



EXPERIENCES OF HEALTH WORKERS AMIDST COVID 19 PANDEMIC IN DAGUPAN CITY

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Abstract: The study aimed to comprehend the life experiences of health workers during the COVID-19 pandemic in Dagupan City, focusing on their tasks, especially in caring for COVID-19 patients amidst numerous challenges. This research aimed to prompt the government to develop comprehensive solutions for health management, covering manpower, facilities, supplies, equipment, and action plans.

Thirty health workers from a private hospital in Dagupan City participated as respondents, selected through non-probability sampling. Interviews were conducted using various communication platforms to collect information on their lived experiences. Additionally, the researchers documented necessary information, adhering to transparency and data privacy regulations.

Utilizing descriptive and phenomenological designs with statistical analysis, the study revealed that physical and psychological distress was the primary challenge faced by health workers in Dagupan City during the pandemic. Ten out of 30 respondents reported significant impacts, including sleeplessness, extended duty hours, wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), and irregular meal times.

The research offers timely and relevant recommendations tailored to the needs of health workers in the private hospital in Dagupan City. These recommendations, integral to hospital management and individual experiences, aim to empower and foster growth among health workers and the institution. The researcher formulated these suggestions to align with the overarching goal of assisting the government in implementing programs that support health workers.

Index Terms – Covid-19, Health Workers, Dagupan City.

I. INTRODUCTION

Amidst the obstacles presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Health Organization (WHO) persisted in its quest for remedies on a worldwide scale. The health sector worked with partners to improve platforms for response and readiness on a global scale. Diverse governmental reactions changed how the pandemic progressed, affecting the welfare and health of people everywhere. Important to health systems, healthcare and care workers were vulnerable to infections, illnesses, and deaths. Between January 2020 and May 2021, an estimated 80,000–180,000 health workers may have died from COVID-19.

The extremely contagious virus that caused the pandemic began in Wuhan, China, and quickly spread throughout the world, marking a watershed in the history of global health. Health care professionals were on the front lines of treating the infected, having a significant influence on economies and people. Physicians and nurses faced difficulties as a result of the COVID-19 patient rush, particularly those who were dealing with pressures that impacted the quality of patient treatment. Serious medical staff exhaustion and a scarcity of nurses were observed in Seoul, South Korea, which resulted in resignations due to overwork.

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) highlighted the vital role that frontline healthcare professionals play globally by reporting concerning rates of infections, burnout, and weariness among nurses. Personal protective equipment (PPE) problems were widespread around the globe, endangering healthcare personnel. These problems ranged from insufficient training in China to shortages in the US. The lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) in low-income communities made fighting the infection more difficult.

The health crisis in the Philippines was made worse by an estimated 23,000-nurse shortfall. The researcher, a general surgeon, carried out a timely study on the experiences of people assigned to the Intensive Care Unit after realizing the hardship of healthcare professionals. The study's goal was to make recommendations for actions that would help health professionals overcome obstacles in their path to better supporting COVID-19 patients. Due to a lack of available reference material, the researcher invited healthcare professionals to submit ideas for enhancing safety, working conditions, and support from the government and hospital administration. In order to fully document the experiences of healthcare professionals working in a private hospital, questionnaires, interviews, and supporting documentation were used in the data gathering process.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a case study research designed on the experiences of health workers amidst COVID-19 for calendar year 2021. The objectives of the study were to narrate the lived experiences of health workers amidst the pandemic in Dagupan City and to identify the government support programs for the health workers amidst the pandemic. This study used Qualitative techniques and phenomenological design that signifies life experiences. To propose measures to solve the prevailing problems experienced by the health workers, and finally, to determine the implications of the study to health management.

A case study is a research process designed to learn about a subject, an event, or an organization. It may focus on one (1) observation or many. It can examine a series of events or a single case that tells the story and has a conclusion (Mohan, 2021). This study deals with the experiences of health workers amidst the COVID-19 pandemic in Dagupan City which depicts the events encountered by health workers.

3.1 Population and Sample

The participants were chosen based on deliberate selection in order to collect data for the study. Respondents were chosen using this non-probability sampling technique based on the criteria set by the researchers. In this case, the investigations specifically involved the Health Workers in the Private Hospital in Dagupan to understand the lived experiences amidst pandemic and how the government supports the health workers in terms of programs. To wit, the participants in this study were thirty (30) health workers assigned to a private hospital in Dagupan City. The breakdown of the thirty (30) respondents was: six (6) doctors, six (6) nurses, six (6) respiratory therapists, six (6) nursing attendants, and six (6) institutionalized workers. The thirty (30) respondents were assigned at the Intensive Care Unit where the patients inflicted with COVID-19 were being treated.

3.2 Data and Sources of Data

In terms of data gathering methodology, the researchers were use three (3) instruments such as: questionnaire, interview, and documentary analysis.

Interview. In this study, it was face-to-face communication that was organized to collect information from the respondents. An interview guide was drafted to have similar questions to the respondents to get their responses. It comprised the experiences of health workers amidst the pandemic and the problems encountered by the health workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interview provided more details in terms of their experiences inside their working area, this also served as an opportunity to have a follow-up question to the respondents. The interview is based on the collecting date and time availability of the respondents so that it would not affect their major responsibility in the hospital and this can be done in a closed area. The information that was gathered supports the answer provided in the questionnaire.

Documentary Analysis. As used in the study, this refers to the collection of information by examining available records and documents in hospital management, particularly on the profile of the respondents. The researcher formulated a letter to the hospital administrator to inform and ask permission subject to approval to conduct research that involved the health workers assigned to patients inflicted with COVID-19. Books manuals, periodicals, and unpublished theses were reviewed and included which are similar to the study as part of the literature and studies of this case study.

3.3 Theoretical framework

The research described the experiences of health workers amidst COVID-19 in Dagupan City for calendar year 2021. The objectives of the study were to narrate the experiences of health workers amidst the pandemic in Dagupan City and to identify the government support programs for the health workers amidst the pandemic. To propose measures to solve the prevailing problems experienced by the health workers, and finally, to determine the implications of the study to health management.

In an instant it became a global phenomenon when COVID-19 was experienced in different parts of the continent which affected greatly the country's economy and deaths in the population. The health care workers as the front liners are to provide care to the sick and those afflicted with the deadly virus. The doctors and nurses are greatly affected by the outpouring of patients having respiratory problems who turn out to be infected with COVID-19.

According to, Villar et al., (2021) the surge of patients during the pandemic caused great challenges to the health-care workforce. Because of the increasing number of COVID-19 patients, nurses were deployed and assigned to different units outside of their nursing experience and background. Therefore, they had to adapt to new policies, report to new supervisors, work with new colleagues, be oriented with the physical layout, and learn new procedures. Nurses had to adjust to this new situation in a short period of time. The sudden change of roles and responsibilities brought a lot of stress to the nurses.

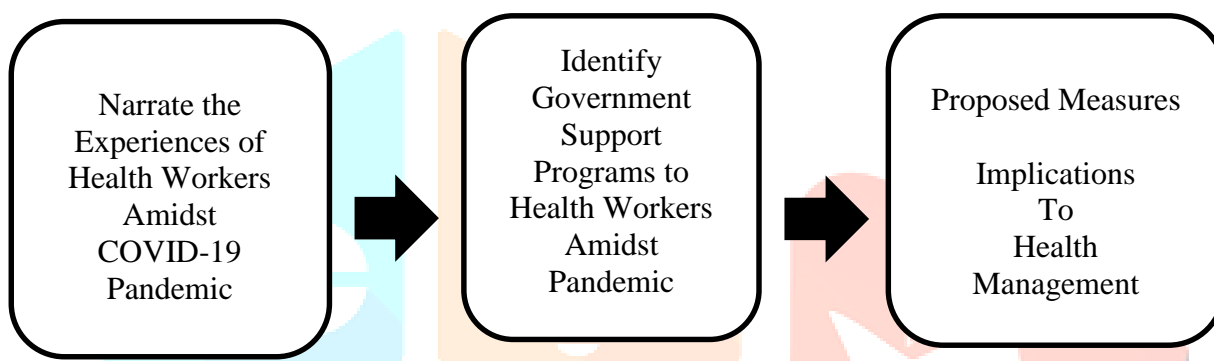


Figure 1. Paradigm of the Study

3.4 Statistical tools and econometric models

The statistical treatments that were utilized in the research were frequency distribution, percentage, and ranking of the lived experiences of health workers amidst COVID-19 in Dagupan City.

Frequency Distribution. In this study, frequency distribution refers to the number of respondents having similar responses on the demographic profile of the health workers in Dagupan City along with age, sex, status, educational attainment, position, and length of service. The experiences of health workers amidst the pandemic, and the problems encountered by the health workers amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ranking. As used in the study, this refers to the arrangement of answers from highest to the lowest. This was used to describe the demographic profile of the health workers in Dagupan City along with age, sex, status, educational attainment, position, and length of service. The experiences of health workers amidst the pandemic, and the problems encountered by the health workers amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Below presents the narration of the thirty (30) health workers lived experiences amidst Covid 19 Pandemic in Dagupan City.

Case 1: The Young Nurse

This 25-year-old San Fabian, Pangasinan nurse has spent the last three years working in the intensive care unit of a private hospital. She considers giving up because of her emotional responsibilities, but she continues to provide for her two sisters financially. Being the family's primary provider, she must balance working long hours in a dangerous workplace with taking care of her family during the pandemic. She highlights how COVID-19 has affected the healthcare sector and stresses the necessity for both financial and non-financial government assistance.

Case 2: Exhausted Doctor

A Dagupan physician, age 41, has previously unheard-of difficulties as a result of the rise in COVID-19 cases. After working for nearly twenty-four hours, he struggles with stress and worry. He is safe in quarantine facilities even if he misses his family. This seasoned medical expert highlights the negative effects of increased effort and emotional strain while offering health advice on social media. Maintaining efficient operations becomes dependent upon cooperation with hospital administration.

Case 3: The Nurse

A 42-year-old Dagupanian nurse with 15 years of experience describes the challenges encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic. She forfeits family time while working in the intensive care unit to shield them from possible contamination. Difficulties include uncomfortable personal protective equipment, low pay, and insufficient testing. The need for support for frontline workers and the larger community is emphasized by the urgent calls for increased emergency response for health professionals and financial aid from the government.

Case 4: The Committed Health Workers

A Mangaldan health worker, 28, tells of her experience of commitment throughout the pandemic. She has nearly five years of experience working in a Dagupan hospital, where she is physically strained and more susceptible to COVID-19. Difficulties include long hours, financial hardship, and insufficient protection. Even while private organizations are providing support, there is a call for more government funding to address the significant obstacles that healthcare professionals confront and guarantee the provision of high-quality care.

Case 5: Heartfelt Nurse

A 33-year-old Dagupan native with seven years of expertise says she is determined to help despite the hurdles posed by the pandemic. As she struggles spiritually, financially, and emotionally, she considers how unpredictable things are. She starts to experience anxiety, tiredness, and insomnia on a regular basis. It is costly to forgo face-to-face family connections because of hospital rules. Even with support from commercial organizations, municipal government, and hospital administration, more government help is needed to meet the changing demands of the medical industry.

Case 6: Loved Doctora

The 40-year-old physician from Calasiao, Pangasinan, considers the satisfaction and difficulties of providing emergency care during the pandemic. Even though she experiences embarrassment occasionally, she has a cheerful disposition and cheers up her team. She is under physical and mental stress as she juggles specialty procedures with COVID-19 patient care. She faces additional challenges due to discrimination, lack of proper PPE, and familial isolation. She expresses a desire for things to return to normal and highlights the necessity of enough pay, better healthcare, and a long-term government program.

Case 7: The Stressful Nurse Attendant

The 34-year-old Dagupan nurse attendant talks about her shock and worries during the pandemic. She struggles with mental breakdowns and hunger loss while working 72-hour shifts. She draws attention to the discomfort of wearing uncomfortable PPE, skin problems, and the effect on mental health while in quarantine apart from her family. She values the cooperation of the local government despite the obstacles, but she emphasizes the need for equitable pay and benefits for healthcare professionals.

Case 8: The Loving Doctor

A 54-year-old physician who has worked in Dagupan for 12 years talks about the challenges of handling ER shifts, unpleasant personal protective equipment, and unfair pay during the pandemic. As the hospital's head, she emphasizes support and solidarity among the workers, transforming the facility into a second home. She speaks out for her family and her coworkers in spite of her own sacrifices, and she supports government support and healthcare as a top priority.

Case 9: A Brave Nurse

The emotional toll that caring for COVID-19 patients takes is shared by the 34-year-old ICU nurse. Due to PPE use, he is confined to a quarantine facility where he struggles with fatigue and homesickness. He is dedicated to providing patient care even in the face of insufficient funding and remuneration. He begs for reforms to the healthcare system and all-encompassing government backing for medical professionals.

Case 10: The Forever Grateful Nurse Attendant

A 29-year-old nurse attendant in Dagupan reflects on the physically and emotionally taxing experience of working during the pandemic. Separated from family, he faces long hours, insufficient compensation, and a shortage of resources. Despite challenges, he remains grateful for the experience, highlighting the need for government assistance and a long-term healthcare program.

Case 11: Tenured Doctor

A 54-year-old Mangaldan physician talks about the unforeseen difficulties he encountered throughout his 15 years of employment. He struggles with discomfort in PPE, lack of preparedness, and the psychological effects of being away from family while caring for COVID-19 patients. He advocates for greater government funding, cutting-edge technology, and acknowledgment of the efforts made by health workers during the pandemic, despite bodily breakdowns and uncertainties.

Case 12: A Careful Therapist

In this instance, a 35-year-old respiratory therapist described difficulties she faced during the epidemic, including limited funding, a lack of appropriate safety gear, and psychological anguish over patient fatalities. Resource shortages constituted a serious threat to healthcare systems despite greater teamwork, underscoring the need for more assistance.

Case 13: The Business-minded Health Worker

A 35-year-old healthcare professional struggled with time management as she balanced front-line responsibilities with an internet business, which had an adverse effect on her business. Delays in material deliveries, psychological discomfort, and inadequate government help highlighted the need for better coordination across different sectors.

Case 14: Strong Independent Nurse

A committed 31-year-old emergency room nurse was the focus of this case, which highlighted the psychological cost, scarcity of resources, and significance of government support. The nurse expressed gratitude for the management's efforts and emphasized the necessity for continuous support while the pandemic was still active.

Case 15: A Caring Nurse

The impact on interpersonal relationships, physical and mental stress, and the urgent need for more staff were all covered by a compassionate 34-year-old nurse. The nurse acknowledged the shortcomings experienced by healthcare professionals and underlined the significance of government assistance with regard to medical supplies and equitable remuneration.

Case 16: The Family-oriented Nurse Attendants

A thirty-five-year-old nursing attendant described difficulties such as prolonged hospital stays and a lack of family bonding as she thought back on the deeper connection that formed during the pandemic. In addition to highlighting the necessity of government assistance in supplying medical supplies and equipment to both public and private institutions, the case also brought attention to the vital role that healthcare professionals play in these difficult circumstances.

Case 17: Unbeatable Doctor

This 43-year-old physician from Calasio, Pangasinan, encountered difficulties when performing oropharyngeal swabs for COVID-19 testing as a front-line employee. A sense of professional value kept the doctor going in spite of tiredness from the restricted PPE and strict standards. The government's lackluster support and the local leaders' constantly shifting suggestions made it clear that more facilities and definitive answers were required to contain the pandemic.

Case 18: Faithful Health Worker

During the pandemic, a 39-year-old respiratory therapist from Dagupan managed the difficulties of long work hours and little family time. The health worker, juggling frontline job with online worship because of limitations, stressed the importance of assistance for mental health and family relationships.

Case 19: The Battle of Therapist

A respiratory therapist from Dagupan City, age 32, described the psychological effects of working nonstop throughout the surge and how they affected her family's lives and general wellbeing. The health professional acknowledged the value of resilience and expressed gratitude for the care she received during her recuperation despite the lack of break and increasing workload.

Case 20: The Boy Health Worker

This 29-year-old Calasio, Pangasinan, institutionalized health worker had difficulties managing her job and using personal protective equipment. The health worker suffered with little pay and turned to the government for support with financial aid and recovery programs, giving up personal pursuits like an internet business.

Case 21: The Emotional Therapist

An emotional account of working in the intensive care unit during the pandemic was provided by a 42-year-old respiratory therapist from San Fabian, Pangasinan. After discovering that the patient had COVID-19, the health professional emphasized the necessity for government incentives and emotional support to reduce stress and enhance general health.

Case 22: A Kind Therapist

A 37-year-old respiratory therapist discussed the challenges faced by frontline employees, highlighting prejudice, discomfort, and a lack of supplies. Notwithstanding the difficulties, the healthcare professional thanked God for the chance to assist patients and wished for further assistance and rewards.

Case 23: A Sleepless Nurse Attendant

This 26-year-old Binmaley, Pangasinan nurse attendant described the hardships of being on the front lines, such as lack of family interaction, discrimination, and insomnia. The optimistic nurse expressed her desire to pursue more education and urged government assistance with facility improvements and incentives.

Case 24: The Powerful Health Worker

During the epidemic, a 28-year-old Bayambang, Pangasinan health worker who was institutionalized talked about feeling anxious and not getting enough sleep. The health worker positioned health workers as the answer to the ongoing problem by highlighting their strength and fortitude in the face of adversity.

Case 25: The Expertise

Throughout the protracted pandemic, a 37-year-old skilled institutionalized health worker talked about her experiences with stress and worry. The health worker, juggling her own health issues, acknowledged the need for government assistance, particularly with regard to mental health services and medical supplies.

Case 26: Struggling Student-Respiratory Therapist

A respiratory therapist from Urdaneta, Pangasinan, who is 43 years old and works, encountered difficulties during the epidemic. Balancing work and school affected concentration, led to stress, and affected responsibilities. The health worker, who was temporarily removed from family due to health regulations, focused on difficulties related to time management and psychological stress. A small amount of medical supplies were obtained, but local businesses and people were thanked for their generosity.

Case 27: Resilient Ward Nurse Survivor

A Binmaley nurse, 25, described in Case 27 the challenges associated with providing care for COVID-19 patients. Challenges included increased workload, shifting management orders, and non-standard protective gear. The nurse used texting apps to inform her family while going through homesickness. Misinformation and public perception regarding COVID-19 treatments compounded the difficulties and had an effect on mental health. Her fortitude and tenacity in the medical sector were emphasized in spite of this.

Case 28: Motivated Institutionalized Health Worker

A 30-year-old Pozzorobio health worker is the subject of Case 28, which sheds light on the difficulties experienced by institutionalized personnel. Physical and psychological anguish resulted from handling COVID-19 patient transfers, wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) for long periods of time, and remaining in quarantine facilities. Problems were exacerbated by prejudice, excessive hours, and a lack of PPE. The health worker's motivation came from coworkers and family, who emphasized the necessity of government cooperation to improve healthcare facilities.

Case 29: Dedicated Senior Doctor

In Case 29, a senior physician with ten years of experience works in a private hospital. Stress resulted from juggling internal operations and COVID-19 care, particularly with the infection risk. The senior physician had to deal with long hours, missing meals, and worries about her family's health. The focus was on managerial issues and medical equipment shortages. It was stated that they wanted government support and acknowledgment for their sacrifices.

Case 30: Leader and Health Worker Advocate

Case 30, a 48-year-old Dagupan institutionalized worker talked about the difficulties in dealing with mental health issues among medical professionals during the epidemic. Stress was exacerbated by PPE issues, infection worry, and family concerns. Extended duty hours, living away from family, and poor communication all led to psychological discomfort. The instance highlighted the necessity of improved guidelines and assistance for medical personnel in the event of a pandemic.

Conclusions

The study's conclusions provided insight into a number of topics pertaining to medical staff at Dagupan City's private hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic. First off, by helping patients, medical professionals were a vital part of the government's efforts to stop the virus from spreading. In Dagupan City, the majority of the staff at private hospitals were women. The health workers, who ranged in age from 25 to 55, showed bravery in taking on the risks connected with the pandemic and their capacity to multitask while remaining dedicated to their responsibilities. The majority of health workers had six to ten years of employment, which indicates commitment and career development within the hospital setting. The survey verified the tenure and skill of these personnel.

Second, doctors and nurses—who were frequently the leaders of their families—showed tenacity in treating COVID-19 patients in spite of missing their spouses and kids. Health professionals were temporarily housed in quarantine facilities as part of the government's quarantine protocol in order to stop the virus from spreading. The hard work hours (12 to 48 hours a week) and low pay from management had an impact on motivation and financial stability. Social media channels were the primary means of communication with families, acting as a conduit for ideas and inspiration.

The study also demonstrated the significant effects of a rise in COVID-19 cases on healthcare professionals, including sleep deprivation, fatigue, and psychological and physical anguish. The difficulties were exacerbated by a lack of medical supplies, especially food, vitamins, and personal protective equipment (PPE). These shortages were caused by production problems and delayed delivery. Crucially, government financial aid, namely the Health Emergency Allowance, has not yet been provided to health staff. Health professionals proposed the "Hospital Management Program: Health Broke for Healthy Workers" as a proactive intervention to treat mental health issues and improve overall efficiency in patient care.

Recommendations

The following recommendations provided by the researcher are based to the findings and conclusion.

1. The Philippine Government may provide *Psychological Outbreak and Refreshment Programs (PORP)* to all professional health workers after the pandemic to lessen and coup up with their physical and psychological distress. This program ensures the provision of effective and efficient services to patients with the help of a professional Doctor in psychology.
2. The Local Government Unit of Dagupan City may provide *Training and seminars for the Development of Health Emergency Management* to enhance the capacity of handling emergency response in their respective area, particularly those major actors.
3. The Hospital Management in collaboration with the Local Government Unit may provide "*Gawad Parangal sa mga navigating na Health Workers*" This program would acknowledge the efforts and sacrifices of the health workers and to paid off to give them motivation and service awards for their dedication and committed amidst pandemic.
4. The Local Government Unit of Dagupan City may release *Anti-Discrimination Campaign: "Respect Health Workers as They Care to Our Patient"* city memorandum or circular to promote modern heroes to our health workers and in addition to lessen discrimination in their respective areas.
5. The Philippine Government should strengthen the Government and Public-Private Partnership with those hospitals, pharmacies, and other related health companies to help the health workers with their needs. This could brought a tie-up to solve the prevailing problems of the country in a health disaster.
6. The Management of the Private Hospital in Dagupan City may allow conducting meetings with their staff to raise their concerns regarding the needs of health workers to improve the services provided to their patients.
7. The Management of the Private Hospital may also invest in modern technology, and expand the building area to provide convenient, professional, and excellent services to their patient, especially during the Health Emergency Response.
8. The Management of a Private Hospital may acquire modern techniques that may easily check and monitor the daily time record and hire additional personnel to avoid conflict and solve their problems in terms of unfair computed and late receiving salaries.

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