstance of settling on troublesome choices and working under outrageous pressing factors. Numerous wellbeing frameworks were gotten ignorant by the COVID-19 pandemic prompting frenzy and disarray in endeavors to battle against the contamination. This disarray prompted disputable choices about who ought to be dealt with or tried with the accessible scant assets. In a nation like Italy, lists, for example, age was utilized in concluding who ought to get treatment and who ought not (Han et al., 2020).<sup>5</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic is a phenomenal emergency that carries with it a ton of issues, particularly for poor people and minimized areas of our general public. The individuals who have the most no money and different methods have the hardest time managing the pandemic's effects on wellbeing and administrations, loss of pay, restricted versatility, and different battles.<sup>6</sup>

Upon the Spaniards' appearance in the late sixteenth century, they found an efficient settlement of local Filipinos called "barangays"—the name barangay got from balangay, a Malay word "boat." Verifiably, the barangay is a moderately little local area of around 50 to 100 families, each under a Datu authority or a tribal leader (Borlaza and Hernandez, 2021).<sup>7</sup> The datu additionally fills in as the Leader, Official, and Boss Equity of the local area. It is additionally the president of the military on the combat zone and empowers composition and détente in international concerns (Manarang, 2011). The barangay towns comprise thirty to one hundred

houses and the populace. Upright up 'til today, the barangays still exist and are known as the Neighborhood Government's littlest unit. It fills in as the essential carrying out and arranging unit of government projects, plans, projects, strategies, and activities locally, and as a discussion wherein the aggregate perspectives on individuals might be communicated, solidified, and considered, and where questions might be agreeably settled (Nearby Government Code of the Philippines, 1991).<sup>8</sup>

It is driven by the Punong Barangay, which upholds all laws and laws; keeps everything under control; guarantees the conveyance of fundamental administrations; implements laws and guidelines identifying with contamination control and assurance of the climate; embraces measures to forestall and control the multiplication of vagrants; and receives measures to forestall and annihilate drug misuse, youngster misuse, and adolescent misconduct (Punongbayan, 2018). With the assistance of the Barangay Police or Barangay Tanod Detachment, which is viewed as one of the Barangay Harmony and Request Council (BPOC), they guarantee harmony and request win in the barangay (Panelo, 2013).

In January, the first three cases were recorded in the Philippines, all with confirmed travel history to Wuhan City. On 5 March, the first case of COVID-19 with no travel history abroad was confirmed, indicating the presence of local transmission.

In real situation to the call of President Rodrigo Duterte, the military and law essential governments including the barangay tanod, are in control to exercise with the local ar sequester in various rooms of the country and the grave implementation of wearing look coverings and face protections and social separating in relieving the perils and expanding case in point of COVID-19 (Recuenco, 2020). Their responsibility similarly embodies the investigation of isolate moves past the executives of designated marks observance the age restriction to notice the base upbeat guidelines (Caliwan, 2020). Barangay tanods are not cleared from the danger of the COVID-19 due care to being presented to world districts alongside upbeat fortunes these movement liners are additionally a contumely topic from violators. As provided particulars concerning the GMA organization's dead person place two barangay tanods were thrashed, deed fry damages from an isolate ravisher and its family in Baliuag, Bulacan (Salazar, 2020).

Notwithstanding versatile articles similarly establish that near barangay tanods use unneeded powerfulness rearing to mercilessness during the widespread these strains of being a forefront additionally bother their pecuniary requirements realizing that near Barangay laborers are sub-the latest pay permitted by law laborers (Ismael, 2020).

The inescapable of Coronavirus uncovered the different weaknesses inside our authoritative response, medical care framework, and the country's general readiness for public crises. It additionally influenced the number of our front-liners working relentlessly since the main month of the public lockdown.

In real life to the call of President Rodrigo Duterte, the military and law authorization authorities, including the barangay tanod, are in control to work with the local area isolate in various spaces of the country and the severe execution of wearing face covers and face safeguards,

and social separating in moderating the dangers and expanding instances of Coronavirus (Recuenco, 2020).

Their obligation likewise incorporates the investigation of isolate passes, the board of designated spots, watching the time limitation to notice the base wellbeing principles (Caliwan, 2020). Barangay tanods are not absolved from the danger of the Coronavirus due to being presented to public zones. Besides wellbeing hazards, these front liners are likewise an abuse subject from violators. As given an account of the GMA organization's true site, two barangay tanods were pummeled, accepting minor wounds from an isolated violator and its family in Baliuag, Bulacan (Salazar, 2020).<sup>9</sup>

Notwithstanding, various articles likewise demonstrate that most barangay tanods utilize inordinate power, raising to mercilessness, during the pandemic. These difficulties of being a cutting edge likewise bother their monetary requirements, realizing that most Barangay laborers are sub-the lowest pay permitted by law workers (Ismael, 2020).

This study is directed during the pandemic and accumulated information through precaution interviews. It is directed to investigate the lived encounters of front-liners in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija, and how they acclimated to the radical change in the workplace, wellbeing hazard openness to Coronavirus, and the danger of threat brought about by various components during local area isolate. It additionally decides the particular difficulties in the workplace and the progressions in policing systems, and how they adapt. In conclusion, this study is directed to delineate what these encounters and means will improve arrangements and the advancement of policing methodologies in future emergencies.

This study is used to determine the problems encountered by barangay front liners on the onset of COVID-19 pandemic and the actions taken to address such challenges.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The study is a qualitative research that used the narrative approach, it examines how stories are told to understand how participants perceive and make sense of their experiences<sup>[10]</sup>, and thus this is the best method to describe the live experience challenges and actions taken by the barangay front liners concerning COVID-19. The respondents were 21 barangay front liners composed of; 45 barangay tanods, 9 barangay chairman, 9 barangay secretary, and 9 barangay health workers from selected barangays of Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija, Philippines.

At the onset of the pandemic, people tend to disagree with the safety protocols such as wearing a facemask, face shields, maintaining social distancing, and others, as such the government law enforcement arms down to the barangay level had a hard time enforcing such protocols.

At the same time, restrictions were laid down by the national government down to the barangay level, peoples' movements were restricted. Thus, barangay front-liners were mobilized to enforce such restrictions. The study revealed that barangay Tanods as force multipliers were tasked to conduct checkpoints, contact tracings, mandate traffic, monitor possible positive COVID19 cases, and sanitize the whole barangay during the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic hammered the barangay front liners to deal with the unseen enemy. Despite the danger of getting infected, they kept their ground to perform their duties and responsibility, not only as peacekeepers but also as safety officers.

The study revealed that barangay front-liners were challenged with the difficult behaviors, defying protocols, and the unfriendly response of some residents.

According to the research of Melissa De Witte of Stanford University, The most common reason for failing to social distance was working requirements for non-essential industries (28.2 percent). Another frequent explanation for not following orders included worries about mental and physical well-being. Some 20.3 percent said they engaged in social, physical, or routine activities to manage unease from sheltering in place, such as "cabin fever." As one respondent said, "Staying in my home 24 hours of every day is depressing." Another emphasized, "I have to get outside now and then for my own sanity." Other rationales that people cited for failure to comply with social distancing included the belief that other precautions, such as only hand-washing, were sufficient (18.8 percent). Some 13.9 percent of people said they wanted to continue everyday activities and 12.7 percent believed that society is overreacting. This study has collected a total of 20,734 responses to a survey that was posted on social media networks Twitter and Facebook, as well as the neighborhood social networking service NextDoor.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, another research from Neda SoleimanvandiAzar, et.al entitled "Explaining the reasons for not maintaining the health guidelines to prevent COVID-19 in high-risk jobs: a qualitative study in Iran" found out that 4 main categories and 13 sub-categories were obtained, including individual factors (personality traits, lack of self-efficacy, little knowledge of the disease and how to observe health norms related to it, misconceptions about health), structural factors (difficulty of access to health supplies, lack of supportive environment, weak laws and supervision, the poor performance of officials and national media), economic factors (economic costs of living, lack of government economic support), Socio-cultural factors (learning, cultural beliefs, social customs, and rituals).<sup>12</sup>

<b>Problems Encountered on the onset of COVID19 Pandemic</b>	<b>Actions Taken to addressed Problems Encountered</b>
<p><b>1. Difficult Behavior</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Masungit (ill tempered, Stern)</li> <li>b. Madalas Pasaway (Stubborn)</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Positive Behavior</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Pakiusapan (pleading)</li> <li>b. pagpasensyahan at nagtitimpi (Understand)</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Defying Protocols</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. hindi madalas mag facemask (not frequent wearing of facemask)</li> <li>c. ang di pagdistancia sa maraming tao (not observing social distancing when gathered)</li> <li>d. mga di sumusunod sa alituntunin (not following rules)</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. Following Protocols</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Pagsunod sa alituntunin ukol sa pag iwas sa COVID19 (Following Rules)</li> <li>b. paliwanagan sa safety (Explain Safety)</li> </ul>

<p><b>3. Unfriendly Response</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. may nakakagalit dahil sa mga ipinagbabawal (they hate you because of the prohibitions)</li> <li>b. nagtatampo sila pag nasisita (sulking when corrected)</li> <li>c. inaaway at minumura (harassed and bad-mouthed)</li> </ul>	<p><b>3. Friendly Response</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. maintaining good rapport</li> <li>b. referral to the barangay chairman</li> </ul>
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**Difficult Behaviors**

Respondent A pointed out that one of the most challenging tasks during the pandemic was to deal with the difficult behavior of some residents, which was affirmed by respondent B who answered "may mga masusungit" and respondent C added "madalas pasaway". It implies that barangay front liners during the pandemic experienced unfavorable encounters due to the difficult behaviors of the residents.

**Defying Protocols**

Another challenges faced by the barangay front liners is the act of defying safety protocols by some of the residents, where majority of the respondents synonymously answered "hindi madalas mag facemask", "ang di pagdistancia sa maraming tao", and "mga di sumusunod sa alituntunin".

In accord with ForbesWomen authored by Brianna Wiest, it is stated there that anxiety affects our ability to think clearly, make decisions or solve problems. The influx of uncertainty could be contributing to a denial of reality or factual information.<sup>13</sup>

Also, as reported by Jay Van Bavel, an associate professor of psychology at New York University, people disobey rules because of individualism versus collectivism. He said that there is higher individualism in some countries, which is about expressing someone’s sense of identity and who they are as an individual. It is identified that that people in individualist cultures tend to reject rules and ignore attempts by public health authorities to nudge behavior change with risk messages or appeals for altruism. For example, wearing a mask will help protect others, people in individualistic cultures just careless.

While on the other hand, in collective cultures, people are more likely to do what's best for the group.<sup>14</sup>

What makes some people disobey the rules?

**Unfriendly Response**

The last challenge encountered by the barangay front-liners is the unfriendly response from some of the residents, respondent D narrates that "may nakakagalit dahil sa mga ipinagbabawal", where some residents don’t want to obey the minimum protocols intended to prevent the spreading

of the virus, and when confronted, indwellers will show untimely and unfavorable responses. It was corroborated by the answer of respondent E “nagtatampo sila pag nasisita”.

In addition respondent, F narrates the experienced of being harassed and bad-mouthed by a resident when he was advised to follow protocols, where the barangay chairman intervened and explained the importance of abiding with the safety protocols to the resident where the latter agreed to follow rules, but this was an isolated case.

Further, the study revealed that the challenges encountered by the barangay front-liners were isolated cases and do not represent the whole constituents of Barangay Valle Cruz.

Based on the study entitled “Using social and behavioural science to support COVID-19 pandemic response” by Jay J. Van Bavel, et. Al. Said that the experience of fear and threat has ramifications not only for how people think about themselves but also how they feel about and react to others—in particular, out-groups. For instance, being threatened with the disease is often associated with higher levels of ethnocentrism; greater fear and perceived threat are associated with greater intolerance and punitive attitudes toward out-groups. Highlighting group boundaries can undermine empathy with those who are socially distant, and increase dehumanization or punishment.<sup>15</sup>

An article by Jenna Birch, an author of health magazine states that lack of personal connection makes it feel unreal. It is affirmed that Experience is the most brutal teacher. If they know someone who’s come down with COVID-19 or passed away from it, or if they are close to someone who is directly facing the virus—front-line workers, essential workers—they are more likely to adhere to the guidelines...whereas others might not grasp the need. Those who have not been faced with the aftermath of the virus have not experienced the reality, so they are unable to see the importance of social distancing.<sup>16</sup>

To overcome the challenges encountered, the study revealed that barangay front liners treated such challenges with; positive behavior, following protocols, and friendly response.

### **Positive Behavior**

Despite unfavorable experiences by the barangay front liners, they tend to adjust and understand the residents' behavior, explain the safety protocols, talk to erring residents, and in some instances bring the matter to the barangay chairman's attention. As it is narrated by respondent A “pakiusapan”, and affirmed by the answer of respondent B “pagpasensyahan at nagtitimpi”.

This can be based on the study entitled “Positive psychology interventions: a meta-analysis of randomized controlled studies” by Linda Bolier, et. Al. This resulted in a meta-analysis that shows positive psychology interventions can be effective in the enhancement of subjective well-being and psychological well-being, as well as in helping to reduce depressive symptoms.<sup>17</sup>

Positive psychology encompasses both treatment and prevention. PPIs can be useful for treating depression, anxiety, and stress disorders (Seligman, Rashid, & Parks, 2006). This fact was validated in a study conducted on terminally ill adolescent patients. The purpose of the experiment

was to evaluate how positive thinking influenced coping strategies and helped the patients battle their disease with resilience.<sup>18</sup>

### Following Protocol

Researchers found out that to address the above-mentioned challenges on defying safety protocols, barangay front liners set themselves as examples by strictly following the safety protocols they implement, as respondent C answered "Pagsunod sa alituntunin ukol sa pag iwas sa COVID19". Respondent D also answered "paliwanagan sa safety", respondent D explained that residents tend to follow when lectured with safety.

On the other hand, respondent E gives importance to cleanliness as their response to the challenges, as he answered "panatilihin ang kalinisan". Further, this action taken in barangay Valle Cruz is part of the cooperation with the national government in combatting the spread of Covid-19, and prevention of its possible new strains of the said virus. The very first measure the residents' practice is cleanliness. As advised by the Department of Health (DOH) people should wear face masks and face shields, Sanitize hands, and ensure good indoor ventilation and airflow.<sup>19</sup>

### Friendly Response

The public officials are untiringly informing the people in their jurisdiction to follow the minimum protocols set by the government, and making sure to carry it out by employing good rapport. Likewise, unpleasant behaviors of the residents are handled with prudence and if they can no longer handle the situation, the barangay captain will be informed and will do an action, like reprimand the obstinate individuals. This technique if used properly, can be a punishment method that is useful for decreasing inappropriate behavior. A reprimand can be a punishment to a person if it is considered unpleasant and reduces the behavior being reprimanded.<sup>21</sup>

## 2. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Those front liners of Barangay Valle Cruz were faced with problems brought up by residents' reactions and responses during the pandemic, and such problems were positively addressed by the barangay front liners.

That the barangay should continue enforcing their practices on safety protocols and strengthen barangay front liners knowledge, skills, and attitude in dealing with problems that might be encountered during pandemics as recommendations.

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