



## NAVIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HEALTH AND SAFETY PRACTICES OF MIDSAYAPENOS AND LGU GOVERNANCE IN RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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### Abstract:

The Local Government Unit plays a significant role in mitigating problems such as the COVID-19 Pandemic. However, the government alone cannot end the pandemic without public's help public and vice-versa. The citizens also play a vital role in stopping the further transmission of the COVID-19 pandemic by religiously practicing health and safety protocols at home or wherever they go. This study investigated the relationship between the health and safety protocols as well as the status of governance of the Local Government Unit of Midsayap using the evidence-based key indicators of Good Governance aggregated from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). A quantitative research design was employed to determine the relationship of the variables under study. Findings showed that the residents of Midsayap often practice the necessary health and safety measures against COVID-19 and that the Local Government Unit of Midsayap is effective in responding to the pandemic. Moreover, the two variables also show a strong positive relationship.

**Keywords:** governance, pandemic, health and safety practices, LGU

### 1. Introduction

The world was put on a global lockdown after the COVID-19 pandemic struck. The SARS-CoV-2 virus causes Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) which is an infectious disease. Most patients infected with COVID-19 will have mild to moderate symptoms and recover without additional therapy. On the other hand, some will get critically unwell and require medical assistance. As of December 2021, the total COVID-19 cases

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accounted for 269 million, of which 5.9 million are casualties. For almost two years now, it has continued to become a global issue but thanks to the massive vaccine campaign, religious safety protocol reminders, and the health and safety practices of the people that the pandemic is slowly losing its grip.

As a way to help protect oneself from acquiring COVID-19, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends the proper use of face masks as masks are an essential tool for preventing viral transmission and therefore save lives. Moreover, WHO also supports physical separation, avoiding crowded, confined, and close-contact situations, sufficient ventilation, handwashing, concealing sneezes and coughs, and more are all part of the 'approach.'

As of April 30, 2021, the World Health Organization (WHO) Country Office in the Philippines, in collaboration with the Department of Health (DOH) Center for Health Development Metro Manila and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), held a session for safety officers of local government units (LGUs) on 'COVID-19 Response in the Workplace.' Additional measures to ensure physical separation, improve ventilation, strengthen occupational health safety protocols in the context of COVID-19, improve early detection and isolation of cases and quarantining contacts, and protect workers in their dormitories and family homes are all necessary to restore production capacity safely and sustainably.

The Philippine national government, through its Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious (IATF) Diseases, outlined different quarantine measures to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, with each level having a corresponding degree of rigidity, ranging from keeping only essential businesses open to allowing all establishments to operate at a specific capacity. Other restrictions include barring people under a specific age category from leaving their homes. Depending on the magnitude of the pandemic in their area, local government units (LGUs)—municipalities and provinces—can take any of these actions (Talabis, et al., 2019).

The government's role as a civic facilitator, or its capacity to support planned, methodical, and effective social action toward addressing future dangers and managing the current crisis, is critical in the battle against COVID-19. Individual and group activities that help to reduce the spread of the illness and minimise its effects are referred to as collective action. People's commitment to social distance, good hygiene, and quarantine standards, as well as resource/knowledge sharing through cross-sectoral partnerships and collaborations, are examples of this. The cornerstone of group activity is mutual trust. How much individuals trust governmental institutions determines how motivated they are to follow the government and make educated decisions to protect themselves, their families, and communities from the hazards of a crisis (Flores & Asuncion, 2020; World Health Organization, 2017). Moreover, governance systems are also vital in countries' initial reactions, and they will remain so until the crisis has gone, both in terms of recovery and establishing a "new normal" (OECD, 2020).

The citizens play a vital role in stopping the further transmission of the COVID-19 pandemic by religiously practicing health and safety protocols at home or wherever they

go. In addition to the peoples' initiatives, the Local Government Units also play a tantamount effort in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. This study will investigate the relationship between the health and safety protocols as well as the status of governance of the Local Government Unit of Midsayap using the evidence-based key indicators of Good Governance aggregated from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

## 2. Statement of the problem

- 1) What is the personal profile of the respondents in terms of sex, age, civil status, religion, and occupation?
- 2) What are the health and safety practices of respondents against the COVID-19 pandemic?
- 3) Is there a significant relationship between the health and safety practices of the respondents against the COVID-19 pandemic and the effectiveness of the local government of Midsayap, Cotabato in addressing the pandemic?

### 2.1 Research objectives

This study sought to identify whether the health and safety practices of Midsayapenos reflect the good governance of the local government unit of Midsayap. Specifically, this research aims to determine the following:

- 1) The health and safety practices of Midsayapenos.
- 2) Status of governance of the Local Government Unit of Midsayap
- 3) The relationship that exists between the health and safety practices of Midsayapenos and the status of governance of the Local Government Unit of Midsayap.

### 2.2 Scope and limitation of the study

This quantitative study is focused only on determining the relationship that exists between the health and safety practices of Midsayapenos and the effectiveness of the governance of the Local Government Unit of Midsayap using the key indicators of Good Governance established by OECD. The conduct of this study started last October 22, 2021 up to November 12, 2021. This study is also limited to the residents of the municipality of Midsayap, North Cotabato through which 30 respondents were randomly selected from various barangays of Midsayap. Recent studies and researches will also be utilized to help determine the relationship between the variables to be used to help ensure that the results are reliable, credible, and are supported by literatures.

### 2.3 Significance of the study

This research is beneficial to the following sectors:

- **Government:** this study will serve as a determinant on the status of governance of the Local Government Unit in responding to health issues and concerns and viral

outbreaks such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, this study will also point out what particular area in the governance should be maintained and be given more attention for further improvement.

- **Health Sectors:** the results of this study will help improve the information drive and campaigns of the health sectors such as the Rural Health Unit (RHU) in influencing the health and safety practices of the residents of Midsayap.
- **Midsayapenos:** this study will contribute to the further awareness of the citizens on proper hygiene and health practices. Furthermore, this study will also foster consciousness among the citizens on the role of the government specifically in the provision of proper health care assistance to its citizens amidst pandemic.

### 3. Theory based

This study primarily relied on the following theories:

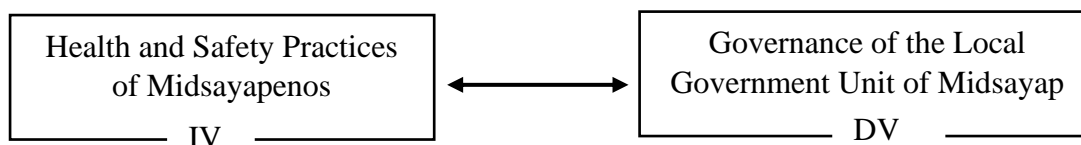
#### a. Good Governance Theory

This theory induced wide-reaching harsh critiques (Farazmand, 2004, 2017). According to Farazmand (2017), "*good governance for whom, and bad governance for whom*" is a concern. UNDP says, the challenge for all societies is to create a system of governance that promotes supports and sustains human development, especially for the poorest and most marginal. But the search for a clearly articulated concept of governance has just begun. Good governance is, among other things, participatory, transparent and accountable. It is also effective and equitable. And it promotes the rule of law. Good governance ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of development resources. In times of crisis such as the current COVID-19 pandemic and its economic and social repercussions, local governance matters more than ever. The local government of Midsayap have played a critical role and immediate responses and will continue to be crucial both to the recovery and to building a new normal once the crisis has passed.

#### b. Normative Theory

This theory was conceptualized by Aristotle and further evolved by Jean Bonin and Moon (2015). This theory contemplated a society that is value-based or guided by norms which define the good life of the social world. These norms determine the standards to be followed by a political community. They also serve as ideal model and reference by which judgment of the goodness or badness of a political community can be made. Similarly, the administration of Midsayap, Cotabato is guided by the principles of good governance or administration such as Participation, Responsiveness, Equity, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Accountability, Transparency, and Predictability, to be effective what was implemented. They may also serve as an idea model and reference by which the goodness or badness of the administration of the social local government can be judged.

#### 4. Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the independent variable (Health and Safety Practices of Midsayapenos) and the dependent variable (Governance of the Local Government Unit of Midsayap):

- Independent variable. The Health and Safety practices are documented procedures that outline how to complete a task with the least amount of danger to people, equipment, materials, the environment, and processes. This also includes personal practices and measures that will hinder the transmission of the COVID-19 virus.
- Dependent variable. The Governance of the Local Government Unit of Midsayap refers to the structures and procedures aimed to provide accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equity and inclusivity, empowerment, and broad-based. The term "good governance" will be also used in this research. In this quantitative study, the status of governance will be determined by the health and safety practices of the Midsayapenos.

#### 5. Methodology

##### 5.1 Research design

This study will utilize a quantitative research approach, particularly a correlational design. Quantitative research is the process of collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and writing the results of a study (Creswell, 2013). Correlational research design, on the other hand, a correlational research design examines the relationships between variables without controlling or manipulating any of them. Moreover, a correlation reflects the strength and/or direction of the relationship between two (or more) variables. The direction of a correlation can be either positive or negative.

##### 5.2 Locale of the study

The research was conducted in the municipality of Midsayap, North Cotabato, 9410.

##### 5.3 Sampling technique

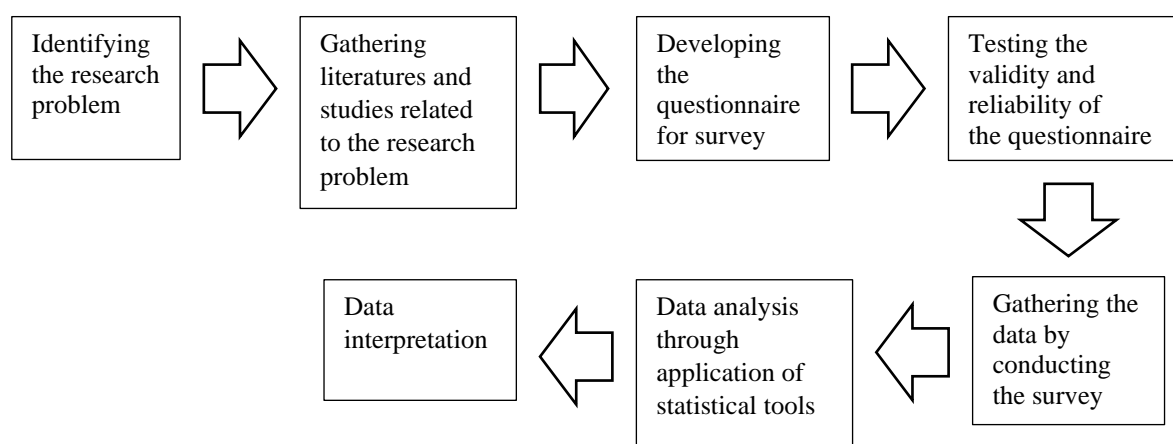
The researcher utilized a non-probability sampling technique, particularly the purposive sampling technique. The sample is chosen based on non-random criteria, and not every person in the population has a chance of being included in non-probability sampling

(McCombes, 2019). Alchemer (2021) noted that the purposive sampling technique is just one type of non-probability sampling technique in which researchers choose individuals of the public to participate in their surveys based on their own opinion.

#### 5.4 Sample size

The sample size was calculated using Raosoft ©. The Raosoft sample calculator is basically a software that primarily calculates or generates the sample size of a population. It also comes with a command that lets the researcher manipulate the confidence level and margin of error. The population size is 32 and Raosoft resulted in a sample size of 30 with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error.

#### 5.5 Procedure of the study



**Figure 2:** Schematic diagram above shows the procedure involved in data gathering

#### 5.6 Data analysis

The dependent variable in the study is the status of governance of the Local Government Unit of Midsayap in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to assess how good the LGU is with its response, evidence-based indicators from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on Good Governance will be utilized. The independent variable in the study is the health and safety practices of the residents of Midsayap. Furthermore, the relationship between these two variables will be determined using a correlational research design in which the data input will be generated through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

For SOP #1, “What is the personal profile of the respondents in terms of sex, age, civil status Religion, and occupation?”, frequency distribution and the percentage were utilized (Appendix A).

Mean and Standard deviation will be employed to determine the SOP #2 “What are the health and safety practices of respondents against the COVID-19 pandemic”.

Lastly, SOP #3 “Is there a significant relationship between the health and safety practices of the respondents against the COVID-19 pandemic and the effectiveness of the

local government of Midsayap, Cotabato in addressing the pandemic?" will employ Pearson correlation to identify the relationship between the two variables.

## 6. Results and Discussion

**Question 1:** What is the personal profile of the respondents in terms of sex, age, civil status religion, and occupation?

Out of the 30 respondents, 8 are male and 22 are female with 15 years old being the youngest respondent and 54 being the oldest. Moreover, a total of 16 respondents practice Christianity and the remaining 14 are Muslims. The majority of the respondents are students, which accounts for 16 out of the 30 respondents, 11 are self-employed, and three (3) are private or public employees.

**Question 2:** What are the health and safety practices of respondents against the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Table 1:** Health and safety practices of respondents against the COVID-19 pandemic

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
<b>a. Physical and Mental Resilience</b>			
1. I clean my hands with disinfectants like alcohol and hand sanitizer.	4.53	.629	Always
2. I properly dispose the face masks after using it.	4.53	.900	Always
3. I cover my nose and mouth when sneezing and/or coughing.	4.87	.434	Always
4. I wash my hands with soap, detergent or other cleansing substances.	4.40	.814	Often
5. I keep the plan for accessing medical help in case of an emergency.	4.13	.681	Often
6. I keep myself updated with the latest news about the outbreak of the pandemic.	4.30	.794	Often
7. I monitor members of the family like the elderly who are at higher risk of infection.	4.43	.858	Often
8. I reach out to my families and/or friends for moral support.	4.03	.718	Often
9. I maintain contact with a mental health professional(s) for guidance.	3.90	1.029	Often
10. I exercise self-isolation whenever I feel a single symptom of the virus.	3.90	1.094	Often
<b>b. Contact and Transmission Reduction</b>			
11. I wear my face mask and face shield properly.	4.63	.556	Often
12. I limit my exposure to individuals who frequently leave our house.	4.30	.915	Often
13. I disinfect frequently touched objects like chairs, tables, phones, with alcohol.	4.10	.995	Often
14. I avoid large social gathering.	4.03	.964	Often

15. I limit my travel only during an emergency or urgent needs.	4.17	.747	Always
16. I stay at home or residence when it is not necessary for me to go out.	4.50	.731	Often
17. I maintain social distancing of at least 1 meter apart in communal area.	4.30	.750	Often
18. I limit my visit only to establishments that provide essential needs.	4.23	.898	Always
19. I fall in-line when making transactions like purchasing goods in establishments.	4.60	.563	Always
20. I do my works and/or studies through online to avoid physical contact with numerous people.	4.73	.521	Always
<b>Total</b>			<b>Often</b>

**Table 2:** Midsayap LGU governance status

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
1. Coordinating the actions of local government agencies in enforcing the health and safety protocols.	4.57	.504	Very Effective
2. Explain the benefits of vaccination and deliver vaccines safely and effectively.	4.60	.724	Very Effective
3. The authorities have empowered the principle of equality, accountability and participation to the people into the COVID-19 response.	4.43	.728	Effective
4. Active in Promoting Open Government Data (OGD), and disseminating reliable information on Corona Virus cases.	4.13	.819	Effective
5. Enhance the use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) to impart the laws and regulations of government.	4.23	.817	Effective
6. Use social media platforms in informing the public about the latest news on Corona Virus cases.	4.40	.675	Effective
7. Addressing the immediate threats and the risks to public health.	4.33	.758	Effective
8. Adopted new law and/or activated the relevant provisions of existing emergency laws to provide restrictions and limitations to the public.	4.40	.563	Effective
9. Public servants participate in the elaboration and implementation of measures related to the health, economic and social consequences of the crisis.	4.43	.568	Effective
10. Implement containment strategies to minimized the risk of transmission from infected to non-infected individuals in order to stop the outbreak.	4.33	.661	Effective
11. Provide avenues for monitoring the outbreak track symptoms and contract tracing.	4.53	.681	Very Effective
12. Placing an area or areas under community quarantine and/or full society lockdown.	4.47	.730	Effective



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13. Support public sector employees with remote working practices and digital tools in switching to working from home.	4.13	.860	Effective
14. Provide schools with online resources and guidance to undertake distance learning or online class.	4.37	.809	Effective
15. Imposed the limitation of the number of individual(s) who are allowed to enter in a certain establishment.	4.67	.547	Very Effective
16. Health community actively communicate about proper hygiene in the public consciousness.	4.33	.661	Effective
17. Local authorities actively participate with the media to inform people about government policy.	4.43	.679	Effective
18. The local authorities conduct conventions to barangays leaders to further extent the laws and policies of the government.	4.13	.681	Effective
19. Monitor public service delivery in the health sector, and ensure transparent procurement process and management of health funds.	4.20	.714	Effective
20. Provide large quantities of goods and services, such as hospital equipment, medical ventilators, hand sanitizers, face masks and health services.	3.97	.928	Effective
21. Addressing the immediate crisis to focus on the economic recovery of different infrastructures.	4.10	.885	Effective
22. Encourage the public on free vaccination.	4.77	.430	Very Effective
23. Health care workers are keeping medical systems functioning and families safe.	4.43	.568	Effective
24. Public servants are playing a leading role in the response to the pandemic.	4.40	.814	Effective
25. Placing individual(s) infected with Corona Virus diseases in isolation facilities.	4.50	.731	Very Effective
26. Providing health workers to deliver health services in Barangays.	4.37	.809	Effective
27. Deploying of police officers to assist in enforcing the guidelines on health protocols.	4.13	.973	Effective
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.36</b>		<b>Effective</b>

Among the 20 questions on the second part of the questionnaire (Health and Safety Practices of the Respondents), the one that got the highest mean is question number 3, *I cover my nose and mouth when sneezing and/or coughing* (4.87) at the same time the lowest standard deviation (0.434). This is indicative that most of the respondent have the awareness that covering the mouth when coughing is not only good etiquette but also by doing so, the extremely common influenza virus, are less likely to spread as coughing, sneezing, and hand-to-mouth contact are common ways for the flu and other diseases to spread as noted in the study of Duda (2011). On the contrary, the question that got the lowest mean (3.90) are question number 9, *I maintain contact with mental health professional(s) for guidance and question* and number 10, *I exercise self-isolation whenever I feel a single symptom of the virus*. these are also the items that go the highest standard deviation

of 1.029 and 1.094, respectively. It is usual for everyone to suffer heightened levels of discomfort and anxiety during a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, especially as a result of social isolation. Moreover, the low mean is reflective of the prevalent mental health stigma and incidents associated with mental health may make patients hesitant to seek help for both COVID-19 and any mental health condition as supported by the study conducted by the American Medical Association (2021). The high standard deviation also means that the answers of the respondents to items number 9 and 10 widely vary. The detrimental impacts of social isolation on mental health are highlighted by COVID-19. Physical separation, isolation, and loneliness were pervasive concerns long before the pandemic. According to a 2018 Pew Research Center poll, one in ten Americans feels lonely or alone all of the time or most of the time. Further, a study conducted by the World Health Organization (2020), loneliness, sadness, hazardous alcohol and drug use, and self-harm or suicide behavior are all likely to escalate as a result of the quarantine and its consequences on many people's normal activities, habits, or livelihoods.

As for the third part of the questionnaire which is about the indicators of Good Governance, the item that got the highest mean (out of the 27 items) is item number 22, *“Encourage the public on free vaccination”*. This indicates that the Midsayap LGU is active in ramping up the vaccine roll out. With the aim of encouraging the Filipinos to get vaccinated, the Department of Health (DOH), calls on Filipinos to live out the spirit of bayanihan and participate in the *“Bayanihan Bakunahan: Ligtas. Lakas. Buong Pinas.”* campaign this November 29, 30, and December 1, 2021. The spread of this campaign largely relies on the involvement of the Local Government Units. In fact, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) applauded some local government units (LGUs) for their innovative efforts in rolling out COVID-19 vaccines to their respective localities to encourage their constituents to register and get vaccinated, as well as boost public vaccine confidence. In North Cotabato, among the measures done by the Midsayap LGU upon vaccination is the provision of snacks and post-vaccine kits containing medicine such as paracetamol, vitamin C, and face masks. Other LGU's such as in Kidapawan City, encourages their residents to get vaccinated by enticing them with one whole dressed chicken and two kilograms of premium rice upon receiving the jab (Garcia, 2021). The item that got the lowest mean, however, is item number 20 *“Provide large quantities of goods and services, such as hospital equipment, medical ventilators, hand sanitizers, face masks and health services”*. During the series of lockdowns, this has been the greatest battle cry of the residents as not everyone was able to receive grossly sufficient *“Ayuda”* or aid. The government announced that 22.9 million impoverished Filipinos will get P1,000 apiece, with a maximum of P4,000 per household. Local government units (LGUs) in the "NCR Plus" region – Metro Manila, Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, and Rizal – will be able to choose between cash and kind. Economists say that the quantity is insufficient and may push people to flee their houses despite the lockout. The enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) or heavy lockdown in the "NCR Plus" region would last at least two weeks (Abad, 2021). Moreover, Senator Risa Hontiveros also noted that:

*“[there] is [a] growing number of incidents stemming mainly from errors in the government’s list of beneficiaries for the cash distribution program, ranging from the inclusion of deceased persons or minors on the list, along with reports of beneficiaries who were not included in the list because they were not voters in the area.” (Philstar, 2021).*

The overall, the mean for the health and safety practices of respondents against the COVID-19 pandemic is 4.33 which indicates that people “often” practice the necessary health and safety measures against COVID-19. The same is true with the overall mean of the governance of the Local Government Unit of Midsayap which is 4.36 indicating that the LGU-Midsayap is “effective” in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Research 3:** Is there a significant relationship between the health and safety practices of the respondents against the COVID-19 pandemic and the effectiveness of the local government of Midsayap, Cotabato in addressing the pandemic?

**Figure 3:** Relationship between health and safety practices of the citizens and LGU governance

Statistics			
		Health_and_Safety_Practices	Good_governance27
N	Valid	30	30
	Missing	0	0
Mean		4.3317	4.3630
Std. Deviation		.37749	.42657

Correlations			
		Health_and_Safety_Practices	Good_governance27
Health_and_Safety_Practices	Pearson Correlation	1	.712**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30
Good_governance27	Pearson Correlation	.712**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	30	30

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result of the Pearson correlation showed a p-value of 0.311 which is  $p > 0.05$ , indicative of a positive correlation between the health and safety practices of Midsayapenos and the Governance of the Local Government Unit of Midsayap. Hence, the rejection of the null hypothesis. A positive correlation exists when two variables move

in the same direction. When one variable decline as the other lowers, or when one variable grows as the other increases, there is a positive connection.

## 7. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, residents of Midsayap acquired a high mean of 4.33 on the health and safety practices which means that Midsayapenos are aware and are active in their part in preventing the further transmission of the COVID-19 virus. In addition, the LGU of Midsayap garnered an average of 4.36 in the Good Governance Indicators by OECD which means that it is performing effectively and actively in its role to minimize the viral transmission and stop the outbreak. Further, the more active and driven the LGU's are in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the better and more effective will also be the residents' health and safety practices.

### 7.1 Recommendations

- 1) The LGU of Midsayap should strengthen its campaign on Mental Health Consciousness by coordinating with their Rural Health Units to provide support programs in every barangay. Through this, stigma associated with mental health issues will be gradually eliminated.
- 2) Stress debriefing should also be provided to those who have recently gone out of the quarantine facilities due to COVID- related symptoms in order to help them recover from their physical separation and loneliness brought by the isolation.
- 3) The government should allocate bigger funds for the provision of large quantities of goods and services, such as hospital equipment, medical ventilators, hand sanitizers, face masks and health services.
- 4) Provide or lend a starting capital to those small-scale enterprises that were affected by the pandemic to contribute to the economic recovery of the municipality.

### Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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