CHAPTER 14

PANDEMIC AND SOCIAL VULNERABILITY: THE CASE OF THE PHILIPPINES

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DOI: 10.26650/B/SS49.2021.006.14

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic crisis has created compounding challenges, disproportionately affecting the disadvantaged sectors of the society and heightening their risk of social vulnerability. In the Philippines, children, women, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and low-income families have faced stressors associated with vulnerabilities and are further triggered by the crisis amid the implementation of stringent quarantine measures. By adapting the socioecological framework, this work describes the pandemic's impact on vulnerable populations in the country. It explores how the factors affecting the vulnerability of the identified social groups are situated within the five levels, namely microsystem, exosystem, mesosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. In doing so, it examines how the risks they encounter are anchored in a dynamic social context that considers their immediate environment, social interactions, culture, macro-level societal influences, and significant life transitions. In each system, it is apparent that vulnerable individuals have to deal with different stressors that are likely to threaten their health, safety, and well-being. The problems encountered by these individuals are further aggravated by the occurrence of natural disasters, armed conflicts, and animal disease outbreaks alongside the pandemic crisis. It is worth noting that various local and international actors have carried out crisis response efforts to respond to vulnerable populations' needs. However, the extent to which such measures can help build their resilience amid the pandemic remains unclear.

Keywords: Pandemic, social vulnerability, risk, socioecological framework, Philippines

Citation: Peñalba, E. (2021). Pandemic and social vulnerability: The case of the philippines. In V. Bozkurt, G. Dawes, H. Gulerce, & P. Westenbroek (Eds), *The societal impacts of COVID-19: A transnational perspective* (pp. 203-209). Istanbul, Turkey: Istanbul University Press. <https://doi.org/10.26650/B/SS49.2021.006.14>

1. Introduction

The unprecedented crisis originating from the outbreak of COVID-19 has placed specific population segments in a more vulnerable position. On the one hand, this pandemic crisis has exposed the socially vulnerable to new forms of vulnerabilities, further threatening their livelihood, health, and well-being. On the other hand, it has exacerbated the already existing vulnerabilities, placing them at increased risks due to the existence of underlying conditions. Undoubtedly, the pandemic has exposed the disparities that have long existed within the society and have long been faced by vulnerable populations.

From a sociological perspective, the concept of risk characterizes the challenges encountered by a globalizing society. Beck (1992) defined risk as a “systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself” (p.21). What have grown alongside the modernization of societies and technological advancement are risks that have significantly transformed contemporary social life. On a global scale, risks can be characterized by social vulnerability emanating from the occurrence of catastrophic events (Beck, 2006). For instance, in hazard-prone areas where poor people live, the negative impacts can be significantly felt as a result of simultaneously occurring socioeconomic, environmental, demographic, and political problems.

In what Beck (2009) termed as a world risk society, the most disadvantaged groups have no choice but to hurdle the challenges of being exposed to such catastrophes. These groups are most likely left behind in crucial decision-making processes when dealing with risks, given their marginal and scarce resources. As a result, they have to bear the unexpected dire consequences of the decisions made by those who are put in a better position to hold power (Beck, 2008). In this context, power relations should be accounted for when explaining the inequalities that reflect differences in exposure to risks (Beck, 2013). Contributing to the climate change discourse, Beck (2010) further argued that the disparity between the rich and the poor is aggravated as well as dissolved by contemporary risks such as the global challenge of climate change. The elimination of inequality requires then a cosmopolitan approach, in which individuals, regardless of their ethnic background, religion, and social class, should be part of a community with a common goal for survival (Beck, 2011).

It should be noted that at the expense of solidarity, an individualization of suffering is most likely to exist among specific members of society. Beck (1992) argued that people have to take full responsibility in dealing with social risks. With the individualization of risks, individuals are compelled to work things out for them, especially when they do not have access to social

support and services (Chan & Ho, 2017). This situation is particularly true for those belonging to vulnerable sectors who lack the required resources to address the risks and uncertainties they face, particularly during the pandemic crisis (Nygren & Olofsson, 2020). For example, workers who lost their jobs would find themselves struggling to make decisions and actions such as seeking relief assistance, enrolling in training programs to upgrade their skills, or making a living through online selling. Poor households that are already beset by health inequalities face difficulty managing their own risks, further contributing to their adverse health outcomes (Cardona, 2020). These unsurprising cases of individualization of risks can place more strain on vulnerable groups that are situated in an environment with scarce resources and demanding conditions (Hanappi & Bernardi, 2010).

Within the disaster management literature, the concept of social vulnerability has been thoroughly examined with a focus on the analysis of socioeconomic conditions and environmental risks (Alwang, Siegel, & Jorgensen, 2001; Bara, 2010). Such conceptualization becomes relevant for further analysis, especially when it advances the view that vulnerability results in the unequal distribution of social risks, indicating that not everyone within a community is most likely to suffer from the occurrence of disasters (Llorente-Marrón, Díaz-Fernández, Méndez-Rodríguez, & Arias, 2020). Existing evidence has consistently identified children, women, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and low-income families as socially vulnerable groups affected mainly by disasters (Fatemi, Ardalan, Aguirre, Mansouri, & Mohammadfam, 2017; Flanagan, Gregory, Hallisey, Heitgerd, & Lewis, 2011; Morrow, 1999).

With its damaging effects on public health and the economy, the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically transformed the social condition by seriously disrupting the functioning of society. This major disruption has led some scholars and institutions to characterize the pandemic as a disaster. For instance, Karaye and Horney (2020) described COVID-19 as a large-scale natural disaster that disproportionately threatens the health of socially vulnerable groups. Lavell and Lavell (2020) advanced the idea that it is a severe disruption to normal lives at different scales, which could be more directly felt in vulnerable situations. Lee and Morling (2020) highlighted the societal effects of the pandemic in terms of putting vulnerable groups “at greatest risk not just from infection but the indirect consequences” (p. 188). Cheval et al. (2020) characterized the pandemic’s consequences as a disaster with prolonged effects on various socioecological systems. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (2020) described it as a pressing disturbance that has driven businesses and livelihoods to enormous losses.

In the Philippines, the pandemic has bared the vulnerabilities of individuals and households, especially during the implementation of strict quarantine measures. Its negative social and

economic impacts revolve around the loss of jobs and livelihoods, restrained access to social services, and aggravation of violence-related conditions (Philippines Humanitarian Country Team [HCT], 2020a). In some areas of the country, the effects could even be worsened by the occurrence of natural disasters, such as typhoons, earthquakes, outbreaks of animal diseases, and armed conflicts. In these contexts, social vulnerability becomes a relevant subject matter that needs to be discussed and addressed.

Anchored on the socioecological framework, this paper examines the factors that drive and shape vulnerabilities experienced by specific social groups. It recognizes the multifaceted nature of social vulnerabilities, which can be described at different levels. In doing so, it attempts to simplify the complexity of discussing the different dimensions of social vulnerability as situated within the pandemic context.

2. Socioecological Framework

The socioecological framework advances that human development is shaped by a combination of individual and environmental factors that occur within nested layers. Humans are situated within interconnected structures that influence their development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The interplay of such structures is illustrated as a model composed of five nested levels. At the microsystem level, the immediate environment bears a strong influence on individuals' activities, relationships, and interactions. When two or more microsystems interact, individuals become active participants in processes that take place within a mesosystem. The next layer, the exosystem, could also influence the processes experienced by individuals in their immediate environment but in an indirect manner. Operating at the broadest level, the macrosystem comprises the cultural context and also deals with the interplay of varying social, political, and economic factors. Lastly, the chronosystem is characterized by significant changes and transitions that are likely to affect individuals' lives.

The socioecological framework has been extensively applied to understand disaster recovery and resilience. Noffsinger, Pfefferbaum, Pfefferbaum, Sherrib, and Norris (2012) shed light on the components of children's social-ecological environment that shape their reactions when exposed to disasters. The nested layers of systems encompassing children's social ecology can be beneficial in supporting gradual recovery from disaster impacts. Boon, Cottrell, King, Stevenson, and Millar (2012) worked around the concept of community or social resilience to explain how the interconnections and interactions among the systems contribute to strengthening resilience to natural disasters. The linkages that exist among the nested factors are beneficial for crafting mechanisms and policies

appropriate for a particular system, contributing to the resilience-building efforts to address future disaster risks.

In the context of vulnerability, only a limited literature adopted the socioecological framework to examine the interplay of social factors that either promote or reduce social vulnerability. In their analysis of the factors affecting social vulnerability among older adults, Andrew and Keefe (2014) identified dimensions of social vulnerability that stretch their influence, ranging from the immediate individual and family environments to the broader community spheres. By investigating the social factors particularly affecting older adults' health from the lens of a comprehensive ecological perspective, the authors argued that a more elaborate understanding of social vulnerability could be advanced. Applying the socioecological model to explore HIV vulnerability among women, Frew et al. (2016) found that the dynamic interactions of factors situated in the microsystem largely contributed to HIV risk. Dominant themes such as substance use, sexual concurrency, intimate partner violence, community violence, discrimination, poverty prevalence, and financial insecurity emerged as the interconnected multilevel factors affecting women's vulnerability.

2.1. Microsystem

Within the microsystem level, vulnerable individuals are likely to be at risk of experiencing abuses, violence, isolation, insecurity, and other forms of stressors. Filipino elderly, for instance, are prone to physical and psychological forms of abuses, and their frequent exposure to such negative situations is likely to heighten their risk of death (Commission on Human Rights [CHR], 2017). Within their homes, they are unprotected from experiencing abuses committed by their family members. Since they are prohibited from leaving their houses during the pandemic, the elderly are put in an inescapable situation, in which they could be recurrently encountering violence against them. The lack of public discourse on this alarming issue, coupled with the dearth of a substantial amount of data that would detail the abuses that they experience, makes elder abuse an invisible issue in the country (CHR, 2020a).

As they remain inside their houses, the elderly have no choice but to rely on their families to meet their basic daily needs. The latest statistics on the elderly population in the country points out that they comprise 7.5% or around 7.5 million of the more than 100 million total population (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2015). A 2019 longitudinal study on ageing and health in the country by the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia highlighted the reliance of older persons on their family members, particularly on their children, for financial and material support (Cruz, Cruz, & Saito, 2019). However, with the

ill effects of lockdown restrictions on livelihood and work, the elderly who depend on their children who work as daily wage earners face the uncertainty of being continuously supported. The situation becomes even worse for aging parents who have to support their adult children. Regardless of the condition they are in, what is evident is that the pandemic has overburdened them in terms of food insecurity, inadequate supply of medicines, and financial struggle (Paul, 2020).

Another long-hidden issue that has revealed its dire consequences during the pandemic is the occurrence of violence against women and their children (VAWC). Trapped within the confines of their homes, the victims have to endure repeated abuses such as intimate partner violence, online sexual exploitation, and rape, placing them in a more vulnerable position. The Philippine National Police reported nearly 3,700 VAWC cases (March 17 - June 4) during the implementation of the community quarantine measures. While the figures reflect a reduction of almost half in the cases reported for the previous period (January 1 – March 16), they do not straightforwardly indicate a declining trend and thus should not be treated as welcome news. The Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) explains that mobility restrictions caused by quarantine protocols hamper victims from reporting to authorities (Ranada, 2020). For the CHR (2020b), the problem lies in the underlying fear of being caught in reporting violence by their perpetrators.

The perpetration of abuse has also been carried out online, targeting children for sexual exploitation. Due to quarantine restrictions, which have led to the disruption of school operations, children are at a higher risk of being victimized by traffickers who happen to be their family members. With cases of cybersex trafficking steadily rising in recent years in the country, online sexual exploitation of minors has still become a matter of urgent concern. Citing data from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the country's Department of Justice reported that children's sexual exploitation increased by more than 270,000 cases during the quarantine period alone (March 1 to May 24), reflecting a 264 percent over the previous year's cases (Pulta, 2020). However, the figure does not represent the actual number of cases due to multiple, misleading, or inaccurate reporting. Still, it indicates that home confinement serves as an opportunity for traffickers to carry out their criminal activities, largely contributing to the spike in online child exploitation cases.

As regards people with disabilities (PWDs), the risk of isolation puts them in a more vulnerable position. Being confined inside their homes prevents them from getting assistance from others to respond to their specific needs. For some PWDs like those with intellectual impairments, staying at home hampers them from going to public places to help them get

through the situation (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2020). Women and children with disabilities are also exposed to a higher risk of abuses and violence. PWDs with underlying health conditions become more susceptible to become infected with the virus. For the majority of Filipino PWDs belonging to the disadvantaged sector and relying mostly on their immediate family members for support, a serious concern revolves around the lack of access to basic goods such as food items and medicines brought about by financial strain and job losses.

Undoubtedly, the pandemic has caused disruptions and pressures on families, especially on those who have to survive on a low income. Its detrimental effects are evidenced in the inability of parents to support their children and food insecurity. According to Albert, Santos, and Vizmanos (2018), more than half (58%) of Filipinos belong to the low-income class, indicating that a large number of the population would face difficulty sustaining their needs amid the pandemic. It is estimated that about 1.5 million families are located in informal settlements in the country (Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, 2014). While not all informal settlers can be regarded as income poor, many of them are most likely to be susceptible to “external shocks that can easily push them below the poverty line” (Raghunath, 2020, para. 4). For instance, mobility restrictions hamper families from continuously providing their members with basic needs to support their daily survival. Worse, families that rely on minimum-wage income are at risk of losing their source of income due to the possibility of layoff.

2.2. Mesosystem

At the mesosystem level, the needed interactions, which would have contributed to the coping and resilience of vulnerable groups, have been interrupted by the coronavirus outbreak. The provision for a supportive social network at this level is so crucial that it could ease the difficulty of living in uncertainty. However, in a pandemic crisis, social support systems could be impaired by the increased stress and anxiety, financial threats, and lack of caregiving assistance (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2020a).

The suspension of school operations has led to an unfavorable impact on children’s personal development and social engagement. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2020) has reported that around 25 million pre-primary, primary, and secondary learners in the country have been affected by school closures. Due to social isolation, these students suffer from the unavailability of essential social support and care services that, for the longest time, have been provided by schools in conjunction with families

and other community-based groups. For the most marginalized children greatly affected by school closures, this would mean the lack of provision for their meals, hygiene, and other support services (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2020). Further, the lack of social interaction undermines children's well-being and sense of community. Although interactions are likely to be established with other children from a nearby neighborhood, strict confinement would make it rather impossible for them to do so.

The absence of social engagement, which could have been offered through extra-familial social support networks, also has detrimental effects on the elderly's well-being. Regarded as high-risk individuals, elderly Filipinos are not allowed to go out during the quarantine period, increasing their risk and experience of being socially isolated. Such a condition becomes even more burdensome for them when they have no means to communicate with other individuals outside their home or when they cannot even use technologies such as digital tools (Buenaventura, Ho, & Lapid, 2020). Due to the lack of access to technology, the elderly lose the crucial opportunity to use either online or phone-based mental health services to address their mental health conditions. Further, due to long-term social distancing measures, the needed social support they can obtain from their community is no longer available to help them meet their mental, emotional, and even spiritual needs.

The pandemic has also caused interruptions in the delivery of community-based services aimed at promoting and safeguarding the welfare of women and children who are victims of abuse and violence. When social support networks become inaccessible, vulnerable individuals' sense of security is endangered. This condition is particularly true for victims of violence who could not get out of the way to seek social protection from community-based institutions and organizations. As noted earlier, the decrease in the number of VAWC cases emerging during the quarantine period cannot be regarded as a positive development. Aside from reasons such as movement restrictions and fear of perpetrators, the difficulty of accessing vital social services that can provide them the necessary protection and support contributes to the underreporting of cases (Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2020). Victims also face stigma and discrimination associated with stereotypes of abuse and sexual violence within the community.

2.3. Exosystem

The effects of the pandemic are very much evident at the exosystem level. The economic strain of quarantine restrictions has far-reaching repercussions on vulnerable individuals. Alongside the lockdowns are massive business shutdowns and layoffs, affecting millions

of workers worldwide. In the Philippines, the PSA (2020) recorded an unemployment rate that increased to a record-high 17.7% or 7.3 unemployed Filipinos in April, manifesting the pandemic's direct impacts on the labor market. Low-income families, who largely depend on members who are informal and minimum wage workers, have to face the immediate loss of income and food insecurity due to unemployment and considering that even before the pandemic, these families had already been experiencing poverty. A closer look at their condition during the pandemic would reveal the desperate measures they need to undertake for survival.

Insufficient healthcare resources have also become an emerging concern. With a strained healthcare system resulting in a public health crisis, the widening of healthcare disparities for vulnerable populations has transformed into an inevitable situation. Families who seek maternal and child care services are likely to find themselves being sidelined and struggling for access to such resources. Since most of the resources are allocated to battle the virus outbreak, essential services aimed at protecting the welfare of women and children are also interrupted. An immediate effect is the discontinuation of family planning use of more than 3 million women aged 15 to 49 years based on the projection made by the University of the Philippines Population Institute and the United Nations Population Fund (Commission on Population and Development [POPCOM], 2020).

Likewise, children's nutrition needs are being threatened by strained healthcare. Prior to the pandemic, undernutrition prevalence in the country had already been alarming in recent years, with cases of stunting (below 5 years of age) affecting 3.5 million children based on a 2003-2018 trend (UNICEF, 2019). This only suggests that addressing this perennial problem of malnutrition becomes even more challenging at a time when critical nutrition programs are not adequately provided due to pandemic. It also comes at a period when "an estimated 5.2 million Filipino families experienced involuntary hunger – hunger due to lack of food to eat – at least once in the past three months" (Social Weather Stations [SWS], 2020a, para. 1). In the case of disadvantaged families suffering from income losses, failure to address even the most essential nutrition needs would eventually result in extreme malnourishment.

High-risk groups such as the elderly and PWDs also have to face the risk of not being prioritized in the uptake of essential healthcare services. This is despite the need to give them the utmost attention considering that they have higher health care needs than others and a higher risk of being infected with the virus (Humanity & Inclusion, 2020a; HCT, 2020b). For instance, the unavailability of outpatient services due to the diversion of most healthcare resources to COVID-19 emergency response has either minimized or removed older Filipinos'

access and uptake of such services (Buenaventura et al., 2020). Healthcare inequality has become even more evident for PWDs who, aside from not being able to gain access to basic health support needs, are also experiencing inconvenience in obtaining access to relevant health information. Thus, a survey carried out by Humanity & Inclusion (2020b) with Manila-based youth with disabilities aged 18 to 39 reveals that 49% of them are in need of health support services, and 41% want access to vital information about the virus and quarantine measures.

2.4. Macrosystem

The pandemic's significant disruptions at the macrosystem level, particularly those that are significantly affecting the economic, political, and social systems, have influenced Filipinos' perceptions of the pandemic and its impacts on their lives. Surveys conducted by SWS reveal a negative picture of how the people are trying to deal with the pandemic. Most (85%) Filipinos are worried about the possibility that their immediate family members might be infected with the coronavirus disease (SWS, 2020b). The vast majority (86%) of them report that the crisis has given them stress, and this could be primarily attributed to experiences of involuntary hunger and loss of jobs (SWS, 2020c). Pessimism is evident among almost half (47%) of working-age Filipinos who believe that the worst-case scenario is yet to come amid the pandemic crisis (SWS, 2020d). Additionally, nearly half (43%) of Filipinos from the same age group anticipate that their lives will worsen in the next 12 months.

In the meantime, however, Filipinos have to learn how to live with the virus. The initial response to the pandemic is marked by an emergency declaration by the national government that has paved the way for community quarantine measures. Despite worries surrounding the coronavirus outbreak, they have responded to the challenges of the pandemic with favorable views about public health measures. Most (84%) Filipinos perceive that the strict implementation of 'stay-at-home' orders, which are aimed at limiting exposure to the virus and protecting lives, are 'worth it' (SWS, 2020e). Large 'majorities' continuously practice preventive health measures such as wearing face masks when leaving their houses (76%), washing their hands several times per day (65%), and observing physical distancing (59%) (SWS, 2020f).

2.5. Chronosystem

It is not only the pandemic crisis that yields stressors for vulnerable populations at the chronosystem level; the threat from natural disasters also augments the risks they face. In May 2020, Typhoon Vongfong (local name Ambo) hit the country, displacing hundreds of

thousands of residents and complicating disaster risk management efforts. Most of these displaced individuals belong to “vulnerable communities in the Eastern Visayas, Bicol and Southern Luzon which were also heavily affected by Typhoon Kammuri (local name Tisoy) in December 2019” (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2020, p. 1). With the response strategies being directed at ensuring safety during the typhoon’s onset, authorities are confronted with another set of problems caused by the pandemic. This has significant implications for the mobilization and allocation of emergency resources during a period when major disastrous events exist simultaneously.

Even before the local coronavirus outbreak in March 2020, the country had already been beset by a volcanic eruption in January, which caused the displacement of vulnerable individuals during the pandemic crisis (Acosta, 2020). From February to March, the agriculture sector was hit by African swine fever and avian influenza infections, putting a strain on agri-food security for a short-term period (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2020). In Mindanao, vulnerable communities had been displaced due to recent earthquakes and ongoing armed conflict. The existence of a combination of highly distressing events puts these communities in critical situations of losing access to social services and endangering their lives (UNHCR, 2020b).

Undoubtedly, the pandemic has become a defining moment in the world’s history. In the Philippines, the compounding challenges encountered by the vulnerable populations due to the coronavirus outbreak are likely to create long-lasting impacts on their life transitions. Such challenges, brought by the inevitable occurrence of the coronavirus pandemic alongside typhoons, earthquakes, animal diseases, and armed conflicts, constitute a dimension of chronosystem that can bring ‘cumulative effects’ on their lives (Schaie, Willis, & Pennak, 2005). It is yet to be known how the combination of these macro-level stressors will shape vulnerable individuals’ resilience in adapting to future crises. In particular, how their current perceptions and responses will form part of their future adaptation to unexpected events remains a question.

3. Response Efforts

In dealing with the needs of vulnerable groups, response efforts at the macrosystem level have been initiated by the national government and several non-profit and humanitarian organizations. The foremost response came from the government, which launched an emergency subsidy program to benefit 18 million low-income families. Widely known as the social amelioration program, the massive measure aims to provide each family social

aid amounting between P5,000 to P8,000 for April and May 2020 (Official Gazette, 2020). The Department of Social Welfare and Development granted a social pension for indigent elderly and relief goods (e.g., family food packs). For its part, the Department of Labor and Employment offered a 10-day employment program for displaced informal sector workers. Privately-owned corporations also had their share of contribution in providing food packs and essential health supplies to vulnerable families.

International organizations also carried out initiatives to support the government's pandemic response. Responses included disbursement of unconditional cash transfers to families with malnourished children (World Vision, 2020), distribution of hygiene supplies and cash grants to displaced families affected by typhoons and earthquakes (Plan International Philippines, 2020), provision for medical equipment and supplies for the benefit of internally displaced communities in Mindanao (UNHCR, 2020c), and healthcare support and donations in conflict-affected areas (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2020). Further, the country acquired aid in cash and in kind from other countries such as Singapore, United States, Japan, China, Taiwan, United Arab Emirates, Australia, South Korea, Brunei Darussalam, and Canada (Tomacruz, 2020). It also received assistance from the European Union. The aid was mostly aimed at strengthening the country's healthcare response through measures ranging from the distribution of medical supplies to technical assistance.

4. Conclusion

This paper has discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic crisis has disproportionately affected specific population segments, resulting in conditions that either produce new forms of vulnerabilities or aggravate those already existing. Through a socioecological framework, it has shown the multifaceted nature of social vulnerabilities, highlighting the pandemic's impacts due to the disruptions and failures that exist in each system. Due to strict quarantine measures, socially vulnerable groups have been placed in a more vulnerable position, increasing risks and threats to their well-being. The occurrence of other stressors brought by other threats (e.g., natural disasters, armed conflicts, and animal disease outbreaks) has aggravated the dire situation experienced particularly by displaced vulnerable communities.

It has also shown that a vulnerable individual's socioecological environment at nested levels has been largely transformed by an unexpected crisis. For Filipinos who are regarded as highly relational people, the pandemic has undermined relationships, largely affecting the social interactions at the mesosystem level. The connections, which should have been strengthened at such a level, have failed to minimize the struggles experienced by vulnerable

groups at the microsystem level due to the strict implementation of quarantine measures. The relevant resources and services that could have been directly made available to these groups are also minimal due to a strained exosystem characterized by mass layoffs and a weakened healthcare system. It is in this setting that these people have to resort to individualized actions to deal with risks for their daily survival.

Despite the disruptions in the implementation of community-based services, several response measures planned at the macrosystem level have been directed on the ground. These efforts have benefitted individuals mostly belonging to low-income and displaced households. For instance, emergency cash aid provision has allowed beneficiaries to afford basic needs during the crisis. Aside from macro-level interventions, measures advanced by exosystem-based entities such as voluntary sector organizations have reached out to victims of abuse, the elderly, and PWDs. Such measures are crucial when response efforts are split between handling the pandemic crisis and ensuring the continued delivery of social services. A case in point is how local government units even at the village level are mobilizing their respective quarantine task forces while constantly monitoring cases of violence. They are even coordinating with other government agencies and private organizations to provide legal assistance to victims. Measures like these, which are enforced at the exosystem level, reflect the relevance of collaborative efforts to foster resilience at the microsystem level. Considering that response interventions have already been undertaken collectively by different social actors and institutions to address the plight of vulnerable groups, the process of developing and strengthening resilience becomes an ongoing question.

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