

# Original Research Article

## Lived Experiences of Persons Under Investigation and Persons Under Monitoring During General Community Quarantine

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### ABSTRACT

The lived experiences of Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) and Person Under Monitoring are examined in this study. The eleven Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) and fourteen Persons Under Monitoring (PUMs) were interviewed via messenger to solicit their struggles and sufferings during General Community Quarantine (GCQ). The data gathered from the identified respondents were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. In the analysis, the major themes identified were Initial Reaction, Discrimination, Life During 14-day Quarantine or Isolation, Challenges Experienced as 1.) Persons Under Investigation and 2.) Persons Under Monitoring . Extreme discrimination for the entire family were the initial reactions of all respondents upon classifying them as Persons Under Investigation and Persons Under Monitoring. Getting insane is also one of the challenges being experienced by a person identified as Persons Under Investigation . For them to cope up with this crisis of COVID-19, they resorted to focus on their strengths and seek support systems.

*Keywords: General Community Quarantine , lived experiences, Persons Under Investigation , Persons Under Monitoring*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The entire world had been alarmed due to the abrupt escalating cases of this very contagious yet deadly virus -Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). In addition, people in all walks of life experienced a prolonged period of uncertainty brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Strengthening community bonds and supporting each other in response to the COVID-19 crisis also appears to be vital. In relation to this, Kovari [1] the communication manager of the Italian branch of EIT Climate-KIC, explains that, it is central to strengthen ties in communities and support each other by sharing important information, resources and tools to try to cope with such a crisis situation. The novel coronavirus or previously known as 2019-nCoV by World Health Organization (WHO), was discovered from the throat swab sample of a patient [1]. WHO declared on January 30, 2020 that the COVID-19 outbreak is a global health emergency. Immediately on March 11, 2020 same agency declared COVID-19 a global pandemic [2]. With this declaration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or CDC issued a recommendation that the general public , even those without symptoms , should begin wearing face coverings in public setting , and observe social distancing at all times that serve as precautionary measures to abate the spread of COVID-19. In addition. People were advised to wear Personal Protective Equipment [3]. On March 16, 2020 evening, Manila announced the implementation of Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) to contain the spread of corona virus. This condition involves the strict home quarantine in all households, suspension of transportation in the entire city, regulated the essential services for food and health, and the heightened presence of the uniformed personnel to enforce quarantine procedure [4]. Corollary to this, province of Northern Samar by virtue of Resolution no. 55-a series of 2020 July 14, 2020 issued by the Republic of the Philippines Inter-Agency Task Force For the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, Region VIII where Northern Samar belongs had been placed under Modified General Community Quarantine (MGCQ) until 31 of July 2020. Placing a certain place in a General Community

Quarantine (GCQ) mean that this place allowed local government units some flexibility in implementing lockdown depending on the risk of the area. [5]. This means that in every household, one member of the family will be allowed to go out to attend the essential needs of the family, basically the privilege is given to the immediate head of the family within a specific time duration during the day.

Included in the announcement of Code Red Sublevel Two in the Philippines is that Locally Stranded Individuals are required to present a Travel Authority or Pass that must be secured from the Joint Task Force COVID Shield of the Philippines National Police (PNP) [6]. The said pass is needed to travel across provinces or regions across the country under General Community Quarantine. Locally Stranded Individuals are classified as: 1.) Person Under Investigation (PUI); and 2.) Person Under Monitoring (PUM). Theoretically, Person PUIs refers to persons who are identified with symptoms such as fever, cough, cold and flu, etc to be put on quarantine either in a facility or at home due to their exposure to a place infected with the virus and with or without history of travel within 14 days, while PUMs refers to persons with no symptoms but with history of travel within the Philippines or abroad and need to be placed in quarantine facility if not home quarantine did not warrant. According to health literature, "quarantine is commonly defined as the separation or restriction of the activities of individuals who may have been exposed to infectious diseases to reduce their risk of infecting others [7]. Conceptually, "quarantine is often used interchangeably with isolation and both terms are used in the context of infection prevention. To make it clearer and easily grasp two terms are different since the term quarantine applies to individuals who are asymptomatic or are not yet ill while isolation is for patients who are asymptomatic or known to have a contagious disease [8]. Disease containment measures such as quarantine and isolation have a detrimental impact on children and their parents manifested in symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) [9].

Living in this pandemic is not quite so easy because people in all walks of life experiencing constant fear as the unseen enemy is just around the corner. Around 3.6 million Filipinos are suffering from mental disorders amid corona pandemic as reported by the Department of Health, [10] Hence, knowing the lived experiences of PUIs and PUMs government agencies concern should take common action to keep people calm and avoid from getting panic that eventually may lead to insanity that would affect country's economy as well as reputation. In order to understand the lived experiences of the PUIs and PUMs during General Community their experiences were explored to come up with interventions to be addressed.

In addition, this will also contribute to the government implementing rule body to help and protect those identified people that they should not be treated in a demoralizing manner thus, helping them cope with the pandemic brought more workers lost their job unexpectedly, it is not only the worker himself is affected rather the whole family.[11]. Since this pandemic In addition, this also pave ways for researchers specialized in psychology to go further research on the psychological impact of this virus.[please insert de asis as gap)

## OBJECTIVES

Generally, this study explored the lived experiences of Persons Under Investigations and Persons Under Monitoring. Specifically, it revealed the coping strategies they utilized in this crisis amidst pandemic; and it determined the biggest challenges they have experienced as PUIs and PUMs.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

### 2.1 Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design. This method attempts to understand people's experiences in certain phenomenon. Its main purpose is to illuminate the specific and identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation, [11] In addition, to seek reality from individuals' narratives of their experiences and feelings, and to produce in- depth descriptions of the phenomenon [12]. In this study, the lived experiences of the persons identified as Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) and Persons Under Monitoring (PUMs) during General Community Quarantine (GCQ) were analyzed as to different circumstances. The number of research participants were completely enumerated thus meeting the saturation point of the interview.

## 2.2 Data Gathering

The study was approved by the research professor of the Samar State University, Catbalogan City to conduct this study provided that both the researcher and the research participants observed the health protocol. For the selection of the respondents, I used complete enumeration sampling of the identified PUIs and PUMs of the Provincial Medical Expert. A developed interview guide exploring the lived experiences of the Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) and Persons Under Monitoring (PUMs). Data were gathered through interview via messenger, guided by the formulated unstructured interview guide questions. Further, their responses done through messenger since they refused video chat and are held confidential and treated with no biases. Hence, were then analyzed using thematic analysis for inference and conclusion. Interviews were transcribed. Data from infant who had been identified as one of the Persons Under Investigation, were sourced through his mother and he was represented by the same for an interview via messenger and cell phone.

Respondents were identified with the following criteria: they are classified either Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) and Persons Under Monitoring (PUMs) during General Community Quarantine. Verbatim transcription was done after series of interviews done via messenger. To respond with ethics in research names had not been indicated. The researcher undertook the initial analysis of the transcribed text by reading the responses of each respondents and understanding the overall meaning of the text. After the analysis, common themes emerged and were discussed in this article.

## 2.3. Research Participants

The respondents of the study are eleven (11) Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) and fourteen (14) Persons Under Monitoring (PUMs) As shown in the in Table 1 for the PUIs their ages range from 1 to 64 years old. Nine (9) of them were married, one (1) infant, and a senior citizen who is a self-employed. Nine (9) of them were working in the government. On the other hand, for the PUMs their ages range from 19 to 56 years old. All of them were married, three (3) students while eleven (11) of them were in the government service.

**Table 1. Profile of the participants**

### a. Person Under Investigation (PUIs)

Participant	Age	Occupation
P1	1 yr. old	none
R2	20 yr. old	student
R3	48 yr. old	govt. employee
R4	32 yr. old	govt. employee
R5	53 yr. old	govt. employee
R6	43 yr. old	govt. employee
R7	30 yr. old	govt. employee
R8	30 yr. old	govt. employee
R9	64 yr. old	self-employed
R10	52 yr. old	govt. employee
R11	50 yr. old	govt. employee

T= 11

### b. Person Under Monitoring (PUMs)

Respondent	Age	Occupation
R10	19	student
R11	56	govt. employee
R12	45	govt. employee
R13	52	govt. employee

R14	50	govt. employee
R15	54	govt. employee
R16	49	govt. employee
R17	39	govt. employee
R18	30	govt. employee
R19	39	govt. employee
R20	35	govt. employee
R21	26	govt. employee
R22	43	govt. employee
R23	19	student
R24	23	student
R25	20	student

T=14

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



Fig. 1 The themes extracted from the interview

In the analysis of the data gathered based from the responses given by the respondents the following are the themes extracted.

#### 3.1 Initial Reaction

Upon classifying either as Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) or Persons Under Monitoring (PUMs), all the participants initial reactions were worried and anxious about the virus. Their common reaction is that COVID 19 can kill even doctors, how much more with them?

Respondent 9 said that “I am old enough my immune system is very weak, once the symptoms will not persist much better to stay in the mountain and do not see my family so that they will not be infected too. I will make a hole and burry myself in the midnight”.

“I cannot resist loneliness, staying in the isolation facility though I cannot live without my loved ones”, she added, “it will not the virus that will take my life but the loneliness in staying away from them will.” R11 said. “I cannot resist loneliness, staying in the isolation facility though I cannot live without my loved ones”, she added, “it will not the virus that will take my life but the loneliness in staying away from them will.” R11 said. R8, R12 and 13 said, “knowing about this COVID-19 and being classified as PUIs/PUMs our distress level was increased. On the other hand, R3, R4 and R5 expressed their satisfaction with the government’ reactions and policies pertaining to quarantine. R22, R23, and R24 said, being classified as PUMs, we experienced loneliness, loss of control, fear of contagion that we will die after several days”.

#### 3.2 Discrimination

When Respondents 17, 18 and 19 were classified as Persons Under Monitoring (PUMs), their families in the community experienced extreme discrimination.

R17 said, “my mother could hardly attend buying my needs since their neighbors keep on saying bad words addressed to their family particularly blaming her of her travel from Manila to her hometown due to the spread of virus”

R18 SAID, “all of my siblings stayed in our farm away from the community after purchasing all their needs since no one in that would want to talk and see them.”

R19 said, “my family was treated more than a criminal since majority of the people in their place did not even glance them much more giving the barangay assistance personally for the fear of being contaminated with the virus”.

### **3.3 Life during 14-day quarantine**

The experiences as Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) and Persons Under Monitoring (PUMs) and having a 14-day quarantine in isolation area had brought both positive and negative experiences. Some of the participants, being quarantined or isolated were considered as a sound practice of obedience to health protocol imposed by the government viz-a-viz by the Department of Health .They considered themselves as fortunate for they are being taken care of by the local medical practitioners with the convergence of the Barangay Health Worker (BHW) which in return boost their confidence and morale. R20 said. "In the television or radio, people are scared once they are classified as PUIs/PUMs since you might die in a matter of hours, days or weeks I am glad that the government had this kind of intervention since local doctors and health workers did not even missed to partake their respective roles for us. Examples, monitoring our blood pressure, giving medicines and vitamins and attending to our medical needs are very accessible .Nevertheless, for some Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) and Persons Under Monitoring (PUMs) thier14-day quarantine brought an array of negative emotions and psychological effects due to lack of mingling with others ,unmindful about the time, looking for someone to visit and talk with personally.R5 said," being in quarantine facility is similar with being put in jail. I cannot move freely, I cannot afford for a loud sound trip, I cannot enjoy my yoga because of limited space". R23 said," While life in quarantine has mental pain since there were no television, no refrigerator to keep left over food and to have a cold drinking water, sharing of comfort room and contented with the food provided by the assigned barangay officials. Consistently, it would mean leaving the comfort zone at home for the welfare of the general public primarily to contain the spread of virus."

### **3.4 Challenges Experienced as Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) and Persons Under Monitoring (PUMs)**

Being one of the so-called "Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) and Persons Under Monitoring (PUMs)" seems difficult to adjust. All of the daily routines will be changed to adopt the new normal. R6,8,9,18, and R25 said "getting insane is one of the challenges being experienced during quarantined and being classified as Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) and Persons Under Monitoring (PUMS).

## **4. LIMITATIONS**

This study was limited to the Province of Northern Samar and the 11 Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) and 14 Persons Under Monitoring (PUMs) who were completely identified by the Provincial Medical Officer. The research participants were interview on July 12 to 30, 2020 which was the period Northern Samar was declared under the General Community Quarantine (GCQ). The number of research participants have met the saturation point of the interview. A wider study involving psychological impacts like anxiety and mental illness may be carried out by future researchers in line with such specialization.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

PUIs and PUMs are also human beings who need to be treated equally. They were classified such that and placed on quarantine for the benefit of majority of us. Extreme discrimination for the entire family were the initial reactions of all research participants upon classifying them PUIs and PUMs. It was found out based from the result of the study, in their desire to cope with this crisis, they resorted to focus on their strengths and seek support systems. Getting insane is also one of the challenges being experienced by a person identified as Persons Under Investigation (PUIs). To make them feel better they should be given attention as if they are not Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) nor Persons Under Monitoring (PUMs) however, observance of the health protocols must be strictly followed in dealing with them. Not all of them can carry the rigors as being put in 14-day quarantine. Families and friends should have ample time for them to reach out via phone call, video chat and even text message. This will make them feel worthy and boost their confidence, thus pave way to set their minds that still life is worth living despite pandemic.

## **5.RECOMMENDATION**

This study should be followed up soliciting experiences of the PUIs and PUMs who eventually admitted as COVID-19 positive. Their experiences will be used as bases in providing specialized mental health care, social support. Further studies are needed to explore the advantages and disadvantages of other modes of isolation and use it as springboard or even benchmark of its effectiveness so that it will be utilized future preparation in dealing with this kind of disease outbreak.

## CONSENT

The researchers declare that the participants had fully understood the main purpose of their roles in this study. They were given the option to withdraw from the study at any time and decline to answer any particular questions. They agreed to provide information on the understanding that their names will not be exposed without their permission. Interviews had been done via messenger chat only as they refused for a video call to respond with the data privacy law. A consent form was secured first from each respondent prior to commence with the interview. They agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the information sheet. The parents or guardians of research participants who were below the legal age were formally asked and oriented on the nature and purpose of the study. They guided the researcher in the interview to draw the needed data from the young participants particularly the 1-year-old infant. The researchers assured the participants' anonymity and the confidentiality of the information divulged by them and codes were used in place of their real identity. The scope of the interview is limited to the information necessary for the research.

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