

Covid-19 Survivors In The Senior High School Department: Their Experience And Aspirations

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Abstract: COVID-19 has caused a significant change in humans' daily living. From having to wear masks, social separation, online schooling, and being separated from the people we care about. The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experience of COVID-19 survivors in senior high school and see if it had an impact on their aspirations. This study adopted a phenomenological research design and a purposive sampling technique. It was conducted at the senior high school department of Dr. Yanga's Colleges Inc. Seven (7) students who fit the criteria were chosen to be informants for this study. The study discovered that COVID-19 impacted many of the survivors' life perspectives, habits, mindsets, and aspirations. Their respective experiences also overlap and differ in certain areas. The researchers recommend the formation of support groups and communities for people who have had similar experiences as a way for them to connect and understand themselves on a deeper level.

Keywords— aspirations, COVID-19 survivors, experience

1. INTRODUCTION

About three years have passed since the World Health Organization (WHO) proclaimed the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus as a global pandemic. From an initial outbreak in the province of Wuhan, China, to a global outbreak, approximately 9.4% of the world's population has been infected with the virus. Moreover, the number of reported COVID cases keeps rising over time, especially since curfews are no longer being enforced, unlike during the virus's peak, and everyone could freely go outside anytime they please. Every person is susceptible to acquiring the virus, including the younger generation, with ages ranging from 13 to 19 years old. Young adults are considered low-risk groups for getting COVID-19.

Younger generations are also vulnerable to coronavirus infection due to their higher level of socializing, which allows a greater exposure to coronavirus. A study on the topic by Margasik (2020) explains that their constant exposure to COVID-19 may be because of their incorrect sense of confidence about their safety, which results in freely mingling with large groups of people and ignoring community pandemic guidelines. Their false belief is mainly associated with young people having less severe cases of COVID-19.

Aspiration, according to Merriam-Webster (n.d), is having a strong desire to do something great or ambitious. Similar to this, Saavedra (n.d.) describes aspirations as a term used to express the human desire to accomplish the goals you have for your life. A fulfilled and productive life, in whatever form it may take for you, is what aspirations help you to achieve. Moreover, He provided four categories of general aspiration: financial, relationship, career, and health aspiration as a

common aspiration of an individual's life. Furthermore, He emphasizes that aspiration is greater than our dream and goal.

In a recent work by Cherry (2021), our aspirations can often be influenced by our career-related skills, achievements, and even experiences. The experience brought by young COVID-19 survivors will not only leave a lasting imprint on their medical history but on everybody's life, including their aspirations.

However, the real-life experiences of COVID-19 student survivors are often overlooked by many; thus, there is still no available literature that offers enough in-depth analysis of COVID-19 student survivors' experiences and its impact on their aspirations after recovering from COVID-19, which could significantly give a deeper understanding of the seriousness of COVID-19 student survivors' coping mechanisms, difficulties, and changes after recovering from the infectious disease. Hence, the researchers conducted a study that will attain an in-depth understanding and analysis of the experiences and aspirations of our fellow senior high school students at Dr. Yanga's Colleges, Inc. who are COVID-19 survivors.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The study's general problem is to have an in-depth understanding of the lived experience of senior high school students who are COVID-19 survivors and their aspirations.

Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. How may the lived experience of the senior high school COVID-19 survivors be described in terms of:
 - 1.1 Physiological Experiences
 - 1.2 Psychological Experiences
 - 1.3 Social Experiences
2. What are the aspirations of the senior high school COVID-19 survivors?

2. METHODS OF THE STUDY

The qualitative research used in this study is intended to reveal a target audience's range of behaviors and perceptions of a specific topic. Denzin and Lincoln (2014) believe it means that the researcher observes things in their natural environment, attempting to make sense of or infer phenomena based on the meanings that people assign to them. This study made use of a qualitative research method to ascertain the significance of a particular experience to a group of people. It entails discarding any preconceived notions or assumptions about the phenomenon under investigation and focusing on the immediate experiences of the participants.

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological methodology. The goal of phenomenological research is to provide participants with a detailed, rich, and accurate description of the structure of the phenomenon under consideration. Phenomenology is a philosophical school that opposes all dogmas, research traditions, and externally imposed methods. Phenomenology lends itself particularly well to investigation. Shaw (2010) states that the emphasis is on the uniqueness of a person's experiences, how experiences are made meaningful, and how these meanings manifest within the person's context as an individual and in their various roles. As a result, the focus of this methodological paradigm is on subjective experience, with an examination of participants' detailed lived experiences to make sense of the world. The essence of the experience, as well as its significance to the participants, should be captured in this description.

2.1 Sample of the Study

The participants in the study were senior high school students of Dr. Yanga's Colleges Inc. who have experienced (the symptoms of COVID-19 such as fever, cough, loss of smell and taste, sore throat, etc.) being infected with COVID-19. There was no gender preference in choosing the participants. The researchers made use of purposive sampling. To ensure that the data gathered is relevant to the research, the study's informants were chosen based on a set of criteria that includes the aforementioned characteristics.

Ethical Consideration

The researchers employed the ethical standards proposed by Bryman and Bell (2007) to guide their study. The participants of this research were not subjected to harm in any way with regard to their safety. In particular respect, full consent will be sought from the informants of Dr. Yanga's Colleges, Inc. senior high school students. In addition to that, the participant's private information, including their name, age, and section, were kept secure and confidential. The research's voluntary informants were given great importance, besides which, they were given the choice to discontinue their participation at any time.

A high level of privacy and security was maintained when handling the data. Misleading information was not tolerated, and biased responses were not accepted. Any and all affiliations, funding sources, and conceivable conflicts of interest were still disclosed. Furthermore, exaggerations about the research's intentions and objectives were avoided. Lastly, any form of communication in regard to the study were conducted with sincerity and transparency; the responses of the participants were not exploited or changed in order to benefit this research.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This contains the interpretation of the study's findings in relation to the study's purpose, which is to determine how senior high school students' experience with COVID-19 influenced their aspirations and general outlook in life. The significant statements were coded into different clusters to come up with the answers to the research questions. The emergent themes are as follow: How the Survivors Contracted COVID-19, Symptoms Experienced by the Survivors and Its Impact on Their Daily Lives, Effect on the Mental Health of the Survivors and the Stigma They Experienced, Survivors' Coping Mechanisms, Survivors' Comments and Insights on the Pandemic, COVID-19's Impact on the Survivors' Aspirations in Life..

Table 1 List of Emergent Themes

Emergent Themes
How the Survivors Contracted COVID-19
Symptoms Experienced by the Survivors
Effect on the Mental Health of the Survivors and the Stigma They Experienced
Survivors' Coping Mechanisms
Survivors' Comments and Insights on the Pandemic
COVID-19's Impact on the Survivor's Aspirations in Life

a. How the Survivors Contracted COVID-19

This theme emerged from the statements of the informants regarding how they contracted COVID-19 wherein the majority of them claim that they have gotten the virus from a family member that was a frontliner during that time. The occupations of their family members involve exposure to different kinds of people which then put them at a greater risk for COVID-19 infection.

Table 2. Analysis of how the survivors contacted COVID-19

Significant Statements	Formulated Meaning
<p>So yes, I do know how I contracted COVID-19. Um, I contracted COVID-19 around late 2021 because both my parents are actually frontliners so they handle a lot of people who con-contracts COVID-19 as well." (No. 1, Lines 1-5)</p> <p>"I came from a family of doctors and my eldest sister is a working med-medical technician at the time she was an active participant and she was directly um... assessing the conditions of each and every COVID um patients, it</p>	<p>Once a family member becomes infected with the virus, other members are quite likely to become sick as well.</p>

was then that she contracted the disease and unfortunately, since the disease was invisible, we couldn't even see it or... or... hasn't manifested until we realized it was already too late."

(I. No. 2, Lines 1-10)

"Um yes, I do know how I got the COVID-19 because my father was the carrier of the virus. He was a frontliner at the time and he was part of the medical team of the PNP."

(I. No. 3, Lines 1-4)

"Actually nakuha ko siya from my dad pero hindi namin... uh... alam kung pa'no at tsaka kung san din n'ya yun nakuha."

(Actually I got it from my dad but we don't... uhh... know how or where he got it from.)

(I. No. 5, Lines 1-3)

According to World Health Organization (2021), the virus mostly spreads amongst people who are close to one another, such as at a conversational distance. When an infected person coughs, sneezes, speaks, sings, or breathes, the virus can spread in microscopic liquid particles from their mouth or nose hence, when the infected particles in the air are inhaled at close proximity, another person can contract the virus. Additionally, the virus can also spread in crowded, poorly ventilated spaces, where people spend more time. This is due to the fact that aerosols can linger in the air or travel beyond a conversational distance.

Moreover, in a new study from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it was mentioned that the transmission of COVID-19 among members of a household once one person is infected is "common" and begins shortly after sickness onset. Infection rates range from 20% to 40%.

b. Symptoms Experienced by the Survivors and Its Impact on Their Daily Lives

Table 3. Analysis of Symptoms Experienced by the Survivors and Its Impact on Their Daily Lives

Significant Statements	Formulated Meaning						
<p>“So actually I was a symptomatic COVID-19 survivor meaning I experienced most of the said symptoms, like coughing, sinus infection or sinus swelling but the most... but the most affecting- the hardest symptom I actually contracted was the headaches, I had a very very bad headache, and it affected my well-being or everyday living because since as I previously stated, we had our online classes while we... while I contracted COVID-19 and I really couldn't focus or couldn't attend even though they were only online. We also had exams so I couldn't properly answer those.” (No. 1, Lines 12-25)</p> <p>“Um, so ayun nga since ano kami nawalan talaga ng panlasa and talagang naapektuhan kami, I became physically weak talaga in terms of gawaing bahay even yung simpleng... pagtayo at paglalakad medyo naging weak na din pati, yung knees ko kasi nga sobrang sakit ng tuhod ko... oh sorry, for a while.... so ayun nga naging physically weak din talaga and nahirapan in terms of... in terms of sumabay dun sa mga task na ginagawa ko just like before.”</p> <p>(Um so there since, we really lost our sense of taste, we were really affected. I became physically weak in terms of household chores and even</p>	<p>The informant's symptoms had a detrimental impact on his/her academics. It diverted the informant's attention away from his/her studies</p> <p>Their loss of taste prohibited them from fully enjoying food intake, and what's more, they couldn't tell whether or not a food was spoiled. It also took a toll on their energy and physical capabilities.</p>	<p>the simple standing and walking, and also, my knees became a bit weak due to my aching knees... Oh sorry, for a while... so there, indeed I became physically weak and it became challenging for me in terms of... in terms of doing the task I usually do before.) (I. No. 4, Lines 8-19)</p> <p>The second theme is derived from the statements of the informants regarding the symptoms they have experienced and their impact on their daily lives. According to the selected informants, the symptoms they have experienced are the said symptoms of the virus including cough, sinus infection, headaches, body aches, and loss of taste buds and these symptoms have a detrimental effect on the informants' ability to focus and perform their duties at home and at school.</p> <p>According to Park et al. (2022), COVID 19 is associated with significant declines in mobility, walking, and physical activity, as well as increases in sedentary behavior. A few studies also found that specific groups of people were engaging in more recreational activities. COVID-19 appears to have a negative overall influence on physical activity, with varied impacts across various subpopulations.</p>	<p>c. Effect on the Mental Health of the Survivors and the Stigma They Experienced</p> <p><i>Table 4. Analysis of Effect on the Mental Health of the Survivors and the Stigma They Experienced</i></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="857 1276 1507 1923"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="865 1287 1182 1350">Significant Statements</th> <th data-bbox="1182 1287 1507 1350">Formulated Meaning</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="865 1350 1182 1923"> <p>“So one of the stigmas I actually experienced as a COVID-19 survivor would be during the time I contracted COVID-19 a lot of people or my neighbors were actually barricading our gates because... ah we live close by... or next... literally next to each other so they were covering their gates with tarpaulins but I understand their... I understand their side... well yeah... that's one of the few stigmas I actually experienced. Another one could be the fact that they</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1182 1350 1507 1923"> <p>Their neighbors' attitudes toward them had shifted as a result of their contracting the virus, with some even barricading their gates in fear of becoming infected as well.</p> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Significant Statements	Formulated Meaning	<p>“So one of the stigmas I actually experienced as a COVID-19 survivor would be during the time I contracted COVID-19 a lot of people or my neighbors were actually barricading our gates because... ah we live close by... or next... literally next to each other so they were covering their gates with tarpaulins but I understand their... I understand their side... well yeah... that's one of the few stigmas I actually experienced. Another one could be the fact that they</p>	<p>Their neighbors' attitudes toward them had shifted as a result of their contracting the virus, with some even barricading their gates in fear of becoming infected as well.</p>
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<p><i>don't really talk to us back then because during the pandemic when we haven't contracted COVID-19 yet, we used to give each other like... food because we were neighbors and it was a Filipino thing to do but after we contracted COVID-19 and during the times we contracted COVID-19 those practices were... were no longer being practiced or done.”</i> (I. No. 1 Lines 53-71)</p> <p><i>“Umm... during that time I was very much worried about my situation to that point that I can't sleep at night and I also felt a little lonely because... um.. of course I was isolated in a room. I call my friends and family from time to time whenever I want or need to but it's still different than actually being with them physically and that is also one of the factors that made me um... downhearted at that time.”</i> (I. No. 3, Lines 18-26)</p> <p><i>“So... my mental health before um I was... before I got this virus it was not really in a good place uh right off the bat. Um I was in my room always and I never really socially interacted with people physically but I do still like talk to people during the pandemic in... through social media. Um when I got COVID I kind of just lost um motivation to talk to other people because I feel like getting this virus would become like a social taboo or something that would make people kind of be scared or uhh... you know be be aware that you have a</i></p>	<p>Their worry about what was about to come prevented them from sleeping at night. We can also see here that a lack of engagement with family and friends, as well as being isolated, can have a negative impact on one's mental health.</p> <p>He/She became discouraged to talk to other people as he/she believes that they will discriminate against him due to his/her health condition</p>		<p><i>virus that may spread through them as well.”</i> (I. No. 6, Lines 39-52)</p>					
<p>The third theme comes from the statements of the informants about the effect of their condition on their mental health and the stigma they have endured, which show that most of them have experienced deterioration in their mental health as a result of anxiety and fear. Moreover, the stigma they have encountered was the reactions of the people around them which made it harder for them to communicate with others.</p>								
<p>According to Adom, et al. (2021), COVID-19 survivors are psychologically distressed which might lead to deterioration in mental health. Stigma can make the recovery difficult, as some may not take their medication, not eat, and not follow protocols because they lost hope of ever getting better. This could also possibly put their lives in danger.</p>								
<p>d. COVID-19 Survivors' Coping Mechanism</p>								
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The fourth theme emerged from the informants' statements concerning the practices or mechanisms they used to cope with their situation as a person with a virus during that time. According to the informants, electronic devices and the internet became a great help for them to cope, in a way that browsing through social media sites and playing online games allowed them to divert their attention from the pain and overthinking brought by isolation.

According to Maftai et al. (2022), social media use has previously been classified as both a maladaptive coping method and a source of peer involvement, implying an ambivalent influence. The findings revealed that adolescents' well-being was positively predicted by their use of social media. Adolescents with high levels of depressive symptoms may be more prone to use social media and have expectations of gaining approval from others in the setting of social media use.

e. Survivors' Comments and Insights on the Pandemic

Table 6. Analysis of Survivors' Comments and Insights on the Pandemic

Significant Statements	Formulated Meaning
<p>"I only have a few because I learned... I learned some things about having COVID-19 because I actually contracted COVID-19 twice and as I stated my parents were frontliners so they... they know things that other people don't, about COVID-19 and all of the cases in the Philippines. So one time when we were taken to their headquarters to get... to get tested for COVID-19 for the second time. We were actually told that we were going to be tested with swab test and the blood test so my insight about that is it's very very expensive and people shouldn't really handle those stuff, the government should."</p> <p>(I. No. 1, Lines 73-86)</p>	<p>The informant expressed his/her dissatisfaction with the measures the government took. He/She thinks that given the cost of COVID-19 tests, the government ought to be responsible for the management of it to its people.</p>

<p><i>"Um, aside from siguro yung sa mental yung sa physical body din na... we should stay healthy kasi hindi natin alam kung kailan nga yun tatama sa'tin. So, yung comments ko din dun... COVID... it's been really hard din dahil wala namang prepared dun sa nangyari so, at least magkaroon tayo ng back-up. For example yung body natin in terms of paano natin yun sasagupain parang ganun para hindi din tayo masyadong shock dun sa sudden changes sa ating society."</i></p> <p><i>"Um maybe aside from mentally, our physical body as well, we should stay healthy because, we never know when it will happen to us. So, my comments would be... COVID... it's been really hard because no one is prepared for the events so, at least let's have some back-up. For example, our body in terms of how we will respond so that we will not be too shocked by the sudden changes in our society."</i></p> <p>(I. No. 4, Lines 49-60)</p>	<p>Staying in good physical and mental health is crucial to surviving the pandemic as to not be caught off guard because COVID-19 hits without warning</p>
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The fifth theme is derived from the informants' remarks and insights on the pandemic as expressed in their statements. According to the informants, many individuals today overlook the virus, and as a COVID-19 survivor, they are aware personally of the importance of having good physical and mental health. While, one of them expressed his/her dissatisfaction with the poor response of the government during that time.

Henerques (2020) claims that because "ego functioning" has multiple developmental stages, different people will respond to COVID 19 in different ways. Understanding a person's level of ego development is helpful for understanding their anxieties, the reasons they provide for acceptable action when those fears are present, and the types of justifications they offer.

f. COVID-19’s Impact on the Survivors’ Aspirations in Life

Table 7. Analysis of f. COVID-19’s Impact on the Survivors’ Aspirations in Life

Significant Statements	Formulated Meaning
<p>“So as a COVID-19 survivor one of my aspirations in life would be um... well I originally wanted to be a doctor before the pandemic but after pandemic I wanted to be... become a lawyer or politician because... and during the pandemic we are- we also had our elections, right? And we... and I saw the lack of action by our politicians or government... government agencies so I really become... I really wanted to become one so I could fix or change a few things about our country and as I stated a while ago in the previous question about how the government didn't really allocate a lot of money or didn't really focus on the fact that we were in a pandemic. One of my aspirations in life is to change how our government works but still connected with COVID-19 because our government really had low or very low satis... they didn't really give enough effort for the pandemic so I really wanted to change that.” (I. No. 1, Lines 93-113)</p> <p>“Uhh... I feel like this virus definitely changed how I um how I set my goals and how I get motivation from hard times because I have experienced this hard time before and I feel like it would be a shame if I were</p>	<p>The informant's choice of the profession they want to pursue changed after contracting the illness.</p>

<p>to give up at an... at another point in my life just because I have experienced something that's very hard when in fact I have faced these hard challenges before and I know I did survive them so I feel like it's very um it's a very important factor or it's a very important lesson that I learned through getting this virus because I realized that you can overcome problems no matter how hard it is.” (I. No. 6, Lines 133-147)</p>	<p>This remark expresses how the informant believes that nothing is as difficult as what they went through while suffering from COVID, and hence they become driven to undertake things even though they believe they are difficult. It served as motivation to keep going even when things got tough.</p>
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According to a research conducted by SNU (2021), the pandemic acted as an instrument to restart life. COVID-19 has served as a reset button for many people, urging them to refocus their attention on what is most important. The pandemic, however, does not have to be all bad. COVID-19 has served as a reset button for many people, urging them to refocus their attention on what is most important.

These significant statements from the informants highlight the lived experience of the senior high school COVID-19 survivors in terms of physiological, psychological, and social experiences, along with their aspirations in life.

3.1. Conclusions

The study's foreshadowed problems were used to derive conclusions. After reviewing the research findings, the researchers found that COVID-19 survivors' experiences and aspirations vary and coincide.

In general, the most prevalent way of contracting the virus among informants is through family members. They also mentioned that the symptoms that manifested in the survivors' physiological health had caused a downgrade in the survivors' daily living, especially in terms of academics.

While in terms of mental health, anxiety caused them to have sleepless nights. Also, it was found that COVID-19's effects did not disappear even after the informants were free of the virus but rather had a long-term impact on the survivors' lives.

Informants also frequently stated that social media was their way of coping while having the virus. In addition to that, they also provided their own perspectives and views on how the government handled the issues during the pandemic and what they believe is the best way to avoid contracting the virus.

Finally, it has been gathered from the informants' statements that their experience with COVID-19 has had a substantial impact on their aspirations and the person they are now.

3.2. Recommendations

The researchers propose the following recommendations as a result of the preceding findings and conclusions:

The students may be encouraged to eat a well-balanced diet. They may also be encouraged to engage in physical activity to keep their bodies healthy and avoid sickness. Participation in social activities may also be beneficial to their mental health.

Students who are struggling with their mental health may benefit from the formation of support groups and communities.

It is advised that the Department of Education (DepEd) and school heads ensure that proper guidance is being employed and that proper consideration is being given to those who have contracted the virus.

The government may consider providing more assistance and covering the costs of seeking healthcare. As a result, people may become less hesitant to get checked and seek medical advice as soon as possible.

Lastly, for the future researchers, it is strongly advised that you look for other studies related to this in order to strengthen the foundation for subsequent studies linked to this current research. Given the limitations of this study, you must look deeper into the underlying narratives and supporting data for your issue rather than solely relying on this research.

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