

Dapit Hapon: The Level of Understanding COVID-19 Risks and Coping Behavior Among Geriatrics

¹Kaela Rolaine H. Sasot & ²Vera Nathalia G. Tolentino

Abstract

Numerous cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) were recorded particularly in 185 countries—including the Philippines, as the virus is highly transmittable. Older population belongs to vulnerable and high-risk demographic for the present outbreak. With their declining cognitive ability due to age, this quantitative descriptive-correlational study meant to determine the level of understanding of COVID-19 risks among the geriatric population of Quezon Province, along with the associated coping behavior. Ethical considerations were thoroughly followed. Thirty-three (33) elderly respondents from selected parts of Quezon Province participated in this study through purposive and snowball sampling. Due to pandemic, samples were very limited. Questionnaires were provided via Google form. The study utilized percentage and weighted mean to score level of understanding of COVID-19 risk. Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation and Chi-Square Test were also used to determine correlations of variables. This study revealed that knowledge about COVID-19 risks among the geriatrics of Quezon Province is average as per study measurements. Statistical analysis showed no significant association between their level of knowledge and their coping behavior against COVID-19, nor is their level of knowledge significantly associated with their demographics. Should these findings be sustained by further studies, it would imply that (1) having greater extent of knowledge does not improve their coping behavior, that it might be more productive to empower and educate the persons in charge of caring for the geriatrics with regards to preventing and dealing with COVID-19 infection, and that (2) efforts or programs to enhance the knowledge of geriatrics can be applied uniformly regardless of demographics.

Keywords: *Coping Behavior, COVID-19, Descriptive-Correlation Study, Geriatrics, Level of Understanding, Risk Perception Theory*

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About the authors:

¹Student, Calayan Educational Foundation, Inc.

²Instructor, Calayan Educational Foundation, Inc.

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Introduction

Numerous cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) were recorded particularly in 185 countries—including the Philippines, as the virus is highly transmittable. Older population belongs to vulnerable and high-risk demographic for the present outbreak. In today's media, reports and conversations about the current situation and state of understanding, as well as a variety of information about hazards and protective mechanisms and prognostics of future concerns related to COVID-19, are almost ubiquitous. Until now, the focus of these talks has primarily been on the potential for overburdening the healthcare system and economic losses, the latter of which has been bolstered by political measures. Although the exact details of its epidemiology are still unknown, COVID-19-related deaths predominantly affect the elderly. This quantitative descriptive-correlational study meant to determine the level of understanding COVID-19 risks among the geriatric population of Quezon Province, along with the associated coping mechanism.

Methodology

The study employed the use of descriptive and correlational research design using a quantitative approach through a descriptive-survey questionnaire. The investigator had set a sampling size of 30 participants who belong to the age bracket of 60 and later. The population size has been set to be constant by the investigator due to the limited data collection-related actions brought by the pandemic. The investigator utilized purposive (judgement) sampling and snowball sampling as the research instrument due to the then ongoing pandemic, it is safer for both the researcher and the participant to stay distant to each other and just depend on referrals.

Participants should suffice the following criteria that the investigator had set, namely: must be residing in Quezon Province; should be a senior citizen, satisfying the given age bracket of 60 and above; must have not any underlying mental diseases (e.g., Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia), nor has never been diagnosed with any mental-related illnesses; is bound to be knowledgeable enough to answer the questionnaires that will be given and; should be open to providing personal information inclined with their demographic profile required as mentioned in the problem statement and should give only accurate answers associated with the study.

Thirty-three (33) elderly respondents from Quezon Province participated in this study through purposive and snowball sampling. Due to restrictions regarding pandemics, samples were very limited. Questionnaires were provided via Google form to follow the safety protocols

during pandemic, then tabulated and analyzed in Microsoft Excel. The study utilized percentage and weighted mean to score level of understanding of COVID-19 risk. Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation and Chi-Square Test were also used to determine correlations of variables.

To secure the validity and the reliability of the given research instrument, this study is validated by the following entities: one (1) research teacher; one (1) research adviser; two (2) licensed psychometricians; and two (2) senior high school language instructors.

The data derived made use of weighted-mean for the frequency distribution and percentage of the categorical variables such as the demographic profile, assessing the participants' level of understanding of COVID-19-related risks, and their response measures. At the same time, Chi-Square Test was used for the determination of the relationship between the demographic profile and the level of understanding of COVID-19 among geriatrics. Additionally, the study also used Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation to determine the significant relationship between the level of understanding and associated coping behavior. After the participants answered the questionnaire, the collected data were checked, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted in Microsoft Excel.

Findings

After the results of the study are thoroughly evaluated and tabulated, the researcher concluded that the majority of the respondents who took the questionnaire are aged 70-74 years old. The said individuals are primarily females who are married. Mainly are elementary undergraduates. Most of the respondents are also pension holders who are mainly urban residents. Additionally, they opted to live with their families even with sufficient self-care ability. This study also revealed conclusions: (1) Knowledge about COVID-19 risks among the geriatrics of Quezon Province is average (48.5 %) to battle the virus, (2) although effective preventive measures are always practiced (WM=4.47), unproven preventive measures sometimes (WM=3.26), and seldom (WM=1.82) do negative measures. (3) Demographic profile and level of understanding COVID-19 risks have no significant relationship, as the p-values were at sex $p=0.577$, age $p=0.148$, marital status $p=0.800$, educational attainment $p=0.307$, pension holder $p=0.065$, self-care ability $p=0.511$, place of residence $p=0.853$, current living situation $p=0.191$, and living environment $p=0.305$. (4) Level of understanding of the said risks and coping mechanism also does not show significant association ($p > 0.05$, $p=0.605$).

Determining the level of understanding COVID-19 risks among the geriatrics of Quezon Province, it was concluded that the elderly population is aware and therefore performs proper safety protocols when it comes to protecting against the pandemic. Hence, this thesis proposal addresses how the said population has overcome false knowledge that might lead them to inaccurate precautions or beliefs. The elderly population of Quezon Province always practices effective preventive measures to battle COVID-19, especially wearing face masks and face shields when going out. However, they still sometimes do unproven preventive measures while seldom practicing negative measures. Thus, there is still a significant gap when it comes to their information sources.

The geriatric population of Quezon province is equipped with average knowledge when it comes to battling COVID-19. The locale of this study might also affect which information about the virus they will accept or reject. The lack of signals in certain areas, especially in barrios, causes barriers as the primary information source they could rely on is the news and television.

The study has found that no significant relationship exists between the demographic profile of the geriatrics of Quezon Province and their level of understanding of COVID-19 risks. As a result, it indicates that, despite having a low academic degree, the person's comprehension of the risk variables remains unaffected. He or she still very well understands the imposed risks by the said virus.

There is no significant relationship exists between the level of understanding of COVID-19 risks and the coping behaviors of elderly people in Quezon Province. An individual's beliefs greatly affect their coping behavior when it comes to crises like the present outbreak. They might understand the risks well yet still ignore them and proceed to their normal daily activity prior pandemic. Due to the study's small sample size, this part of the conclusion still may vary.

Conclusion

From the results and findings gathered from this study, the researcher recommends the following:

1. The geriatrics may do a consultation on the medical staff for the verifications regarding if the information they gathered is accurate. Given that fake news is lingering nowadays on social media, the geriatrics have to be precise especially it concerns their health.

2. The medical associates may conduct further research for an improvement on how to handle geriatrics in times of crisis.
3. The geriatrics may attend webinars conducted by the city health or rural health units in their respective locales regarding COVID-19.
4. Further research into the influence of older adults' views regarding public health events on their response behaviors may be done by follow-up studies with a larger sample size.

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