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Tourism during pandemic: Constraints and interventions in economic enterprise of the tourism sector in Dingalan, Aurora

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Abstract

This research aimed to examine the challenges faced by Dingalan, Aurora's tourism sector due to the Covid-19 pandemic and evaluate the effectiveness of intervention programs offered by governmental and non-governmental organizations. The study focused on analyzing the respondents' socio-demographic profiles and utilized a descriptive research design, collecting data via questionnaires and interviews. The findings showed that the majority of respondents were aged 33-41, female, high school graduates, earned 5,000 to 8,000 PHP, single, and had families with 8-12 members. Souvenir making and vending were the primary income sources before and during the pandemic. Respondents strongly agreed that curfews, lockdowns, and age limits on travelers led to a decrease in tourist numbers. All respondents concurred that financial constraints severely impacted their income. The government's Social Amelioration Program, designed to support Filipinos during the pandemic, was highly appreciated by respondents, who agreed it provided significant financial assistance. However, they only slightly agreed that the government provided effective technical support. Respondents reported that non-governmental organizations did not offer financial or technical assistance. The study found that respondents considered the government's intervention programs moderately effective. Based on these findings, researchers recommended that the Local Government Unit offer long-term livelihood technical assistance to equip respondents with the necessary skills for sustainable economic stability. Additionally, they suggested revisiting and reviewing a comprehensive destination management plan to adapt to the current situation and the "new normal" of travel and tourism.

Keywords: COVID - 19 Tourism Constraints; Tourism; Intervention Programs; Economic Enterprise; Dingalan Aurora; Philippines.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted nearly every industry in unprecedented ways, including tourism and hospitality. Major events have been canceled. Hotels temporarily closed their doors. Cities have been forced to deal with lost revenue during some of the busiest times of the year [1].

The economic impact on the industry has been dramatic and highly noticeable because many things shut down fast, and people stopped traveling. When the Pandemic is happening, local governments around the world implemented total Lockdown on their respective areas that caused people to stop from travelling, and this has stop receiving a huge chunk of tourism income [2].

In the Philippines, where Tourism is an important sector for the economy, COVID-19 Pandemic destroyed Philippines' National Budget. Filipinos has extremely struggled to survive this phenomenal event and one of the best Adventure Destination in the Philippines is The Province of Aurora. It has gone a long way since its conception as a tourist destination. Since then, arrivals continuously increased alongside with industry development. Aurora has been included

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in the bucket list of tourists of all types, either local or foreign. Accommodation, restaurants and other tourism-related services are very visible in tourism designated areas of every municipality. The Provincial Tourism Office strives to fulfil the vision of the province to be a premier eco-tourism and adventure destination. The scenario happened during the COVID-19 pandemic really affected the economic aspect of the municipality which relies almost 20% to 25% on tourism and other tourism related industry in which struck the chord of the researchers being residents of Dingalan, Aurora Province which have a firsthand experience of the situation [3].

While the Municipality of Dingalan and its people is still coping with the on-going Pandemic, Mayor Sherwin Taay has re-launched the TURISMO DINGALAN Program last January 23 of this year. He said that the gradual opening of TURISMO DINGALAN that is exclusively only for the residents of Region III for now will be the basis of the Municipal Government to gradually open it for the other regions specially NCR. He also added that the whole team of the Provincial Tourism office is open for any suggestions that are helpful for its faster development.

The main objective of this study is to gather essential knowledge, information, and data to address specific questions related to the respondents' profiles and the challenges faced by the tourism sector in Dingalan, Aurora. The researchers aim to describe the respondents' profiles concerning age, gender, educational attainment, monthly income, civil status, number of family members, and sources of income before and during the pandemic. Additionally, the study seeks to identify the various constraints affecting Dingalan, Aurora's economic enterprises, and explore the intervention programs implemented by both the government and private/non-government organizations to support the municipality's tourism sector. Finally, the researchers will assess the respondents' perspectives on the effectiveness of the intervention programs provided by governmental and non-governmental entities.

2. Material and methods

2.1. Research Design

The study employed a quantitative method using a self-completion questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. The advantage of this approach is the complete standardization of the measuring instrument, as questions are consistently phrased for all respondents.

2.2. Research Locale

The research was conducted in Dingalan, Aurora, Philippines, focusing on the municipality's tourism sites and their surrounding areas.

2.3. Research Validation Procedure

The study's questionnaire was developed through a comprehensive literature review, consultations, and a validation process involving the researchers' adviser and research instructor.

2.4. Statistical Analysis

In this study, the responses to questionnaires were systematically tallied, analyzed, and interpreted, with findings presented through tables and graphs. To analyze the data gathered about the respondents' profiles and the challenges and interventions in Dingalan, Aurora's economic enterprise sector, various statistical tools were employed. Frequency and percentage distribution were utilized to describe the respondents' profiles, including aspects such as age, address, sex, and religion. The weighted mean distribution was applied to assess the pandemic's influence on Dingalan, Aurora's tourism. This was done by adding all scores and dividing the sum by the total number of scores. The mean response was then described using the following verbal descriptions: 4 for Strongly Agree, 3 for Agree, 2 for Disagree, and 1 for Strongly Disagree.

3. Results and discussion

Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents in terms of age. Based on the data presented, respondents ages 33 to 41 top the results having a total average of 58.67%, followed by the ages 26 to 32 which consist of 20.00%, while 17.33% belongs to ages 42 to 50, and the least of the respondents were at the age bracket from 18 to 25 with a total average of 4.00%. According to [4] Sixty percent of the population 15 years old and over are in the labor force. They are 43.0 million of the estimated 71.6 million population of labor force.

Table 1 Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents as to Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage	Ranking
18-25	3	4.00%	4TH
26-32	15	20.00%	2ND
33-41	44	58.67%	1ST
42-50	13	17.33%	3RD
Total	75	100.00%	

Table 2 Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents as to Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Ranking
Female	56	74.67%	1ST
Male	19	25.33%	2ND
TOTAL	75	100.00%	

Table 2 shows the gender of the respondents. It can be seen that 74.67% of the respondents were females, and 25.33% were males. [5] reveals that incorporating more women to companies not only protect their rights but at the same time, it is also good for business. They reported that women can access to the best available talent, improve in productivity and innovation, strengthens team dynamics, reduced staff turnover and long-term relations and promote better work environment.

Table 3 Socio Demographic Profile of the Respondents as to Educational Attainment

Attainment	Frequency	Percentage	Ranking
High school	28	37.33%	1ST
Vocational	27	36.00%	2ND
College	20	26.67%	3RD
TOTAL	75	100.00%	

The table 3 presents the socio-demographic profile of the respondents based on their educational attainment. The table shows that out of the total 75 respondents, 28 or 37.33% had only completed high school, making it the most common level of educational attainment among the respondents and ranking first. The second most common level of educational attainment among the respondents was vocational, with 27 or 36.00% of the respondents having attained this level of education. The third most common level of educational attainment among the respondents was college, with 20 or 26.67% of the respondents having attained this level of education. The table provides a summary of the educational background of the respondents, which can help in understanding the characteristics of the sample population in relation to the research question or topic.

Table 4 Socio Demographic Profile of the Respondents as to Monthly Income

5,000 -8,000	35	46.66%	1ST
9,000-12,000	32	42.66%	2ND
25,000-30,000	5	6.66%	3RD
30,000 and above	3	4.00%	4TH
TOTAL	75	100.00%	

Table 4 presented the Monthly Income of the respondents. Respondents who are earning Php 5,000.00 to Php 8,000.00 top the results of having an average of 46.66%; followed by an average of 42.66% respondents who are earning Php 9,000.00 to Php 12,000.00, while the average rate of 6.66% earns Php 25,000.00 to Php 30,000.00 and 4.00% of the respondents earns Php 30,000.00 and above. According to [6] Wages are low because there are many job seekers and few job creators. It is a matter of supply and demand. The underlying question is why are there many job seekers and few job creators? The answer lies in the protectionist provisions of the Philippine constitution – Sections 10 and 11, Article 12, National Patrimony, 1987 Constitution.

Table 5 Socio Demographic Profile of the Respondents as to Civil Status

Status	Frequency	Percentage	Ranking
Single	46	61.33%	1ST
Married	29	38.67%	2ND
TOTAL	75	100.00%	

Table 5 shows the Civil Status of the respondents. It shows that 61.33% of them were single while 38.67% of them were married. [7] quoted, “when single people are caring for their parents and others who need their help, they do so at greater economic risk than married people,” wrote social scientist Bella DePualo last year for Quartz. She shared her experience helping her widowed mother pay her bills and noted that “other single people are providing support in other ways—for example, quietly accumulating college funds for their nieces and nephews, or welcoming them into their homes when times are tough.

Table 6 Socio Demographic Profile of the Respondents as to Number of Family Members

Number	Frequency	Percentage	Ranking
1 to 3	6	8.00%	3RD
4 to 7	31	41.33%	2ND
8 to 12	38	50.67%	1ST
TOTAL	75	100.00%	

Table 6 shows the Number of Family Members of the respondents. The average rate of 50.67% respondents belongs to a family that have 8 to 12 members, followed by a 41.33% average of respondents who belongs to a family that have 4 to 7 members and respondents who belongs to a 1 to 3 members are 8.00%.

Table 7 Socio Demographic Profile of the Respondents as to Source/s of Income Before The Pandemic

Source/s	Frequency	Percentage	Ranking
Government employee	13	17.33%	2ND
Licensed tourist guide/operator	13	17.33%	2ND
Non-licensed tourist guide	13	17.33%	2ND
Souvenir maker/vendor	18	24.00%	1ST
Seafood vendor	18	24.00%	1ST
TOTAL	75	100.00%	

Table 7 shows the Source/s of Income of the respondents before the pandemic. It shows that Souvenir maker/vendors and Seafood Vendors top the results for the having the combined percentage of 48.00% (24.00% each), while the combined percentage of 51.99% (17.33% each) are Government Employees, Licensed Tourist Guides/Operators and Non-Licensed Tourist Guides. According to [8], Filipinos are known to be some of the most hard-working people around the world. They are proud with their values and heritage. Whatever values they've learned when they were young will continue to practice throughout their adult lives.

Table 8 Socio Demographic Profile of the Respondents as to Source/s of Income During Pandemic

Source/s	Frequency	Percentage	Ranking
Government employee	13	17.33%	3RD
Licensed tourist guide/operator	6	8.00%	5TH
Non-licensed tourist guide	0	0%	7TH
Souvenir maker/vendor	5	6.66%	6TH
Seafood vendor	5	6.66%	6TH
Online seller	21	28.00%	1ST
Ornamental/plant vendor	15	20.00%	2ND
House helper	10	13.33%	4TH
TOTAL	75	100.00%	

The table 8 presents the socio-demographic profile of the respondents based on their source/s of income during the pandemic. The table shows that out of the total 75 respondents, the most common source of income during the pandemic was online selling, with 21 or 28.00% of the respondents earning their income through this means, ranking first. The second most common source of income was ornamental/plant vending, with 15 or 20.00% of the respondents earning their income through this means, ranking second. The third most common source of income was government employment, with 13 or 17.33% of the respondents earning their income through this means, ranking third. The fourth most common source of income was house helper, with 10 or 13.33% of the respondents earning their income through this means, ranking fourth. The fifth most common source of income was licensed tourist guide/operator, with 6 or 8.00% of the respondents earning their income through this means, ranking fifth. The sixth and seventh most common sources of income were seafood vendor and souvenir maker/vendor, respectively, with each having 5 or 6.66% of the respondents earning their income through this means, ranking sixth and seventh, respectively. The table provides a summary of the different sources of income of the respondents during the pandemic, which can help in understanding the impact of the pandemic on their livelihoods and the economic sectors that have been affected the most.

3.1. Travel Constraints

The study revealed that the respondents encountered various travel constraints during the pandemic, including the imposed curfew hour, the lockdown resulting in no tourists/visitors, and the unavailability of transportation for local residents to visit tourist destinations. Additionally, due to the imposed age limits (15-59 years old), many tourists opted not to visit tourist destinations because their children would be left behind, and celebrations of special occasions were held in the tourists' own homes instead of in tourist destinations. These constraints were found to have significantly impacted the tourism industry, affecting the economic aspect and the ability to celebrate special occasions. The study's findings can help provide insights into the impact of the pandemic on the tourism industry and can guide efforts to address the negative effects of the pandemic on the industry in the future.

3.2. Security Constraints

The different kinds of Security Constraints. 100% of the respondents are "Very much Agree" that these security constraints suddenly make travelers felt insecure to travel and this has resulted their tourism numbers decreased. In today's very politically and economically unstable world the tourism and hospitality industries have no choice but to be sensitive to the needs of security and safety (S&S), and to emphasize public health requirements. Despite this needed

emphasis on COVID-19 and the universal pandemic, other classical issues of tourism security and safety still exist and should not be ignored [9].

3.3. Financial Constraints

The different kinds of Financial Constraints. 100% of the respondents are “Very much Agree” that these financial constraints affected their income negatively because this has resulted in their tourism numbers decreased. The novel coronavirus disease, COVID-19, has brought significant change to people’s lives and business activities nationally, regionally, and globally [10]. The Philippines took swift action—including enhanced community quarantine (ECQ)—to contain the pandemic and launched an emergency subsidy program with massive public spending to support disrupted households and businesses.

3.4. Government Interventions in terms of Financial

The different Government Financial Intervention Programs. Majority of the respondents are “Slightly Agree” that these financial assistance had helped them during the pandemic, but when it comes to a specific financial program, the Social Amelioration Program or S.A.P. got the highest number of respondents who are “Very much Agree” that this had helped them financially. According to [11] the combination of trade protection, investment incentives, and domestic growth propelled by investment and construction took its toll on Philippine industry. Output shifted toward more capital-intensive, lower productivity industries, limiting the growth that the Philippines got out of its investment and foreign borrowing. But these industries were also dependent on the continued momentum of borrowing and investment and proved extremely vulnerable to the recession of the early 1980s. The sharp declines in many of these industries worsened the recession in the early 1980s, and many of these firms ended up in the hands of the government, either through rescue operations or the assumption of guaranteed external loan obligations.

3.5. Government Interventions in terms of Technical Assistance

In the context of technical assistance, the respondents in this study slightly agree (weighted mean = 1.82) that the government has provided assistance in various ways to aid in the recovery of the tourism industry. The highest agreement was for the assistance in diversifying tourism markets (weighted mean = 1.92), followed closely by the assistance in applying new health protocols for safe travels (weighted mean = 1.87), and working with businesses to access liquidity supports (weighted mean = 1.85). The respondents also agreed that the government helped restore the confidence of travelers by utilizing visitor’s information apps, as well as campaigning for new safe and clean travels. However, there was a disagreement in terms of the government’s efforts in promoting domestic tourism and preparing comprehensive tourism recovery plans by rebuilding destinations and encouraging innovation and investments. The different Government Technical Intervention Programs. Majority of the respondents are “Slightly Agree” that these technical assistance had helped them during the pandemic. If the pandemic is adequately contained within a year, the IMF expects growth in Asian developing Countries to rebound up to 8.5% in 2021. The response by Asian countries has included shutting down travel; surveillance, monitoring, tracing and isolation of those with the coronavirus; as well as Lockdowns. Additionally, measures to address the socio-economic impacts have been implemented.

3.6. Non-Government Interventions in terms Financial

the non-government interventions related to financial assistance for the surveyed health setting. The highest weighted mean score is for Financial Assistance provided by M.L. Remittance Center, which has a weighted mean of 2.52, indicating agreement among the respondents. On the other hand, the provision of Relief Goods by Norwin Fishing Supplies Inc., Tau Gamma Phi, Jumong Fishing Supply, and Pentecostal all have a weighted mean score of 1, indicating disagreement among the respondents. The provision of financial assistance by Turismo Dingalan Tourist Guides also received a high weighted mean score of 2.89, indicating agreement among the respondents. The different Non-Government Financial Intervention Programs. Majority of the respondents are “Disagree” that these programs had helped them during pandemic.

Remittances from abroad, a lifeline for many Filipino families, were reported to have fallen for two in five households that receive remittances, according to the survey. As a result, poverty is estimated to increase from 20.5 percent in 2019 to 22.6 percent in 2020 (measured against the World Bank lower middle-income poverty line of US\$3.2/day) [12].

3.7. Non-Government Interventions in terms of Technical Assistance

The most effective intervention is "Helped in applying new health protocols for safe travels," with a weighted mean of 2.28, indicating an agreement among the respondents. The least effective intervention is "Helped by means of preparing comprehensive tourism recovery plans by rebuilding destinations and encourage innovation and investments," with a

weighted mean of 1.45, indicating a disagreement among the respondents. The other interventions received weighted means between 1.36 and 1.69, indicating a disagreement or a slight disagreement among the respondents. Overall, the respondents were not satisfied with the effectiveness of the non-government interventions in terms of technical assistance. The different Non-Government Technical Intervention Programs. Majority of the respondents are “Disagree” that these programs had helped them during pandemic. In [13] said, we have to keep on doing the same thing but expect a different result – Einstein had a word for that. We simply get the worst of both worlds. Let’s trust our people to keep themselves sound and healthy.

4. Conclusion

The study analyzed the socio-demographic profile of the respondents, the impact of travel, security, and financial constraints on tourism, and the effectiveness of government and non-government interventions in terms of financial and technical assistance during the pandemic. The majority of respondents belonged to the age group of 33-41 years old, were female, and had a high school education. The primary sources of income before and during the pandemic were souvenir making, seafood vending, and online selling. Travel constraints, security constraints, and financial constraints significantly affected the tourism industry. Regarding government and non-government interventions, respondents agreed that financial assistance programs like the Social Amelioration Program (S.A.P.) were helpful during the pandemic. However, they disagreed with the effectiveness of other financial intervention programs from non-government organizations. In terms of technical assistance, respondents slightly agreed that the government provided support, but they disagreed with the effectiveness of non-government interventions in this area. This study highlights the need for targeted and effective interventions to support the tourism industry and its workforce during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. It is essential to consider the various demographics and unique circumstances of the affected population to develop tailored solutions that address their specific needs and promote a sustainable and inclusive recovery.

Based on the insights and conclusions derived from the study, the researchers propose the following recommendations: That the Municipality may provide long-term technical assistance to the local community until the situation they back into normal. Tourism constraints in times of pandemic are unpredictable but local community can cope easily if they are willing to help each other, therefore, the researchers recommend that the government may organized association for the tourism sector so that they may able to hear the sentiments of the people working on the tourism sector then afterwards address it properly. We are now facing the “New Normal” situation, and with this, new opportunities are on their way to help us cope on this situation. The Municipality can also help the Establishment Owners in the creation of their visitor management system to level up the visitor experience despite the risks of the Covid-19, also, it is therefore significant to assess the processes of their system to maintain the safety precautions required while keeping the visitor’s preference as its first place destination, promote to invite more tourist while observing health protocols.

Compliance with ethical standards

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