

# Challenges and Coping Mechanisms of People Included in Different Social Classes during the Pandemic

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**Abstract:** *The main objective for the research was to give further knowledge to the lifestyles of Filipino people in different classes, and how much or how little they have been affected by the virus and the Pandemic. The tools for the main data gathering of this research was conducted by using a survey, where the researchers applied the qualitative research method. The answers from the selected participants who answered in their own will were gathered and examined carefully. The results revealed that even though the classes were divided into three, there were a lot of things that the participants of the different classes agreed on. The results of this research shows the different experiences of Filipinos and how they also share common struggles or coping mechanisms. This study is to understand the different lifestyles amidst a struggling situation like the Covid-19 pandemic that started in early 2020.*

**Keywords—** Keywords— Social Classes, Pandemic, Coping Mechanisms, Lifestyles

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In 2020, a virus called Covid-19 from Wuhan, China has caused a syndemic pandemic which has affected the environment of people in many ways, such as the economic fallout. Studies showed that about 4.5 million Filipinos have lost their jobs, with the unemployment rate at 10.4 per cent, which is the highest in 15 years. We cannot deny the fact that the pandemic has had a negative impact on everyone, no matter their age or social status. A lot of plans and opportunities have failed due to the GCQ (General Community Quarantine) placed by President Rodrigo Duterte, issuing Executive Order 112.

The differences between the experiences of people in various social classes continue to be reflected during the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the longevity of the virus, its social and economical impacts became inevitable as the country underwent several changes in order to adapt and mitigate the effects of the pandemic to the public which was called the “New Normal.” During this time period, many Filipinos have experienced a sudden shift to their lifestyles and many have faced its negative impact. Factors such as the education system and work forces are some of the greatly affected by these changes.

In order to unfold the new lifestyles of the Filipinos in a time of a global health crisis, this study’s objective is to compare the contrasting experiences of the citizens living in different social classes. This study raises awareness regarding the challenges that the Filipinos have faced amidst the pandemic, and shows how they cope during the “New Normal” with different lifestyles, opportunities and welfare.

This research hopes to reach people in order for everyone to understand the different situations that many Filipinos have been experiencing throughout a public health crisis.

## 2. RELATED WORKS

Since January 2020, Covid-19 has been spreading around which resulted in an uncontrollable crisis. The Philippine government attempted to deal with the infection but they were given a lot of criticism due to the method of them trying to solve the problem. The research shows the middle class’ narrative and how they deal with the crisis.

The effects of Covid - 19 raised important concerns for middle-income and low-income countries, this study shows the perspective from households in the Philippines that are experiencing poverty[1].

The low classes face a future of being trapped in poverty, but also middle classes are also vulnerable to poverty. That said, vulnerability is recognized as a wake up call of the impact of Covid-19. The study shows that the middle class declines by 10%, and that the poor Filipinos can increase by 5.5 million[2].

The results of Covid-19 affected various systems of privilege. The Pandemic affected the Philippines, especially the poor, who are expected to increase by 1.5 million, as 7.5 million are unemployed. Privilege issues remain taken for granted by Filipinos. The poor in the Philippines remain neglected[3].

The Covid-19 pandemic affected all social classes in the world, but has a huge impact especially on the low and middle classes. As the pandemic advances, may it be from new strains of virus, or people infected, we cannot deny that it has affected most of the people’s livelihood. Upon research using qualitative and quantitative methods, we discovered how it really affected people and how they cope with the virus around. This research provides information on how people take action for short and long term solutions. We have also observed that people focus more on the short term solution. After all, we are all aware that this pandemic has a long term effect in all social classes[4].

The goal of this paper is to present the face of poverty in this time of pandemic. They say that the virus is our real enemy and we cannot deny that the pandemic is, moreover there's a lot of issues going on such as political and economic issues. And we are all affected by it, especially the most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic are the poor[5].

COVID-19 has been the major concern of every Filipino since when it started. And the government has been trying to deal with the transmission of infection and economic issues, nonetheless there has been some criticism towards the government's method of solving the problem. And one of those is the inequity of offering assistance to socio-economic groups, and this paper seeks to understand the middle class Filipinos. The results show their responses and narratives through dealing with the social adaptation and coping strategies[6].

As we all know when Coronavirus or COVID-19 came up it made a huge impact on us, not only in our economic, tourism, and health sectors but also in our educational system. Specifically here in the Philippines when the COVID-19 hit us and the ECQ started we conducted and shifted our learning system which is face-to-face into emergency remote teaching (ERT) to continue the education despite the global health threats. This paper discusses the lived experiences of some students who were suddenly immersed in a remote learning context, it shows the struggles and challenges that they faced or experienced in this new learning system[7].

### **3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

This study's main objective and goal is to raise awareness about the contrasting experiences of the citizens living in different social classes during the pandemic. This study tries to unfold the new lifestyles of people affected by the Pandemic. The researchers sought answers to the following questions.

- 1.) How did the pandemic and lockdown change people's lifestyles?
- 2.) Did the lockdown affect their lives positively or negatively?
- 3.) How did the people manage to cope with the new challenges they have faced amidst the pandemic?

### **4. METHODOLOGY**

The research method in this study was a qualitative phenomenological approach. A study that attempts to understand different people's perspectives and understandings in a certain situation. The researchers used interviews, observation, and related studies in gathering data information. The investigators also handed the participants a letter of request, which signifies their agreement regarding the interview.

The chosen participants of this research study will be presented anonymously, they are composed of people living in the Philippines from selected private workplaces from Luzon. We used purposive sampling to select the participants. Purposive sampling is a technique in qualitative research

where the participants have experienced or have knowledge about the phenomena regarding the study's topic. The researchers selected these participants because they met all the requirements needed for the research. The five participants individually belong to one of the social classes, which are low class, middle class, and high class. Considering that they belong in those classes, the participants have been qualified for the study.

To gather information needed for this study, we used interview questions made by the researchers. These questions were used to know their lived experiences. The researchers gave letters to the participants to plan a schedule of a personal meeting with them in order for them to tell their experiences over the research topic. The guide questions for the participants were:

- 1.) How did the pandemic and lockdown change your lifestyle?
- 2.) Did the lockdown affect your life positively or negatively?
- 3.) How did you manage to cope with the new challenges you have faced amidst the pandemic?

## **5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Change in Lifestyle During the Pandemic and Lockdown**

#### **A. Lower Class**

##### **a.) Opportunities**

One of our respondents in the low class said "Job opportunities were harder to come by." In this time of pandemic, occupations are hard to find. It is not easy to find them, the occupations that are available or easy to find are just only for jobs which are related to our situation. And it's also getting worse because respondent 12 told us that, "There was a period of time when we didn't have any income from our business." Due to the lockdown, people weren't able to go outside. And we all know that the number one key to having great income in a business are the people. Due to the fact that people weren't able to go outside was a big change for our society.

##### **b.) New Lifestyle**

Our second responder answered that this pandemic totally changed our respondent's life. Just like in respondent 9th's work, "I don't have a choice but to switch jobs, where I can work from home." Our participant already had a stable job, but due to pandemic and lockdown, our participant was forced to choose another job that can be able to have work from home. Due to this situation, it was a huge change for our respondent.

#### **B. Working Class**

##### **a) Stay-at-home**

A lot of the respondents stated that they had limited travels as they would most of the time spend their days in their homes unlike before. Respondent 1 stated, "We are now more content just staying in the house, and unlike before, we always used to go out

and eat out during weekends.” regarding their change of lifestyle.

**b) Limited Changes**

“Nothing much changes. As a nurse abroad especially working in Saudi Arabia, the only changes I find in my lifestyle is that my observance of proper hygiene is doubled.” is a quote from Respondent 6. They are one of the few other respondents who stated that they have not experienced any drastic change over the course of the pandemic.

**C. Upper Class**

**a) Changes in Lifestyle**

The participants have statements where most of them respond to some extent that they realized how much different ways they do their usual regimen and habits from before lockdown happened and once it happened changed. They also realized that working is affecting them in either good or base ways. Respondent 1 stated, “That pandemic and lockdown had affected and changed how I work and also several personal routines I am used to.” Whilst Respondent 3 says, “It did not do so much change but one of the highlights is being able to work from home, which works to my convenience.”

**Positive and Negative Effects of the Lockdown**

**A. Lower Class**

**a.) Negative**

Our respondent said that this lockdown affects negatively because, “No one wants to be locked up at home with no income. Before the pandemic, we could still survive because of our business but when the pandemic started and we had to shut down for a few months, we had to look for other ways to survive.” Due to the lockdown, it affects them negatively. Therefore, lockdowns must be analyzed because it affects negatively to some people just like our respondent.

**b.) Positive**

The answer of respondent 12 regarding the effect of lockdown in life is positive due to the fact that, “I can set aside extra time with my family, with my hobbies and recreation activities.” As you can see this lockdown is such a blessing to our participant and think positively. Therefore, not all bad things that happened are bad. Some are also good, just think positive.

**B. Working Class**

**a) Neutrality**

A number of the respondents stayed on a neutral stand regarding the positive or negative effects of the pandemic in their lives. Most of the respondents stated that it affected them positively for the reason that it lets them spend more time with their family. On the other hand, the pandemic has affected their lives in a negative manner as most of the respondents stated that they have limited travels.

**C. Upper Class**

**a) Objective**

The respondents have similar thoughts regarding the question given, agreeing that they felt positivity and negativity during the lockdown. “There are positive and negative effects. Spending more time with the family to build a harmonious relationship and avoiding traffic hassles are some positive effects. However, some negative effects are the following: distinguishing between a work setting and a feel-at-home rest mind-set is a great challenge; and the social skills that can only be achieved through personal encounters with colleagues, friends, and relatives are now limited.” As stated by Respondent 19. There are also some respondents who experienced more negatively than positively, just like Respondent 6 who shared their experiences, “Negatively in most cases though there are positive effects as well. My work requires a lot of face to face interactions and it negatively impacted my work prospects. On the other hand, less travel and social engagements saved me money.”

**Coping Mechanisms Amidst the Pandemic**

**A. Lower Class**

**a.) Adjust**

Majority of our resource person answered, “By making myself busy. We immediately opened up a new business and it has been better compared to before.” Patience is the key to managing to cope with the new challenges they have faced amid the pandemic. As a result, being busy is not just for having a new business but also for chatting with friends online, and also focusing more and developing some skills to make their life productive.

**B. Working Class**

**a) Positive Outlook**

Having a positive perspective on the situations is the coping strategy that some of the respondents stated just like a quote from Respondent 2 stated, “I did get to spend time with my family and get to know myself even more.”

**b) Acceptance**

“The acceptance of the new normal is the first step while adjusting to the new rules to be safe and be considerate of others as well.” is a quote from Respondent 6. Some of the respondents also stated that acceptance is one of their coping mechanisms given the current situation. Therefore, the respondents cope through adjusting in the new normal.

**C. Upper Class**

**a) Adapting**

Some of the respondents have been accepting the new normal and adapting to how they should handle the changes they’re experiencing. More so, some of them are able to cope with the pandemic by being optimistic. “I always make sure I am entertained by

a lot of things,” Respondent 3 stated, “A happy mind is a stable mind.”

### Synthesis

The conditions that the Covid-19 pandemic has brought to the Filipino citizens has greatly impacted their lifestyles. According to the data the researchers have gathered, the low class tend to have a negative outlook towards the pandemic while the middle and upper classes have positive perspectives. Most participants shared similar struggles yet their coping mechanisms differ from one another. Safety is one of their priorities during a pandemic so they tend to lessen their travels in avoidance of catching the Covid-19 virus. The upper and middle class cope with their challenges by mostly acceptance and having positive perspectives towards the situation. While the lower classes tend to make themselves busy career-wise.

A sudden change in someone's life can be overwhelming and difficult to handle. Just like the sudden appearance of the COVID-19 in the country changed people's lives. It changed people's routine, lifestyle, and it changed everything in a blink of an eye. The Filipino citizens were overwhelmed by it because it was least expected. The pandemic affects the people despite the different classes they belong in. Some citizens lost their job, home, education, and their daily routines..

The country will be able to improve their classes if the government focuses on the people who lost their jobs, and give them stable jobs to earn money to use for daily living. Another thing is if each class starts working and helping each other equally, without any bias. It can also be improved if low interest rates are made because money is a big problem for most people.

The country can also improve their classes by the help of people included in every class. Having good communication and good relationships toward each other will help maintain peace. This peace will motivate everyone to move forward life without any issues, which will result in the classes' improvements.

### 6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, each member of the different social classes in the Philippines have struggled during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Great impacts on their lifestyles were made such as their daily routines, careers and the like. Both the positive and negative ends were experienced by the participants yet each social class was coping in various ways, such as having a stable mindset or completely changing their routines. With limited travelling and the new normal on the line, many citizens have learned to adapt to the current situations of the pandemic by coping through making changes in their routines and learning how to keep mental stability amidst a struggling situation.

### 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the best effort that the researchers have exerted in this research, the research may have been better if the

researchers were able to find more participants who may fall in the low class category. It is recommended for this study to find more participants as the researchers were unable to gather a larger data and perspective from citizens included in the lower classes. The researchers recommend that the research would have been more informative if the researchers were able to find more to add in the related works.

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