

# The COVID-19 pandemic knowledge, attitude, anxiety, and the perceived mental healthcare needs among Filipino respondents

Chizanne Sarabia-Larena<sup>1</sup>, Emmanuel Melendez Ozoa<sup>2</sup>, Sujit Kumar Kar<sup>3</sup>  
<sup>1,2</sup>Negros Oriental State University, <sup>3</sup>King George's Medical University

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## Abstract

*This paper focuses on the lives of Filipinos at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. It investigates the knowledge, attitude, anxiety, and perceived mental healthcare needs as Filipinos continuously experience the pandemic. This research is a quantitative cross-sectional study. A self-report online survey was conducted on (N=939) Filipino respondents utilizing a non-probability purposive sampling technique. Results reveal that respondents have adequate knowledge that the COVID-19 virus is highly contagious. The attitude towards COVID-19 shows respondents' compliance with self-quarantine and social distancing. Respondents felt the need to wash their hands frequently due to anxiety. They are anxiously distracted, worried for themselves and family about the widespread of the disease. Filipino anxiety has reached the point of seeking professional help, demonstrating the necessity of talking to a mental health professional if panic persists. Thus, those affected by the pandemic should avail themselves of mental healthcare services. Strengthening mental health providers' services may be recommended to address the psycho-social needs of Filipinos during an outbreak.*

**Keywords:** Psychology, Mental Health, COVID-19, Cross-sectional study, Philippines

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## INTRODUCTION

It has been two years since COVID-19 created a massive challenge. Social scientists around the globe consider this phenomenon as necessary research of interest, especially on the immediate response needed to address mental health concerns. The spread of infection has rapidly increased, demonstrating a global physical and psychological health threat (World

Health Organization, 2020).

In 2021, the World Health Organization (WHO) recorded more than 119 million cases of COVID-19 worldwide. The WHO also reported the Philippines to have the first death outside China on February 2, 2020. The outbreak experiences of the novel coronavirus outbreak in the country started to erupt, and the Department of Health detected more than eight thousand confirmed cases in March

2020. Because of these, people's lives have been disrupted in various aspects of society, such as education, economy, entertainment, government, and family. Businesses were temporarily closed, and unemployment reached 45% during the second quarter of 2020 (ABS-CBN News, 2020). Indeed, the COVID-19 crisis has become the most significant public health concern (Valladolid, 2021).

Looking at these facts and figures, one may think the virus psychologically upset humanity. For example, the swine flu pandemic in 2009-2010 that resulted in high mortality has evoked anxiety among the public (Everts, 2013). Anxiety is a typical response to stressful situations and uncertainty, which causes a feeling of discomfort. These challenges could trigger mental health concerns, such as anxiety and depression (Dar et al., 2017; Li et al., 2020; Roy et al., 2020). Hence, the challenges of global spread, quick local transmission of COVID-19, and disruption of movements have relative effects brought to people that generate a psychological crisis. The knowledge of contracting COVID-19, and the feeling of uncertainty amid the pandemic, adversely contribute to one's mental health and well-being, which may cause psychological distress and anxiety.

The lives of Filipinos have significantly altered ever since former President Rodrigo R. Duterte declared a state of Public Health Emergency nationwide due to the outbreak of COVID-19. This event has impacted Filipino lives, from economic to emotional aspects. Related studies have shown that many of these impacts are adverse; Caldwell et al. (2021)

suggested in their paper that countries worldwide should determine the best strategy to end COVID-19 transmission.

In this study, knowledge is the thinking process that directs the person to have information and awareness towards the COVID-19 virus, which portrays an attitude of keeping in a safe zone for safety and security during the pandemic. In line with this, attitude is manifested by how a person reacts to the pandemic situation based on the relevant knowledge that they possess; meaning, actions manifest his attitudes which are the products of a system of feelings towards and beliefs about the COVID-19 virus. Furthermore, anxiety is the adverse emotional reaction of a person as he experiences the pandemic. Anxiety includes undesirable behaviors induced by this adverse emotional reaction, such as an intense feeling of unease, excessive worrying, inappropriate behaviors toward others, and the like (Roy et al., 2022). On the other hand, perception is the process of recognizing a particular event; and responding appropriately to the current situation (Myers, 2012). Hence, the knowledge of public safety health protocols, attitude toward adhering to precautionary measures, and the ability to discern by accepting these safety standards that cause sudden changes in daily routines may also help beat the pandemic.

While other countries have begun studying the impact of this pandemic on the various aspects of the lives of the people with great intensity, such is not the case in the Philippines. During this study, the researchers felt that there

needed to be more scientific studies on COVID-19 health-related challenges. The government and other policy-making bodies need to be armed with data-backed information to come up with life-saving decisions; that is why there is a need to contribute to the body of knowledge that would help improve the understanding of this outbreak experiences. Hence, this study aimed to investigate the knowledge, attitude, anxiety, and perceived mental healthcare needs towards COVID-19 as Filipino respondents continuously experienced the pandemic. It also aimed to establish an initial analysis of the emerging COVID-19-related psycho-social crisis to facilitate appropriate mental health interventions beneficial to Filipinos. Mental health practitioners may use the results of this study as a basis for recommendations to policy-making bodies to pursue mental health response and psycho-social support services; for example, Zandifar and Badrfam (2020) point out the importance of comprehensive management and attention to mental health care.

A sense of awareness through adequate knowledge and attitude toward COVID-19 is vital to the psychological well-being of people, their households, and the community. Research studies revealed that Filipino students possessed sufficient knowledge and perceived a high-risk level of becoming infected, while at the same time, high levels of COVID-19 anxiety are prevalent among them (Baloran, 2020; Cleofas & Rocha, 2021; Valladolid, 2021).

Research has indicated that people have adequate awareness of the virus and thus adhere to minimum health standards set by the government, such as increased personal hygienic measures to avoid COVID-19 infection, social distancing, self-quarantine, and avoiding travel. In addition, individuals also took precautionary measures, such as using masks and sanitizers, resulting in shortages of resources in the market and panic buying (Feng et al., 2020; Roy et al., 2020).

Aside from the damaged economic zone due to the enforced lockdown (World Economic Forum, 2020), most company employees work remotely from home, creating financial disadvantages. The government also shut down educational institutions and postponed classes, causing uncertainty and psychological distress to young minds (Roy et al., 2020).

Previous studies have suggested that this pandemic has psychological effects on individuals: loneliness, anger, and stress developed among quarantined people who lost face-to-face connections and social interventions. People in isolation and quarantine experienced substantial symptoms of depression, anxiety, frustration, stress, and uncertainty (Brooks et al., 2020; Xiang et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). The unpredictability of the situation, the ambiguity of when to manage the disease, and the severity of the risk are some of the most stressful circumstances. This situation has raised fears among the masses, along with some commentary and misinformation (Bao et al., 2020).

In the Philippines, various scientists conducted studies during the early phase of the pandemic; moderate-to-severe anxiety was reported by one-fourth of the 1, 879 Filipino respondents, while one-sixth claimed to have experienced moderate-to-severe depression and psychological impact (Tee et al., 2020). Similarly, a study in the middle part of 2020 revealed that out of the 421 Filipino respondents, 40.70% experienced moderate to severe stress, 60.30% had moderate to severe anxiety, and 53.1% had experienced severe depression (Montano & Acebes, 2020; Bahadur et al., 2021). Another study on the impact of the pandemic on physical and mental health by Tee et al. (2020) revealed that Filipino respondents reported significantly higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress as compared to their Chinese counterparts.

On the other hand, despite having adequate knowledge of the pandemic, Filipino students are also affected psychologically. Students experienced different worries such as physical health, studies, future education, finances, family, and professional careers. Nevertheless, students utilized varied ways to cope with mental health challenges (Baloran, 2020; Cleofas & Rocha, 2021; Valladolid, 2021), and they accepted the challenge of learning amidst the pandemic (Ecang & Petalla, 2022).

People who experienced the pandemic can be considered a good source for ideas on handling themselves in situations such as the pandemic because the ideas they provide are based on their experience.

A study conducted on an adult Indian population attempted to investigate this aspect, and one of their significant findings is that 75% of the 662 total respondents agreed that making mental healthcare available for individuals is necessary, especially if they experienced panic amid the pandemic. Among these respondents, 83.5% felt that if people have to deal with emotional and other psychological issues during the pandemic, they should be able to avail themselves of professional help. For those who are highly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, 82.9% of the respondents suggest obtaining mental health help (Roy et al., 2020).

Given the evidence thus far mentioned, it is evident that psychological distress deliberately affects the mental health of Filipino respondents during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the necessity of knowing the perceived mental healthcare needs of respondents, along with the other variables in this study, could be investigated to facilitate appropriate mental health interventions beneficial to the Filipino community.

WHO (2020) emphasized that the best way to prevent and slow down transmission is to inform people about the COVID-19 virus, its causes, and how it spreads to maintain people's physical and mental health. Otherwise, the absence of these intentions may result in inconsistent thoughts and feelings that may lead to anxiety-provoking behavior and mental health concerns. Patricio and Verdeprado (2020) mentioned that mental health is the condition of an individual's well-being.

Such a condition enables the person to realize one's potential, cope with life's daily stressors, be resilient to extreme life events, and perform efficiently for the community's development.

METHODOLOGY

This research investigated the knowledge, attitude, anxiety, and perceived mental healthcare needs as Filipinos continuously experienced the COVID-19 pandemic using a quantitative design; data was gathered using a survey questionnaire carried out on the Filipino population for a cross-sectional analysis.

The idea to conduct this study was born when the pandemic was starting to escalate. The researchers needed to understand respondents' cognitive and emotional states as they experienced the worsening pandemic. There was a sense of urgency to expedite empirical data gathering in this context. Around this time, the government had started to impose the strict implementation of the rule on limiting the movement of the people.

The funding agency gave the researchers a six-month timeline to complete the study. These circumstances compelled the researchers to use a non-probability purposive sampling technique. Such technique is accepted for use in quantitative research, as exemplified by the ones conducted by Djatmiko and Pradana (2016), Matanluk et al. (2013), and White et al. (2018). Therefore, the researchers sought people with specific characteristics to answer the research

question. The selection criteria for the target respondents for this research were the following: at least 18 years old, Filipino citizen, and currently living in the Philippines.

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CATEGORIES		F	%
Age			
	18 to 29	601	64.00
	30 to 39	161	17.15
	40 to 49	127	13.53
	50 to 59	42	4.47
	60 and above	8	0.85
	Total	939	100
Sex			
	Female	700	74.55
	Male	235	25.03
	Other Categories	4	0.43
	Total	939	100
Occupation			
	Healthcare Worker	38	4.05
	Hospital Support Staff	16	1.70
	Professional (other than healthcare worker or hospital support staff)	484	51.54
	Student	337	35.89
	Unemployed	64	6.82
	Total	939	100
Area of Residence			
	Rural	388	4.32
	Urban	551	58.68
	Total	939	100
Current Location among the Three Main Island Groups			
	Luzon and NCR	138	14.70
	Visayas	603	64.22
	Mindanao	198	21.04
	Total	939	100

Therefore, anyone with these characteristics and have access to the Internet is qualified to participate in this study.

While all four major geographical groupings of the Philippines were represented, 64.2% (n=603) of the respondents came from the Visayas group of islands. The remaining 21.1% (n=198) came from Mindanao, while 14.7% (n=138) came from Luzon and NCR. Fifty-nine percent (n=551) lived in an urban area, while 41% (n=388) lived in rural areas. The mean age of the respondents was 29.4 years old  $\pm 10.01$ . Females comprised 74.55% (n=700) of the respondents, while males comprised 25.03% (n=235). Professionals who work in the non-healthcare-related field made up 51% (n=479) of the respondents, while only 6% (n=38) work in the healthcare-related field. A significant percentage of the respondents have high educational attainment – college graduate and higher – at 84% (n=665). Table 1 shows the socio-demographic profile of the respondents.

#### Data gathering procedure

At its conception, this research was designed to have the data gathering done purely online because restrictions on the movement of people were just implemented following quarantine protocols of the government. Since many parts of the country were still under the Enhanced Community Quarantine protocol - only essential front-line workers could travel outside their residences. At the same time, the government mandated the rest of the

population to stay at their residences. That is why it was not possible to meet with prospective respondents personally. Therefore, the researchers did an online survey to facilitate data gathering using Google Forms, which also included the informed consent form. There were two ways of sending the survey link: 1) the link was sent to the respondents via email, Facebook Messenger, and Viber, and 2) the link was posted on the Facebook accounts of the researchers and to the Facebook groups where the researchers belong. Respondents were requested to roll out the survey to as many individuals as possible for two weeks in May 2020. Nine hundred thirty-nine passed the researchers' selection criteria and were accepted as respondents. After the survey, the researchers downloaded the responses in Excel format.

#### Measures

The questionnaire for measuring variables was adopted from the study of Roy et al., published in the Asian Journal of Psychiatry on April 8, 2020. The online self-report questionnaire was composed of the following: 1) demographic details, 2) knowledge/awareness, 3) attitude, 4) anxiety, and 5) perceived mental healthcare needs. There were six multiple-choice questions in the knowledge/awareness section. The attitude section contained seven items to be rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Anxiety related to novel coronavirus infection had 18 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging across never, occasionally, sometimes, often,

and always. The perceived mental healthcare need was also assessed by four items on a 3-point Likert scale; permission was granted from the authors to use the questionnaire. The email correspondence includes permission to use the questionnaire, which the authors granted. The questionnaire was forwarded to fellow researchers to check the readability and understandability of its content.

### Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to organize the data gathered from the respondents and get an overall picture of how they experienced the COVID-19 pandemic as manifested in the variables of this study. A series of pie graphs show the percentage of respondents' adequate knowledge of the disease. The same analytic tools were also used to show the attitude of the respondents about the disease and their perception of the need for mental health care. For the anxiety variable, a table shows the different manifestations of the anxiety the respondents felt caused by the fear of the disease. The table shows the percentage of the respondents who have manifested these behaviors and then ranked accordingly.

### Ethical Considerations

The researchers endeavored that only Filipinos of legal age were accepted as respondents for this research. With this in mind, the researchers added a feature to the online survey form wherein the potential respondents must

declare that they are of legal age before proceeding to the questionnaire survey proper. The researchers also included a thorough description of the research, its purpose, and how the data gathered will be utilized. Respondents' consent to be part of the research was also sought. As part of the ethical consideration of this study, the researchers only accepted prospects who could adhere to the informed consent.

The researchers undertook the following actions to ensure that the rights and conditions of all individual respondents have been considered. The autonomy of the respondents was ensured by informing them that their participation in this research was completely voluntary and that they could always change their minds and stop at any time without any penalty. The researchers have taken steps on nonmaleficence by ensuring that participation in this research will not result in an additional financial burden to the respondents. Furthermore, the anonymity of the respondents had likewise been given the utmost consideration to protect them from possible physical and emotional suffering (PHREB, 2017; PAPSEC, 2010).

The researchers took the necessary steps to ensure data privacy by collecting and storing data anonymously, refraining from asking for the respondents' names and other identifying personal information, and saving the data with password protection to protect the respondents' privacy. Only the researchers have access to the responses given by the respondents.



This research passed the mandatory review by the University Research, Innovation, Development, and Extension, conducted from February 19 to 20, 2020, and has been given clearance by the Research, Ethics, and Innovation Office of the Negros Oriental State University with reference number 2020-EXE-001.

## RESULTS

### Knowledge of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Of the 939 respondents, 81.9% (n=769) had a basic knowledge of the virus' mode of transmission; respondents understand that the virus could be spread in diverse ways such as touching, sneezing, kissing, and through food (Figure 1). Also, 96.4% of respondents recognized that fever, tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, aches, and pain are categorized as multiple symptoms and could occur when a person has the disease. Almost half of the respondents (45.8%, n=430) perceive the disease as highly contagious; therefore, to prevent the disease from spreading, 84.3% (n=792) of the respondents consider frequent hand washing necessary. Furthermore, 88.9% (n=835) of the respondents believe that if symptoms occur, self-isolation is necessary to stop the spread of the disease. Lastly, 38.9% (n=365) negated the idea that household pets can transmit the virus.

### Attitude toward the COVID-19 Pandemic

The results show that the respondents' attitude toward some essential safety-related aspects of the pandemic implies healthy regard for its danger (Figure 2). The result was illustrated by the high percentages of respondents who answered "agree" or "strongly agree" to statements that portrayed some behaviors that could keep a person in a safe zone during this pandemic. This attitude may be necessary for safety and security. Almost half of the respondents (47.2%, n=443) agree that they could be affected by COVID-19. In addition, 56.8% (n=528) agree with the policies set forth by relevant government agencies to ensure the public's safety.

Regarding some suggested actions that could help keep people safe, the respondents seem in agreement with these ideas. For example, they agreed that frequent hand washing could lower the risk of COVID-19 infection (87.7% (n=824). Among the respondents, 90.4% (n=849) agreed to self-quarantine and social distancing (93.3%, n=876) as a protocol for safety measures during the COVID-19 pandemic; 79.8% (n=749) also believed traveling across/within the country is unsafe during pandemics.

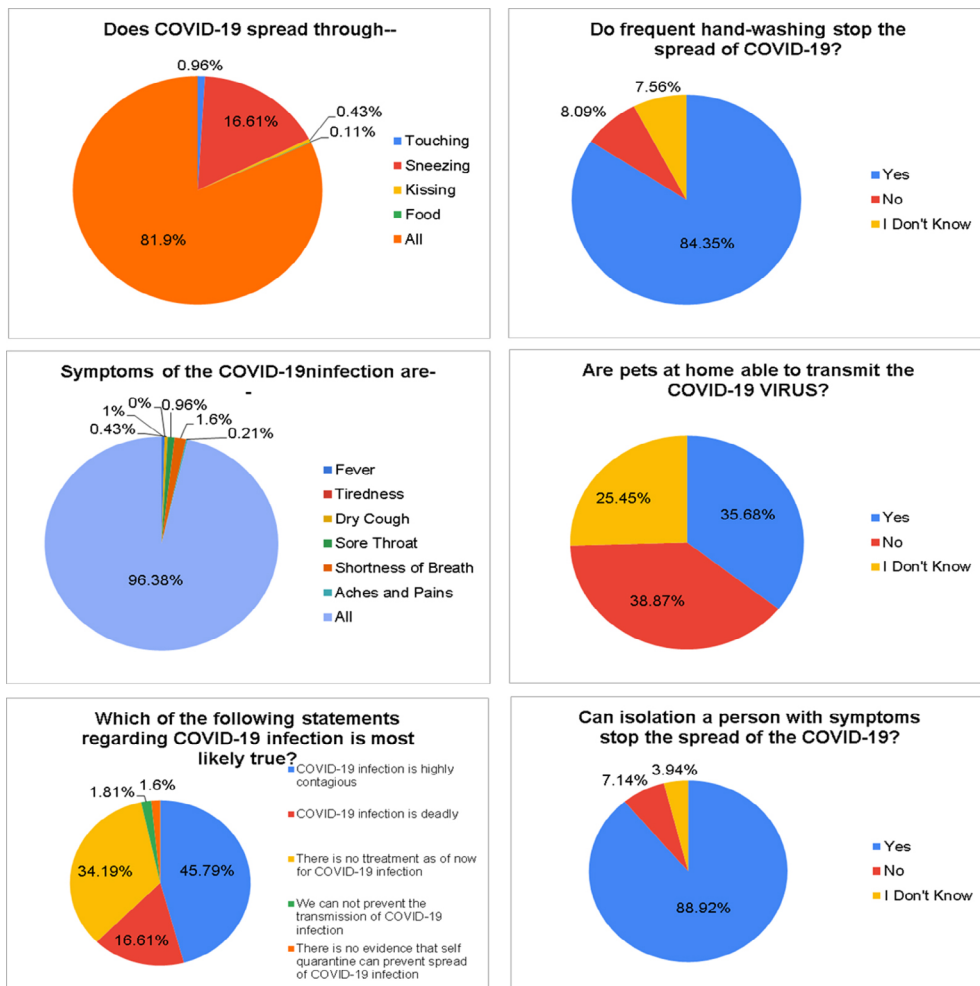
### Anxiety related to the COVID-19 pandemic

The pandemic experiences have affected the respondents' mental health, as shown by the high percentage of "often" and "always" responses concerning anxiety. As illustrated in Table 2, 90.37% (n=852) of respondents felt the need to wash



their hands frequently. Among the respondents, 88.82% (n=834) often avoided large meetings and social gatherings, as well as avoided intimate gatherings 84.45% (n=793) and reduced social contact (81.85%, n=762). Most respondents had often used masks even without apparent signs and symptoms of infection (81.90%, n=769). About 79.77% (n=749) of respondents reported worrying about themselves and their families on the escalating COVID-19 infection. Moreover, the

result shows that more than half, 72.1% (n=667) of respondents were mentally preoccupied with the COVID-19 pandemic. Several respondents, 72.63% (n=682), felt the need to use sanitizer or gloves repeatedly. The result further shows that 56.34% (n=529) of the respondents feared anyone in their social circle reportedly being sick; together with their friends, 55.80% (n=524) respondents have frequently discussed the pandemic. More than half, 54.63% (n=513) of the respondents



**Figure 1** Knowledge of COVID-19 Pandemic

were reportedly uneasy and worried they might contract COVID-19 infection. In this view, 53.57% (n=503) of respondents felt obligated to buy and stock essentials at home. Lastly, 50.16% (n=471) of the respondents often felt emotionally disturbed by the print media and television news coverage reports. During those weeks, nearly half, 48.67% (n=457) of the respondents, have avoided ordering online food.

To questionnaire items referring to online social media post on topics that

pertains to the COVID-19 pandemic, almost half of the respondents, 45.74% (n=415), got affected by the idea of getting infected by the virus, which caused them to feel uneasy and worried, that somehow triggered the 36.63% (n=344) of the respondents to inappropriate behaviors with anyone.

Perceived mental healthcare needs

Of the 939 respondents, 87.6% (n=823)perceivedthatseeking help from

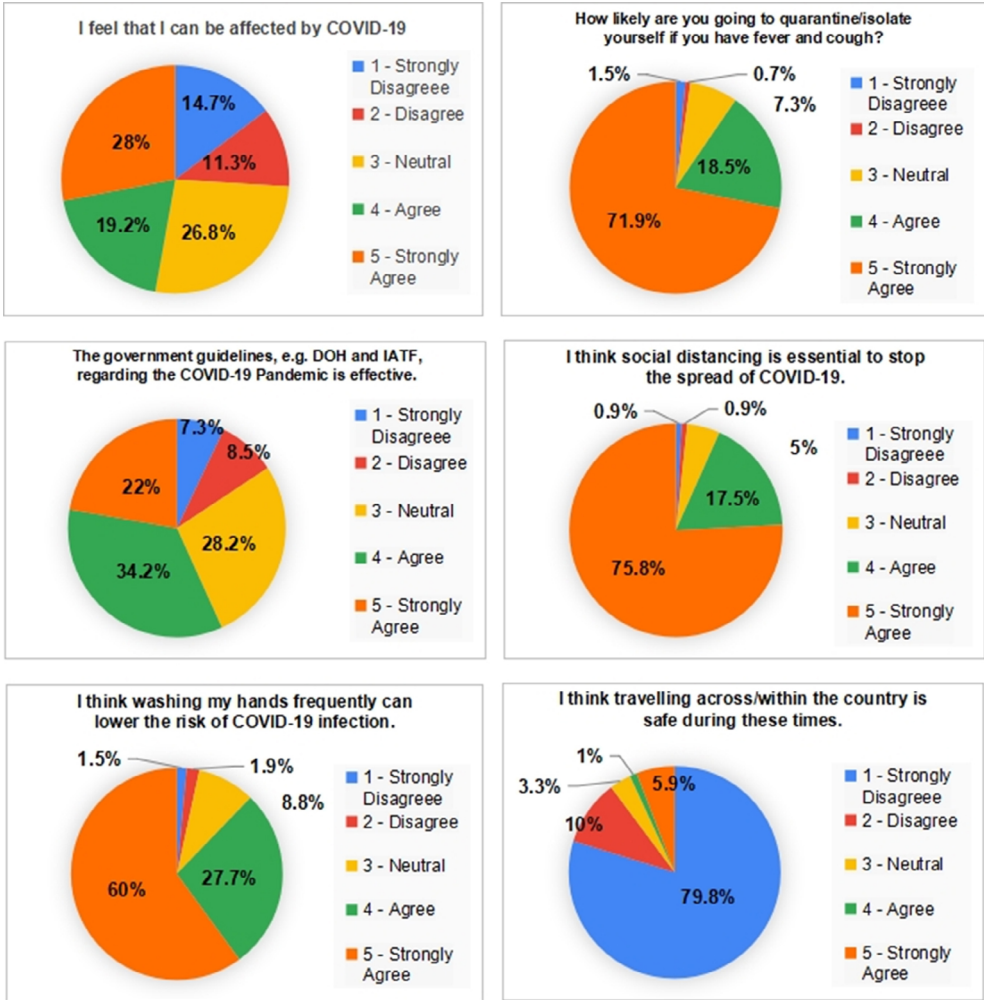


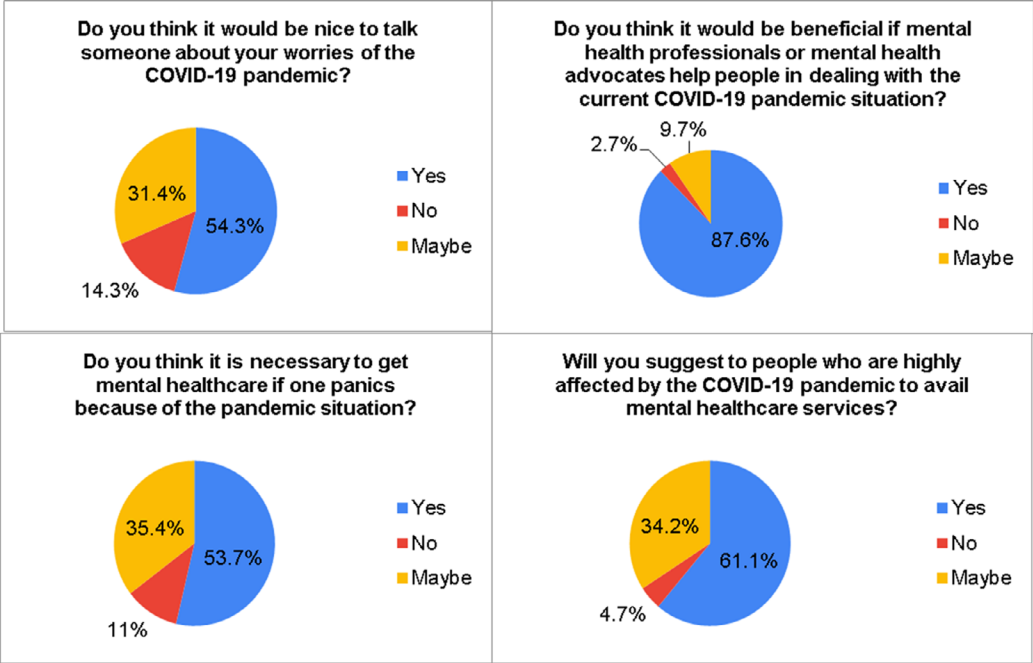
Figure 2 Attitude toward the COVID-19 Pandemic

mental health professionals/advocates to help them deal with the current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic is beneficial (Table 3). Furthermore, 61.1% (n=574) of the respondents suggested that those positively affected by the pandemic should avail of mental health

care services; and 53.7% (n=504), or more than half, emphasized the necessity to talk to someone about their worries and seek mental healthcare if panic persists due to pandemic situations.

**Table 2** *Anxiety towards the COVID-19 Pandemic ranked according to the most number of “often” and “always” answers.*

Items		% of responses who feel anxious (often and always) (N=939)
14.	For the past week, how often do you feel the need to continually wash your hands?	90.73%
5.	For the past week, how often have you avoided large meetings and social gatherings?	88.82%
3.	For the past week, how often do you avoid intimate gatherings?	84.45%
16.	For the past week, how often do you use a mask without any apparent signs and symptoms of the infection?	81.90%
4.	For the past week, how often do you avoid social contact?	81.85%
15.	For the past week, how often do you feel worried about yourself and your family regarding the spread of the COVID-19 infection?	79.77%
13.	For the past week, how often do you feel the need to use sanitizer/gloves?	72.63%
1.	For the past week, how often do you think about the COVID-19 pandemic?	72.10%
12.	How often do you feel afraid of anyone in your social circle reports of being sick for the past week?	56.34%
7.	For the past week, how often have you talked to your friends about the COVID-19 pandemic?	55.80%
2.	For the past week, how often do you feel uneasy and worried about contracting the COVID-19 infection?	54.63%
11.	How often do you feel the need to buy and stock all essentials at home for the past week?	53.57%
10.	For the past week, how often do you feel affected by the talks of the COVID-19 pandemic on print and TV news?	50.16%
6.	For the past week, how often have you avoided ordering food online?	48.67%
9.	How often do you feel affected by the posts on online social media about COVID-19 infection for the past week?	47.28%
18.	For the past week, how often does the idea of COVID-19 infection made you uneasy and worried about posts on online social media?	44.20%
17.	For the past week, how often does the idea of the COVID-19 infection made you uneasy and worried, leading to inappropriate behaviors with anyone?	36.63%
8.	How often do you have difficulty sleeping by being worried about the COVID-19 pandemic for the past week?	15.76%



**Figure 3** *Perceived mental healthcare needs among Filipinos during the COVID-19 pandemic*

**DISCUSSION**

Through quantitative analysis, this study investigates knowledge, attitude, anxiety, and perceived mental healthcare needs as Filipinos continuously experience the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings indicate that a substantial majority of the respondents know the basic nature of the COVID-19 virus, how the disease can be transmitted, the ease of its transmissibility, and how to prevent its transmission. Furthermore, as reflected in their attitude, it is evident that respondents are compliant with the policies set forth by relevant government agencies to ensure public safety. At the same time, they strive to lower the risk of spreading the virus through frequent washing of hands,

engaging in social distancing, adhering to quarantine protocols, if necessary, and foregoing travel which contributes to the prevention of the spread of the disease. Findings also indicate that regardless of the safety measures they were enculturated to follow, it is evident that COVID-19 is causing a psychological impact on the respondents, adversely affecting their mental health. Because they feared catching the disease, they frequently needed to wash their hands and use sanitizers or gloves. They constantly worry about themselves, their families, and people in their social circle as COVID-19 escalates in the community. It is also evident that respondents are mentally preoccupied with the pandemic situation. It reached

the point where they misbehave towards other people. It also shows the manifestation of a disrupted sleeping pattern. These indicate that mental healthcare needs are essential to address the pandemic's psychological crisis.

Moreover, findings reveal that most Filipino respondents perceive the benefits of seeking help from mental health professionals to help them deal with the current pandemic. They also recognize the necessity of providing mental healthcare as they experience pandemic anxiety. Moreover, talking to mental health professionals will help ease their worries and anxiety to strengthen healing and well-being.

The results above confirm Johnson and Hariharan's (2017) findings that a government information health drive is essential in creating awareness of disease prevention. It also confirms the studies of Baloran (2020), Cleofas and Rocha (2021), Feng et al. (2020), and Roy et al. (2020) that adequate knowledge about the disease tends to result in socially-acceptable behavior beneficial to all people in the community, such as hand washing, mask-wearing, and social distancing. Moreover, the findings of this study are congruent with various studies that COVID-19 harms the mental health of those who experienced the pandemic – the most common of this is anxiety (Baloran, 2020; Bao et al., 2020; Brooks et al., 2020; Cleofas & Rocha, 2021; Xiang et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). Hence, it can be anxiety-provoking when the unknown approaches. It is normal to feel this way, just as it is normal to fight

when facing danger. However, when it is not possible to use the fight response, it creates a great deal of stress that is often converted to worry, leading to maladaptive-dysfunctional behavior (Oklahoma Psychological Association, 2020).

The findings of this study could be a concrete help as an empirical basis in the analysis of COVID-19-related psychosocial crisis for mental health advocates to facilitate appropriate mental health interventions beneficial to Filipinos. As emphasized by Alcantara (2020) that mental health professionals should be at the forefront of providing culturally-adapted and mindfulness-informed psychological first aid. Moreover, policy-making bodies in the public and private sectors may use the findings of this study in their quest to have appropriate and contextually designed mental health responses and psychosocial support services.

When the researchers conceptualized and conducted this study, it was urgent to gain knowledge of the pandemic phenomenon and how it may affect people's mental health. This urgent need resulted in using the purposive sampling technique through online surveys due to the strictly limited movement imposed by the government. However, the challenge of this sampling technique has produced respondents who are not representative of the general population because they were not chosen randomly. Therefore, the researchers recommend replicating this research if another outbreak occurs. However, future research should be conducted using a probability sampling

method instead of a non-probability sampling method. This technique may produce a more accurate picture of Filipinos' knowledge, attitude, anxiety, and perception of the COVID-19 pandemic. It would result in a group of respondents statistically representative of the general population.

### Limitations of the Study

The conduct of this research was limited by the restrictions mandated by the government and the dangers posed by the COVID-19 disease. These conditions created a situation that is unique to the time and place of the conduct of the research. Therefore, these exact conditions may not often occur, resulting in the difficulty of replication. Furthermore, the generalizability of the findings is limited only to the respondents of this study.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the Filipino respondents acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic is highly contagious. As the result suggests, appropriate knowledge and attitude toward compliance with personal health hygienic measures are necessary to create a safe climate among people in the community. Nevertheless, due to the nature of the pandemic, it is evident that Filipino respondents are anxious, which leads to a psycho-social crisis as people continuously experience the pandemic. Hence, facilitating mental health response and psycho-social support during the COVID-19

pandemic is recommended. Despite this surmountable challenge, one still has to step up and recognize the significance of mental healthcare needs to mitigate the psycho-social crisis and anxiety-induced behavior (e.g., fear, panic, and worry) as reported. Filipino pandemic anxiety has reached the point of seeking professional help by talking to someone, e.g., a psychiatrist, psychologist, and mental health professional.

One critical insight gained from this study is that a good chunk of the respondents (44%) are hesitant to admit that the guidelines given by the government are effective. This finding could lead to people not trusting or respecting the government's or its representatives' authority. Most of the measures the respondents have undertaken to ensure their safety are self-imposed. The results show that they tend to trust their judgment rather than what the government says. This behavior could explain the several instances where civilians had altercations with government representatives concerning the imposition of the restriction of movements.

Hence, the government and other agencies are constantly working to generate awareness among the public as the pandemic evolves. Therefore, the knowledge and attitude toward COVID-19 are expected to change from time to time. Understanding the knowledge, attitude, anxiety, and perceived mental healthcare needs will help the government and policymakers design prevention strategies. Thus, strengthening the services of mental



health providers may be recommended to address people's mental healthcare needs as well as the creation of special training and programs designed to increase the numbers, readiness, and effectiveness of those professionals who can provide mental health care, especially in an emergency, such as pandemics and other similar catastrophes

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