

The Jeepney Drivers and their Lived Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Phenomenological Qualitative Study in the Philippines

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Abstract

The majority of Filipinos rely on jeepneys or "Kings of the Road" as a transportation mode of Filipino daily lives. Public transportation provides mobility and access to employment, community resources, medical care, and recreational opportunities in communities across the Philippines. It benefits both of those people who have a vehicle and commuters because of the cheapest fare. Jeepneys show importance as a mode of transportation and an icon in Filipino cultures. The main objective of the study is to describe the lived experiences, challenges faced, and coping mechanisms of the Jeepney drivers during the pandemic. Moreover, the implications of the study were discussed, and recommendations were suggested.

Keywords: *Jeepney Drivers, Lived experiences, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), COVID-19*

1. INTRODUCTION

The majority of Filipinos rely on jeepneys or "Kings of the Road" as a transportation mode of Filipino daily lives. Public transportation provides mobility and access to employment, community resources, medical care, and recreational opportunities in communities across the Philippines. It benefits both of those people who have a vehicle and commuters because of the cheapest fare. Jeepneys show importance as a mode of transportation and an icon in Filipino cultures. Back in the American period, wherein a load of jeepneys left over by the American soldiers, the jeep's enculturation was one of the main modes of transport in the Philippines (Ines, 2017). Furthermore, until now, jeepneys have stayed with the Filipinos along with their unique designs, paintings, and sayings on the exterior (Ines, 2017).

Every public transport driver's Life was difficult even before the pandemic because of the average amount of income that covers only their everyday financial expenses such as food, rental fees, electricity fees, and other costs (Raskin & Meyer, 2020). The same way in Pedicab drivers in New York City, wherein a lot of pedicab drivers there are used to have at least 1,000\$ per week if they are lucky to have enough Tourists in the city and also in the streets there used to be 250 pedicabs in the central city before the pandemic happens (Raskin & Meyer, 2020). When the Coronavirus (COVID-19) happens, almost all of the world's countries experienced a severe

health emergency wherein this contagious virus can pass to others if they have close contact with the person who contains the virus World Health Organization (WHO, 2020). In this case, according to (Arab News, 2020), this pandemic dramatically affects everyone's lives, including their livelihood, occupation, and other essential things to make a living. They promoted the Government to close the country's borders and ban all public transportation to mitigate the virus's contagion. This restriction created by the Government to control the COVID-19 situation made the jeepney driver's Life more complicated. With no income and debts piling up, other jeepney drivers and their families started living in the jeepney to lessen their everyday expenses.

According to the Union of Catholic Asian News (2020), owners of jeepney drivers and struggling drivers appealed to the Philippine Government to allow them to resume their operations to survive the COVID-19 crisis. However, the Government said the jeepneys' operation remained suspended to control the areas' spread with a higher case of COVID-19. The Government also said they need to follow and observe the hierarchy of transportation mode in the Philippines. They also stated Jeepney operation will be lastly to operate if the public transport still is not sufficient.

This study aims to know the hardships, sacrifices, and Life of Jeepney drivers, how pandemic affects their livelihood and financial stability, and how they affect their mental health in Life to overcome and survive these difficulties amidst the pandemic. To gain knowledge about the strategies that could be applied to aid jeepney driver's problems and the future researchers, they will know about the phenomenon in which jeepney drivers encounter many challenges amidst the pandemic results in poverty and other social issues.

1.1 Research Questions

The main objective of the study is to describe the lived experiences of the jeepney drivers during the pandemic. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of Jeepney drivers during the pandemic?
2. What are the challenges faced by the Jeepney drivers during the pandemic?
3. What are the coping mechanisms of the Jeepney drivers during the pandemic?

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Experiences of Jeepney Drivers during the pandemic

After being stopped in their routine because of the pandemic, drivers call the Government's attention to help them in a little way. (Caymaniantimes, 2020). Those living in the "Dutch houses," as local people call them, are helpless drivers of public utility jeeps that used to handle the roads of the capital during the pre-pandemic days. (Lucenio, 2020). The Philippine "jeepney" driver is now walking the Manila streets begging for money to feed his starving family. (Lopez, 2020). "We need to leave our homes and take our risks in the roads to have something in our snarling stomachs" (Bondoc, 2020) stated. Other drivers haul plastic compartments and cardboard signs around their necks to grab the eye and compassion of passing motorists. "We have nothing left to spend," (Flores 2020) told AFP as he sat inside his jeepney. Since it was lockdown, some jeepney drivers think of another way to supply their daily needs and provide their everyday expenses. Some of them are selling fruits and vegetables to fit their daily needs.

The other jeepney drivers are selling fruits, vegetables, and other products. (Garcia, 2020). Jeepney drivers have nowhere to go, and no one relies on them. It's embarrassing to ask for help from their relatives every day, so the drivers gathered the courage and asked for help

from other people who are willing to help them so they can eat. Other people would give jeepney driver any amount of money, and they are very thankful to accept it to have something to eat. But sometimes, they will take just once a day. That's what they experience during this lockdown. Some of them say that sometimes if their one will help the jeepney driver, they don't eat at all (Yahoo News, 2020). The jeepney drivers' distribution of relief goods was led by Jimmy Bondoc, PAGCOR vice president, and Mayor Joy Belmonte. The relief goods were filled with food, facemasks, and alcohol for Jeepney drivers in Parañaque and Pasay City. The Government strengthens response efforts against the pandemic that Mayor Belmonte was thankful for. The infected members in Quezon City have become slower in the meantime. According to (Ranjit Rye 2020), OCTA Research group member Quezon City should continue fighting the COVID-19. Testing and contact tracing should encourage them to continue. And they are also implementing health protocols and social distancing. Mayor Belmonte was glad to accept the reports as she thanked her residents and officials for cooperating on the COVID-19 pandemic fight. (PhilippineStar, 2020). Quezon City was one of the highest rates of COVID-19 in the past months. Because of this, Mayor Belmonte tried hard not to spread the virus. She distributes a lot of relief to help the residents in their everyday needs and avoid them from going out in their place. Resulting in this Quezon City improved and became slower the number of COVID-19 pandemics. According to (George San Mateo 2020), PISTON's former national president, jeepney drivers are also pandemics victims. They need to come back into the routine because they need to survive and to live. (Calleja, 2020). Even if the drivers get harm, they have nothing else to do but take the risk and chances to go in the streets and beg for money to buy food for family and eat. The Government tried to give money in exchange for their lost income, but it is not enough. In June, 55,000 jeepneys are allowed to go back but do not forget the rules about safety protocols. They need to use plastic in every seat to avoid contact with the commuters. (TheStraitsTimes, 2020).

Six jeepney drivers were arrested in June because of violating social distancing rules after protesting because of their work loss. Many drivers like Mr. Bondoc were nothing else to do but protest and beg for them to get back their livelihood. Every day, roughly 3 million burdens are moved over the U.S. These vehicles' drivers help move 71 percent of the cargo in our nation, including genuinely necessary wares, for example, food supplies, innovation, clinical gear, and considerably more. If we understand it, these experts assume a considerable function in our everyday lives. Maybe now, like never before, we depend on them as COVID-19 "stay at home" demands have expanded the requirement for fundamental things, such as food supplies and toiletries. Moreover, these drivers assume a vital function in supporting COVID-19 testing destinations and clinical focuses. (Emery, 2020).

When the COVID-19 Pandemic spread, Americans start to panic buying supplies, resulting in drivers putting a lot of time to get their deliveries to stores and putting more of their work in. According to (Richard Joseph 2020), a driver needs to go in and out and can't do anything about it. Joseph defines the drivers as a lonely job especially that the new normal to COVID-19 concerns is social distancing. Many companies that trade between Canada and the U.S are now close due to the pandemic though the drivers have a big part in transporting essentials people need. (News, 2020). CNN Business talked with a few transporters about their ongoing encounters. Many said they're working under challenging conditions that incorporate longer hours, swarmed stops, and troubles discovering food, just as well-being and security concerns. Drivers aren't medical services laborers, and we're not anyone extraordinary. Do we need to keep it since what else would we say we will do now? (McFarland CNN Business,

2020). .*"Before the pandemic, there used to be 250 pedicabs out in Central Park. At present, it's 10 to 15"* *"In the roads, there were more than 300. At this moment, it's possibly 50 aggregate."*(Sawajao, 2020). Stawell transporter finding the restricted admittance to food and offices during the COVID-19 closure is making a *"level out"* work even harder. *"Truck stops denied their lounge area access leaving transporters with no place to plunk down and eat"*(Pyke, 2020). The taxi, limousine, and other services are affected by the Corona Virus pandemic. Due to the demand for service, fares dropped more than two thirds in March 2020 by resulting in pressure on ride companies. The salary of taxi drivers has been affected because of lockdown and is rigorous to operate. A small number of taxi services are allowed to offer emergency services with the Government's approval. Drivers and also passengers are required to maintain the most top and highest kind of hygiene. Companies need the drivers to follow all the protocols by keeping social distancing, both passengers and fellow drivers. The taxi driver's company offers emergency transport services to ease the ambulance services' burden. (TBR Company, 2020). The Amarillo transporters in Texas experience driving difficulties because of the COVID-19 pandemic. As transporters keep on conveying items during the pandemic, the challenges they face are developing. There are a more significant number of trucks accessible to get things than there are items.

Notwithstanding the difficulties, drivers in Amarillo are endeavoring to convey the items we as a whole depend on (Miller, 2020). Everything had changed, as it's been said if before. They were battling to ride public transportation; however, now there are a couple of individuals who depend on them. On the off chance that no individuals are working in the emergency clinic, individuals who have not lost their positions will ride them. Nothing so their family might be eager (Strabane, 2020).

To prevent the spread of the virus, people should learn how to clean the basic things they used as a car. All surfaces that individuals will touch should sanitize (Wiltshire, 2020). In transporting and using public vehicles, individuals should bring their sanitizer, use the mask, and don't put it off. (Wiltshire, 2020). If you see a transporter while you're out looking for staple goods, accept the open the door to show them some increase by expressing gratitude toward them on the off chance you can. (Padfield, 2020). *"Hold putting down the miles and continue remaining safe, and we'll overcome this all together"* (Peterson, 2020)

2.2 Challenges faced by the Jeepney drivers during the pandemic

The Government implements a tight lockdown resulting in the Iconic Philippine vehicle "King of the Road" being dismissed. Many drivers are begging on the roads and asking for a small help from the Government and hoping for the drivers to drive again. Before the pandemic arises, the Government has plans and programs to modernize public transport, resulting in phase-out jeepneys. This program aimed to update and have safety and convenience for the passengers. (Favila, 2020) According to (Recio 2020), the Government should study the program because low jeepney drivers cannot afford the new vehicle. This will result in jobless and hardship for the Jeepney drivers. Indeed, even before COVID-19, Life was hard. However, it was tolerable. (Kalagayan, 2020). Jeepney drivers are now suffering not just because of not being allowed to drive but also the Government has a program to evict all the old vehicles like jeepney. Modernizing the jeepney has no problem for drivers, but they ask for a little consideration during the pandemic. The jobless drivers have turned to ask in the roads, showing cardboard signs bearing cash and food requests on their jeepneys. And before the outbreak began, jeepneys had just been undermined by an administration program to modernize public vehicles and eliminate

maturing vehicles. The modernization program means to make over jeepneys by improving their motors, well-being, and accommodation. (Indian Express, 2020).

The drivers and owners of the iconic Philippine Jeepneys are begging to drive again to have income that has been lost because of the pandemic crisis. But according to the presidential spokesperson, Harry Roque (2020), jeepney drivers will not allow to back in operation because of high coronavirus rates. Harry Roque stated that jeepney was the last on their list to come back because of the increased risk commuters can get because jeepney has crowded seating and close to close passengers. As the virus spread in the country, they were forced to stop in their old routine to avoid contacting each other, resulting in them not having enough money to spend with their family. One more thing that worried them is the government plan this year for the modernization of vehicles. They are worried that they will not be able to drive again. The program aim was to finish this year, but the Government has no announce yet if the deadline continues. (Calleja, 2020)

Many commercial drivers face several health challenges, including obesity, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. Such conditions place them at high risk for contracting COVID-19. This pressure compounded with well-being challenges has set extra mental and actual requests on drivers, putting them further in danger for COVID-19. Drivers get sick, and it can affect everyone. People will come into contact with these drivers at truck stops or their delivery stops. If they are very ill, their driving skills may be impaired and, when they return to their homes, they risk spreading the virus to their family and friends (Emerly, 2020).

The drivers in the Washington region and some local industry leaders have nothing no reports of COVID-19 deaths. But killing by the virus across the country is concerning, according to the stories of transit, rideshare, and taxi drivers. Local Government set giving programs that provide transportation for low-income residents, seniors, or special needs to supply some business to the drivers. (Lazo, 2020). The taxi drivers are considered as one of the front liners in Washington. Drivers in Washington suffered because of Coronavirus. The drivers become afraid to risk their lives, but Washington's Government didn't desolate the drivers by providing temporary jobs. According to (Farrel 2020), for clear communication about all of the COVID-19 related changes, drivers are looking for assistance.

As the COVID-19 Pandemic spread, the drivers are not just looking for money but also for assurance, assistance, and protection on their own respective companies. Companies should not leave them behind and provide all the necessities they need. In this time of the pandemic, no one should be left behind. The COVID-19 pandemic hasn't been useful for vehicles. However, it's managing much more terrible. They revealed that its rides business's gross appointment declined by 75% in the three months to June contrasted with a year ago, tumbling from \$12.2 billion to simply \$3 billion. At this point, be delivering gross appointment figures to its financial specialists have, all things considered, announced a 60% drop in the number of dynamic riders on the stage in the three months to June, from 21.8 million a year ago to 8.7 million this year. Rajesh his temporary home was in Hulimavu, South Bangalore, while his family is in India. He saved his money by working a lot of time. Rajesh's health became worse. Unfortunately, he died because of Coronavirus. The drivers in the U.K are now demanding and requesting better protection and security from the Government. (BBC News, 2020). The drivers need to be extra careful so that it will lessen the burden of doctors and frontliners.

2.3 Coping mechanisms of the Jeepney drivers during the pandemic

Nationwide have a concern during the pandemic times and agree to help each other and do the right thing as much as possible (Preidt, 2020). Some have continued working at singular

risk, working more hours, keeping things under control for sections, and getting less money. Their goal is to get impediments and facilitators to realize workplace approaches and heading that help rideshare workers' prosperity and security and application-based drivers as the pandemic continues (Schroeder, 2020). When all individuals were apprehensive, sitting at home, the transporters proceeded with their work. On the off chance that drivers sit at home, how individuals can eat. So they need their wheels moving to give our everyday needs because without them, we don't have anything to purchase, and on the off chance that we don't have anything to buy, we don't have anything to eat (Karim & Tkach, 2020). Accordingly, there is the potential for their psychological prosperity to be antagonistically affected. Whatever the 'new ordinary' resembles, hitting it up will be a test. Drivers will require extra help and direction to keep up mental and actual well-being. Bosses ought to create intense driving for work strategies that put prosperity and psychological wellness at its middle. Great mental and actual well-being improves profitability, makes better execution, and enhances the business's money-related quality for the excursion ahead (Turner, 2020). They can get different germs that can cause COVID-19, and they can likewise taint their family. So even though it is hard for each driver to stop their work, they did it for their family's security (Conger and May 2020). Some rest stop washrooms won't let drivers utilize those, so many need to use close by porta-potties. It was conceivable to eat hot nourishments during a pandemic to lose their weariness (Bloomberg Law, 2020).

Transporters have kept on making a trip to places the vast majority of us aren't permitted, and the significance of the shipping business has been upfront for the last six months. (Global News, 2020) *"When all individuals were apprehensive, sitting at home, and we were much the same as drivers," "If drivers sit at home, how individuals can eat? "So, we must have our wheels moving."* (Jhinger, 2020). Enlarge of sanitation and hygiene is a must and is part of the messaging around the Pandemic. According to (Muzik 2020), drivers are allowed to do that by providing the drivers with open parking and having their place that is clean and sanitized. They will allow the drivers to be in that place. (Kocher, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has a higher risk and is very dangerous. Contacting and exposure to multiple people might not control the spread of the virus. They were driving rather than flying is safer because people who travel know who will contact. According to (Shmerling, 2020) the car was loaded with sanitizers, food and water, supplies of hygiene, a mask, and all they need to prevent going out from the stores. To be safe and symptoms free is a must, and it is one way to be safe and avoid the virus even during a pandemic. (Shmerling, 2020).

3. METHODOLOGY

The paper is a qualitative study, and the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used. It aims to provide details of the respondent's lived experiences. The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) aims is to explore details on how participants make sense of their personal and social environment (Smith & Osborn, 2007). The method is phenomenological, as it requires a thorough systematic attempt to discover and describe the meaning of Jeepney drivers' lived experiences during the pandemic.

3.1 Participants

The study focuses on Jeepney drivers that experience hardship under the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of the research is to understand and have a broad knowledge of the drivers' situation. The whole world is suffering because of the pandemic. Due to the volume of

Government's problem, a small sector like jeepney drivers is being forgotten. Jeepney drivers are considered as one of the frontliners that fighting against the unseen enemy. The researchers selected nine respondents from the community that has been working before and during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

3.2 Instrument

The study used an Interview to facilitate the efficient and effective gathering of responses. The interview consisted of 14 questions to share the participants' experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of the Jeepney driver. The interview was primarily tested on at least nine Jeepney drivers to expand and explore the participants' responses. The researcher uses the Filipino language to provide a comfortable environment and to encourage deeper responses from respondents. The questions were classified into different sections. The first part of the interview focused on the experience of those respondents during this pandemic. The second part included questions about the Jeepney driver's challenges. The last part included issues related to their coping mechanism.

3.3 Procedure

On data gathering, we first ask the Jeepney drivers if we can interview them about their experiences during this pandemic and ask them if it's okay to record so that they can better share their story and experiences this pandemic. The interview process was done one by one to give the respondents privacy and make them feel comfortable answering the questions and telling their stories. A researcher asks about the Interview guide question and records while the respondents answer the researchers' questions. After conducting the interview, the researchers transcribe, one by one, the respondent answers. Through this, the researchers have learned the experience, challenges, and coping mechanisms of Jeepney drivers.

4. RESULTS

After conducting and listening to the jeepney drivers' lived experiences during the pandemic, the gathered data are ready to be presented.

The method is phenomenological as it aims to discover and understand personal lived experiences and the social environment. It seeks to explore how participants make sense of their personal and social setting (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

| Variable | Frequency |
|----------|-----------|
| Age | |
| 28-40 | 4 |
| 41-53 | 3 |
| 54-59 | 2 |

The summary of demographic characteristics of participants included in this study was shown in Table 1. The study was composed of 9 Jeepney Drivers residing in Bulacan and Quezon City. The participant's age is from 28-59 years old.

Table 2. Supplementary Demographic Information

| Variable | Frequency |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| Status | |
| Single | 1 |
| Partnered | 8 |
| Work Status | 1 |
| Currently Working | 8 |
| Not Currently Working | 1 |
| Driving Experience | |
| 1-5 years | 1 |
| 6-10 years | 4 |
| 11-15 years | 2 |
| 16-20 years | 2 |

Listed above Table 2 is the supplementary demographic information of the participants. Most of the participants have partnered. 8 out of 9 are currently working, and most of the driving experience is under 6-10 years, as shown in the table.

4.1 The Lived Experiences of Jeepney Drivers

During the pandemic, the jeepney drivers are one of the victims of pandemic. The pandemic makes them hungry, and they have nothing to do but find another source of income. 80% of the participants become emotionally unstable because of the pandemic. They are thinking about their family on how they are going to feed them. Because of the pandemic, they are forced to stop their routine on being a driver. When they were allowed again to be back in their usual way, Jeepney drivers ensure the safety measurement and protocol are followed. They put plastics to provide barriers and to have physical distancing of the passengers. They didn't forget the alcohol they displayed in the corner and sides of the jeeps. The drivers make sure that the passengers are always wearing their facemask and face shield. Because of the pandemic, their salary decreases a lot. One of the respondents says that during the pandemic, their pay is ranging to 200 or less. Even though it is hard to fit in the lives, they have nothing to do but accept this new normal. According to (George San Mateo 2020), a PISTON's former national president, Jeepney drivers also need to live. Even if pandemic drivers need to earn a living or else, they will be starved.

Table 3. Experiences Themes

| Experiences | Frequency |
|------------------|-----------|
| Safety Measures | 9 |
| Positive Mindset | 9 |
| Empowerment | 9 |

Most of the Jeepney Drivers are experiencing difficulty amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The Jeepney driver Listed below Table 2 is the supplementary demographic information of the participants. Most of the participants have partnered. 8 out of 9 are currently working, and most of the driving experience is under 6-10 years as shown in the table's was classified in three divisions: Safety Measures, Positive Mindset and Empowerment

4.1.1 Safety Measures

With appropriate physical distancing of passengers, these become more extensive. Taken together, these kinds of safety measures limit the danger of transmission, and among the upgrades made by, as of now, de cash-strapped jeepney drivers were the establishment of plastic obstructions between passengers. (Sabillo,2020)

"Ay! Ito safety nag aalcohol ka, nag mamask ka, may faceshield ka at tsaka may harang harang ka na plastik. Sabi ko nga sa mga pasahero kung maari meron kayong faceshield, kapag wala naman basta naka facemask wag lang kayo umalis don sa plastik na nakaharang. Yung iba kasi sinasampay nalang lalo kung mag syota. Nako! Wala na akong magawa sa inyo."

When covid began to hit our country, there were safety protocols to prevent the rapid escalation of cases of people with COVID-19. The Government implements it, and people need to follow. It's a must.

"Una dyan syempre wag mo kakalimutanng magdala ng facemask,faceshield tsaka alcohol kasi ayan lang yung panlaban natin sa ngayon diba."

4.1.2 Positive Thinkers

God has not forsaken us. I had a spot near us and was able to sell breakfast. Those are also the sources of our livelihood for a few weeks. Sometimes we have friends who are also drivers and ask for help because they have nothing to eat. It is complicated, especially if the family is big and the children are young. You can't bear to see your children go hungry. (Cloudbric, 2020)

"Ay! Kapit lang at tsaka laban lang wala naman mangyayari kapag inisip mo yang ng inisip ang tanging magagawa mo lang ay magpakatatag para sa pamilya."

Despite the severe trials faced by jeepney drivers in this pandemic, they still cannot help but be cheerful in Life, trust, and have faith in our Lord. They draw the strength to God to go on in Life and to believe that we can also overcome these trials.

"Ahh...syempre magtiwala sa taas at tulungan lang."

4.1.3 Empowerment

Jeepney drivers and their families should not be left to starve. Allow jeepneys to travel but continue with caution. (Mangubat,2020). All we want is to provide services to workers and commuters who are having difficulty finding vehicles every day due to unreasonable government bans. This is no longer just a matter of our livelihood but of the role of public transportation to help our dying economy. (Floranda, 2020)

"Ingatan yung mga sarili kasi may mga pamilya tayong binubuhay. Sumunod tayo sa mga bawal kasi para satin din naman kasi yon e."

Despite the challenges faced by Jeepney drivers in this pandemic, their cooperation with each other, unity, and be a reminder to their fellow drivers to be careful every day.

"Katulad ng sinasabi ko kung maari wag niyo naman kalimutan yung mga pinagbabawal sa atin ng gobyerno. Halimbawa ng mga ginagamit araw-araw sumusunod ka dapat sa mga pinagbabawal."

4.2 The Challenges Faced of the Jeepney Drivers

The drivers are emotional. They felt sad, anxious, and nothing to do but to be healthy for their family. As a father, they need to be healthy and be positive because their child is looking

after them. They are forced to find another income to support the needs of their family. After the pandemic, their salary is just enough to buy rice for their family. They can't save money due to the lack of income. According to the President of Manila-based Piston Transport Group (2020), Florida said mass transport was killed. People can't move around even if the malls are opened, factories and offices are still useless. Drivers are not just thinking of income but also on their health. They are afraid that they might get the unseen enemy and infect their family. In their everyday travel, they are scared that that would be their last chance to see their family, but they have no choice but to risk their lives. Jeepney drivers are willing to risk everything just to provide for the needs of their families. They make sure that they sanitize before and after they will go out on their house. And as far as they can, they need to strengthen their immunity to fight the unseen virus.

Table 4. Challenges themes

| Challenges | Frequency |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Financial Issues | 9 |
| Emotional Support | 9 |
| Surviving | 9 |

Jeepney drivers are facing different challenges because of the pandemic. Among the subordinate shown in Table 4, the financial issues were the highest frequency, according to participants' responses.

4.2.1 Financial Issues

COVID-19 pandemic affects everyone, some more drastically than others, and for several families, it could mean making big changes to their daily routine due to financial difficulties. (Health, 2020)

“Hindi sa ngayon eh sa aking hanapbuhay parang kulang sa ganitong panahon kaya naman nagtitiis ako sa ganto pero dahil mayroon kasing dumarating sa akin na ibang ano may nagpapadala kasi sa akin e kaya hindi ako masyadong nakakaramdam na ng hirap na may mga kapatid kasi akong nagpapadala sa akin eh yung iba nasa ibang bansa kaya hindi na ako masyadong nahihirapan.”

COVID-19 has caused widespread damage to the economy - to the point that it is easy to overlook how unevenly households suffer. (NPR, 2020)

“Hindi, katulad ng sinabi ko kanina marami kaming pangangailangan na hindi na nabibili pero kahit ganon naman nakakakain kami tatlong beses sa isang araw salamat sa panginoon. Tiis tiis lang muna.”

4.2.2 Emotional Support

If COVID-19 spreads to our community, there are some simple precautions you should take, such as physical distancing, wearing a mask, good ventilation of rooms, avoiding crowds, cleaning hands, and coughing in a bent elbow or handkerchief where you live and work. (WHO,2020)

“Wag lang iasa sa gobyerno yung solusyon dapat tayo din kumilos sa simpleng pagsunod don sa safety protocols.”

The COVID-19 pandemic can depend on your background, family or friends' social support, financial situation, health and emotional environment, the community you live in, and many other factors.

“Konting tiwala, kung nagtiwala ka sa diyos. E ngayon kapit ka talaga sa sarili mo sa pamilya mo at tsaka sa mga taong dapat mong kapitan e kakapit ka. Kung hindi ka naman pwedeng kumapit edi wag kangkumapit. Kung may sakit naman yan e wag kang kumapit diyan. Kahit papaano nakasurvive naman kahit medyo tagilid yung laban. Sabi ko nga sa mga bata hanggat maari wag muna lumabas kung wala pa sa tamang edad. Katulad nalang ng sinasabi sa balita kaso hindi na natutupad e makikita mo nalang minsan yung mga bata wala pang faceshield at wala pang face mask.”

4.2.3 Surviving

Life is full of uncertainty, especially in times like this. While many things are out of your control, your way of thinking is key to facing difficult circumstances and facing the unknown. (HelpGuide, 2020)

“Ay paghahandaan naten yan kasi yang pagsubok nayan darating yan, kaya naten paghandaan yan. Sana wag bibigay kase kapag bumigay ka wala na walang mangyari satin.”

While we may not want to acknowledge it, uncertainty is a natural and unavoidable part of Life.

“Kakayanin, wala naman tayong ibang dahilan para sumuko kapag sumuko ka pano na yung pamilyang umaasa sayo. Kaya kailangan kayanin mo para sa kanila.”

Very little of our lives is constant or safe, and although we have control over many things, we cannot control everything that happens to us. As the coronavirus outbreak has shown, Life can change very quickly and unpredictably.

4.3 The Coping Mechanisms of the Jeepney Drivers

Due to Jeepney drivers' insufficient income, they are forced to think of another strategy to have income during the pandemic. When the lockdown was implemented, most jeepney drivers used their received SAP to provide for their families' needs. They used it as an alternative way to survive during the pandemic. The Government examines the possibility of giving another financial support for the jeepney drivers because Jeepney drivers are banned due to the implementation of general community quarantine (Valente, 2020). Even though it is not enough, they learn how to cope up with the

Table 5: Coping mechanism themes

| Coping Mechanisms | Frequency |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Alternative Works | 9 |
| Emotional Support | 9 |
| Protecting the Self | 9 |

Amidst COVID-19 Pandemic, Jeepney drivers learn to cope with what is happening to survive in the situation. Under the coping mechanism are the following subthemes: Alternative Works, Emotional Support, and Protection of selves. As shown in Table 5, alternative works have the highest frequency among all.

4.3.1 Alternative Works

The Government's recent survey showed that the latest unemployment figure has seven in 10 workers in Metro Manila due to loss of jobs during lockdown that lasted for more than two months. The family Income shrank by nearly half. 60% spent less on food, and some 13% said that they borrow money from relatives and friends.

“Katulad ng sabi ko kanina, nagconstruction muna sa kapit bahay pandagdag sa pambili ng bigas. Dahil nga hindi rin naman sapat yung binibigay ng ayuda ng barangay. Kahit papaano nakaraos naman.”

Danny Mateo used to be a Jeepney Driver but realized that he could not support his family with driving he starts to plant vegetables'. (Sarian, 2020)

“Ahhh...Nagtanim tanim tas binibenta naming tsaka kinakain.”

4.3.2 Emotional Support

Since the pandemic strikes in the Philippines, the jeepney has been banned in the public routes. Only selected vehicles are allowed to ply the roads. The Jeepney drivers have desperately looked to any option to earn money while the country still in quarantine and people are going back with their workplaces (Beltran, 2020). The Jeepney drivers are needed to be strong in this time of the pandemic.

“Pinapatatag ko yung loob ko sa panahon ngayong pandemic katulad ng sa kapwa natin na nakikita kong kaya nga ng iba ako pa kaya”

The Church leader told the Jeepney drivers to continue praying for a pandemic to end, which is the only way to get back on their everyday lives. According to Bishop David, drivers are not alone. The church is with them, and the Lord is with us. (2020)

“Kapit sa Diyos kasi sya talaga ang una nating masasandalan pag sa mga ganitong sitwasyon, yung paggabay nya sa atin at pamilya natin ang kailangan talaga natin.”

4.3.3 Protecting the Self

The drivers had to make their vehicles safe from the virus by putting plastic seat dividers and reducing passengers' capacity to follow the social distancing regulations. (ArabNews, 2020). Jeepney drivers should make sure of the safety of their health while earning money to support their families.

“Para saken napaka halaga na ingatan ang sarili dahil ako lang ang inaasahan ng pamilya ko. Kaya kailangan may facemask at magiingat lagi dahil hindi naten nakikita yung kalaban naten.”

It is expected that operators and drivers must follow the safety protocols such as wearing facemask and gloves and a 50% maximum operating capacity of vehicles (PNA, 2020). It is the safety protocols that must be followed not just for drivers but also for passengers' health.

“Paggamit ng facemask, Faceshield, ng alcohol. Pag uwi ko naman maliligo bago pumasok sa bahay.”

5. DISCUSSION

The result indicates that the Jeepney drivers are still struggling since the COVID-19 started here in the Philippines. The Government implements a tight lockdown resulting in the Jeepney driver being dismissed. Many drivers are begging on the roads and asking for a small help from the Government and hoping for the drivers to drive again. Some of them take another job to have money to provide food for their families. Before the pandemic arises, the

Government has plans and programs to modernize public transport, resulting in the jeepneys' phase-out. The Government should study the program because low jeepney drivers cannot afford the new vehicle. This will result in jobless and hardship for the Jeepney drivers. Indeed, even before COVID-19, Life was hard. However, it was tolerable. Jeepney drivers are now suffering not just because of not being allowed to drive but also the Government has a program to evict all the old vehicles like jeepney. Modernizing the jeepney has no problem for drivers, but they ask for a little consideration in this pandemic because they have no other source of money in this pandemic when they stop to drive their Jeepneys.

The other jeepney drivers are selling fruits, vegetables, and other products. Jeepney drivers have nowhere to go, and no one relies on them. Many commercial drivers face several health challenges, including obesity, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. Such conditions place them at high risk for contracting COVID-19. This pressure compounded with well-being challenges has set extra mental and actual requests on drivers, putting them further in danger for COVID-19. Drivers get sick, and it can affect everyone. People will come into contact with these drivers. If they are very ill, their driving skills may be impaired, and when they return to their homes, they risk spreading the virus to their family and friends.

Jeepney drivers are in danger because they can have COVID-19. They work all day on the road, and some of them have high blood pressure, diabetes, and another disease that may cause to weaken their immune system, and some of them is elderly with weak resistance. With the hardships of Life since the COVID-19 hit, it had become even more difficult for us to find our livelihood to buy food every day, especially for our Jeepney drivers who stopped driving when the lockdown was implemented. Now that they are gradually returning to the beach, they are still consistent in being positive in Life, work together and follow safety protocols. Even though their income is not that high now compared to before, you can always find satisfaction in them even though it is complicated. They yet have not forgotten to believe in God and believe in his good plan. They also serve as an inspiration to their family to work even more challenging. Our Jeepney drivers are still in pain and struggle right now. We used to call them the "Kings of the Roads," but now they seem to be begging on the road to have money to buy food for their families. Now when they returned to drive their jeepney again, Life is still complicated for them because of the social distancing protocol, so they only can take fewer passengers. But according to them, their income is still enough for them they still buy their basic needs, but their income now is small compared to the huge amount of their income before COVID-19, so that they can no longer believe their others' needs wants for now.

6. CONCLUSION

This present study aimed to examine and understand one of the most critical aspects of Jeepney drivers' life experiences. Several findings were collected regarding the experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms that the pandemic brought. The Jeepney driver's adventures are tricky because while they are working, they have a threat of the enemy illness that we do not see. That they can still be infected, and they can also infect their families. But with the danger of this disease, they do not forget the Government's safety protocols. They keep following it for themselves and their loved ones. Most Jeepney drivers need to be strong to face Life's challenges. They should not show that they are struggling and fear of their health and still for their family's health. Especially the discouragement during the times we are being tested. Their incomes are not enough due to the increasing goods and food, but they cannot do anything if

there are fewer passengers and more like them, most of them are a father who struggles every time they do not give and provide what their family wants. The main thing is that they feed themselves and somehow pay off and reduce their debts.

During this pandemic, Jeepney drivers initially thought of other ways to survive, while Jeepneys are banned from driving. Most of them worked in construction to provide for their daily needs, and they say that when they work for their families, we can do nothing but fight and take care of ourselves during this pandemic. The researchers recommend that Government allow the old route of the Jeepneys to return. So that they are not alone in the same place looking for passengers. So that half of their income goes back to before the pandemic. This can be providing their needs and pay their sacrifices so that we can return the favor to be delivered safely to our workplaces. We learned how important they are when they get lost along the way. So, we should bring back what they deserve, because we can also consider them heroes. Therefore, further investigation can take these findings as a starting point and investigate the Jeepney driver's experiences.

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