

FOOD ACCESSIBILITY OF THE RESIDENTS OF SITIO SAN ROQUE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

The impact of the COVID-19 virus extends beyond the threat to physical health and basic human needs. Challenges to achieving food security arise as quarantine protocols imposed to combat the spread of the virus affect employment and mobility, exponentially affecting the urban poor. This paper explored the effects of implementing quarantine protocols due to COVID-19 on the food accessibility of the residents of one of the largest informal settlements, Sitio San Roque, utilizing a descriptive qualitative design. The study dissected the respondents' situations on varying parameters of food accessibility such as Transportation, Proximity, and Price, where the government response to the resident's needs was also investigated. The data gathered from the residents of SSR revealed that most residents' food accessibility was affected by different parameters. They struggled mostly with economic access as most of the population worked in the informal sector, which was drastically suspended. Increasing prices of food commodities also hindered their economic food access, which led them to claim they had a more difficult time as even residents with continuous frontline jobs underwent a difficult time. Contrary to what has been assumed, since the community had long existed, established community markets enabled the residents to access food physically easily. Nevertheless, the findings clearly showed that even though the marginalized can strive to adapt to make ends meet, there is a significant improvement to guarantee the food accessibility of the urban poor.

Keywords: COVID-19 Pandemic, Community Quarantine, Food Accessibility, Food Security, Sitio San Roque, Urban Poor.

Introduction

A decade ago, threats of unwanted demolition and violent incursions happened in the community of Sitio San Roque (SSR), at the heart of Quezon City. Its residents inspired a movement across the country as they successfully prevented a demolition by setting up barricades last September 23, 2010. The said activity and ensuing mobilizations in other slum areas raised the clamor of advocates for the right to adequate housing and in-city relocation. On which the then president, Noyon Aquino declared a moratorium on urban poor demolition (Arcilla, 2019 [16]). However, years after their success, several houses were dismantled and residents of over twenty thousand (20,000) were left in a troubled state of living in 2014. Residents that started their family and built their homes in Sitio San Roque are left facing eviction and a standoff between the residents and the Ayala Land Inc. as the property will be established into a new commercial business district (Reyes, 2019 [82]). Given that the community until now is experiencing this situation, it becomes even harder when a jeopardizing disease spreads. According to a study by Collantes (2021) [24], SSR, coming from the urban poor and part of the members of informal communities, are greatly vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their current perilous condition-facing threats of eviction-and

housing instability that raises political tensions, aggravated by the pandemic left them in a more challenging situation.

As the fatal disease took its heavy toll worldwide, the virus affected 2 significant issues, specifically those concerning basic humanitarian needs. Issues on food security have been an ongoing global issue up to this day. Internationally, eradicating hunger belongs to the aim of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Number 2 established by the United Nations. One of its goals is to achieve food security in all forms and envisions every individual in any part of the world enjoying good-quality food and leading a healthy life (United Nations, 2015). In addition, based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the first level to reach one's full potential is to fulfill their need for food. Exploring more on food security, it is divided into four dimensions: food availability, access, utilization and stability. Food availability is determined as the supply side of food security where food production, stock levels, and net trade plays an important role. Food access can be divided into two aspects: the physical and economic factors such as proximity and price of food. Utilization revolves around the food preparation, diversity of diet that directs the nutritional status of individuals. Food stability concerns the continuity of

the first three dimensions on which continuity is given importance where weather, global climate, and political instability can affect the dimensions. Focusing on food accessibility, this refers to the physical accessibility and affordability of food with consideration of certain factors such as the travel time to a retail store, availability of healthy foods, and food prices (InTeGrate, 2018 [53]).

As further defined by the Philippine Statistics Authority (2022), economic access is factors involving income, poverty, and various indicators of an individual's buying capacity while physical access refers to those elements influencing infrastructures and facilities affecting access to food. This parameter of food security was being challenged throughout the course of the pandemic as the majority of the Filipino working class, most especially the informal workers and daily wage earners, suffered to a great extent an incalculable loss of livelihood (Guanzon, 2020). This circumstance was greatly felt by the SSR community as most of their livelihood under the informal sector. Food inaccessibility led to a point where some residents of SSR staged a rally to call for help upon disappointment and frustration towards the government's actions in saving people from both hunger and COVID-19 (Rappler, 2020). Also affecting the other aspect of food accessibility, hindered by the strict transportation policy that was imposed at the start of the Metro Manila Lockdown last March 15, 2020 limiting the capacity of public transportation vehicles. Therefore, this research aims to take a course on the experiences of the residents of SSR during the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, the researchers will dig deeper into the effects of the pandemic on the urban poor community: SRR.

Theoretical Framework

• Theory of Access

Guided by the Theory of Access of Ribot and Peluso (2003) that conceptualizes how one's right to access may not necessarily have the ability to utilize the resources available (Steenkamp, 2021). The term "access" is beyond the classic definition as "the right to benefit from things" but also assimilates the idea of "the ability to benefit from things" (Mutea et al., 2020). With a number of factors affecting the urban poor's ability to access food, such as economical and financial aspects, there arises difficulties in accessing the most basic necessity. In connection with the argument of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs that states the significance of lower level satisfaction or the physiological needs (food and clothing) to progress and fulfill in increasing motivation to fully function (McLeod, 2007), this manifests that not every individual might have access to food security no matter how important the basic needs are. Concerning the study, Maslow's theory as supported

by Steenkamp (2021), provides support for the situation of the residents of SSR because it mirrors the plight of people in slums to food accessibility since not all can suffice their needs despite the access to food in the local market. In addition to the research conducted by Bozyigit (2021), the COVID-19 affected the economic stability of the developing countries resulting in people losing their jobs and prioritizing their basic needs. Furthermore, Bozyigit cited that physiological needs must be in the forefront during this COVID-19 pandemic as these affect the overall health of an individual. This is further reiterated by the study of Ryan et al. (2020), that economically vulnerable populations, which in the study is the urban poor, cannot keep up with the extended periods of lockdowns as nationwide relief could not be sustained by most countries. This study will unveil how the Theory of Access becomes deeply applicable or not on the residents of SSR as initial local and international studies have assumed the negative impact of the COVID-19 on the general urban poor population's food accessibility without looking into specific varying factors.

Statement of the Problem

In order to ascertain the accuracy of data and information, the researchers perceive that the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic increased the hunger rate which affected food accessibility of the residents in SSR. Therefore, this study aims to unveil the answers to the following questions:

Central Question:

How did the COVID-19 pandemic impact the food accessibility of the residents in Sitio San Roque?

Sub-questions:

1. What are the common issues influencing the food accessibility of the residents of Sitio San Roque at the start of the pandemic?
2. How did the respondents cope with their issues of food access during the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. How has the government addressed the food accessibility challenges faced by the residents of Sitio San Roque?

Scope and Limitations of Research

This study aims to focus its investigation on the experience on food accessibility of residents of SSR of Barangay Pag-Asa, Quezon City on their experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers will examine how the quarantine protocols affected the parameters of food access of the residents and how they cope up with the discovered effects. In addition, the researchers will also look into the government aid received by the residents and how it helped them, specifically the food packs and cash assistance. This study acknowledges the possible problem of food insecurity of the population since the start of the

pandemic, but it will not delve deeper into the experience of the respondent before the whole pandemic. While many dimensions define food security, this study will be delimited to the extent of the effects of the pandemic on food accessibility alone. Food Availability, Utilization, and Stability dimension of Food Security will not be covered due to time, monetary, and technical constraints inviting future researchers to delve more into this topic. While there are other urban poor communities that may or may not share the same circumstances as the chosen population of the study, the researchers focus on studying the experience of SSR because of the attention it gains pertaining to other issues that surround the community. The sample population will only be coming from the residents of Sitio San Roque even though there are other areas outside the said community that share their barangay. Participation will be also limited to only one respondent from one household who manages the household expenses relating to food expenditure aging 18 years old and above to widen the perspective of understanding the situation of the community. Individuals who show interest that does not satisfy the age criteria will not be allowed to participate. The respondents may withdraw anytime without citing any reason yet the data gathered will still be analyzed and included towards the result of this research. The data gathering was conducted last August 27, 2022 and with that, further developments of COVID-19 quarantine protocols, other issues and factors that will affect their food accessibility that may arise after the said date will be not included in the study

Methodology

Research Design: Research Design

A phenomenological descriptive qualitative research design will be used to perform the study. A phenomenological research method analyzes the common experiences of a group of people brought upon by a shared phenomenon between the subjects with as many as ten (10) individuals (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, the researchers will solely look into the impact of the pandemic on the people of Sitio San Roque's socioeconomic position, which has resulted in difficulty in accessing food. In addition, this technique was chosen since the goal of the research was to characterize and assess the community's existing status, notably by identifying and explaining the difficulties residents have in accessing food within a shared phenomenon which is the COVID-19 pandemic. Liu & Liu (2021) cited from Husserl (2007) that the aim of a phenomenology is to establish a crucial understanding of human experiences among its common features of experiences. Furthermore, this descriptive type of qualitative research will enhance the capacity of the researchers to dwell more on real-life experiences of the urban poor as they deal with

the repercussions of government policies to control the pandemic. Likewise, qualitative research is largely concerned with words, language, and experiences. It fosters an awareness of people's perspectives on their own and others' lives. It also aids the researcher in creating an in-depth narrative that paints a vivid picture of the reality of the participants (Crossman, 2020). Lastly, a descriptive qualitative research approach documents the experiences of the respondents through personal observations and interviews in an expository manner throughout the study (Martin, 2015). Indeed, a phenomenological descriptive qualitative research design is the best fit for this study. It complements each other's purposes aimed at answering the questions and is based on the subject under probe of the researchers.

Participants/Respondents of the Study

The researchers will conduct an interview to twelve (12) residents of Sitio San Roque. However, it might add respondents perpetually if the answers were not enough to suffice the goal of having an objective understanding of the phenomenon. In fact, as stated by Kumar (2020), in a phenomenological study, minimum of three (3) to maximum of ten (10) respondents until saturated. Supported by Morse (1994), for a phenomenological study, there should be at least six (6) participants for sample size. Hence, the aim of qualitative research is the attainment of saturation.

Instrument/s of the Study

In descriptive studies, interviews are commonly used in data gathering to obtain the quality information that would be significant in research. In this study, the researchers have decided to use an open-ended semi-structured interview guide questionnaire to be used as the research instrument to obtain information about the impact of the pandemic on the people of Sitio San Roque's socioeconomic position, which has resulted in difficulty in accessing food. An open-ended questionnaire will help the interviewer and interviewee define the topic being asked and has the chance to expound the explanation to get a more detailed touch on the experience (Fox, et al., 2002). Likewise, a semi structured interview will give the respondents and the interviewer the benefit of having a conversational style interview. Although there are ready-made questions, the follow-up questions are still depending on the flow of the interview (Oxfam International, 2019). This type of interview will definitely help the researchers get a good grasp of answers that will give justice to the descriptive phenomenological nature of the study.

This also stems from the fact that the nature of this study is set in a phenomenological setting wherein it explores the experiences of the respondents

(Neubauer et al., 2019). To support this, Burns and Grove (2013), state that interviewing is a flexible technique that allows the researcher to explore a greater depth of meaning than can be obtained with other techniques, interpersonal skills can be used to facilitate cooperation and elicit more information, and interviews have a higher response rate.

The study questions in this study are written in English, but they will be translated into Filipino to encourage a more thorough interaction and make the respondents feel more at ease throughout the interview. The demographic of respondents will be answered through a survey form of a questionnaire. The name, age, gender, status, educational attainment, employment status, occupation, respondent's characteristics, economic status, and if they are a member of 4ps are part of the demographics. However, the following research questions are as follows:

Food Accessibility

1. What are your experiences with food accessibility? (*Ano ang iyong naging karanasan sa kakayahang makakuha ng pagkain?*)
 - a. Tell us about your experiences with food accessibility before the pandemic. (*Pwede po bang ikwento ninyo ang karanasan ninyo sa food accessibility o kakayahang makakuha ng pagkain bago ang pandemya.*)
 - b. How did your food accessibility worsen during the implemented heightened community quarantine protocol? (*Paano lumala ang inyong kakayahang makakuha ng pagkain noong ipinatupad ang mas mahigpit na community quarantine protocol?*)

Parameters of Food Accessibility

I. Transportation

1. Did you experience any form of struggle with transportation during the implementation of community quarantines between 2020-2021? (*Paano po kayo nahirapan sa transportasyon noong ipinatupad ang community quarantine?*)
 - a. What other means of transportation were/are available to you? (*May iba po ba kayong paraan ng transportasyon?*)

II. Proximity

1. How accessible are the grocery stores or public markets to you? (*Gaano po kadalang puntahan ang mga grocery o mga palengke sa inyo?*)
 - a. Which is more convenient, grocery stores or public markets? (*Sa alin po*

kayo mas mapapadali, grocery o palengke?

2. How frequently do you buy groceries or food? (*Gaano po kayo kadalang mamalengke o bumili ng pagkain?*)
3. Were there mobile markets available in your community throughout the imposed quarantines between 2020-2022? (*Mayroon po bang mobile markets sa inyong komunidad noong ipinatupad ang quarantine noong 2020-2022?*)
4. Aside from mobile markets, what other options for purchasing groceries and other goods were available to you throughout the imposed quarantines between 2020-2022? (*Maliban po sa mobile markets, saan pa po kayo nakakabili ng mga makakain at iba pang mga gamit na kailangan habang quarantine noong 2020- 2022?*)

III. Price

1. What are your experiences with the changes in prices of food commodities? (*Ano ang iyong mga karanasan sa pagbabago ng presyo ng mga bilihan sa pagkain?*)
 - a. How affordable are the prices of food commodities? (*Abot kaya po ba ang mga presyo?*)
2. Has the pandemic affected your work? (*Paano naapektuhan ng pandemya ang iyong trabaho?*)
 - a. How did it affect your income? (*Paano nakaapekto ito sa iyong kita?*)

IV. Government (cash assistance, ayuda, etc.)

1. Did you receive any cash assistance from the government during the imposed strict quarantine protocols (Alert Level 5 or Enhance Community Quarantine (ECQ)) between 2020-2021/2? (*Nakatanggap po ba kayo ng tulong pinansyal mula sa gobyerno noong Alert Level 5 o Enhanced Community Quarantine sa pagitan ng taong 2020-2021/2?*)
2. Aside from the cash assistance, did you receive any goods from the government? (*Bukod sa pera, may iba po ba kayong natanggap na ayuda mula sa gobyerno?*)
 - a. What did the government do to act in aid of your needs? (*Ano ang ginawa ng gobyerno upang tumulong sa iyong mga pangangailangan?*)
 - b. How often does the government provide you with these goods in a month? (*Gaano po kayo kadalang mabigyan ng gobyerno ng ayuda sa isang buwan?*)
3. Did the barangay officials offer any assistance? For example, buy some goods for

the elderly (*Inalok po ba kayo ng tulong ng barangay? Halimbawa bumili ng mga kailangan para sa mga nakatatanda.*)

Data Collection

A. Conduct of Personal Interview

As the primary data collection instrument, the researchers utilized the use of interviews, specifically, a semi-structured type of interview. Through it, the researchers were successful in obtaining information regarding the impact of the pandemic on the food accessibility of residents of Sitio San Roque guided by flexible conduct of questioning. These experiences are those that compromised their lives and narrated their experience in accessing food brought about by the pandemic. It consisted of a variety of open-ended questions pertaining to subject areas which allowed the researchers to explore and clarify parameters of food accessibility while encouraging the residents to take the initiative and build their own narratives.

While the researchers briefed on the research procedure, ethical and community considerations, and other reminders as preparation for conducting the interview, unforeseen hindrances are still encountered but easily resolved with adjustments. With a great number of residents of Sitio San Roque, the difficulty to look for respondents was not part of the study's expectations. However, some prospective respondents show similar symptoms of COVID-19 forcing the researchers to find replacements. Also, it took time explaining the nature of the research due to the threat of eviction that made them cautious to be part of the research study or even sign the informed consent form.

The respondents later on extended their hospitality as they welcomed the researchers inside their homes to conduct the interview when their concern about the research was all cleared out. The researchers also

make use of available community spaces to conduct the data collection for some respondents whose homes are limited to accept guests. The whole process of the interview was performed where privacy can still be upheld whether in the comfort of their homes or communal places within the community accessible to the respondents. Overall, the minor problem throughout the process of the said interview did not hinder the data gathering, and were able to finish within their set time frame.

B. Transcribing and Interpreting the Data Gathered

The researchers upheld the written agreement between the two parties: the researchers and respondents. The researchers explained and informed the participants, in the local language, about the study, its goals, its risk and benefit, their rights and responsibilities, and their option of participating or not. It was reiterated that they may accept or refuse if there are any difficulties detected within the confines of confidentiality, rights, duration, the goal of the study, and data treatment. Following the discussion, the respondents were given an informed consent form to sign before the interview started in order to protect both parties and that the shared raw documents were only for research purposes. The names of the respondents and other personal information that can place them in harm were placed at utmost confidentiality.

In transcribing the data, the audio recordings were exported to software that assisted the researchers in manually transcribing. The files extracted were then saved in a document and were used for uncovering codes and themes described in detail in this chapter.

Data Analysis

a. Demographics of the Respondents

Table 1: Age, Gender, Civil Status, Educational Attainment, and Employment Status

Code	Age	Gender	Civil Status	Educational Attainment	Employment Status
R1	39	Female	Married	High school Undergraduate	Unemployed
R2	43	Male	Cohabitation	Kinder	Employed
R3	27	Female	Cohabitation	Secondary	Unemployed
R4	47	Female	Separated	Elementary	Unemployed
R5	53	Female	Widowed	High school Undergraduate	Unemployed.
R6	34	Female	Single	Secondary	Unemployed
R7	52	Female	Married	Secondary	Unemployed
R8	56	Female	Married	Secondary	Unemployed
R9	27	Female	Cohabitation	Secondary	Unemployed
R10	53	Female	Cohabitation	High school Undergraduate	Unemployed
R11	41	Female	Married	Elementary	Self-employed

R12 22 Female Married High school Undergraduate Unemployed

** R1, R4, and R5 accept part-time jobs doing laundry.*

The table above shows the age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, and employment status of the 12 respondents of the study. The respondents are chosen among the following criteria: (i) eighteen (18) years old and above (ii) resides in Sitio San Roque since 2020 (iii) does not belong in the same household as those in the previous gathered individuals (iv) manages household expenses related to food expenditure. To sum it up, the average age of the sample population is 41 years old whereas only two belonged to the youth group and the rest were adults.

Additionally, half of the respondents finished secondary school, thirty-three percent (33%) are high school undergraduates, sixteen percent (16%) only attended elementary school, and eight percent (8%) only attended kindergarten.

Out of all the respondents, there is only one who is single, one widowed, one separated and the rest are married or cohabitating. Lastly, ten (10) out of twelve (12) respondents are unemployed and only two (2) respondents: R2 employed and R11 self-employed are currently working.

Table 2: Occupation, Family Role, No. of People in the Household, Economic Status, and Membership in the 4Ps program

Code	Occupation	Family Role	No. of People in Household	Low-Income Class	Member of 4Ps:
R1	Full-time Housewife	Mother	5 (2 adults, 3 children)	Yes	✗
R2	Construction Worker	Father	7 (5 adults, 2 children)	Yes	✗
R3	Full-time Housewife	Mother	4 (3 adults, 1child)	Yes	✗
R4	Full-time Housewife	Mother	5 (1 adult, 4 children)	Yes	✗
R5	Full-time Housewife	Mother	5 (2 adults,3 children)	Yes	✗*
R6	None	Others	3 (2 adult, 1child)	Yes	✗
R7	Full-time Housewife	Mother	9 (9 adults)	Yes	✗
R8	Full-time Housewife	Mother	5 (2 adults, 3 children)	Yes	✗
R9	Full-time Housewife	Mother	5 (2 adults, 3 children)	Yes	✗
R10	Full-time Housewife	Mother	9 (3 adults, 7 children)	Yes	✗
R11	Vendor	Mother	5 (2 adults, 3 children)	Yes	✗
R12	Full-time Housewife	Mother	7 (2 adults, 5 children)	Yes	✗

**R5 was previously a member of the 4Ps program but their membership was discontinued due to relocation.*

Table presents the twelve (12) respondents' occupation, family role, no. of people in the household, economic status, and membership in the 4Ps program. As observed, the majority of our respondents are female housewives with only one male who works a construction job and one female who is a vendor. The findings closely align with the information in our background of the study and evidently shows how the western social norms are followed; the male is the breadwinner, and the female is the homemaker in the family (Sear, 2021), as seen on the employment and family role distribution of respondents. The top two most common livelihoods in Sitio San Roque are Construction Workers which covers thirty-seven point six percent (37.6%) and Vendors at about fifteen point eight percent (15.8%). This led the

study to have respondents composed of housewives such as R3, R4, R7, R8, R9, and R10 as the breadwinners are working at the time of data collection. The gender or family role in of the respondents did not affect, in any way, the responses to certain questions in the interview regarding employment and income as they handle the household budget and expenditure.

All of the respondents belonged in the low-income economic status and none are currently enrolled in the 4P's program. The number of people residing in their respective households ranges from three (3) to nine (9) people with an average of five point nine (5.9) people per household which is more than the average number of household population which is four point six (4.6), according to PSA (2022).

Results and Discussion

Research Findings

A. Themes

The following are the themes that transpired from the data collected: 1. Troubled Employment and Soaring Prices

EXPERIENCES ON FOOD ACCESSIBILITY

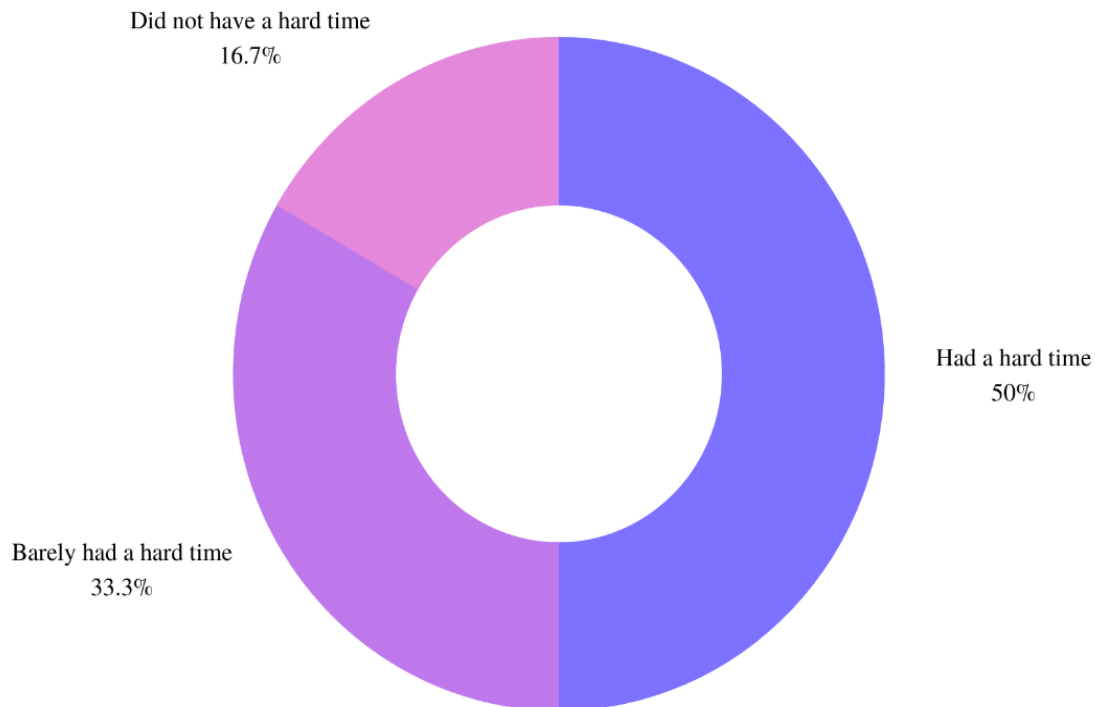


Figure 1: Experiences on Food Accessibility by The Gathered Respondents from SSR

The respondents described their experience with food accessibility in varying levels of hardship using degrees from "had a hard time", "barely had a hard time", to "did not have a hard time." However, a closer look at their individual response points out that they all have problems with food accessibility. The majority of the gathered responses outright stated that they struggled with food accessibility with one respondent (R5, answered "had a hard time") noting that high prices forced them to substitute meat with instant noodles. While R1, who answered "did not have a hard time", said they are weathering the pandemic by only having coffee for breakfast, only eating meals for lunch and if budget allows, dinner too. On the other hand, R3, who answered that they are able to eat by relying on food aid, the same with R4 who only considers their experience "barely had a hard time." Three respondents (R5, R8, and R10) mentioned the loss of jobs and job insecurity as the problem that affected their acquisition of food. R7, R9, and R11 have members in their household that worked as frontliners in their respective fields ensuring

consistent jobs and salaries. However, it is no total guarantee for food accessibility. R7 responded that they didn't experience problems with food accessibility because of the secured job as a frontliner of her husband and R11 also expressed the same answer as she and her husband work together in selling street foods. R9, on the contrary, struggled to buy the food that they wanted even though the job and salary of her husband is stable as increasing prices of the goods lessened what they can buy with their allotted budget of two thousand pesos (Php 2,000.00) for 15 days. Additionally, R12 mentioned the struggle to be employed as her and her husband work under the sector of informal workers; there will be days when there is no work and there are fortunate days to be called for work (laundry or carpentry). Figure 2 below presents the distribution of employment status of the respondents with fifty-eight point three percent (58.3 %) of are unemployed mostly 78 throughout the pandemic, thirty-three point three percent (33.3%) are freelancers/self-employed, and eight point three percent (8.3%) are vendors.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

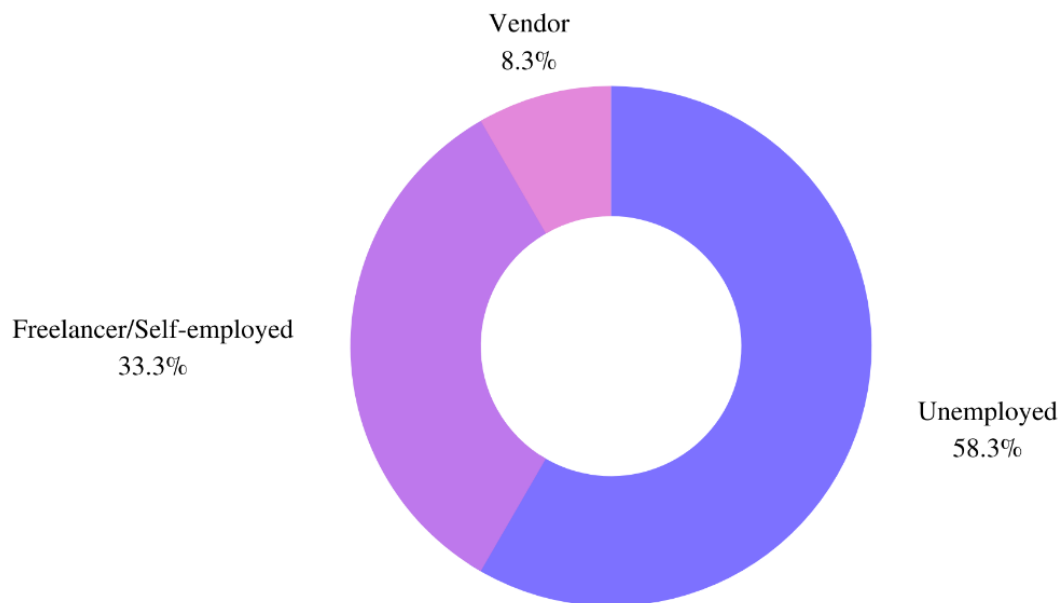


Figure 2: Employment Status of The Gathered Respondents from SSR

B. Community Markets Help People's Access to Food

MODE OF TRANSPORTATION

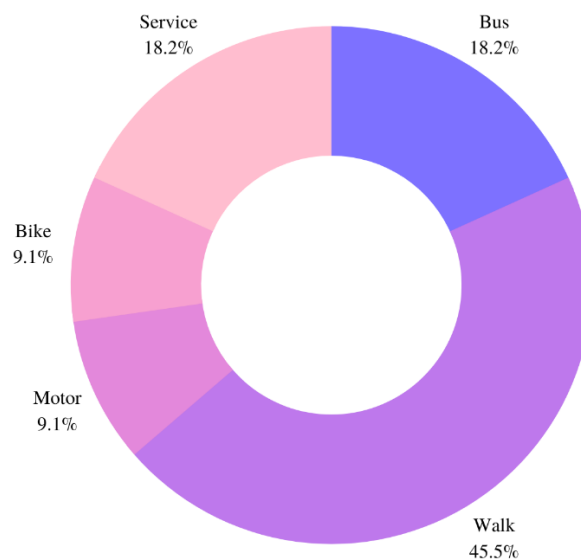


Figure 3: Mode of Transportation of The Residents of SSR Based on The Gathered Data

The figure above indicates the initial mode of transportation of the respondents they use in acquiring food. Forty-five percent (45%) of them walk, both respondents that take a car service and travel by bus gathered eighteen point two percent

(18.2%), and nine point one percent (9.1%) ride bicycles or motorcycles. The car service are from market vendors that import their products from their supplier using private cars which allows their neighbors to hitch a ride.

EXPERIENCES ON TRANSPORTATION

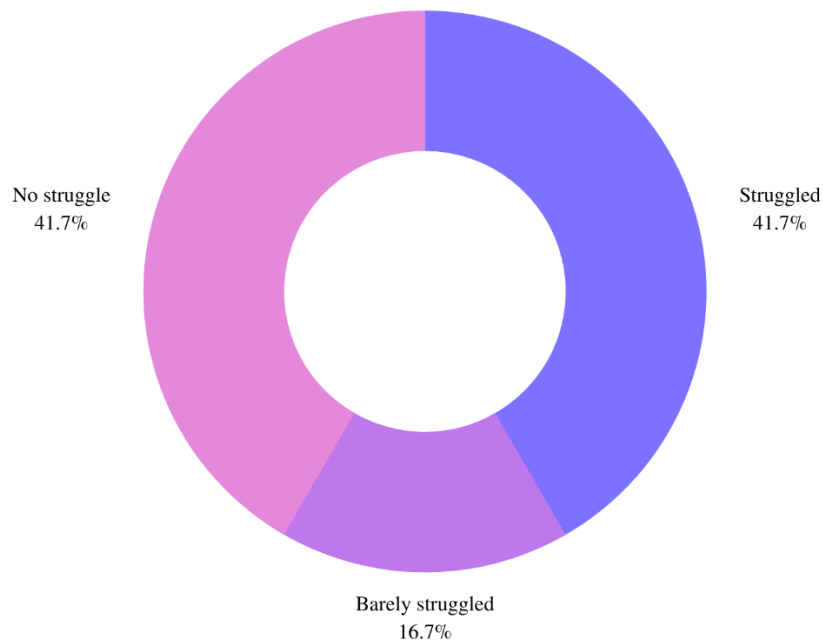


Figure 4: Experiences on Transportation by The Gathered Residents from SSR

As seen in figure 4, both those that claimed they struggled and those that did not struggled on transportation composed forty-one point seven percent (41.7%) of the respondents and only sixteen point seven percent (16.7%) barely struggled. R6, R8, and R12 shared that the long queues for public

vehicles due to the imposed protocols have been their struggle. In line with this, the limited and modified routes, and fare increases also affected R5 and R11. Such factors influence the majority of them on settling buying food on makeshift markets.

CHOICE OF MARKET/GROCERY

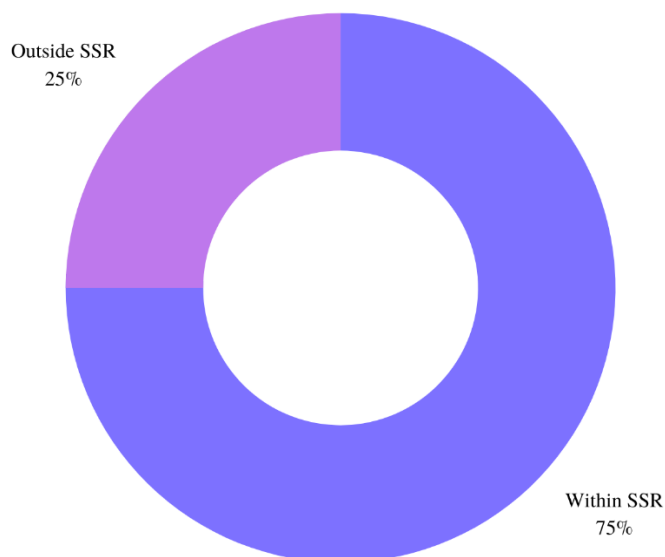


Figure 5: Choice of Market/Grocery of The Gathered Residents from SSR

This phenomenon is supported by the data gathered presented on the figure above showing that seventy-five percent (75%) of the respondents, at the time of the interview, now relied most of the time on the

makeshift market located at the main access road of Sitio San Roque from Agham Road. It is within walking distance from the respondents' homes where a variety of dry and wet goods from

vegetables and fruits to common meat cuts are sold. Furthermore, this lifestyle is also related to the fact that most of them do not own refrigerators to store easily spoiled food. They also rely on eateries that can be found along their community market as some respondents also do not have proper cooking stations.

On the contrary, twenty-five percent (25%) of the respondents such as R6 and R9 buy their food in grocery stores and walk to and from the supermarkets. They later on added that their husband works in the grocery store or sometimes receives gift checks for them to spend. They refrain from riding pedicabs, which is the main transportation mode on the said route to cut expenses. Approximately, the distance between the entry point of Sitio San Roque on Agham Road and the supermarket is two point four (2.4) kilometers.

C. Government Response from Local to National

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) was responsible for the distribution of the Social Amelioration Program-Emergency Subsidy Program (SAP-ESP) by the government. During the first three months of the pandemic, households that belong to the poor and vulnerable received cash assistance divided into two tranches amounting to a minimum of five thousand pesos (Php 5,000.00) and a maximum of eight thousand pesos (Php 8,000.00) depending on the minimum wage of the region, for two months (DSWD, 2020). The local government of Quezon City also conducted its own SAP program (QC-SAO) for those marginalized families that were not included in the national SAP program. The national SAP-ESP program was brought back the following year in 2021 when Metro Manila and surrounding provinces were placed again under ECQ. However, due to the limited budget, it was limited to one thousand pesos (Php 1,000.00) per individual up to a maximum of four thousand pesos (Php 4,000.00) per household (DSWD, 2021).

FREQUENCY OF CASH ASSISTANCE

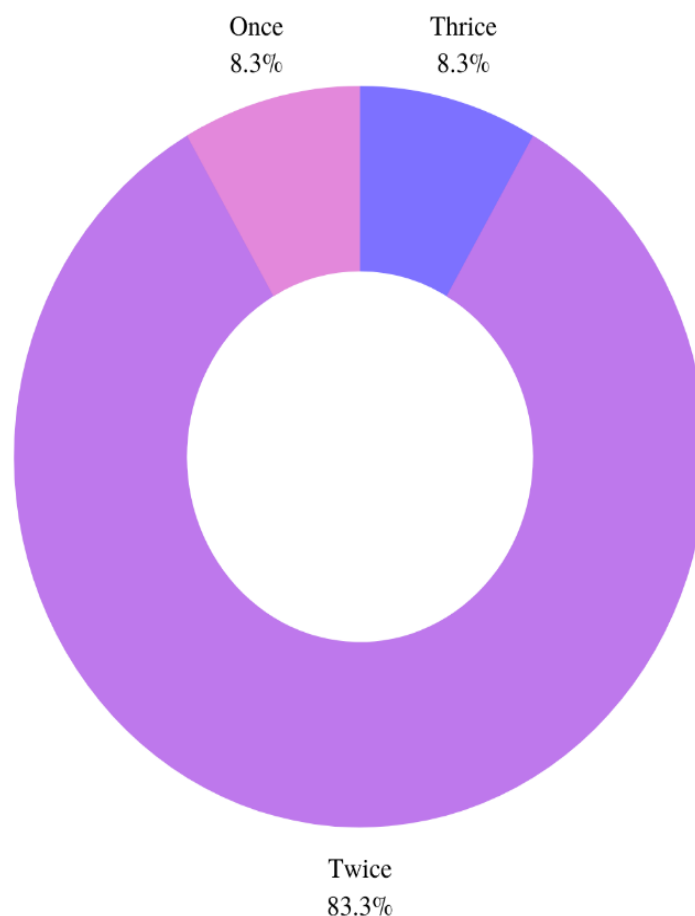


Figure 6: Frequency of Received Cash Assistance from The Government

Fortunately, all the gathered respondents of Sitio San Roque received cash assistance from the government varying from national SAP to local government assistance. The reception of the respondent was divided. As presented above, eighty-three point three percent (83.3%) received twice

cash assistance and eight point three percent (8.3%) received thrice or once. Regardless of whether they received it once or twice from the national SAP-ESP or twice from the QC-SAP they are all in unison saying that it was a big help for them.

FREQUENCY OF GOVERNMENT AID

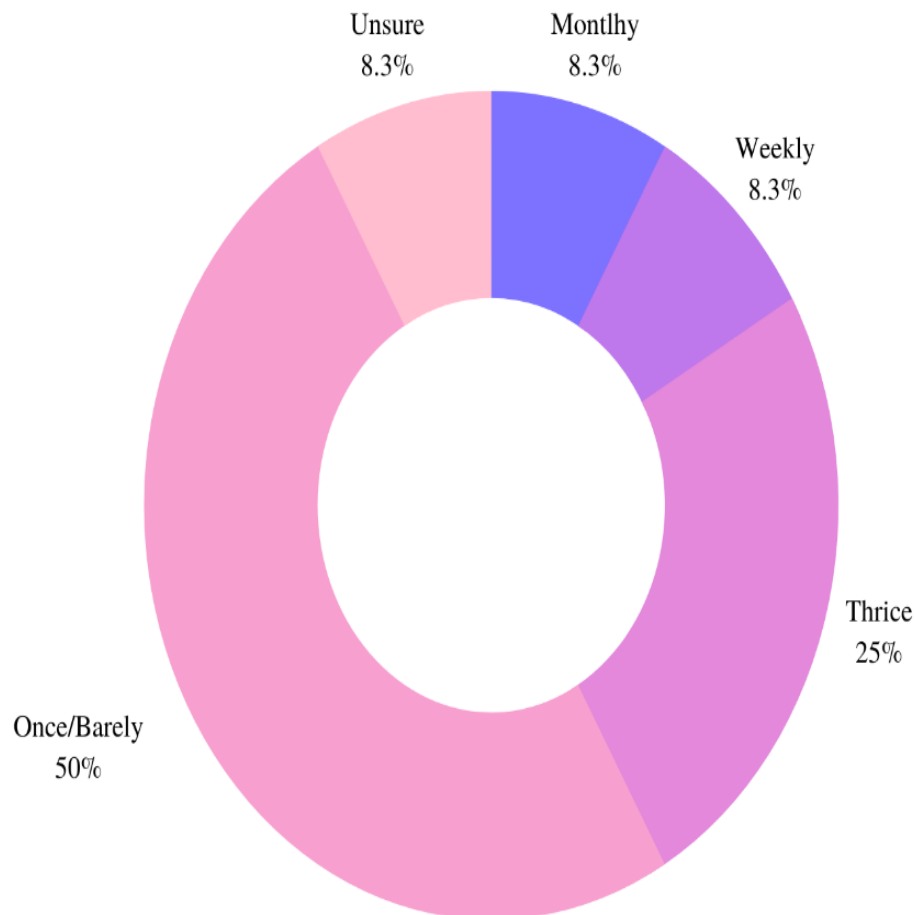


Figure 7: Frequency of Government Aid Received by The Gathered Respondents from SSR

According to Garcia (2021), the early weeks of the lockdown left people in a questionable state. Thus, to mitigate the result of lockdown, the government mandates subsidy programs more commonly known as ayuda. Aside from the cash assistance that the residents received from the national and local governments, they also received relief goods such as canned goods and kilos of rice, which somehow helped to overcome their hunger and alleviate their food insecurity, even just for a week. But the frequency of receiving goods during the lockdown disappoints R7 and R12 as they had expected continuous food support from the government. R11 also said that sometimes the distribution of goods could not cater to everyone in their community. In addition, according to R8, the frequency of the

goods being distributed is inconsistent and in their own words, “blocked by the authority” and some were found rotten because they had been piled up for a long time in the barangay hall.

In addition, R3 and R9 specifically received a gift card from a private organization, while the others did not. There are also said private individuals most are students, youth, and one prominent personality that later on runs for a political post in the district where the community is located. R7 did not fail to emphasize that compared to everyone that donated goods including those coming from the government, the food package from the prominent personality was of the highest quality of food products.

BARANGAY ASSISTANCE

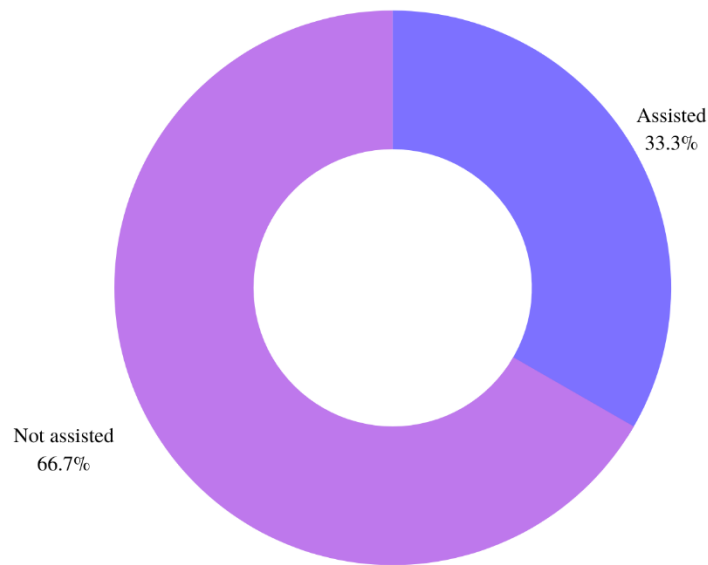


Figure 8: Gathered Respondents from SSR's Personal Experiences on Barangay Assistance

The residents of Sitio San Roque have a different experience in acquiring help from barangay officials. About sixteen point seven percent (16.7%), or R4 and R11 specifically received help with acquiring their needed medicine for maintenance while most of the respondents, or about eighty-three point three percent (83.3%) did not receive any help from the barangay officials. Meanwhile, R3 mentioned a padrino system present in the barangay but didn't expound.

Conclusion

Based on the finding of the study, the researchers concluded that:

1. According to Ramos (2020), the pandemic affected around 2.5 million people; the majority of these families are from Metro Manila households with no regular income. In relation to the Philippines' transportation system during the first ECQ, the consumers find it hard to travel due to the risk of contracting the virus and the travel time they would spend going to the nearest market (Hapal, 2021). Hence, the COVID-19 negatively affected the food accessibility of the residents of Sitio San Roque by greatly decreasing their purchasing power and impeding their transportation options.
2. The common issues influencing the food accessibility of the residents of SSR during the pandemic are unemployment, high food prices, and difficulties of public transportation. This further supports the claim that Agrawal, et al., (2021) stated, saying the effects of unemployment hampered people's income and socioeconomic standing resulting in their

inability coping up with the increase of price commodities. Moreover, Odii, et al. (2020) also discovered that poor urban households underwent a major devastation with finance and transportation. Transportation, according to Widener & Hatzopoulou (2016, as cited in Agyei-Boakye, 2022), is a crucial aspect for human movements that can directly affect accessibility of facilities like markets, grocery stores, and etc.

3. The respondents cope up by substituting their common meals with cheaper alternatives, reducing the frequency of their meals, and settling on buying food from nearby community markets. The study by Tampe (2020) found that one factor affecting the hardships of the slum dwellers disrupting their livelihood was due to their jobs falling under the informal sector category resulting in risks of having an imbalanced diet. This further supports that with their poor living conditions with high risks of containing the virus, McNulty (2019) makes a point that these kinds of conditions affect food security.
4. According to Afridi, et al., (2020), the COVID-19 situation aggravated the plight of the urban poor population as the pandemic response halted the economy directly affecting their informal employment, leaving them dependent on either government or private charity support (Afridi, et al., 2020). As a response, the government partially addressed the food accessibility challenges faced by the residents of SSR by providing limited cash assistance and

food packs, and helped those residents in need to buy food and medicine for them.

Recommendations

The researchers make the following recommendations:

Future Researchers

- The future researchers could also interview male respondents to have their point of view as the sole providers of the household.
- The future researchers could explore more on other dimensions of food security such as food utilization, food availability, and food stability of the urban poor that can be associated with our topic: food accessibility.
- The future researchers can explore the nutritional value of the food items inside the food packs distributed by the national and local government units.
- Regarding the answers of the respondents on their experience of food accessibility, the future researchers could investigate the phenomenon of why many downplay or deny their struggle even if their experience says otherwise.

National Government Unit

Department of Social Welfare and Development

- The concerned agency could reevaluate the basis of the cash assistance programs to provide enough support for the marginalized sector of society.

Department of Health

- The agency could oversee the effects of protocols in the marginalized sectors to cater to more Filipinos in their measure to control the widespread effect of the COVID-19 virus.

National Housing Authority

- The government agency could better provide better housing options for the urban poor who are facing threats of eviction.

Local Government Unit

- The researchers suggest conducting a review of the extent of the effectiveness of their implemented measures and initiatives by the Quezon city government to mitigate the COVID-19 situation in the city and the difficulties faced by, especially the areas that require further improvement or attention to increase their effectiveness.
- The local government should also investigate the issue of corruption within the barangay level where incidents of hoarding of food packs by the officials have been reported by the respondents
- The government could also explore the positive effects of government-led or sponsored rolling markets to promote food accessibility and food security within the communities in need.

Blended learning is recommended to improve the level of achievement of students. For lectures and general instructions, online classes are advised, while face to face classes for professional courses that require actual and hands-on experience with laboratory instruments and technology.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest between the authors in this manuscript.

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