

The Perceived Effects of Social Distancing and Quarantine During Coronavirus Pandemic to The Sexual Abuse in Butuan City

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Abstract — This study used the descriptive research design employing a self-made survey questionnaire distributed randomly to 189 resident-respondents of Butuan City. The basic statistical tools were used to interpret and analyze the data gathered. Likewise, Pearson r was used to test the association between the profiles of the respondents and the perceived effects of social distancing and quarantine during the coronavirus pandemic on the sexual abuse in Butuan City. The study revealed that the perceived impact of social distancing and quarantine would help prevents prevalent touching to the victims of sexual abuse during the coronavirus pandemic. Likewise, social distancing and quarantine will allow people to spend more significant work and leisure time online.

Keywords — *sexual abuse social distancing quarantine restrictions children exploitation cybersex*

Introduction

In response to the increased COVID-19 epidemic, governments across the Philippines have imposed varying degrees of stringency in social distancing restrictions. To decrease the opportunity for an infectious agent to spread across persons as well as the overall pace of transmission, Social Distancing is practiced by many and is often encouraged and normalized. In response to the continuing COVID-19 epidemic, governments have introduced social distancing measures. Orders to maintain social distance when out in public, school closures, restrictions on gatherings and company activities, and instructions to stay at home are among the measures used. The volume and distribution of crime may be influenced by social distance.

According to the (CPNF 2014), the number of abused children referred to CPU-PGH has increased; one out of 4 children came from the poor urban communities of the City of Manila. The same source has stated that 84 Women and Child Protection Units (WCPUs) in cities and municipalities throughout the Philippines have similarly received increasing referrals for abused children. Based on the annual data of (CPNF 2015), the majority (64%) of these referrals were child sexual abuse (CSA) cases. The peak age of the sexually abused children evaluated at the WCPUs was between 13 to 15 years old.

Based on the report from the Public Information Office of Police Regional Office (PRO) 13 (Caraga), told the Philippine News Agency (PNA), authorities rescued 13 victims, mostly minors, during an entrapment operation and court-ordered search of a suspected cybersex de, four are aged 1 year to 3 years, who are considered children at-risk, while the rest are aged 11 years to 19 years.

Moreover, the Child Rights Network said cases of online sexual abuse and exploitation of children have jumped three-fold during the lockdown period in Butuan City. Citing the police report, the suspect offers a paying foreign sexual predator a live stream of the sexual abuse and exploitation of the seven (7) victims and six (6) other children suspected of being abused with an adult and known to be a close relative and a neighbor.

During lockdowns, children are compelled to spend much more time at home with relatives who may be the main perpetrators of abuse, and the additional economic stressors on parents may further increase the risk of child abuse (Sserwanja et al., 2020).

The incidence of violence against children, primarily by parent and caregivers, has dramatically increased globally during the COVID-19 pandemic as loss of income from lockdown measures have resulted in increased negative feelings and reduced psycho-social well-being in the household, according to global research conducted by Save the Children (Muyot, 2020)

Since children are highly vulnerable to the 'secondary' impacts of the pandemic, with a possibility of lifetime effects, it is crucial to look into the impact of COVID-19 on child abuse in a society with high baseline rates of child abuse (Sserwanja et al., 2020).

Moreover, cases of online sexual abuse and exploitation of children (OSAEC) in the Philippines increased by 264.6 percent or 202,605 more reports during the imposition of the enhanced community quarantine from March to May 2020, compared to the 76,561 cases during the same period in 2019, according to the Department of Justice (DOJ), citing the data from the US-based National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children.

According to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (2019) data, the increase in time spent at home increases the risk of violence in residential locations, between 30 and 63% of assaults and between 40 and 73% of sexual assaults commonly occur in residential settings with most jurisdictions closer to the upper end of that range. This might be expected to increase during COVID-19.

There has been a noticeable increase in the number of reported child abuse cases since the lockdown in Uganda. The Uganda Child Helpline (UGHL) March 2020 report revealed that sexual abuse was the third most reported form of the child, contributing 20.1% of all the cases (98% of the victims being girls and 17% of the perpetrators being family members, including fathers, cousins and uncles). In addition, Save the Children's recent report indicated that 60% of the respondents observed increased sexual violence against children since the lockdown started.

With this, this study aimed to determine the profiles of the respondents in terms of age, civil status, highest educational attainment, religion, occupation, and employment status; perceived effects of social distancing and quarantine during coronavirus pandemic to the sexual abuse in Butuan City. Likewise, an association between the profiles of the respondents and the perceived effectiveness of social distancing and quarantine during coronavirus pandemic to the sexual abuse in Butuan City.

Literature Review

In an iceberg diagram, the tiny visible tip represents cases reported to the police. A larger section may be explained through survey research and the work of non-governmental organizations. But the reasons behind the occurrences of these problems are still of vital importance. In general, sexual violence has been an ignored area of research. The sources of data are small and limited. Police data, for example, are often incomplete and inadequate. Many of the victims are hesitant to report sexual violence to police because of the doubts that they might be blamed, feeling ashamed, misinterpreted, or fear that the officer does not believe in them.

On the other hand, data from medico-legal clinics may be biased towards the more violent occurrences of sexual abuse. The number of women who look for medical services for immediate problems related to sexual violence is also relatively small. Although there have been considerable developments over the past time in determining the phenomenon through survey research, the definitions used have mixed significantly across studies. There are also substantial changes across cultures in the willingness to disclose sexual violence to researchers. Caution is therefore needed when making global comparisons of the prevalence of sexual violence (Larsen, 2014).

On record, rape is the most common form of sexual violence among women and children. The Biological Theory of Thornhill and Palmer (2014) claims that rape is a crime of male domination, which has evolved as a form of male reproductive behavior. They write that social scientists promote "erroneous solutions" to rape because they incorrectly view the crime as controlled by unusual desires to control and dominate, not by sexual desire. The scientists suggest that women should prevent uncontrollable male impulses by not dressing daringly or participating in unsupervised dating. Nonetheless, they do not associate "natural" as good and agree that their public mission is to make rape extinct as a trait in human beings. The two oppose that current thinking causes of rape fail in refusing to acknowledge that by definition, rape requires sexual arousal of the rapist. However, Darwinian biological theorists remind that discovering biological bases for destructive human behaviors (such as rape) does not imply social acceptance of such behaviors (Jurimetrics, 2017).

Moreover, the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NRVRC) defines sexual violence as forcing or manipulating someone else into unwanted sexual activity without their consent. The World Health Organization also defined sexual violence as any sexual act, attempt

to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.

On the other hand, coercion can cover a whole spectrum of degrees of force. Apart from physical strength, it may involve psychological intimidation, blackmail, or other threats, such as the threat of physical harm, being dismissed from a job, or not obtaining a job that is sought. It may also occur when the person aggressed is unable to give consent, for instance, while drunk, drugged, asleep, or mentally incapable of understanding the situation. (WHO, World report on violence and health, 2014.)

The World Health Organization (WHO), in its report on Sexual Violence (2014), also identified other forms and contexts of sexual violence. The report said that a wide range of sexually violent acts could occur in different circumstances and settings. These include, for example, rape within marriage or dating relationships; rape by strangers; systematic rape during armed conflict; unwanted sexual advances or sexual harassment, including demanding sex in return for favors; sexual abuse of mentally or physically disabled people; sexual abuse of children; forced marriage or cohabitation, including the marriage of children; denial of the right to use contraception or to adopt other measures to protect against sexually transmitted diseases; forced abortion; violent acts against the sexual integrity of women, including female genital mutilation and obligatory inspections for virginity; forced prostitution and trafficking of people for sexual exploitation.

In terms of age, young women are usually found to be more at risk of rape than older women. According to data from justice systems and rape crisis centers in Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Peru, and the United States, between one-third and two-thirds of all victims of sexual assault are aged 15 years or less. Certain forms of sexual violence, for instance, are very closely associated with a young age, in particular, violence taking place in schools and colleges and trafficking in women for sexual exploitation (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi and Lozano (2015). The study of M.L. Larsen, M. Hilden, and Lidegaard (2014) showed that two-thirds of their respondents who were victims of sexual assault were 15 to 24 years old.

James R. Vanderwoerd (2017) study, which compared reported sexual violence on Christian campuses, revealed that sexual violence occurred less frequently in his sample of students from Christian colleges than reported incidence on secular campuses.

According to the report of the WHO on Sexual Violence and Health (2014), Community factors such as Physical and social environment is one of the factors that increase men's risk of committing rape. Moreover, the report stated that "While fear of rape is typically associated with being outside the home, the great majority of sexual violence occurs in the home of the victim or the abuser. Nonetheless, abduction by a stranger is often the prelude to rape, and the physical environment influences the opportunities for such abduction.

Socialization within a community is commonly more important than the physical surrounding (de Alwis-Seneviratne, 2015). How deeply rooted in community beliefs in male dominance and male privilege to sex are will significantly mark the chance of sexual violence taking place, as will the overall forbearance in the community of sexual assault and the strength of sanctions, if any, against assailants. For example, rape can even occur in public in some instances, with passers who declined to interfere. When police leniently catered to the complaints of rape, particularly if the assault is committed during a date or by the victim's husband. When the procedures of police investigations and court procedures of cases may be handled either enormously lax or else corrupt – for instance, with legal papers being “lost” in return for a payoff.” Community factors associated with an increased likelihood of being sexually abused as a child have been studied to only a limited extent thus far. However, some studies suggest that tolerance of sexual abuse and weak sanctions against sexual abuse within a community play a role in raising the risk.

In the Philippines, Manila (AsiaNews, 2018) reported that 11,558 Filipino women between the ages of 15 and 49 suffered various forms of physical and sexual violence in the year 2017 alone. According to a report by the government of Manila, they were drawn up with the contribution of the national police and the Department of Statistics (Dugal, 2018).

In the Philippines, Rape is one of the most prevalent forms of violence against women (VAW). Reported rape cases ranked third (13.1%) of the total reported VAW cases in the country from 1999 to 2009. The hard fact is that this is not yet an accurate representation of the problem. Due to cultural and social stigmatization associated with rape, many women victims prefer to maintain their silence and not report their ordeal to the authorities.

With the aid of NGOs, the government has taken initiatives to set up crisis centers for rape survivors in collaboration with the different sectors of the community to help victims deal with the trauma and encourage them to report rape. Several rape-related laws have also been passed to address the concern. By providing proper legal support and health services, it is hoped that women victims of rape be encouraged to come forward for appropriate intervention and justice to be served accordingly (Philippine Commission on Women Journal, 2017).

The survey results revealed that women in the Philippines experience all sorts of violence: 14.4 percent of married women had experienced physical abuse from their spouses. In comparison, about one-third (or 37 percent) of separated or widowed women admitted experiencing abuse. In the issue of sexual violence, one in twenty-five women age 15-49 (who have had sex) has experienced being forced into sexual intercourse at least once (National Statistics Office -NSO, 2014).

Moreover, three years ago, UNICEF identified an estimated 100,000 victims of sexual exploitation in the Philippines, dubbing it "the global epicenter of the live-stream sexual abuse trade. One in five children in the Philippines has experienced sexual violence (National Baseline Study on Child Violence). Eight in 10 children are at risk of online abuse and bullying (Perils and

Possibilities: Growing Up Online UNICEF 2016). One in three sex trafficking victims are children (Global Report on Trafficking in Persons UNODC 2016).

While several laws have been passed to protect this vulnerable sector, including the Anti-Child Pornography Act of 2009 (RA 9775) and the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act (RA 7610), a top-down approach in tackling sexual exploitation can only do so much. That's because at the root of this problem is the reality that sexual exploitation has found fertile grounds in both the lack of understanding and the culture of silence that permeate sensitive issues like this (Ayta, 2019).

This is further aggravated by widespread poverty that causes many victims to engage in prostitution to earn money to buy their needs. Most upsetting is the fact that many of these children fail to grasp the situation they have been placed in fully. Just ahead of International Women's Day, development and humanitarian organization Plan International Philippines launched Face Your Peers, a new education guide for young Filipinos to help their peers learn more about the reality of commercial sexual exploitation and how to tackle it. Developed with partners under the Girls Advocacy Alliance, the Department of Justice, and the social welfare and development office of Tacloban City, this guidebook includes modules on the local sexual abuse landscape, training activities, and guidelines on handling disclosures and reporting exploitation cases in communities.

Methodology

The researcher used the descriptive research design to employ a self-made survey questionnaire based on previous studies' existing literature and results. The researcher used the google survey to distribute the self-made survey questionnaire randomly to 189 respondents of Butuan City. The self-made survey questionnaire is composed of two parts: part one is about the profiles of the respondents in terms of age, sex, highest educational attainment, civil status, religion, occupation, and status of employment, and the second part is about the perceived effects of social distancing and quarantine to the sexual abuse in Butuan City. The five-point Likert scale was used to guide the respondents in answering the survey questionnaire: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. 189 respondents answered the google survey thoroughly. After the data gathering, the basic statistical tools were used to interpret and analyze the data gathered; these are the frequency, percentage, median, and ranking. The Pearson r was used to determine the degree of association of the profiles of the respondents and the perceived effects of social distancing and quarantine on sexual abuse in Butuan City. The researcher follows the ethical considerations in the conduct of this study.

Results and Discussion

Table I. Frequency of the age of the respondents

Age	f	%	Rank
18 – 22 years of age	4	2.12	7
23 – 27 years of age	35	18.52	2
28 – 32 years of age	48	25.4	1
33 – 37 years of age	25	13.23	5
38 – 42 years of age	30	15.87	3
43 – 47 years of age	27	14.29	4
48 – 52 years of age	16	8.45	6
53 – 57 years of age	0	0	10
58 – 62 years of age	3	1.59	8
63 – 67 years of age	1	0.53	9
Total	189	100	

Table I presents the frequency of age of the respondents. The majority of the respondents are from the age bracket of 28 – 32 years of age, 23 – 27 years of age, and 38 – 42 years of age with a frequency of 48 (25.4%), 35 (18.52%), and 30 (15.87%), respectively. However, the least of the respondents are from the age bracket of 63 – 67 years of age, and 58 – 62 years of age with a frequency of 1 (0.53%), and 3 (1.59%), respectively.

Table II. Frequency of sex of the respondents

Sex	f	%	Rank
Male	92	48.68	2
Female	97	51.32	1
Total	189	100	

Table II presents the frequency of sex of the respondents. The majority of the respondents are female, with a frequency of 97 (51.32%), and male respondents have 92 (48.68%).

Table III. Frequency of highest educational attainment of the respondents

Highest Educational Attainment	f	%	Rank
High School Undergraduate	2	1.06	5
High School Graduate	4	2.12	4
College Undergraduate	1	0.53	6
College Graduate	146	77.25	1
With Masters Units	26	13.76	2
Masters Graduate	10	5.29	3
Total	189	100	

Table III presents the frequency of highest educational attainment of the respondents. The majority of the respondents are college graduates with a frequency of 146 (77.25%), followed by master's units with a frequency of 26 (13.76%), and master's graduates with a frequency of 10 (5.29%). The least of the respondents are college undergraduates with a frequency of 1 (0.53%).

Table IV. Frequency of civil status of the respondents

Civil Status	f	%	Rank
Single	58	30.69	2
Married	126	66.67	1
Widow/Widower	2	1.06	4
Separated/Solo Parent	3	1.59	3
Total	189	100	

Table IV presents the frequency of civil status of the respondents. The majority of the respondents are married with a frequency of 126 (66.67%), followed by a single with a frequency of 58 (30.69%). The least of the respondents is widow/widower with a frequency of 2 (1.06%), and separated/solo parent with a frequency of 3 (1.59%).

Table V. Frequency of the religion of the respondents

Religion	f	%	Rank
Roman Catholic	153	80.95	1
Adventist	5	2.65	3.5
Baptist	5	2.65	3.5
Christian	6	3.18	2
UCCP	2	1.06	6.5
Born Again	2	1.06	6.5
PCGAMI	1	0.53	9.5
Assembly of God	1	0.53	9.5
Jehovas Witness	1	0.53	9.5
Four Square	1	0.53	9.5
Iglesia ni Cristo	3	1.06	5
Charismatic Full Gospel	1	0.53	9.5
Kristohanon	1	0.53	9.5
Islam	2	1.06	6.5
Free Methodist	1	0.53	9.5
Evangelical	1	0.53	9.5
4 Bread of Life	1	0.53	9.5
Church in Butuan City	1	0.53	9.5
Protestant	1	0.53	9.5
Total	189	100	

Table V presents the frequency of religion of the respondents. The majority of the respondents are roman catholic, with a frequency of 153 (80.95%). However, the least of the respondents are PCGAMI, Assembly of God, Jehova's Witness, Four Square, Charismatic Full Gospel, Kristohanon, Free Methodist, Evangelical, 4 Bread of Life, Church in Butuan City, and

Protestant; all have a frequency of 1 (0.53%). It indicates that Roman Catholics dominate Butuan City.

Table VI. frequency of occupation of the respondents

Occupation	f	%	Rank
Police Officer	147	77.78	
Teacher	26	13.76	
PNP NUP	1	0.53	
OFW	1	0.53	
Self-Employed	1	0.53	
Fire Officer	1	0.53	
Businessman/woman	2	1.06	
Crime Registrar	1	0.53	
Government Employee	1	0.53	
Unemployed	2	1.06	
Vendor	1	0.53	
Student	1	0.53	
House Wife	1	0.53	
Admin Officer	1	0.53	
Product Promoter	1	0.53	
Total	189	100	

Table VII presents the frequency of occupation of the respondents. The majority of the respondents are police officers with a frequency of 147 (77.78%), followed by teachers with a frequency of 26 (13.76%). The least of the respondents are Non-Uniform Personnel of the Philippine National Police, Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW), Self-employed, Fire Officer, Crime Registrar, Government Employee, Vendor, Student, House Wife, Admin Officer, and Product Promoter; all have a frequency of 1 (0.53%).

Table VIII. frequency of employment status of the respondents

Employment Status	f	%	Rank
Regular	180	95.12	
Contractual	1	0.53	
Temporary	2	1.06	
Part-Time	2	1.06	
None	4	2.12	
Total	189	100	

Table VIII presents the frequency of employment status of the respondents. The data showed that the majority of the respondents are regular employees with a frequency of 180 (95.12%). The least of the respondents are contractual, temporary, and part-time with a frequency of 1 (0.53%), 2 (1.06%), and 2 (1.06%),

Table IX. Perceived Effects of Social Distancing and Quarantine during Coronavirus Pandemic to the Sexual Abuse in Butuan City

As a respondent, the perceived effects of social distancing and quarantine during coronavirus pandemic to the sexual abuse in Butuan City is/are...	MEDIAN	VI
1. Social distancing prevents prevalent touching to the victims of sexual abuse	5	Strongly Agree
2. With people spending greater work and leisure time online, the opportunity for sexual abuse to occur online	4	Agree
3. Quarantine helps to decrease incidents of sexual abuse during coronavirus pandemic	4	Agree
4. The sexually abused victim during coronavirus pandemic will not be reported because of quarantine and social distancing	3	Neutral
5. Increased time spent in the home might be expected to increase sexual abuse	3	Neutral
6. Increased time spent in the home might increase sexual abuse because most of the perpetrators are relatives of the victim	4	Agree

Table IX presents the perceived effects of social distancing and quarantine during the coronavirus pandemic to the sexual abuse in Butuan City. The study reveals that item 1, *social distancing prevents prevalent touching to the victims of sexual abuse*, obtained the highest median of 5, with a verbal interpretation of *strongly agree*. It indicates that social distancing prevents prevalent touching to the victims of sexual abuse during the coronavirus pandemic.

Likewise, the study also revealed that items 2, 3, and 6, *with people spending greater work and leisure time online, the opportunity for sexual abuse to occur online, and quarantine helps to decrease incidents of sexual abuse during coronavirus pandemic*, all obtained a median of 4, with a verbal interpretation of *agree*. It can glean from the data that social distancing and quarantine will help people to spend more excellent work and leisure time online, higher risk of opportunity for sexual abuse to occur online, and quarantine helps to decrease incidents of sexual abuse during the coronavirus pandemic.

However, the study also revealed that items 4 and 5, the sexually abused victim during coronavirus pandemic, will not be reported because of quarantine and social distancing, and increase time spent in the home might increase sexual abuse because most of the perpetrators are relatives of the victims, both obtained a median of 3. It indicates that the sexually abused victim during the coronavirus pandemic will not be reported because of quarantine and social distancing. Increased time spent in the home might increase sexual abuse because most perpetrators are relatives of the victims.

Table X. Association between the profiles of the respondents and the perceived effects of social distancing to the sexual abuse in Butuan City

Variables	S-Tools	C-Value	P-Value	Decision	Interpretation
Age VS Perceived Effects	P E A R S O N r	-.029	.735	Accepted	Not Significant
Sex VS Perceived Effects		-.153	.211	Accepted	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment VS Perceived Effects		-.103	.297	Accepted	Not Significant
Civil Status VS Perceived Effects		-.112	.244	Accepted	Not Significant
Religion VS Perceived Effects		-.015	.633	Accepted	Not Significant
Occupation VS Perceived Effects		-.111	.523	Accepted	Not Significant
Employment Status VS Perceived Effects		-.098	.142	Accepted	Not Significant

Table X presents the association between the profiles of the respondents and the perceived effects of social distancing and quarantine on sexual abuse in Butuan City.

It reveals that age, sex, highest educational attainment, civil status, religion, occupation, and employment status have no significant association with the perceived effects of social distancing and quarantine to sexual abuse in Butuan City. This means that age, sex, highest educational attainment, civil status, religion, occupation, and employment status have no significant association to the perceived effects of social distancing and quarantine to sexual abuse in Butuan City.

Conclusion

The researcher concludes that most of the respondents are from the age bracket of 28 – 32 years. They are primarily female and college graduate, married, and working as police officers, with regular employment status, and their religion are primarily Roman Catholic. The perceived effects of social distancing and quarantine prevent prevalent touching to the victims of sexual abuse during the coronavirus pandemic. However, there is no association between the profiles of the respondents and the perceived effects of social distancing and quarantine on sexual abuse in Butuan City.

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