

# Exploring the Consequences of Covid-19 among Fruits and Vegetable Vendors in Poblacion, Trento Agusan Del Sur: Challenges, Strategies and Emerging Social Supports

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## ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted global livelihoods, with informal workers particularly fruit and vegetable vendors. More than a health crisis, COVID-19 has triggered severe economic instability, exposing the precarity of those dependent on daily earnings. This qualitative study explores the lived experiences of fruit and vegetable vendors in the Philippines, focusing on the challenges they faced, the coping strategies they employed, and the forms of social support they received during the pandemic. Employing a phenomenological design, the study engaged sixteen purposively selected participants (12 females and 4 males) through in-depth interviews. Thematic analysis revealed key challenges, including difficulty repaying debts, disrupted supply chains due to travel restrictions, and limited storage for perishable goods. Despite these hardships, vendors demonstrated adaptability through strategies such as online selling, peddling, resourcefulness by utilizing leftover fruits and vegetables, and self-motivation. Social support included emergency subsidies from the Department of Social Welfare and Development and aid from local government units, though these were insufficient to meet sustained household needs. The findings underscore the relevance of Bibb Latané's Social Impact Theory in understanding how external crises shape economic behavior and social resilience. This study contributes to the broader sociological discourse on informal economies and provides insights for inclusive, equity-driven policy responses during public health emergencies.

**Keywords:** Covid-19 pandemic, informal economy, financial crises, social impact theory, and fruits and vegetable vendors

## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly disrupted the everyday lives including the informal workers worldwide, with street vendors among the most vulnerable. Fruits and vegetable vendors, in particular, faced drastic interruptions in mobility, market operations, and income flow due to extended lockdowns, mobility restrictions, and sudden shifts in consumer behavior (Richards & Rickard, 2020; Shinozaki & Rao, 2021). In the Philippine context, these vendors play a crucial role in food distribution, especially in low-income communities where access to formal retail is limited. However, their informal status often excluded them from institutional support mechanisms during the crisis, deepening pre-existing vulnerabilities (Majithia, 2020; Baur-Yazbeck & Johnson, 2020). The abrupt shutdown of economic activity and the strict mobility restrictions severely impacted informal workers, particularly those engaged in food vending and agriculture-related microenterprises. Fruits and vegetable vendors, often self-employed or operating as microbusinesses, found themselves particularly vulnerable. Their low cash reserves and informal status rendered them highly susceptible to both income loss and lack of access to government support systems (Majithia, 2020). Unlike formal sector workers who shifted to work-from-home (WFH) arrangements (Waizenegger et al., 2020), these vendors experienced an almost complete disruption of their work routines, labor networks, and access to buyers especially in rural communities where digital alternatives are not viable.

The pandemic has also significantly disrupted the food retail environment, contributing to growing concern over its impact on population health. Access to fresh fruits and vegetables was particularly affected, with implications for nutrition and food security (Galanakis, 2020; Richards & Rickard, 2020). While consumers

became increasingly health-conscious during the pandemic, prioritizing fruits and vegetables in their diets, vendors found it increasingly difficult to maintain consistent sales and supply chains due to travel restrictions, market closures, and health scares. From a sociological perspective, street vendors, particularly those selling perishable goods like fruits and vegetables, not only contended with material deprivation but also encountered new layers of social exclusion, fear, and stigma due to health-related anxieties and state-imposed controls (Barua, 2020; Haddawy et al., 2021). These circumstances prompted grassroots coping strategies ranging from local mutual aid networks to innovative forms of vending, such as mobile selling and digital coordination (Nikitas et al., 2021; Jang et al., 2021).

The study aimed to describe the consequences of COVID-19 among fruit and vegetable vendors, with a focus on the challenges they faced, the strategies they adopted to survive, and the social supports both spontaneous and institutional that emerged in response. By grounding the inquiry in the voices of those directly affected, the study contributes to a broader sociological understanding of crisis survival strategies within the informal economy, while also informing future policy responses that are inclusive and equity-driven.

## METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research design, locale of the study, sampling procedure, and data gathering to be used in this study. It also outlines the details of the data analysis.

### Research design

This study employed a phenomenological qualitative research design, which is well-suited to exploring and understanding participants lived experiences without imposing preconceived frameworks (Holloway, 1997). Phenomenology allows participants to articulate their own experiences amidst the pandemic, facilitating a comprehensive and authentic representation of the phenomenon under investigation. The researcher's objective was to describe the phenomenon as accurately and faithfully as possible, adhering strictly to the facts and avoiding bias or assumptions (Groenewald, 2004).

### Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in the Municipality of Poblacion, Trento, Agusan del Sur, selected due to its accessibility to the researcher. Trento has a population of 51,656 individuals across 9,343 households. Geographically, it is situated in the southernmost part of Agusan del Sur Province, between 126°00' and 126°25' east longitude and 8°05' north latitude. The municipality is bordered by Monkayo in Compostela Valley Province to the north, Surigao del Sur Province to the east, and Sta. Josefa, Agusan del Sur to the west. Covering an area of 555.7 square kilometers (214.6 square miles), Trento constitutes approximately 5.56% of Agusan del Sur's total area of 9,989.52 square kilometers.

### Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, was employed to select participants who could provide rich, relevant insights into the study topic. The researcher purposively recruited sixteen fruit and vegetable vendors (4 males and 12 females) based on their willingness to participate and their direct experience with the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Selection criteria emphasized participants' in-depth knowledge of and exposure to the phenomena under investigation.

### Data Gathering

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, ensuring their full understanding of the study's nature and their rights as participants. Data collection adhered strictly to prevailing health protocols, including the use of face masks and shields and maintaining physical distancing during interviews.

Privacy and confidentiality of participants were rigorously maintained. Data were collected via in-depth, semi-structured interviews, allowing for a flexible yet focused exploration of participants' perspectives (Adams, 2015). Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was conducted in the participants homes.

Participants were provided with modest tokens of appreciation, and transportation was arranged for those coming from remote locations.

## Data Analysis

Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and translated as necessary. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and emergent themes relevant to the study objectives. Throughout the analysis process, results were iteratively presented to the local community for validation to ensure the credibility and accuracy of the findings.

## Ethical Consideration

The research was conducted by observing research ethics. A Permission to conduct the study was sought from the Barangay Captain and MGDH head officials of the locale of the study and an Institutional Ethics Review Committee (IERC). The permit was secured from CMU before the conduct of the study. Likewise, the interviewers explained to the participants the nature and the purpose of the study. They assured them that their identity would be kept anonymous. They were asked to participate and were made aware of their right not to answer questions that they believe are offensive or discriminatory. Their participation should they feel uncomfortable in the course of the activity.

After securing the approval to conduct this study from the local Government of Poblacion and Municipal Government Department Head Trento, the researcher started this data gathering where the participants were interviewed in their respective houses. The interview was ran for about an hour. Lastly, the participants was given a simple token of appreciation for their time and the most valued answers. Those coming from distant places were fetched.

As a rule, the result of the study was presented back to the community for validation before the manuscript was finalized.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings derived from in-depth interviews with fruit and vegetable vendors, focusing on their demographic and socio-economic profiles, the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the coping strategies they employed, and the social support mechanisms that emerged in response. The presentation of results is supplemented with tables to facilitate clear and systematic interpretation. Interviews were conducted in the local Bisaya dialect, and all transcriptions retain this linguistic authenticity, with dialectal excerpts indicated in italics to preserve cultural and contextual nuance.

### Participant Profile

The study engaged sixteen (16) participants, comprising four (4) males and twelve (12) females, all active vendors in the Poblacion area of Trento, Agusan Del Sur.

Table 1 displays the frequency and percentage distributions of key demographic variables: age, sex, educational attainment, marital status, years of vending experience, and average net daily income.

Analysis of the data reveals that the majority of vendors fall within the 50 to 59-year age bracket, highlighting an aging workforce engaged in this informal trade. Educationally, 42% of participants completed high school, while only a minority attained tertiary education, suggesting limited access to formal education pathways. This educational profile potentially constrains vendors' opportunities for formal sector employment, reinforcing their reliance on informal livelihoods.

Marital status data indicate that 87.5% of participants are married, which may imply familial responsibilities that compound the economic vulnerabilities associated with informal vending. The vendors demonstrate significant tenure in the trade, with most having sold fruits and vegetables for between six to ten years, reflecting both skill accumulation and dependence on this occupation as a sustained income source.

In terms of earnings, daily net incomes predominantly range from PHP 1,000 to PHP 5,000, underscoring the modest and variable nature of informal sector income. Notably, the gender composition of the vendor population is heavily skewed toward women, underscoring the gendered dimension of informal work in rural Philippine contexts and suggesting broader socio-economic dynamics that channel women into this sector.

### Analytical Reflection

These demographic and socio-economic insights establish a critical foundation for understanding the lived realities of fruit and vegetable vendors amid the disruptions caused by the pandemic. The predominance of older, less formally educated women, many of whom bear family responsibilities, elucidates the compounded vulnerabilities faced during crisis conditions.

The Demographic and Socio-Economic profile of the participants is presented in table 1 below.

Table 1 Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile of the Participants (n=16)

VARIABLE	FREQUENC	PERCENTAGE
<b>Y</b>		
<b>Age</b>		
20-29	5	20.85
30-39	5	29.15
40-49	2	16.65
50-59	4	33.35
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	13	87.5
Single	2	8.5
Widow	1	4.15
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Level of Education</b>		
High school level	4	29.0
High school grad	7	42.0
College level	1	4.0
College grad	4	25.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Number of years as a vendor</b>		
1-5	4	25.0
6-10	6	42.0
11-15	1	4.16
16-20	2	8.33
21 (above)	3	20.83
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>

Net daily income		
1,000 – 5,000	12	83.5
6,000 – 10,000	3	12.5
11,000 – 15,000	0	0
16,000 (above)	1	4.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>

### Challenges brought about by the Covid-19 Pandemic

The following are the results and discussion of the participants about the challenges experienced by the vendors amidst Covid-19 in Poblacion, Trento Agusan Del Sur. Specifically, this section describes the challenges brought about by Covid-19 in their means of livelihood as vendors.

#### “A.1 Threat to be stopped from vending”

Most of the participants are afraid of losing a job since, at that time, social gatherings at the workplace were prohibited. Fruits and vegetables are most affected by social distancing measures. Consequently, some participants lose their jobs and stop selling their products. The participants admitted they experience difficult times since they practice one-meter physical distancing and limited physical interaction with co-workers and their customers.

The participants revealed almost losing the work, due to limited number of workers to be allowed to avoid self-isolation.

One of them mentioned that:

*“Isip usa ka vendor mahadlok ko matakdan og virus, mahadlok ko matakdan kay bisan unsa lang akong mahalobilo nga costumer. Mahadlok ko mawal-an og trabaho bawal sab og daghan trabahante og daghan pa”*

(As a vendor, I was afraid of the virus, afraid to get infected, afraid of losing a job, afraid of losing customers and workers are limited at that time).

Due to pandemic, they forcedly stop small vending shops, other participants also shared that:

*“Naapektohan among negosyo, na wala-an mig source of income kay ni hinay siya tapus naka undang mig tinda kay wala kayo tao mamalit. Ug mga pang gasto sa among adlaw2 nga palitonon”*

(Our business has been affected; we have no other source of income because our sales were low and there are only limited customers. Because of it we cannot buy our daily needs).

In a prior study by Richards and Timothy (2020), the spread of novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, and the COVID-19 disease it causes has had unprecedented impacts on all food markets, including the demand for fruits and vegetable vendors. In other countries like the United States, the first estimates of the effects of Covid-19 on the fruits and vegetable vendors cause dramatic early-stage reductions in small business activity a well-established grocery store vendor. These fresh fruit and vegetable vendors may not have the financial infrastructure to withstand the changes in supply and demand induced by the COVID-19 Pandemic (Imbruce, 2021). Many fresh fruit and vegetable vendors (mainly street carts selling fresh fruits and vegetables) in cities across the United States, including NYC, have been forced to close since the COVID-19 Pandemic began due to the dual concerns of plummeting demand and fear of contracting COVID-19, social distancing measures significantly impact direct sources of fresh produce, such as fruits and vegetable vendors (Ali and Colleague 2021).



## **“A.2 Difficulty in paying debts or loans”**

Most of the participants experience financial difficulties. This study found that all of the participants are retailers. This means that some participants purchase their goods through loans or credit. The participants admitted they experience difficult times paying their debt because only a few people buy their goods. As a result, they have difficulties paying their debt.

One participant revealed that:

*“Na apektohan jud mi sa financial, kay shempre kay malata sia, dli nimo ni ma lako or something dli nimo ma baligya malat-an jud ka tapus ang capital ra namo is inutang rapud so rolling-rolling rapud, tungod sa malat-an mi og stocks mahulog na dayon na magansi mi”*

(Our financial aspect got affected, because our sale is perishable when we do not sell it immediately it affects our business and the money, we used to buy is debt. When we do not sell it, we cannot pay our debt).

Fresh fruits and vegetable vendors can detrimentally impact population health and financial aspects, which has already been identified as an area of concern (Richard and Rickard 2020). Many of the fruits and vegetable vendors are located in smaller local processors. It has been found challenging to compete with other corporations are pre-existing challenges, and it has worsened significantly due to the pandemic experience. Likewise, they find it more difficult to pay debt and have gone out of their business (Ali et al., 2021). Covid-19 profoundly impacted informal vendors whose income depends on access to public places and social interactions in other countries like Latin America. As a result, their sales plummeted due to curfews shortening their workdays and limited public transportation (Marchiori and Assis 2021).

## **“A.3 Spoilage of products due to travel restrictions”**

For the participants, travel restrictions caused the delay in their stocks. Most customers complain about their supplies despite difficulties since it is not fresh anymore. According to the participants, it cannot be avoided that customers will choose what they want to pick and buy. Indeed, even *suki* (a special customer) also complained. However, the cost of doing business and the risk have gone up significantly, with vendors not having access to wholesale markets and suppliers. Having to spend more on travel costs due to travel restrictions in place in the city. Most of the vendors interviewed were retailers and bought their stock in Davao City.

One participant shared that:

*“Maong malat-an mi kay usahay ma stock among prutas wala kayo mamalit kay tungod saka mingaw og dili maka dali-dali og kuha na bag-ong stocks kay stricto kayo pag mag byahe sa Davao, didto man pami maga kumpira”*

(This is why our stocks become rotten because there is no consumer, due to pandemic we cannot buy our stocks immediately; also, travel restriction was strongly enforced, we bought our stocks in Davao City).

Other participants also revealed that:

*“Mag reklamo ang mga customer, kanang naay mga lata”*

(Many of our customers were complain because our stocks are no longer fresh).

Travel bans, lockdowns, and partial shutdowns are being implemented as countries work to contain the spread of the coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic (Brady, 2020). The travel restrictions, especially in public places such as tourist destinations, massively affected the hotel and tourism sectors, and many workers lost their jobs. People's travel behavior changes at the individual level due to the Covid-19 Pandemic around the globe (Downey et al., 2021). In the a study by (Haddawy et al., 2021), it was stated: “ The impact of government lockdown policy on an area with deficient socio-economic status, poor healthcare resources, and highly active

cross-border movement, the quick return to normal mobility after relaxation of the lockdown implies that close monitoring of disease should be continued to prevent a second wave."

#### **"A.4 Lack of storage facilities (Warehouse or Cold Storage)"**

The participants admitted that they experience difficulty storing their stocks like bananas needed to keep in the fridge for 5-7 days, properly preserving fruits and vegetables to extend shelf life. Due to lack of cold storage, it quickly withers. On behalf of the limited number of customers who buys their products due to safety restrictions, this may cause an underlying issue of declining sale.

One participant shared that:

*"Tungod sa malat-an mi og mga stocks mahulog na dayon na magansi mi. Dili sad pud namo malikayan na mangalata kay wala miy storage para pang preserve sa among stocks except sa grapes na among-e ref kay dali ra siya malata"*

(Due to the withering of our fruits and vegetables, we could no longer sell them. We have a lack of cold storage, and we cannot preserve it immediately. As a result, we can no longer sell our product because it is no longer possible. Except for grapes that were needed to put in our refrigerator).

Other participants also revealed that:

*"Oo daghan na isa naka nangalata, mao dayon maka cause og kagansi isip usa ka vendor. Amo nalang likayan na dili maulanan og ma initan para dili dali malata"*

(Almost a sack of fruit and vegetables has already been rotten, and cause us huge deficits. We try to avoid getting it on rain or exposure to heat to wither it immediately).

In the prior study by Singh and Singh (2011), one of the major factors attributed to substantial post-harvest losses in fruits and vegetables is poor shelf-life and the perishable nature of these commodities. Fruits and vegetables are metabolically active, fresh perishable commodities with a shorter shelf life. Post-harvest treatments of fresh produce are used as strategies to minimize significant losses in nutritional and quality attributes. Post-harvest treatments will slow down the physiological processes in fresh fruits and vegetables, such as respiration, senescence, and ripening. In addition, those treatments also reduce the incidence of pathogen attacks and microbial contamination to increase the shelf life of fresh commodities (Mahajan et al., 2014).

## **B. Strategies employed in addressing these challenges**

This section describes the strategies of participants to cope with the above challenges. These strategies include online marketing, peddling, utilizing leftover fruits and vegetables, and motivating oneself.

### **"B.1 Online Marketing"**

A few months ago, changes in the workplace brought on by Covid-19 were viewed as a temporary adjustment. Though the economy has tightened during the pandemic, it does not mean there are no new opportunities. For the participants, social media like Facebook helped them increase their sales. Shopping trips to public markets nowadays are becoming more complex. Some participants have tried online marketing and direct marketing at the same.

As one of the participants shared that:

*"Since ni hinay man among baligya nangita mi og way na para mabaligya among prutas maong nag online marketing og direct marketing nalang mi, kay ang prutas og gulay man jud need tubsonon"*

(There are only a few consumers who buys our products, so we looked for a way to sell our fruits and vegetables, we just did is online marketing and direct marketing at the same time. Because the fruit and vegetables need to be sold immediately).

Other participants also revealed that:

*“Gina online nako through Facebook ubay2 man ang gapalit. Online nabaya ron”*

(I sell fruits and vegetables on Facebook. Moreover, few buyers are out there. Online marketing now is a new trend).

Direct marketing and online marketing are effective simultaneously. The participants also revealed that:

*“Oo ka testing ko pero wala ko nag focus ana mas nag focus ko aning mag tinda sa stall”*

(I tried online marketing, but I prefer to sell at our stall).

The participants also shared that some of their customers make them secondary retailers.

One participant revealed that:

*“Mas ni kusog akong baligya kai halos man jud na nagka taon ang mga tao mas grabe ang ilang engage sa online world then among mga costumer ge himo mi nilang liner, kibali online business ilang style then kami ilang secondary retailer”*

(Many people buy our product now, even in online marketing. Then they make us their second retailer).

Online selling started in the Philippines in 1994, and e-commerce took a new manifestation. Businessmen sell their goods through their website and close sales transactions online or through e-mail (Toral, 1999). The lockdowns and social distancing alongside a stay-at-home order prevented consumers from visiting the physical retail stores. As a result, buying behaviors significantly changed as most consumers began ordering essential commodities online (Gu et al., 2021). In China, the threat of COVID-19 has resulted in people shopping online to get fresh food and reduce outdoor trips (Chen et al., 2021). In the prior study by Strategy Analytics (2020) UK consumers responded to the impact of COVID-19 by adjusting their shopping behavior, that is, the way they purchased food. Online purchases increased during the Pandemic both from de-specialized retailers (such as Amazon) and specialized food retailers developing online services along with their traditional “brick and mortar” stores (such as Tesco online).

## “B.2 Peddling”

Peddling for the participants is an alternative tactic to sell their products faster. It begins preparing all products and putting them away in their private vehicles. The participants drove it in the small community, specifically in barangay. The participants increase their price by 19% for each of their products. In this way, the participants can recover their other expenses like gas and labor.

One participant shared that:

*“Oo sila mama kay ga peddling, ga suroy2 sila og baligya sa uban barangay. Kibali among tubo-an og twenty percent parias sa manga nga tag 80 kilo then mahimo na sia og 95 ang kilo”*

(Yes, my mother is peddling, she sells fruits and vegetables in different barangays. We have a 19% mark up for each type of product like mango, 80 pesos per kilo when we are not peddling, but when we are peddling, it becomes 95 pesos per kilo).

Food peddling is one of the significant economic boosters today. In a prior study by Saha (2021), peddling is a direct marketing option in which producers sell and deliver to retail stores, barangays, etc. Operators might



also sell from the backs of their trucks, take orders, and deliver or sell door-to-door where permissible. This newly found outbreak-induced momentum creates an opportunity to establish a new ethos that allows the promotion of potentially permanent strategies. This may help food peddling as a robust, mainstream, and resilient travel mode for any location, including barangay (Nikitas, Tsigdinos, Karolemeas, Korumpa, and Bakogiannis 2021).

### **“B.3 Resourcefulness by utilizing leftover fruits and vegetables”**

Utilizing leftover fruits and vegetables is a way to avoid wastage of products. They make them more resourceful. For example, mango and banana they made into processed food like mango float and banana float and sell them to their customer. Some participants dried the leftover fruits and vegetables and mixed them all to feed on their pigs and chicken as a source of nutrients. Few are making it as an alternative organic fertilizer.

One participant shared that:

*“Ang manga og saging usahay, gahimo mi og mango float og banana float. Pero mag dependi rapud saka daghan. If daghan ang stocks, amo kini e-baligya, pero if gamay ra amo lang kanoon”*

(We gather all mango and banana that can no longer be sold and make process food like mango float and banana float. But it depends a lot, we sell it if many are remaining. If few remain, we eat with my family).

Other participants also shared that:

*“Oo, naay baboy og manok sila mama. Ang uban nalata pilian pwede pa makaon sa baboy og manok. Ang uban gina himo pataba sa mga tanom”*

(Yes, my mother has pigs and chicken, we choose what possibly can be eaten. Some are used as organic fertilizer for plants).

In a prior study by Wadhwa and Bakshi (2013), fruit and vegetable wastes like a baby corn husk, cauliflower, and cabbage leaves, pea pods, Sarson saag waste, culled snow peas, and tomato pomace; citrus, carrot, and bottle gourd pulp, banana, mango peels, etc., are rich sources of nutrients. These can be fed after drying or with cereal straws without affecting livestock's palatability, nutrient utilization, health, or performance. These can also produce value-added products like essential oils, polyphenols, anti-carcinogenic compounds, edible oil, pigments, enzymes, bio-ethanol, bio-methane, bio-degradable plastic, single-cell proteins, etc. The practical and efficient utilization of fruit and vegetable wastes will reduce the cost of animal feeding. This increases farmers' profits, generates value-added products, helps waste management, and reduces environmental pollution. On the other hand, leftover fruits and vegetables can make as fertilizer. In the prior study by Musa et al. (2020).

### **“B.4 Motivating oneself”**

For the participants, it is not easy to make a living, especially during a pandemic. Most of the participants experienced challenges in their livelihoods, affecting their income from selling fruits and vegetables. But throughout their experience, they have gradually come up to work hard and motivated themselves to overcome these challenges they have experienced.

One participant shared that:

*“Lisod jud kay ang mga tao murag ma langanin na mopalit kay mahadlok sa virus, mao ilang ge likayan. Pang duha nihit na ang pangwarta kay dli na basta2 maka sulod og bisan asa kay ge control na nila sugod sa pandemya. Akong ge buhat is maningkamot lang then adjust nalang sa situation karon Dasig lang sa kaugalingon, ampo sa ginoo kay tabangan raman japun ka nia”*

(It is difficult for us because people seem afraid of virus, so they have to avoid it. To motivate myself all I did is be positive in life, believe in yourself then adjust to the current situation. Just encourage yourself, believe in him, and pray to the Lord because he will help you in the end).

One participant also revealed that when Covid-19 arrived in the Philippines, one of the participants was pregnant. In other words, pregnant women experience high anxiety and depression symptomology.

Other participants shared that:

*“Kadtong pag abot sa covid-19 nag lisod ko ato kay isip usa ka buntis atong panahona mahadlok ko making halobilo sa uban tao. Naningkamot lang jud dala pag ampo. Lisod to para sa akua kay buntis ko ato, stress kayo hinay hinayan lang jud dili lang kayo e mind”*

(When Covid-19 arrived, I find it difficult as a pregnant at that time, I am afraid to socializing with other people. However, I keep motivating myself and keep praying. It is difficult for me at that time; it stresses me out but I slowly adjust the situation and overcome these challenges)

In the COVID-19 context, the satisfaction of basic psychological needs positively predicts the level of self-determined motivations for physical activity, which is partially related to social cognitive beliefs and intentions (Jang et al., 2021). Response efficacy and self-efficacy positively predicted the protective behaviors.

### C. Emerging Social support

This section describes the emerging social support that the fruits and vegetable vendors received. These supports include the provision of rice and cash assistance, and local government supports funds.

#### “C.1 Provision of rice and cash assistance by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)”

According to Municipal Government Department Head in Poblacion Trento, In November 2021, the DSWD has provided emergency subsidies. All fruits and vegetable vendors were qualified as the benefices. There are 315 beneficiaries, including fruits and vegetable vendors, who received three thousand cash assistance and one sack of rice. Based on their narratives, this support helped them with their daily needs.

Other participants mentioned that:

*“Nakadawat ko og 1 sack of rice og 3k gikan DSWD. Nalipay gyud ko naka-dawat og ayuda kay ako raman gapaningkamot akong bana panagsa ra sia maka pangwarta kundi ako jud adlawadlaw lisod jud kayo lisod pag bahin bahin”*

(I received 1 sack of rice and 3k from DSWD, I’m really happy to receive this support. It is very difficult for me because as the breadwinner of our family I must work hard since my husband does not have a stable job).

The DSWD's response to COVID-19 does not stop with providing emergency subsidies. Likewise, financial assistance to individuals and families, such as rice and cash to low-income families in the informal sector, was affected by the imposition of community quarantine or is assessed to be continuously involved (DSWD 2020).

#### “C.2 Local Government Support fund \_\_\_\_\_ Local Government Unit (LGU)”

According to the Local Government Unit \_\_\_\_\_ April 2020 and June 2021, local government units implemented “temporarily rent-free” to all essential and non-essential. In December 2020, all Poblacion, Trento Agusan Del Sur people received 5 kilos of rice, canned goods, and face masks thrice. All low income (but not poor) received five thousand cash assistance once when it comes to cash assistance. Based on their narratives, the following beneficiaries aid daily for a short period.

Most participant revealed that:

*“Kadtong December naai ge hatag na facemask tapus nahatagan mi 5,000 cash assistance kaisa, og 5 kilo rice and dilata daun 3 times sa local government”*

(In December, we were given a facemask and 5,000 cash assistance once, 5 kilos of rice and canned goods three times by the local government).

Most participant also revealed that:

*“Naka dawag mi og bugas 5 kilos ika 3 times tong tunga na sa covid then 5,000 cash assistance”*

(We received 5 kilos of rice 3 times in the middle of the pandemic crises then 5,000 from the local government).

Governments are still providing social assistance payments programs to include a broader swathe of the population, increase benefit amounts, advance future payments, add extra payments, and increase the frequency of their wave conditions. Financial aid delivery relies on social protection and payment systems and the extent to which these are already in place and functioning effectively (Baur-Yazbeck and Johnson 2020).

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study.

### Summary

This study aimed to describe the challenges faced by the fruit and vegetable vendors in Trento, Agusan Del Sur, during the Pandemic. It also explored their strategies to address these challenges and describe emerging social supports they receive.

This study is anchored on social impact theory. The perspective guided the researcher as he explored the challenges brought by the Covid-19 that reduced social interactions, changed lifestyles, led to economic loss, and resulted in psychological crises. This study utilized a phenomenological type of qualitative research. This study employed the purposive sampling technique. Data were gathered using an in-depth interview using a semi-structured interview guide. There are 16 participants (4 males and 12 females) who are vendors at the time of data collection. The data were analyzed through thematic analysis.

The results of this study revealed that all participants faced numerous challenges, including difficulties in repaying debts and threats of being prohibited from vending. Travel restrictions further contributed to delays in transporting their goods and complications in storing supplies, exacerbated by the lack of adequate cold storage facilities. In response, vendors employed various coping strategies such as online marketing, peddling, utilizing leftover fruits and vegetables, and self-motivation. Additionally, the participants received emergency assistance during the crisis, including subsidies from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and support funds from the Local Government Unit (LGU).

### Conclusions

Selling fruits and vegetable is their primary source of income. Consequently, if their sales are minimal, it affects their livelihood. Lack of income opportunities and pay reduction were pre-existing challenges but had worsened significantly due to the pandemic experience. Therefore, fruits and vegetable vendors experience a lot of challenges and cause a negative impact on their means of livelihood in times of Pandemic. But throughout their experience, they have gradually come up with strategies to address the challenges that some have encountered. The social support from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and Local Government Units (LGUs) provided crucial emergency relief, this assistance was largely short-term and insufficient to sustain families' daily needs over an extended period. The findings of this study resonate with Bibb Latané's Social Impact Theory, which explores how and when sources of social influence affect individuals. This theoretical framework is reflected in the participants experiences during the times of the

COVID-19 crisis, encompassing a wide range of cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and physiological responses. The pandemic disproportionately affected individuals from middle and lower socioeconomic classes, leading to diminished social interactions, altered lifestyles, economic hardship, and psychological distress. Despite the condition the participants exhibited remarkable adaptability and able to create mechanisms to survive at minimal cost.

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