

THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF QUEZON CITY POLICE AMIDST COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY IN THE PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

Philippine National Police particularly the Quezon City Police District faces COVID-19 pandemic public health challenges because of its resource and capacity limitations. Police frequently monitor and enforce lockdowns, travel bans, and measures of social distancing. COVID-19 is contagious and spreads through any encounters a police officer may have, exposing them to the disease daily as frontline personnel. This is a qualitative study that makes use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA is concerned with determining individuals' links to or participation in a certain event or process. The study interviewed 18 informants from seven Quezon City police stations.

The researcher examined the QCPD's response to the unique COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting widespread impact on daily life. Police personnel were required in lockdown zones to restrict the movement of ill individuals and to keep strangers away from afflicted areas. A lockdown is a government-led emergency response method that bans individuals from leaving a certain location until the outbreak is contained. QCPD has utilized its campaign to persuade people to follow the COVID-19 pandemic response minimum health safety standard. Police personnel are fighting this pandemic on the front lines. They must receive extensive training in response to public health crises such as this public health emergency before they can begin working. Due to the nature of their profession, police personnel are unavoidably exposed to the risk of contracting infectious diseases. As a result, it is vital to safeguard police officers from disease while yet enabling them to perform their duties of making the community safe effectively.

In the event of a large-scale public health emergency, QCPD must have a comprehensive strategy in place. This may entail identifying the most critical functions and the bare minimal number of police officers required. QCPD should make every effort to establish effective and meaningful collaborations with local hospitals, public health departments, and local government entities.

Keyword: Police Officers, COVID-19, pandemic, public health emergency, phenomenological analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness discovered in December 2019 in Wuhan, China (IACP, 2021). As of July 1, 2021, coronavirus plague has been found in over 220 countries, and new information is becoming available daily (Worldometers, 2021). This ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has infected hundreds of millions of people, killed millions worldwide (John Hopkins University, 2021), and counting. In the Philippines, as of July 3, 2021, the National Task Force for Corona Virus Disease-2019 Situational Report No. 459 recorded that 1.4 million Filipinos have been infected, and the dreaded virus killed more than 25 thousand (NDRRMC, 2021).

The outbreak as it sweeps across the globe has generated unanticipated problems for the public health sector and law enforcement organizations and has produced new complications in several aspects (Jennings & Perez, 2020 and Reicher & Stott, 2020) as well as in the Philippine National Police. Most often than not, the police

organizations' current responsibilities are unpredictable, taxing, and frequently in the realm of the unknown; they are called upon and expected to intervene effectively in almost every sphere of human activity (Singh, 2020). Policing techniques differ depending on the nature and severity of the threat and the possible risk to responding officers. In the event of a public health emergency, law enforcement is required to collaborate fast with public health and medical personnel, many of whom they may not have previously dealt with (Richards & Rathbun, 2006).

Many governments have implemented emergency measures to protect their citizens and slow the spread of the virus. Lockdowns, travel bans, and social distance measures, for example, are frequently monitored and implemented by the police, resulting in increased service demand for law enforcement organizations (Laufs et al., 2020). This is in addition to the police's existing responsibilities, which include maintaining order and continuing neighborhood policing operations (Bonkiewicz & Ruback, 2012), while resources are stretched to the limit (Laufs & Waseem, 2020).

Police organizations are one of the frontline clusters in the drive against the COVID-19 pandemic that are most prone to infection and hence have a higher probability of becoming susceptible to disease, including their respective families (Matarazzo et al., 2020). Notwithstanding improvements in the past decade, Quezon City Police District faces COVID-19 pandemic public health challenges because of its resource and capacity limitations. This is illustrated by the insufficiency of personal protective equipment for people deployed in health emergencies during the early months of adopting community quarantine measures, as well as the restricted amount of equipment and medical supplies (Rubio, 2021).

As a result, the QCPD's limited resources and capacity make responding to public health emergencies like COVID-19 challenging. Additionally, police organization's lack or inadequately trained to deal with such contagious diseases, and do not prioritize preventive measures for officers at risk. (Jessop et al. 2014).

The question at the start of the pandemic was whether QCPD officers would be able to protect themselves from exposure while still doing their duties. The contagious nature of COVID-19 extends to any contacts a police officer may have, bringing them in direct contact with the disease as frontline workers. Since police officers progressively assist with an increasingly diverse range of societal challenges, the nature of police work requires officers to engage with people who may have a hidden medical condition that puts them at danger of contracting the feared corona virus sickness and infecting others.

This work provides an important contribution to developing this subject and fostering fresh perspectives on the roles of police officers during public health emergencies, given the rising interest in understanding and improving the intersections of law enforcement and public health. In addition, the researcher intends to make essential recommendations that police organizations should follow in all pandemics to properly cope with such unusual situations in the future.

1.1 Research Questions

The main goal of this research is to find out what police officers went through during the COVID-19 public health emergency in Quezon City. This research was intended to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experienced roles of police officers during COVID-19 pandemic;
2. What are the challenges encountered by police officers during COVID-19 pandemic; and
3. What policy recommendations may be proposed to enhance the role of police during public health emergencies in the future?

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Experienced Roles of the Police Officers during COVID-19 Pandemic

Pandemics are extremely unusual occurrences that present severe difficulties for society and governments (Jain et al., 2018). Due of the rarity of the event, identifying instruments and techniques to address the issue at both the policy and field implementation levels presents obstacles. It is a significant responsibility, and governmental powers have historically been used primarily to promote public health, morals, safety, and the community's overall well-being; and (b) regulate private rights in the public interest (Galva et al., 2005). To respond to public health threats, the state has the authority to control private property and imprison individuals (Galva et al., 2005). Public health laws are founded on the ideas of the common good and communitarian aspirations, as well as on the legal concepts of "sic utere tuo ut alterum non-laedas" (use what is yours without causing harm to others) and "salus publica suprema lex est" (public well-being is supreme law) (Gostin et al., 1999). Police officers, who are generally

responsible for preventing and detecting crime, maintaining public order, and providing community service (Wilson, 1981), have historically had a role in implementing public health regulations (Richards, 2006). Public health regulations oblige police to enforce quarantine, social segregation, and other measures to prevent disease spread (Richards, 2006) all cited in Kumar (2021).

According to Jennings and Perez (2020), police organizations play a critical role in the global effort to curb the epidemic. Police officers across the country have been assigned to maintain social distancing, prevent people from congregating in public places, monitor people's movements on the roads, keep healthcare and other essential workers safe, keep cyber-threats under control, assist stranded commuters in getting to their destinations and issuing passes to people who need to travel outside of curfew areas, and provide reliable, accurate, and dependable policing services to the public. Because of this, police officers have had to spend more time on duty in addition to their regular tasks to keep up with the demands of their jobs (Helfers & Nhan, 2021).

Authors Talabis et al., (2021) reported that while national governments have established broad-scale strategies to contain the pandemic, local governments have considered both granular regulations and real-time interventions to address variations in local COVID-19 transmission dynamics caused by community heterogeneity and diversity. Regional and local government units, as well as the Philippine National Police, have implemented several regulations, including the implementation of minimum public health standards and precautions, such as the maintenance of social distancing protocols, the wearing of face masks, and the observance of curfew hours (Joint Memorandum Circular No. 001, 2021).

Further, the police were empowered to enforce (with fines, arrest, or physical force if necessary) the prohibition on the opening of businesses, stay-at-home orders, self-quarantine if necessary, and limits on public mass gatherings, among other things (Perry & Jonathan-Zamir, 2020). For example, the Department of the Interior and Local Government in the Philippines directs local governments and the police to vigorously enforce health rules. For three days, COVID-19 cases have exceeded 3,000 per day. According to DILG Officer-in-Charge Bernardo C. Florece, noncompliance should result in fines or other sanctions. Local government units should have implemented local ordinances imposing consequences on people who breach the national government's minimal health standards. DILG Spokesperson and Undersecretary Jonathan Malaya emphasized the critical role of Barangay Disiplina brigades in curbing the virus' spread (Anonymous, 2021). Corollary, data from Joint Task Force COVID Shield shows 30,150 were apprehended, fined, and warned for violating various public health and safety protocols and quarantine guidelines. Police tallied a little over 5,000 violators per day during the first week of enhanced community quarantine (Caliwan, 2020).

Campbell (2020) and Laufs & Waseem (2020) stated that during a pandemic, the law enforcement organization has a variety of critical responsibilities, including assisting in the implementation of public health programs. For example, during COVID-19, the police were required to enforce laws or regulations requiring physical distance, business closures, prohibitions on mass gathering, lockdowns, and quarantines or restrictions on staying at home. Other aspects of pandemic response are also intrinsic responsibilities of other law enforcement organizations, such as immigration and port officials, which are responsible for putting restrictions on international travel. On March 20, 2021, the Department of the Interior and Local Government issued a policy directive to bolster enforcement of minimum health standards, including but not limited to physical separation, hand hygiene, cough etiquette, and the wearing of facemasks and face shields, in all local government units, regardless of community quarantine, and the PNP is directed to assist local government units in implementing these guidelines (DILG MC No 2021-035).

Furthermore, Campbell, (2020) told that police officers are frequently on the front lines of pandemic response and are unable to conduct their duties from home, placing them at danger of contracting and possibly spreading the virus. They must be adequately trained and equipped with protective gear, masks, and other equipment in order to deal with the general public in a safe manner. Also important is the prevention of organizational capacity from diminishing, which would imperil their ability to offer key services and have a negative impact on public safety.

2.2. Challenges Encountered during the COVID-19 Pandemic

In the current circumstances, Janković, B. (2021) pointed out that the police have played and continue to play a critical role in the fight against pandemics. Recent events have demonstrated the importance of paying equal attention to the police role in emergencies caused by pandemics (epidemics) of infectious diseases, because this segment of police work received insufficient attention in the previous period, either in practice or in scientific circles.

As the COVID-19 pandemic began affecting the world, researchers have begun investigating its impact on police. Researcher studies have looked at police organization changes and activities (Maskály et al., 2021), role of police (Janković, 2021), police mental health and well-being (Drew & Martin, 2020), and police leadership (Torigian, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic was undoubtedly unprecedented, and police organizations were unprepared to respond, protect, and direct their officers. This was a global concern (Gujski et al., 2020; Matarazzo et al., 2020).

Djalante et al. (2020) contend that officers must be aware of their profession's hazards while looking to leadership for direction and protection. Initially, there was doubtless disinformation and contradicting data. But the most effective agencies had leaders who were proactive in ensuring officer safety and security (Matarazzo et al., 2020).

Police officers are at a higher risk of contracting infectious diseases by inhalation or blood transfusion simply due to the nature of their role in the society. Indeed, according to Baker et al. (2020), police personnel are likely exposed to an infectious/communicable disease at least once a week. The PNP recorded a total number of 45,782 verified infected cases and 125 confirmed deaths since the start of the pandemic (Caliwan, 2022). Consequently, COVID-19 frontliners such as law enforcement personnel have suffered significant health risks, psychological suffering, and occupational stress because of their jobs (Huang et al., 2021). PNP in Cebu City performed welfare interventions to mitigate the emotional and mental health effects of quarantine duty on its personnel. A rookie cop assigned to enforcing stay-at-home orders at an inter-village control post committed suicide.

Narratives of "pasaway" also beefed up the challenges of the police officer implementing the quarantine. Pasaway is a derogatory epithet frequently used to refer to the Filipinos' lack of discipline. The term "pasaway" is used colloquially to indicate to someone who is obstinate, bullheaded, importunate, intractable, or obstinate. It frequently refers to impoverished people, particularly young, out-of-school, or unemployed men, in common speech (Harpal, 2021). However, a Filipino woman who returned from the United States broke quarantine. She was meant to check into a hotel for a five-day visit. Rather than comply with her quarantine, she partied at a restaurant and a bar, and was later diagnosed with COVID-19 infected at least 15 people (Parrocha, 2022).

To add to the unique nature of this period, Minneapolis cops faced social unrest and urban riots prompted by police use of force episodes that resulted in the deaths of George Floyd Jr. in Minnesota, United States. In the context of the Philippines, a police officer shot dead a 52-year-old woman in Quezon City, prompting fury and calls online to "never tolerate injustices" by authorities tasked to "serve and protect" the public. The hashtag #PulisAngTerorista topped Philippine Twitter trends, with netizens denouncing the state's uniformed personnel for sowing "fear" in communities.

As a result, training is critical since officers' perceptions of exposure and the chance of developing infectious diseases are not proportionate (Beletsky et al., 2011). Protecting officers and reducing the danger of infection is, however, an administrative responsibility, according to Jessop et al. (2014), who discovered that police agencies do not prioritize preventive measures (e.g., hepatitis, influenza, etc.) or training to lower officers' risk. Laufs & Waseem (2020) said that appropriate training and established processes can help alleviate a loss in available personnel and the deterioration of decision-making and organizational abilities. Officer perceptions of a new infectious threat might be influenced by training and education. While some anxiety (or risk awareness) may be good in encouraging required measures and alertness, excessive uncertainty and stress might impair officers' performance. Furthermore, training must be both directive and informational. If police are to benefit from the training, it must be of high quality and maximize potential gains (Dunleavy et al., 2012; Bennell et al., 2020) all cited in Helfers & Nhan (2021).

A review of the empirical literature on the responses and role of the law enforcement in natural disasters discloses four categories of issues that have been raised in this context: police community relations, police officers' mental health in disasters, organizational challenges within police organizations, and inter-agency cooperation (Laufs & Waseem, 2020). However, few research has looked to examine the police officers' impressions of their pandemic experiences. Stogner et al. (2020) & Janković (2021) recorded the early and later changes to police operations, but not how the way police officers perceived them through a qualitative investigation.

This study will help fill this knowledge gap that exists in the literature. Therefore, this study will explore two research questions: What were the experienced roles of the police officers during COVID-19 pandemic? And, what were the challenges encountered by police officers during the COVID-19 pandemic?

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper is a qualitative research study using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA is concerned with understanding personal lived experience and thus with exploring persons' relatedness to, or involvement in, a particular event or process (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin; 2009). Creswell (2007) further stated that a phenomenological approach allows for an exhaustive manner of inquiring into how the participants experience the phenomenon through the lens of their individual experience.

In qualitative research, the inquirer analyzes words such as transcriptions from interviews to analyze the data instead of statistics. Rather than relying on statistical procedures, the qualitative researcher analyzes the words to group them into larger meanings of understanding, such as codes, categories, or themes (Girik, 2020).

This approach is appropriate to understand issues such as event like understanding the lived experiences of police officers amidst COVID-19 public health emergency from the informants' point of view in context-specific settings.

3.1. Participants

The study involved 27 informants in an online interview through zoom virtual platform, all from seven police stations in Quezon City. These participants were purposively selected by the researcher for they can provide in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon under investigation. They were deployed to man quarantine checkpoints, lockdowns, and travel restrictions in their areas of responsibility.

Creswell (1998) as cited in Mason (2010) mentioned that 6-25 participants seemed a practical guidance for estimating sample size for the robust phenomenological research. However, this research reached the saturation point at the 18th participants. Whitehead & Whitehead (2016) stated that while such a small number does not represent the entire population, it is deemed acceptable to demonstrate the qualitative purpose of this paper to saturate all the experiences of the police participants during their COVID-19 pandemic deployment.

3.2. Data Collection

The main sources of data were from the responses of the participants in the online interview and the focus group discussions. The responses on the online interview validated by the focus group discussion were used by the researcher to generate long-form responses from the police informants. The purpose of this was to elicit perspectives, experiences, narratives, or issues regarding their roles during the pandemic. After the online interview, the researcher conducted focus group discussion to the same participants since they already aid in the identification of early themes or topics that can be explored in the study.

3.3. Data Analysis

The data obtained was analyzed using documentary analysis. Document analysis is a type of qualitative research in which documentary material is analyzed and research questions are addressed using a systematic approach (Frey, 2018).

The researcher initially transcribed all the individual responses of the participant into a single master transcript. The analysis of the raw data identified the relevant codes which were then listed in a separate file. The researcher analyzed these codes on a continuous basis to finally classify them according to their commonalities. The larger categories were constructed and organized concurrently with the groupings of comparable codes to address the goal of this research.

The interview analyses were done using a qualitative analysis tool called MAXQDA 2020 Analytics Pro. The tool helped in organizing relevant code arrangements and provided visualizations of critical elements using various built-in tools (MAXQDA, 2020).

3.4. Ethical Considerations

This work was accepted by the PPSC Ethics Board and it was driven by research ethics principles. The needs of voluntary involvement, informed consent, confidentiality, and personal safety were highlighted. This study's participants were neither compelled nor pressured to participate. They have the right to refuse to participate in the online interview and focus group discussion for whatever reason. Confidentiality and anonymity were always respected and upheld. Finally, the participants in this study did not suffer any bodily injury because of their participation.

4. RESULTS

The findings from the researcher's online interview and focus group conversations with the police personnel deployed to Quezon City are described in the following parts. The outcomes of the study are summarized in themes discovered inside each questionnaire, and the focus group discussion validates them. These findings are organized into two sections that cover the various viewpoints of police officers on their experiences during the COVID-19 outbreak, namely: 1) roles assumed and 2) challenges faced. These data were used by the researcher to generate policy recommendations targeted at increasing the QCPD's engagement in public health emergencies.

4.1. The Experienced Roles of Police Officers during COVID-19 Pandemic

The spread of COVID-19 has caused significant disruption to regular living in the country. Since the disease's first reported appearance on March 7, 2020, it has spread fast around the archipelago. As a result, according to Laufs, et al. (2020) public health law requires the police to regularly monitor and apply various measures such as lockdowns, travel restrictions, and social distancing measures to interrupt the spread of COVID-19.

Table 1. Categories for the Theme Experienced Roles of Police Officers amidst COVID-19 Pandemic

Experiences	Frequency
A. COVID-19 Activities	
Social distancing	18
Lockdown	15
Curfew	11
Travel/movement restriction	9
B. Police Community Relations Activities	
Oplan Bandillo	13
Oplan Paglilingkod "Libre Sakay"	7

The table above manifested the two overlapping sub-themes; COVID-19 activities and police community relation activities with its respective categories: social distancing, lockdown, curfew, and travel/movement restriction for the sub-theme COVID-19 activities and Oplan Bandillo and Oplan Paglilingkod for the sub-theme police community relations.

4.1.1. COVID-19 Activities

The best number of frequencies in the theme COVID-19 deployment were the sub-themes: social distancing, lockdown, curfew, and travel/movement restriction.

Most of the police officers claimed that their experienced role during COVID-19 pandemic was the enforcement of social distancing. World Health Organization in its Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) Situation Report - 72 on April 2020 stated that distancing measures, both social and physical, are intended to reduce the spread of disease by interrupting the chain of transmission and preventing the emergence of new diseases. P13 call their deployment as "social distancing patrol" (P13 - La Loma Police Station 1, Pos. 5). These measures maintain a physical barrier of at least one meter between persons and prevent contact with contaminated surfaces, while simultaneously establishing and preserving virtual social connections within families and communities. P6 mentioned that they implemented and enforce a safe distance of one meter in a crowded places such as public market, mall, and mass gathering to minimize infections (P6 - Talipapa Police Station 3, Pos. 4).

Lockdown is an emergency technique performed by the government that stops individuals from leaving a certain location during an emergency situation. P11 shared that they were deployed at lockdown areas limiting the movement of infected persons and restricting the entry of outsiders into the affected areas (P11 - La Loma Police Station 1, Pos. 5). This mean that the people in the given area must stay where they are and must not exit or enter a building or given area. P15 also expressed that even family members were not allowed to go near the person with COVID-19 positive in the lockdown or quarantine areas (P15 - Novaliches Police Station 4, Pos. 4).

In the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, a curfew can be characterized as an order to stay-at-home during certain time periods to reduce coronavirus transmission. P10 raised that he was deployed at the boundary checkpoint in Batasan to enforce local ordinances and implementation curfew to restrict movement of persons in a certain period of time (P10- Batasan Police Station 6, Pos. 4). People need to be inside their home or premises not loitering around for them not to get infected by the dreaded virus. P5 experienced that they were deployed in special area concern lockdown, social distancing patrol, and conduct curfew at night to curve the infection of COVID-19 Delta variant “pero ang mga tao gala pa rin ng gala lalo na sa squater area hindi sila takot dun, hindi nga nag susuot ng face mask.” (But people are still loitering at night specially in squatters’ area, they are not afraid there, they do not even wear facemask (P5 - Talipapa Police Station 3, Pos. 4).

The goal of the travel restrictions was to slow the spread of COVID-19 or somewhat flatten the curve or shift the curve to the right to give enough time for health care providers, civil society, and governments to prepare (Nowrasteh, 2020). P11 shared that they examine whether the people inside the vehicles entering their checkpoint area are permitted to travel to reduce COVID-19 spread by limiting unauthorized individuals to travel (P11 - La Loma Police Station 1, Pos. 4). In Europe, their decision to temporarily restrict all non-essential travel was by no means uncontroversial, it was very much in line with the mitigation strategies of most of the local governments (Linka et al., 2020). It was the same with P18’s deployment in border control check points to control movement of vehicles going to the city. They check everybody inside the vehicle if everyone is authorized to travel as per local government and IATF’s guidelines (P18 - Novaliches Police Station 4, Pos. 4).

4.1.2. Police Community Relations Activities

The highest number of frequencies in the theme Police Community Relations were the sub-themes: Oplan Bandillo and Oplan Paglilingkod “Libre Sakay.”

Police officers are task with safeguarding public safety amid severe events and catastrophes, many of which develop in unexpected ways—as we are witnessing today with the novel COVID-19 epidemic and its widespread repercussions on daily life.

Oplan Bandillo is a community awareness and information dissemination program against criminal elements and was eventually used to encourage people to observe the minimum health safety standard protocol since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. As recalled by one of the participants (P17), he helped in the conduct of information drive regarding “Oplan Bandillo” to constantly remind and enforce the use of face mask, implementation of home quarantine pass, and observance of social/physical distancing as part of COVID-19 preventive measures (P17 - Pasong Putik Police Station 16, Pos. 5). Police deployed on the ground can better assess the dangers that communities face, and the public can better comprehend the reaction to that danger and how to get ask assistance to the police officers. P16 revealed that as a police officer while on duty during the pandemic, I still prevented the people from going out of their residence. So far, they are obedient. If they want to buy something, we suggest that we will be the one to buy for them (P16 - Novaliches Police Station 4, Pos. 9).

Oplan Paglilingkod is a program of the national police organization to serve, work, and help the community in terms of its community relations mandate. “Libre Sakay” program is the QCPD’s approach of addressing people by offering authorized personnel outside residence mobility and other extended services so that they can attend to their work and destination with ease during the pandemic. P14 mentioned that he was deployed to conduct checkpoint in a boundary within our area of responsibility in Novaliches, distributed COVID-19 ResBakuna info drive and helped stranded individuals to go to their destination (P14 - Novaliches Police Station 4, Pos. 4). In a Youtube video clip of Batasan Police Station 6 titled Oplan Paglilingkod/Libre Sakay dated November 29, 2021, mentioned that the program is to help ease the burden of the commuters due to the limited operation of public transportation. This is one of their ways of reaching out to citizens by providing mobility, extended efforts, and services. P7 brought up also that they experienced giving face mask, face shield, and bottled water during the “libre sakay” for stranded individuals. They also implemented proper wearing of face mask and social distancing protocols while in the police vehicle (P7 - Batasan Police Station 6, Pos. 5).

4.2. Challenges Encountered by Police Officers amidst COVID-19 Pandemic

The majority of interviewees stated that working as a frontline officer during this pandemic time exposed them to an array of unforeseen policing concerns. The abrupt shift in their work environment, combined with the difficulty of doing their duties in the face of the COVID-19, makes it even more difficult for them to conduct their jobs/roles as police officers efficiently. Under this theme includes people who are not following the minimum public health standard, the researcher includes them in the theme “pasaway,” police officers who are “afraid of being

infected” by the vicious corona virus, not for themselves but also for their respective families as well, police officers who are tested positive of the disease, Station Health Unit personnel detailed in dealing with tested positive police officers for they experienced the necessity and insufficiency of personal protective equipment, and the police leaders encountered due to numerous and shifting situations encountered the challenges of the lack of deployable personnel.

As shown in Table 2, the 27 participants shared their sentiments, in a category with overlapping codes, from their experiences in facing their sworn duties to serve and protect the community amid these challenges of the dreaded corona virus pandemic.

Table 2. Categories for the Theme Challenges Encountered amidst COVID-19 Pandemic

Challenges Encountered	Frequency
Lack of training	17
Fear of being infected	16
Pasaway	12
Insufficient supply of Personal protective equipment (PPE)	9
Lack personnel for deployment	6

The 18 participants, they all discussed the challenges and the risks that their role as a police officer had brought them with.

Majority of the interviewees, in the focus group discussion told the researcher that the lack of training in public health emergency influenced their perception and response to COVID-19, which resulted high in the survey. P11 recalled that the QCPD officers did not actually given relevant COVID-19 public health emergency training, instead issued recommendations, and disseminated information to personnel on how to prevent becoming infected (P11 - La Loma Police Station 1, Pos. 6). The coronavirus response exposed a deficiency of infectious disease training. Personnel assigned to the Station Health Unit, on the other hand, received some level of infectious disease training, but not police officers in the field who were tasked in maintaining social distancing procedures, manning the community quarantine lockdown, enforcing curfew, and restricting travel or movement. One officer (P18) stated that they need training in respect to the COVID-19 public health emergency, particularly for those personnel on the ground exposed to the public (P18 - Pasong Putik Police Station 16, Pos. 10).

The informants stated that they were fearful of contracting COVID-19 not just for themselves, but also for the risk to their family and close relatives. P1 mentioned that some personnel are afraid of being infected, not for themselves but for their family and relatives as well (P1 - Fairview Police Station 5, Pos. 8). Fear is described as an unpleasant emotional state brought on by the perception of a potentially dangerous stimuli (Cerdeña & García, 2021). P3 told that it is hard to get infected. The situation you are in, knowing that you might not survive the infection of COVID-19 is very stressful (P3 - Galas Police Station 11, Pos. 8).

Pasaway is a Tagalog term which means disobedient, uncontrollable, undisciplined. Harpal (2021) seen “pasaway,” as a stubborn character disregarding the ill-effects of COVID-19. P8 experienced those hardheaded people who do not follow the health protocols. “Pasaway kung baga” (they are just disobedient). They resisted and made an argument on us. But still we managed the situation, and we explained to them that the COVID-19 health protocols are for their safety along their family (P8 - Batasan Police Station 6, Pos. 8). However, P12 insisted that the challenges are the people who violate curfew, he always issues citation ticket to violators. They did not follow the public health protocol. They are drinking intoxicating liquor in public places during pandemic (P12 - La Loma Police Station 1, Pos. 8).

PPE for COVID-19 patients is required by the University of the Philippines-Philippine General Hospital. PPEs protect the health care employees' safety. Due to a lack or insufficiency of PPE supplies, numerous health workers have been infected and others have died from COVID-19 (Tutor & Pascual, 2021). As stated by P2, being members of the Station Health Unit, they needed sufficient and standard protective gear for them not to get infected of COVID-19 for they are dealing with people tested positive. We might get infected. “Mahirap na” (It is hard) (P2 - Fairview Police Station 5, Pos. 8). Additionally, P9 voiced out, that during their deployment in contact tracing COVID-19 positive individuals, he noticed that the PPEs were not enough for the station health personnel (P9 - Batasan Police Station 6, Pos. 8).

The lack of personnel to be deployed is the sentiments of police leaders. P1 made mention that owing to this crisis personnel are on rotation basis already; they lack personnel to be deployed because of the many COVID-19 activities. Some of them are already infected with COVID-19. Some are in quarantine for they were contact traced to COVID-19 positive personnel. Others are afraid of being infected (P1 - Fairview Police Station 5, Pos. 8).

P4 also commented that the challenges he experienced during the COVID-19 deployment, “minsan double shifting kami dahil kulang ng tao, maraming deployment sa SCAL meron pang regular police work” (Sometimes we worked for a double shift due to insufficiency of personnel, we have many deployments in special concern area lockdowns, also in the regular police work) (P4 - Galas Police Station 11, Pos. 8).

5. Discussion

In this section, the discussions are derived from the findings of this study on the live experiences of QCPD Police Officers amidst COVID-19 public health emergency community quarantine are describe in detail. To further look into the subject, the supporting question was broken into two major topics: the role of the police officers and the challenges faced during the implementation of community quarantine.

The result of the study showed that despite inappropriately trained and unequipped in public health emergency situations the QCPD rise above and beyond the call of duty engaged in an extraordinary battle against an unforeseen foe.

Social distancing, lockdown, and curfew are the main measures adopted by different countries to respond to the pandemic (Kumar, 2021). The QCPD enforces physical and social distancing to prevent the transmission of disease. Their operation is dubbed a "Social Distancing Patrol." They were stationed in lockdown zones to restrict sick individuals' movement and to prevent outsiders from entering impacted areas. Lockdown is a government-led emergency response method that prohibits individuals from leaving a certain area in the event of an infectious disease outbreak. To prevent the spread of the coronavirus, a curfew is implemented by the QCPD to stay-at-home for a set amount of time. Individuals were told by police to remain within their residences or businesses and refrain from loitering. Travel restrictions imposed by police border control checkpoints were consistent with most local governments' mitigation strategies. The travel restrictions were implemented to slow the spread of COVID-19, or to slightly flatten or shift the curve to the right, allowing time for health care providers, civil society, and governments to adapt.

Additionally, Maier and Brockman (2020), after studying data from Hubei and other provinces in China, determined that the quarantine procedure, individual behavior modification, and a containment policy effectively limited disease spread in China. Singer (2020) discovered that in China, Denmark, Norway, and South Korea, lockdown and travel restrictions, combined with adherence to social distancing, resulted in a considerable reduction in infection. Numerous research from various parts of the world have revealed similar findings (Dehning et al., 2020).

However, coronavirus has mutated to spread quickly to more people. Even countries that previously contained COVID-19 transmission are seeing a rapid rise in cases partly driven by this more transmissible variant. The World Health Organization encourages the government, local government units, employers, and all Filipinos to act proactively and together to stop its spread. People are taking risks to earn a living despite the threats of corona virus and other variants or even simply getting together with their loved ones. We need to be extra vigilant and adopt ways to be safe in these settings. The minimum public health standards when complied with due diligence are still very effective in preventing transmission (Junio, 2021).

Police officers act as a conduit for information and services during emergencies (Helfers, 2021). Oplan Bandillo is a community awareness and information dissemination program against criminal elements. It was eventually used to encourage people to observe minimum health safety standard protocol since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Police deployed on the ground can better assess the dangers that communities face, and the public can better comprehend the reaction to that danger. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic began, the QCPD has employed its Oplan Bandillo initiative to raise community awareness and disseminate information (Luna, 2021). Further, the police provide the public with regular, accurate, and timely information on enforcement orders. Effective collaborations between police and communities resulted in increased compliance, particularly with relation to community quarantine and social distancing.

Meanwhile, Oplan Paglilingkod is a National Police Agencies initiative dedicated to serving, working, and assisting the community. This is one of their strategies for engaging individuals through mobility, extended efforts, and services. Also, they adhered to proper wearing of face mask and social distancing measures while in the police vehicle. Additionally, Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III lauded the national police for assisting in the protection of millions of Filipinos against the highly contagious and fatal coronavirus. According to the Finance Chief, the PNP responded bravely and swiftly to their mission of keeping people safe from infection. The PNP Command Group and rank-and-file members have agreed to sacrifice a percentage of their salary to assist the government in funding its response, he added (De Vera, 2020 and Unknown, 2020).

The coronavirus response demonstrated a deficiency in respondents' infectious disease training. Police officers on the ground are responsible for enforcing social distancing procedures; they are at the forefront of the fight against the dreaded disease. They require considerable training in the area of public health emergencies including COVID-19. As a result, Janković (2021) claimed that it is required for police leaders to receive specialized training on police planning in certain situations, as it was discovered that police organizations in the previous time lacked plans for responding to such events. Along with leaders, each police officer should receive further training in reacting to situations caused by pandemics of infectious diseases, as it is apparent that they were not fully prepared to react appropriately during the preceding time. Such training should be incorporated into the curricula of educational institutions charged with the responsibility of police education.

Most interviewees expressed concern about COVID-19 infection not just for themselves, but also for their family and close relatives. The PNP stated in its latest COVID-19 bulletin that this increased the recovery count to 45,613, out of a total of 47,782 confirmed illnesses since the epidemic began and death toll remained at 126 (Nepomuceno, 2022). Due to the nature of their job duties, police officers are naturally at danger of exposure to infectious diseases transmitted via the air and blood (Helfers, 2021). Janković (2021) noted that while police officers are at the frontline of the pandemic's fight and the deployment of response measures, they face a greater danger of infection at the same time.

Police officers have encountered and labeled those obstinate individuals who disregard health protocols as "pasaway". During this pandemic, the term was used to refer to anyone who disobeyed stay-at-home instructions, refused to wear masks, engaged in social distance, argued with authorities, or engaged in any other wayward behavior (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2020) as cited in Hapal, 2020. However, According to Lasco (2020), blaming the pasaway for the increasing number of COVID-19 cases is an attempt by the government to absolve itself of responsibility for its incompetence—"the pasaway as scapegoat," as Lasco puts it.

Personal protective equipment safeguards the frontline workers' safety. As with other frontline workers who must continue to interact with the public during the COVID-19 epidemic, police officers worldwide have attempted to limit viral risks using personal protective equipment (Simpson & Sandrin, 2021). The supply chain for personal protective equipment was broken not only due to a shortage of the products, but also because they were reserved for medical first responders (Deepthi et al., 2020; Shrivastava & Shrivastava, 2020; Thomas et al., 2020). For instance, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC 2020) of the United States America, recommends that law enforcement personnel wear eye protection, such as face shields and goggles, to further reduce the danger of viral infection.

However, numerous frontliners have been infected with COVID-19 and others have died including police officers, because of a shortage or insufficiency of PPE supplies. Meanwhile, the World Health Organization and the Philippine News Agency have warned that significant and growing disruptions in the global supply of personal protective equipment—caused by surging demand, panic buying, hoarding, and abuse—are endangering lives from the novel coronavirus and other infectious diseases (Chaid, 2020 & Crismundo, 2021).

Frontline personnel rely on personal protective equipment to keep themselves and from becoming ill and infecting others. As a result, some police personnel are already infected with COVID-19 and cannot be deployed due to lack of personnel. Some are being held in quarantine after being in contact with COVID-19 positive personnel. Others fear infection due to their fear of being exposed to the virus. Janković (2021) pointed out that because the police are at the forefront of the fight against the pandemic and the deployment of response measures, they face a greater risk of infection at the same time.

Additionally, police officer stress levels may grow as a result of increasing workload and long work hours (Laufs and Waseem 2020). Police officers must be physically present in communities in order to do their duties (Gordijn et al. 2017), often in situations that could result in their physical and psychological harm, all cited in Edwards & Kotera, 2021). As a result, it is critical to protect police officers against infection while maintaining the effectiveness of police action.

Further, police officers are aware of the risks inherent in their profession (Djalante et al., 2020), but they also rely on leadership for direction and protection. Without a question, there was initial disinformation and inconsistent information. However, the most successful agencies had leaders who had vision, were concerned about the safety and security of their officers and were not afraid to take action (Matarazzo et al., 2020).

6. CONCLUSION

Combating a rapidly spreading worldwide pandemic will need a large, coordinated effort on the part of organizations and people. This period afforded a unique chance for researchers to examine police officers' perspectives of their work environments. Police officers are tasked with safeguarding public safety amid extreme

events and emergencies, many of which unfold in unexpected ways—as we are witnessing now with the novel COVID-19 pandemic and its widespread effects on daily life.

Physical and social distance are enforced by the QCPD in order to prevent disease transmission from spreading. They were stationed in lockdown zones to restrict the movement of sick individuals and to keep outsiders out of impacted areas. Lockdown is a government-led emergency response strategy that prevents people from leaving a specific area in the event of an infectious disease outbreak. The QCPD has imposed a curfew to prevent the coronavirus from spreading. Similarly, in China, Denmark, Norway, and South Korea, lockdown and travel restrictions combined with social distancing resulted in a significant decrease in infection.

Coronavirus has mutated to spread rapidly and to infect a greater number of people. We need to be extra vigilant and develop strategies for staying safe in these situations. The QCPD has used its Oplan Bandillo initiative to increase community awareness of criminal elements and disseminate information about them. It was eventually used to encourage people to adhere to the COVID-19 pandemic's minimum health safety standard protocol. Oplan Paglilingkod is a community-based initiative dedicated to serving, working, and assisting. To assist those in need during times of pandemic, rank-and-file members of the QCPD have agreed to forego a portion of their salary to assist the government in funding the coronavirus outbreak response. Collaborations between police and communities resulted in increased compliance, particularly regarding community quarantine and social distancing protocols.

Police officers are on the front lines of the battle against the scourge. They must receive extensive training in responding to public health emergencies, including COVID-19. The coronavirus response revealed a deficiency in respondents' training in infectious diseases. According to the study, police leaders should receive specialized training on police planning in specific circumstances.

Numerous respondents indicated worry not just for their own well-being, but also for the well-being of their family and close relatives. Police officers are inherently at risk of developing infectious illnesses because of their employment obligations. While police officers are at the forefront of the pandemic's battle and reaction, they also face an increased risk of infection. Police officers have encountered and classified persons who disobey health rules as "pasaway."

Personal protection equipment helps keep frontline personnel safe including police officers. Numerous frontline workers have contracted COVID-19 and others have died because of a lack of or inadequacy of personal protective equipment. Certain police officers have already contracted COVID-19 and are unable to deploy owing to a staffing shortage. As a result, it is critical to protect police officers from infection while still allowing for effective police action. The most successful police departments had visionary leaders who cared about their officers' safety and security and were not afraid to act. Those things may need to be taken into account when planning for future catastrophes, as the police continue to play a role in this social panacea.

7. RECOMMENDATION

The researcher recommends the following:

7.1. Keeping Police Officers Safe

When dealing with a pandemic like COVID-19, there are a number of options for future responses to safeguard both officers and the general public. In the event of a large-scale public health emergency, the QCPD must have a comprehensive strategy in place that specifies all steps to be performed as soon as a pandemic outbreak occurs. Contingency plans should be included in this, as well, to guarantee that operations continue even if the workforce is decreased, including the relocation of police personnel performing non-essential tasks to more crucial positions.

This may include identifying the most important functions and the bare minimum number of police personnel required, as well as to guarantee that all necessary tasks are carried out and a breakdown of the goods and services required to fulfill these jobs. Encourage officers to remain at home if they are feeling unwell or fear they have COVID-19. Consider alternative staffing strategies such as pooled service provision with neighboring agencies, swing hours, obligatory overtime, leave cancellation and non-essential trip cancellation, and officer flex time repurposing.

Police officers sick leave, mandatory leave, hazard pay, and other human resources policies should also be in place for pandemics. Create a plan for dealing with crisis intervention stress. Take care of the police officer's physical and mental well. Increased pressures and ongoing responsibilities outside of work, along with the possibility of loved ones being unwell, will result in tension, fear, and anxiety. Support services for police and their

families should be activated. Encourage personnel to make contingency preparations in the event they will be separated from their families for a lengthy period. Increase public awareness of personnel assistance programs.

Communicate with police officers on changing policies and procedures in a clear, consistent, and frequent manner. Prepare police officers to respond to inquiries concerning travel restrictions, quarantine and isolation, and personal safety precautions, as well as who the public should contact for additional information.

In accordance with public health recommendations, QCPD should seek to educate all personnel about health and safety precautions during a pandemic, including mechanisms of disease transmission, protective measures to restrict spread, and proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Keeping an adequate quantity of personal protective equipment (PPE) on hand, such as masks, gloves, gowns, eye protection, and hand-cleaning products, is critical for agencies to be prepared for future pandemic outbreaks. This includes ensuring that PPE has not expired and that a sufficient number of items are on hand at all times. Prior to an emergency, it may be necessary to establish a working relationship with PPE providers and share space with other local authorities.

As a final precaution, QCPD should consider setting up alternate virtual forms for typical in-person events including mandatory training, specialized training, daily personnel accounting, and police community engagement programs in advance of a pandemic.

7.2. Keeping community safe

QCPD should endeavor to create effective and meaningful collaborations with local hospitals, public health departments, and other national and local government agencies in order to pool their knowledge and resources in order to effectively protect the community (Richards et al. 2006).

These collaborations can help with staff cross-training, community outreach, and public relations. It is recommended that the QCPD should follow the guidelines provided by these partnerships when enforcing social isolation, quarantine, and other health-related limitations. Communicate with the public openly and consistently when new information becomes available. Coordinate with national and local authorities to ensure that information is correct and consistent. Additionally, these plans should be evaluated and revised on a regular basis to integrate new information and lessons learned from previous events. Collaborate with national and local governments, as well as the private sector. Communicate consistently with the local health department and emergency services to keep police informed of the most current response protocol.

In addition, QCPD should concentrate its efforts on addressing the current needs of their communities and do so through the application of problem-solving methodologies. As a result, the agency's primary goal should be to alleviate community anxiety and concerns. QCPD should consider responding to future pandemics by issuing warnings, summonses, or citations for minor or non-violent offenses such as misdemeanors, and other infractions.

Gather data and document response methods for future review and assessment if it is possible. While pandemics are exceedingly rare, evaluating prior attempts can provide significant information into an organization's emergency response. These plans should also be updated on a regular basis to incorporate new information and lessons learned from prior incidents.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic caught many police officers and the general public by surprise at first, and QCPD's response to the public health emergency continues to evolve. Regrettably, this is unsurprising given that there is virtually no current "rulebook" for the QCPD to follow when dealing with this dreaded COVID-19 of this magnitude and scope. Police officers, together with healthcare professionals are truly the frontline fighters in the combat against COVID-19. We will prevail, and those on the front lines, including police officers, will continue to play a critical role in the Philippines' pandemic response.

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