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Master's Thesis of Public Administration

**The Impact of Covid-19 on Criminal
Proceedings in the Philippines:
An Examination of the Criminal Cases Handled
by the Public Attorney's Office (PAO)**

**코로나19가 필리핀 형사소송에
미치는 영향:
검찰청의 형사사건 조사를 바탕으로**

February 2023

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**The Impact of Covid-19 on Criminal
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by the Public Attorney's Office (PAO)**

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Abstract

The Impact of Covid-19 on Criminal Proceedings in the Philippines: An Examination of the Criminal Cases Handled by the Public Attorney's Office (PAO)

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The criminal justice system was not spared by Covid-19. During the pandemic, the normal course of legal work and transactions was heavily interrupted. The courts had to be closed and proceedings such as trials and hearings had to be conducted remotely.

This study tries to examine how Covid-19 and the preventive measures adopted to respond to it impact the investigations and proceedings in criminal cases in the Philippines. In particular, this study looked into the criminal cases handled by the Public Attorney's Office (PAO) in the Philippines, which is the principal law office of the government in rendering free legal assistance and services to indigent persons who cannot afford the services of a private lawyer. The study examined how the pandemic affected the disposition of cases by looking into the resolution of cases as well as access to courts and lawyers.

After gathering the official data from PAO, a Welch's t-test was conducted to determine if there are significant differences in the number of terminated cases and new cases received before and during Covid-19. The results of the test showed that Covid-19 indeed had significant impact on the cases.

To supplement the secondary data from PAO, public attorneys were also interviewed. It was found from the interviews that they perceive Covid-19 to have affected them as practitioners and their client's access to justice. While they encountered negative and positive effects of remote transactions in the cases they handle, they are still expecting to return to the traditional way of dealings but still open to remote proceedings for certain cases.

Keyword: Covid-19, Criminal Justice, access to justice, public attorney, defense
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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

The 2019 novel coronavirus disease or the Covid-19 virus was unprecedented and unexpected not just to developing countries but to the whole world. No country could be said to have been fully prepared for Covid-19. The spread of the virus was on a global scale with speed and effects that would eventually be declared as a public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organization.

Unfortunately, the virus has continued to spread resulting in an ongoing global pandemic. As of writing, Covid-19 cases have reached 517 million with 6.25 million deaths worldwide. (Covid-19 data explorer) While vaccination efforts have been ongoing, more contagious variants of the virus have also been seen to have developed. This indicates that the virus may linger and that the society has to, in one way or the other, live with it as the new normal.

The Covid-19 virus has affected almost every part of human life, may it be public, personal and professional. Due to its rapid spread and its adverse effect on the respiratory system, governments had no choice but to adopt measures to contain it. Human contact had to be limited, lockdowns have been imposed, employees had to resort to remote working, and some establishments had to close down, which inevitably resulted to unemployment for affected individuals.

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the COVID-19 is more than a health crisis. It is a “human, economic and social crisis” which is attacking societies at their core (United Nations, 2021). While it has affected all segments of the population, it is particularly detrimental to those who are in the most vulnerable situations. The World Health Organization has added that the pandemic is a challenge to food systems and the world of work (World Health Organization, 2020).

The criminal justice system was not spared by COVID-19. During the course of the pandemic, the normal course of legal work and transactions was heavily interrupted. While the justice system has to continue functioning despite the ongoing pandemic, it is recognized that public safety and the health of those under control of the criminal justice system have to be protected. Hence, there was a need to impose measures limiting human contact. With this, courts had to be closed and proceedings such as trials and hearings had to be conducted remotely.

The criminal justice system is, in essence, the process through which crimes are investigated, suspects are apprehended, prosecuted in court, and punished if found guilty, with provisions for their correction and rehabilitation (Valle-Corpuz, n.d.). The main goal of this system is “justice for all,” which includes protecting the innocent, convicting criminals, and providing a fair justice system with the objective of maintaining peace and order for the safety of the community (Goodwin University, 2020). In order to achieve this, institutions are organized and charged with the responsibility of preventing crimes, enforcing laws, and apprehending and prosecuting those who break them. Accordingly, persons

who are found by the courts to be guilty of a crime must be imprisoned until they can be rehabilitated and reintegrated into the community as law-abiding citizens (Bravo, n.d.).

On the other side of the spectrum is the civil justice system. Unlike the criminal justice system, the civil justice system does not determine an offender’s innocence or guilt. Rather, it seeks to know whether an offender or a third party is responsible for the injuries as a result of the crime committed. When a civil court finds that a person is civilly liable, it means that such person must pay monetary damages to the victim or his family. Essentially, the civil justice system’s objective is to provide victims with the financial resources they need to rebuild their lives, and to have the persons found to be liable, usually called defendants, be directly accountable to the victim or his or her family (Criminal and civil justice, n.d.).

Figure 1. The Philippine Criminal Justice Process



Source: <https://probation.gov.ph/philippine-criminal-justice-process/>

In the Philippines, the criminal justice system is composed of the following: law enforcement, prosecution, court or judiciary, corrections or penology and the mobilized community (Valle-Corpuz, n.d.). The Philippine National Police (PNP) and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) primarily make up the law enforcement component of the criminal justice system. They are charged with the duty of investigating the crime once they are made aware of its commission which entails collection of evidence that may be used in the prosecution of suspects in court. Law enforcement officers are then authorized to arrest those deemed to have violated the law and tasked to eventually refer their case to the prosecution or courts, for preliminary investigation or trial and judgment, respectively. After referring the person arrested to the prosecution, the latter is tasked to determine whether the person apprehended for violating a law should be prosecuted. The prosecution determines the same by looking into the background and all circumstances surrounding the case. This task is lodged with the Department of Justice (DOJ), through its national prosecution service. Once the prosecution finds that a crime has been committed and the person apprehended is probably guilty thereof, the prosecution has the obligation to file the corresponding information before the proper court. After this process, the judicial process is initiated (Valle-Corpuz, n.d.).

The court or judiciary is the foundation of the criminal justice system. It determines whether or not a person charged with a criminal offense is guilty thereof (Bravo, n.d.). The process starts by setting the case for arraignment, which

involves reading to the accused the information or criminal complaint in open court. The accused, then, is asked if he pleads guilty or not guilty to the offense charged. If he pleads guilty, the court shall sentence him to the corresponding plea. Otherwise, if he pleads not guilty, the case will be set for trial or pre-trial. During trial, the prosecution starts with the presentation of evidence and witnesses against the accused, then after resting its case, the accused follows with the presentation of the evidence and witnesses in his or her favor. After both parties are done with the presentation of evidence, the case is submitted for decision. The court, then, must decide whether to convict or acquit the accused based on the evidence presented. If the accused is acquitted because the court, after considering all the evidence presented and surrounding circumstances, deem the accused innocent or that his guilty is not proven beyond reasonable doubt, the case is terminated definitely. The prosecution cannot anymore appeal the said decision. Otherwise, the principle of double jeopardy will be violated. On the other hand, if the court decides that the accused should be convicted because his or her guilt has been established beyond reasonable doubt, the said accused may move for a new trial or reconsideration as may be applicable. However, if the convicted accused's appeal will be denied and his or her conviction is affirmed, the judgment shall be executed. The court shall set the date for such execution, in which it will issue an order of commitment and then hand over the accused to the corrections or penology. During the penal or correctional process, the convicted person will be isolated for the period as prescribed by law and as laid down by the courts as punishment for committing a crime. The institutions set up by law under this process, such as the Bureau of Prisons, Parole and Probation Administration, are charged with the correction and rehabilitation of the persons convicted. After the convicted persons have passed

through the correction process, which may be through serving the full term of imprisonment imposed or by parole or pardon, they go back to the community and ideally lead normal lives as law-abiding citizens (Valle-Corpuz, n.d.).

The last but not the least component of the criminal justice system is the community. It is expected that the members of the community who have knowledge of the facts relevant to the investigation or prosecution of crimes will cooperate with institutions tasked with law enforcement and investigation by reporting crimes and helping provide evidence and information against offenders. Included in this component are lawyers in private practice as well as organizations dedicated to providing legal aid to indigents. These legal practitioners play an important part in the criminal justice system by advising or representing people who find themselves involved in criminal actions before the appropriate authorities (Valle-Corpuz, n.d.).

In order to ensure that persons who are involved in criminal actions but cannot afford the services of private lawyers can be effectively represented and their rights protected, the government has established the Public Attorney's Office (PAO). The PAO is the principal law office of the government in rendering legal assistance and services, free of charge, to indigent persons or the immediate members of their family in criminal, civil, labor, administrative, and other quasi-judicial cases, where, after due evaluation, it is determined that the interest of justice will be served (Philippines, 2007, Republic Act No. 9406). To make sure that the PAO only serves and represents those who are deserving, they require aspiring clients to show proof of indigency and prove that their case is meritorious.

In criminal cases, however, the cases of people accused of a crime, called the defendants, are deemed meritorious as they enjoy the constitutional presumption of innocence until the contrary is proved. While it may be attached to the Department of Justice for purposes of policy and program coordination, the PAO acts as an independent and autonomous office. Thus, although the DOJ is tasked with the prosecution of criminal cases, the PAO can still do its mandate of representing people accused of a crime, even if it is in contradiction with the prosecution's side. In fact, the PAO is allowed to represent an indigent client even if the case is adverse to a public officer, government office, agency or instrumentality, as long as the case is meritorious (Philippines, 2007, Republic Act No. 9406).

The criminal justice system cannot function with just the people and entities tasked with law enforcement. For it to work effectively and efficiently, all the pillars or components must work together, in cooperation and in coordination with one another.

Nevertheless, even if all the components turn out to be doing its role in the system, problems still arise. One of these is the delay in the provision of justice remedies. The delays could be attributed not just to one but to every component of the system. Delay may be caused by the lawyers, judges, law enforcement officials and entities, prosecutors, or the weakness of the institution itself (Primer access to justice, n.d.). In particular, lawyers could cause delay by notorious filing of petitions for extensions and postponements. Their lack of preparation, absence and tardiness in proceedings can also be a cause of delay. Some lawyers may also indiscriminately accept caseloads causing pile-up which will then result to

incompetence. Judges can also be the cause of delay if they have insufficient knowledge on developments in law and jurisprudence, as well as deficient knowledge of court procedures. Judges' leniency in granting postponements and laxity in enforcement of rules of procedures also add to the delay. Some judges may lack competence in judicial decision writing, or have poor skills in administration and case management, or are lazy, inefficient and corrupt. All these would add to the delay in the resolution of cases. On the part of law enforcement, it can attribute to the delay by non-appearance during trial, failing to effect valid arrest, lack of internal coordination, poor case documentation, delay in the transmittal of case to the prosecutor's office, or not submitting the evidence to the court promptly. On the prosecution side, delay could be caused by prosecutors who are not competent enough to handle cases or when they have too heavy caseloads, which will also result to incompetence. Lastly, the delay could also be caused by the weakness of the institution or system itself. Particularly, the lack of court resources and facilities could add to the delay, as well as deficient case management system and tools, including information technology support across the components or pillars, insufficient training, or lack of formal coordination among the pillars (Primer access to justice, n.d.).

The problem on delay in the resolution of cases has been a major concern to the criminal justice system. It has been in existence even before the COVID-19 pandemic came into the picture. Considering, however, that the criminal justice system was not spared by COVID-19, it is empirical to look into how it affected the system not just in terms of delay but also other facets such as access to justice. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) defines "access to justice" as

“the ability of people, particularly from poor and disadvantaged groups, to seek and obtain a remedy through formal and informal justice systems, in accordance with human rights principles and standards.”

1.2. Statement of the Problem

This study primarily aims to answer how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the criminal justice system, with a focus on the criminal proceedings handled by the Public Attorney’s Office in the Philippines. Particularly, this research aims to answer the following questions:

1. Did COVID-19 cause further delays in the resolution of criminal cases handled by PAO?
2. Did COVID-19 affect the indigent clients’ access to justice?

1.3. Objective / Significance of the Study

Despite all the challenges brought about by COVID-19, well-functioning criminal investigations and proceedings, which are crucial parts of a society governed by the rule of law, must be in place and maintained. The purpose of this study is to examine how Covid-19 and the preventive measures adopted to respond to it impact the investigations and proceedings in criminal cases in the Philippines.

In particular, this study focused on the impact of Covid-19 on the criminal cases handled by the Public Attorney’s Office (PAO) in the Philippines. The PAO

exists to “provide the indigent litigants, the oppressed, marginalized and underprivileged members of the society free access to courts, judicial and quasi-judicial agencies, by rendering legal services, counseling and assistance in consonance with the Constitutional mandate that ‘free access to courts shall not be denied to any person by reason of poverty’ in order to ensure the rule of law, truth and social justice as components of the country’s sustainable development.” Due to its important role in rendering legal service to those who cannot afford the services of private lawyers, it bears emphasis to look into how the cases they handle, particularly the criminal cases, which mostly involves matters of life and liberty of litigants, were affected by Covid-19.

More specifically, the study examined how the pandemic affected the disposition of cases by looking into the length of time as to its resolution, kinds and types of criminal cases involved, the area or locality of the cases as well as access to courts and lawyers. In order to see the impact, the study compared how the criminal justice system works before and during the pandemic. In addition, the perceptions of practitioners, i.e., PAO lawyers, was also looked into to determine how Covid-19 affected them and their clients especially as to criminal proceedings and investigations.

The study aims to recommend a policy on how the Public Attorney’s Office and eventually other law practitioners can adapt and respond to the new normal pertaining to criminal investigations and proceedings in order to better serve their clients who are in need of legal assistance.

1.4. Scope and Limitation

The study is limited to the examination of criminal cases handled by the Public Attorney's Office. This research would not delve into the cases handled by PAO pertaining to civil, labor, administrative, and other quasi-judicial matters. In order to see whether COVID-19 had an impact on the criminal cases, data ranging from 2018-2019 (before pandemic) and 2020-2021 (during pandemic) will be collected. The data collected from this period will include the information on the cases resolved per region.

Chapter 2. Review of Related Literature

With the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic, researchers have been trying to examine its effects in different aspects, areas and context. However, not much research has been conducted on the legal context, especially as to criminal proceedings, more so into the Philippine context. This chapter sets out a review of existing literature relevant to the current study. The review is divided into four main sections: (1) jail and corrections congestion, (2) court proceedings, (3) access to justice, and (4) challenges and opportunities. This chapter primarily aims to provide a foundation for investigating the importance of addressing the impact of COVID-19 on the criminal justice system and to highlight how this research would contribute to the literature pertaining to this field of study.

2.1. Jail and Corrections Congestion

With the limited studies available, the literature search and review indicated that Covid-19's most direct impact on the criminal justice system is the concern on the spread of the virus among inmates in jails and correction facilities. With the need to impose social distancing rules comes the issue on how it can be implemented in prisons especially in the Philippines where problem on jail congestion is a major concern. The overcrowding in correction facilities is considered most acute in the Philippines, with 463% average rate of congestion (Cahapay, 2020). Due to this overcrowding, it is inevitable that Covid-19 would spread quickly through many prisons and jails, which will eventually lead to high infection rates and several deaths (Jones and Narag, 2021).

Considering that prisons are epicenters for Covid-19 transmissions, decarceration is needed in this time of pandemic (Anthony and Barles, 2021). With the concerns of the spread of the virus, previous studies on this matter posit that there should be cooperation between jail personnel and detainees to ensure safety inside the prison. Studies also show that the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the unhealthy and unsafe conditions of detainees inside the prison more. Hence, as earlier mentioned, rapid decarceration is needed to promote health equity (Henry, 2021).

In another study on mitigating the effect of Covid-19 in jails, particularly in South Korea, the focus was on the treating of correction officers and prisoners from the virus (Lee, 2020). This is different from the previous studies in that the previous ones were advocating for the release of prisoners, whereas this study focuses on keeping the detainees but treating them and the jail officers they interact with.

In the Philippine context, a study indicates that containing the virus in prisons would be “particularly challenging and perhaps psychologically precarious to think about since it ‘has the highest jail occupancy in the world’”(Kahambing, 2021). However, this does not mean that it cannot be done. In fact, another study shows that there have been measures implemented to respond to the issue such as “easing the rules on parole grant and executive clemency, providing human consideration to the vulnerable segments, and improving the corrections facilities health management.” (Cahapay, 2020)

The studies, however, are limited in a sense that they focus only on the concerns pertaining to jail conditions of detainees. They fail to consider other factors such as delays and logistics, which the present study seeks to examine.

2.2. Court Proceedings

Proceedings in courts such as hearings and trials are done face to face in physical court rooms. This, however, had to change with the occurrence of COVID-19. With the lockdown measures imposed, courts had no other option but to limit their operations and/or even close physically. Most countries looked for solutions that would limit face to face interaction with courts and its personnel and one of the measures adopted was the suspension of non-urgent cases (Bošković, 2021).

In the legal world, this has a number of consequences, including the expiration of procedural deadlines, statutes of limitation, and legal actions, damages caused by time lapse, and difficulties accessing evidence, among other things (Ayala Corao, 2020).

To avert the risk of infection among court officers and personnel in the frontline, courts had to resort to remote hearings through the use of technological tools as may be available and applicable. For most courts, this is the only feasible and logical option to counter and respond to the pandemic (Zakariya, 2020).

In line with this, studies also point out that courts all over the world had no choice but to rely on remote technology to adapt to the new normal justice system. While it may have offered convenience to some who had no difficulty as to access

and use of required technology, the same has also caused challenges to the other side of the digital divide (Bannon, 2021; Bošković, 2021). Thus, countries with advanced technology available and those with established justice systems had high turnout of court users and courts continued to function without significant disruption during the pandemic (Bošković, 2021). On the other hand, this cannot be said for countries which have problems as to access to internet, computers or technology in general (Bošković, 2021).

The propriety and sustainability of remote hearing have also been important issues especially in criminal proceedings. Some practitioners, specifically those involved in criminal cases, argue that remote hearings may reduce the litigants' understanding of the consequences of the penalty, potentially damaging to their sense of dignity and adversely impacting the courts' assessment of the demeanor and credibility of trial witnesses (Zakariya, 2020).

Despite this, however, there is still a recognition that remote hearing may be a viable option in dealing with the courts and that its availability would improve and expand access to justice, assuming litigants would have the access to technological tools which will enable them to make transactions with the courts without necessarily having to go to courts physically.

2.3. Access to Justice

Access to justice, as defined by the UNDP, is “the ability of people, particularly from poor and disadvantaged groups, to seek and obtain a remedy

through formal and informal justice systems, in accordance with human rights principles and standards.” Included in this is the right to access to a lawyer and case files as these are aspects of the right to a fair trial (Bošković, 2021). These aspects, however, were heavily affected by the outbreak of COVID-19. The imposed lockdowns and limited interaction with persons deprived of liberty by jails and corrections resulted in the limitation of access to a lawyer (Justice Under Lockdown, 2020). This aspect, however, is critical in one’s access to justice in that the access to a lawyer includes the physical presence and effective participation of his or her lawyer during police investigation in order that the lawyer may intervene in cases where the accused’s rights may be violated (Bošković, 2021). These raise concern as to the effective safeguarding of the right to fair trial and quality of justice during the pandemic.

Another aspect of access to justice is the access to case files. Since courts were closed, litigants had limited access to the pertinent documents for their cases. It must be emphasized, however, that access to case files is an aspect of the right to a fair trial and therefore an accused has the right to access all documents which are in the possession of competent authorities (Bošković, 2021). Therefore, it is imperative on the courts and other competent authorities to grant access in due time. The ability to grant access, however, would depend on the availability of equipment. Considering that physical contact is limited, one of the options to provide access to necessary files and documents is to enable electronic access to them. However, similar to the option for remote hearing, this again depends on whether the authorities who are in possession of the documents are equipped with

tools and equipment necessary to make digital and electronic versions of the case files (Commentary, 2020).

In line with the access to justice is the protection of the defendants' procedural rights. During the outbreak of COVID-19, new crimes were prescribed with a view of combatting the pandemic. On the one hand, a person may be criminally liable if he or she fails to comply with health regulations, and on the other hand, new offenses have been introduced relating exclusively to COVID-19. Some countries even made it criminal when a person behaves in a way, which, in the government's opinion makes the battle against the virus more difficult (Bošković, 2021). This, however, seems arbitrary and can therefore lead to abuse by authorities.

Similar to the existing literature, the present study would also delve into the effect of COVID-19 on the indigent litigants' access to justice but in the Philippine context. It aims to add into the literature by looking into whether COVID-19 made a significant impact on the access to lawyers, case files and courts.

2.4. Challenges and opportunities

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Report highlighted that the implementation of Covid-19 mitigation measures has created and will continue to create additional challenges for the criminal justice system, particularly in responding to gender-based violence against women. It highlighted several difficulties and challenges brought about by the pandemic such as reporting

to criminal justice system agencies, shifting law enforcement priorities, reduction of personnel in law enforcement and investigation agencies and prosecution services, suspension of court activities, increased court backlogs, etc. (Toledo-Vasquez, 2021). The report, however, focuses specifically on gender-based violence against women. While the challenges and problems may also be applied in the general context, the report seems to highlight that it is more applicable to the said type of cases. The present study aims to look into the different kinds and types of criminal cases that might have been affected, only limited by the fact that the focus is only on the cases handled by the PAO in the Philippines.

As to opportunities, the literature available point out that a paradigm shift on the use of technology and other digital tools, specifically on the use of remote hearings in criminal justice system is crucial (Zakariya, 2020). This means that to improve the administration of justice in this age of new normal, courts have to continue improving its infrastructure, with the support of all the stakeholders involved.

Although there may be critics as to the propriety of remote hearing or utilization of virtual courts, it is inevitable that litigants will have to adapt to the said set-up, assuming they are able to gain access to the necessary technology. This may be explained by the social presence theory which notes that “computer-based communication is lower in social presence than face-to-face communication, but different computer-based communications can affect the levels of social presence between communicators and receivers” (Chang, et al, 2016).

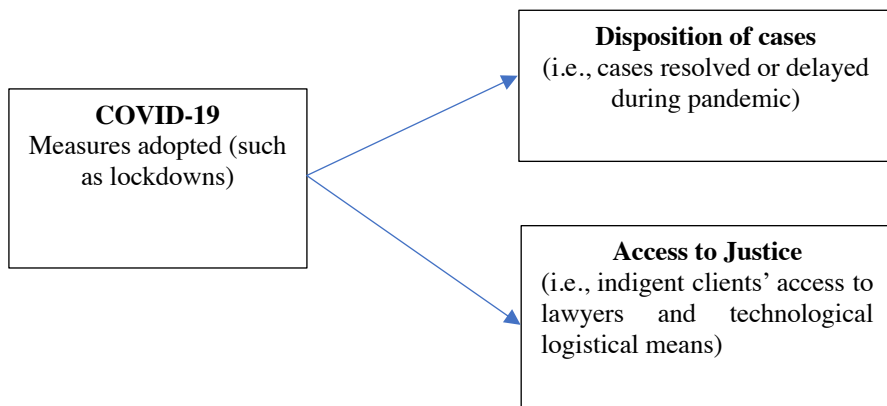
Chapter 3. Research Hypothesis and Methodology

This chapter contains the research questions and hypotheses which are sought to be addressed by this study. Also included in this chapter are the analytical framework, the data collected and the data collection process.

3.1. Analytical Framework

The following framework was used to analyze the data collected in the present study:

Figure 2. Analytical Framework on the Impact of Covid-19 on the Disposition of Criminal Cases Handled by PAO and Access to Justice



The independent variable in this study is the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly the measures adopted to contain the virus. This includes the lockdowns, social distancing, education of the community on healthy lifestyle and hygiene, wearing of face masks and face shields (Prasetyo, et al., 2020).

On the other hand, the dependent variables of the study are the disposition of cases and access to justice. For the disposition of cases, the dependent variable includes the number of cases resolved or delayed. As to access to justice, the variable includes the number of new clients served to determine if the pandemic caused any difficulty in accessing the services of the lawyers, and the availability of technological and logistical means in communicating with lawyers and appearing before the courts.

3.2. Research Questions and Hypotheses

1. Did COVID-19 cause further delays in the resolution of criminal cases handled by the Public Attorney's Office?

Hypothesis 1: The COVID-19 pandemic caused further delays in the resolution of cases handled by the Public Attorney's Office.

2. Did COVID-19 affect the indigent clients' access to justice?

Hypothesis 2: The COVID-19 pandemic caused problems with indigent clients' access to justice, courts and lawyers due to the imposition of measures for its containment.

3.3. Data

To test these hypotheses, the study looked into the data as officially reported by the available official statistics from the Public Attorney's Office. Specific data as to the number of cases resolved and new cases accepted and

handled by the PAO, segregated by month and per region. From the same official reports from the PAO, data on specific types of new criminal cases handled by PAO per year for the period subject of this study were also gathered.

In order to determine if Covid-19 had a significant impact as to the proceedings in criminal cases handled by PAO, the study examined the available data from 2018-2019 before the pandemic and compared it with data from 2020-2021 during the pandemic.

In addition, the study also investigated how the PAO lawyers were affected as practitioners. Interviews with the PAO lawyers on the impact of Covid-19 on how they handle cases were conducted. The aim was to determine their perception of the effects of the pandemic on the hearings, how they handled new cases and interacted with clients, logistics and movement restrictions, problems as to delays, among others. The data from this were considered in addition to the official data from the PAO as to the specific details of the criminal cases handled.

3.4. Methodology

For this study, the aim was to determine whether the COVID-19 pandemic made a significant impact on the criminal justice system, particularly on the criminal cases handled by the Public Attorney's Office in the Philippines. Hence, the secondary data from the PAO was secured to examine the impact on the resolution and disposition of cases as well as the possible delays that might have been brought about by COVID-19. Specifically, the data as to the new cases received and the terminated cases were gathered. The same data were grouped by PAO regional office and by month. While the data received as to the number of

cases were given as a whole, without segregation as to the types of criminal cases, data as to certain types of criminal cases by year was obtained from the PAO reports, to determine how the Covid-19 pandemic affected those certain types of cases.

In order to examine the impact, data before the pandemic was compared with the data during the pandemic. The data from years 2018 and 2019 were used for data before pandemic and data from 2020 to 2021 for data during the pandemic for comparison.

In addition, to supplement the data gathered from the official reports of the PAO, interviews were conducted to the study the effect of Covid-19 on the PAO lawyers. The objective was to determine their perception on the effect of the pandemic on the hearings, how they handled new cases and interacted with clients, logistics and movement restrictions, and problems as to delays, among others.

The data collected from the official reports was organized and processed using an Excel spreadsheet. Trend analysis was conducted to see the pattern on the number of cases pre-covid and during covid, the results of which will be discussed in the succeeding chapter. As to the interview, the researcher transcribed the responses and organized the respondents' answers by topic as will be discussed also in the succeeding chapter.

Chapter 4. Results and Discussions

This chapter provides the data on the regional offices operated by the Public Attorney's office, which was considered as the constant variable in this study. This chapter also includes the trend of cases from the period subject of this study, i.e., 2018-2021. This was done through line graphs to visualize how the number of cases changed for the said period, specifically as to how it changed during covid. The graphs also show the magnitude and rate as to how the numbers are changing. Considering that there are 17 regional offices, the trends were divided into the three main island groups – Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. To show the start of Covid-19 restrictions, the period during Covid-19 is indicated by the gray area on the graphs. Aside from the trend analysis, also included are the quarantine restrictions imposed and implemented in the Philippines.

This chapter also provides the results of the hypotheses testing to determine if the changes are significant and whether the hypotheses made are supported by the data gathered. Lastly, the results of the interviews conducted on the perception of the PAO lawyers on the impact of Covid-19 on how they conduct their work as practitioners are also included in this chapter.

4.1. PAO Regional Offices Data

Currently, the PAO operates with one central office located in Quezon City, Metro Manila, and 17 regional offices. These regional offices are established in line with the PAO's mission rendering legal assistance and of making access to

courts possible for all indigent and qualified clients, wherever they may be. Based on the office’s accomplishment report in 2021, there are 2,328 public attorneys currently assigned to the regional offices who handle criminal, civil, labor, administrative, and other quasi-judicial cases before the courts and different judicial bodies. (Public Attorney’s Office, 2021)

The following table shows the data gathered on the regional offices currently operated by the PAO:

Table 1. PAO Regional Offices Data

REGION	ISLAND GROUP	DISTRICT/OTHER UNITS	NUMBER OF PUBLIC ATTORNEYS	POPULATION^①
Central Office	Luzon	One Central Office (with six services)	112	
National Capital Region (NCR)	Luzon	16	351	13,484,462
Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR)	Luzon	23	65	1,797,660
Region I (Ilocos Region)	Luzon	23	124	5,301,139
Region II (Cagayan Valley)	Luzon	17	101	3,685,744
Region III (Central Luzon)	Luzon	36	227	12,422,172
Region IV-A CALABARZON	Luzon	38	252	16,195,042
Region IV-B MIMAROPA	Luzon	14/ one satellite office	62	3,228,558
Region V (Bicol Region)	Luzon	29/ one sub-district	139	6,082,165

^① Data for population is based on the 2020 Census of Population and Housing from the Philippine Statistics Authority’s website (<https://psa.gov.ph/population-and-housing>)

Region VI Western Visayas	Visayas	24	159	7,954,723
Region VII Central Visayas	Visayas	19/ one Regional Special and Appealed Cases Unit (RSACU)	161	8,081,988
Region VIII Eastern Visayas	Visayas	26	122	4,547,150
Region IX-A BARMM	Mindanao	5/ one sub-district	50	4,404,288
Region IX-B Zamboanga Peninsula	Mindanao	15/one satellite office	96	3,875,576
Region X Northern Mindanao	Mindanao	16/ one RSACU & three sub-district offices	99	5,022,768
Region XI Davao Region	Mindanao	14	70	5,243,536
Region XII SOCCSKARGEN	Mindanao	12	89	4,901,486
Region XIII Caraga Region	Mindanao	12	49	2,804,788
TOTAL		349	2,328	109,035,343

For this study, the cases from each of the regional offices from years 2018-2021 were gathered and analyzed to see whether there was a remarkable difference as to the cases received and terminated, particularly the criminal cases, before the pandemic and during the pandemic. This variable pertaining to the area or location of PAO offices is treated as a constant variable.

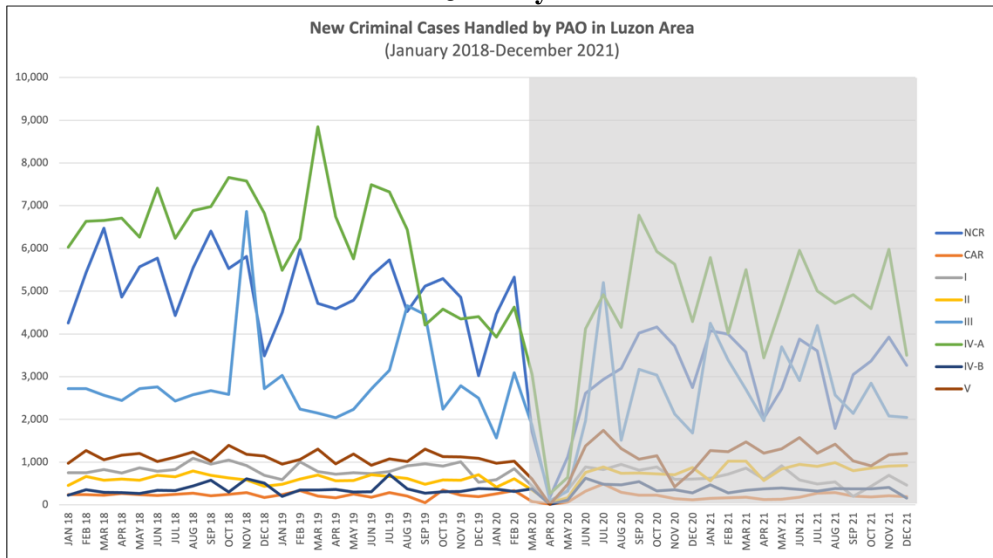
Based on the table, the National Capital Region (NCR) has the most number of public attorneys nationwide, with 351 PAO lawyers, which addresses the demand considering that NCR is also the highest in terms of population. On the other hand, the regional office with the least number of public attorneys is Region

XIII or the Caraga region, despite it not being the least populated. In fact, the least populated region is the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) but 65 attorneys are assigned to the said regional office.

4.2. Trends Pre-Covid and During Covid

To determine whether there was a significant pattern of change as to the new and terminated criminal cases handled by PAO, this study gathered data from January 2018 to December 2021. Data per month and per regional office was gathered during the said time frame.

Figure 3.1. New Criminal Cases Handled by the Public Attorney’s Office in the Luzon Island from January 2018 – December 2021



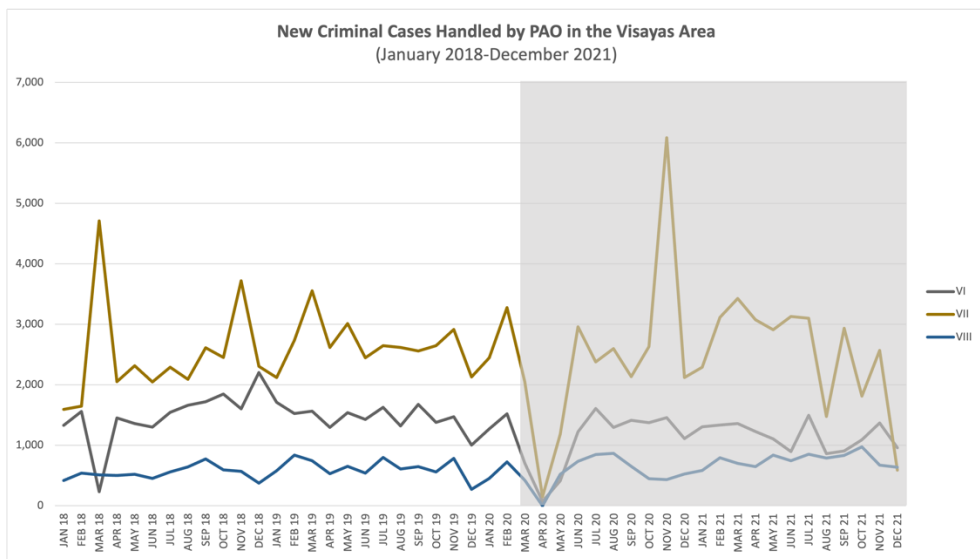
Source: Public Attorney’s Office

Figure 3.1. shows the number of criminal cases newly received and handled by PAO in the eight regions, namely NCR, CAR, Regions I, II, III, IV-A, IV-B, and V, which are all located in the Luzon Island from January 2018 to

December 2021. Among the eight regional offices, the most number of new cases received during the period is Region IV-A, followed by NCR, Region III, Region V, Region I, Region II, Region IV-B, and lastly CAR.

Based on this graph, cases have been fluctuating in the subject regions. However, it is evident that the cases from all regions started to decrease during March 2020, when the Covid-19 measures were first announced. By April 2020, cases dropped as the measures imposed to contain the virus intensified. Here, the gray area indicates the start of imposition of restrictions due to the increasing number of Covid-19 cases. Cases started to increase after April 2020 and then continued to fluctuate. A perusal of the graph shows, however, that while there was a rise in the number of cases in the top three regions with the highest number of cases, namely, NCR, Regions IV-A and III, said increase is still not as high as during the pre-covid period,

Figure 3.2. New Criminal Cases Handled by the Public Attorney’s Office in the Visayas Island from January 2018 – December 2021

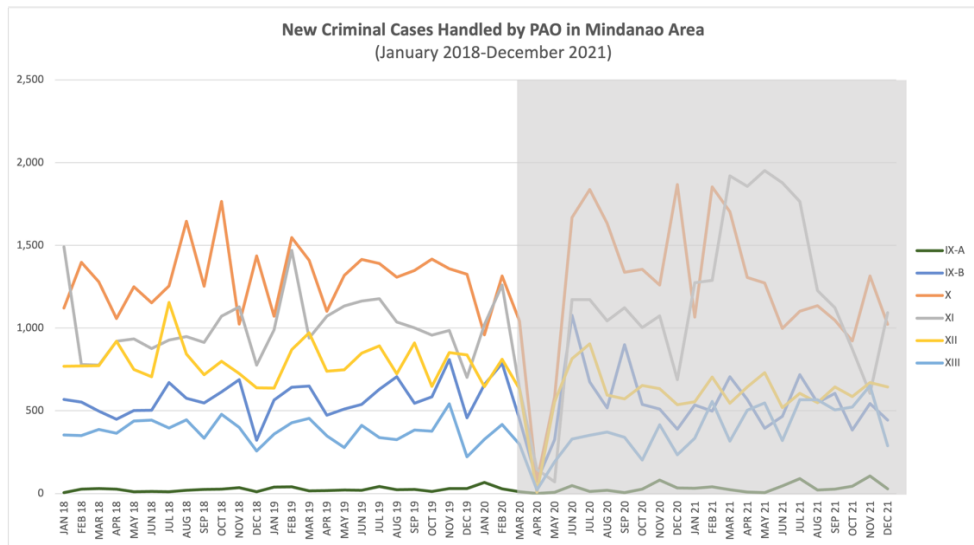


Source: Public Attorney’s Office

Figure 3.2. shows the number of new criminal cases handled by the Public Attorney's Office in the three regional offices in the Visayas Island, namely, Regions VI, VII, and VIII. Among the three regional offices, Region VII has the highest number of new cases followed by Region VI and Region VIII.

Similar to the new cases handled by the PAO in Luzon, the regional offices in the Visayas also shows a fluctuating number of cases. As seen from the graph, cases started to decrease from February to March 2020. In April 2020, the cases had a significant drop in all the three regional offices. This period pertains to the start of the imposition of quarantine measures including the lockdown. The gray area in the graph indicates the period of the pandemic when restrictions are in place from March 2020 to December 2021. From April 2020, cases started to increase again for all three regions. What is striking, however, is the trend of cases for Region VII during the pandemic. From an increase starting in April 2020, the cases for the region peaked in June 2020 and eventually declined again. In September 2020, the cases saw a rise again and peaked in November 2020. Such sudden rise in number of cases is highest compared to any other month in the covered period of the study, including pre-pandemic. It is also interesting to note that the cases saw a significant drop in the three regions.

Figure 3.3. New Criminal Cases Handled by the Public Attorney’s Office in the Mindanao Island from January 2018 – December 2021



Ssource: Public Attorney’s Office

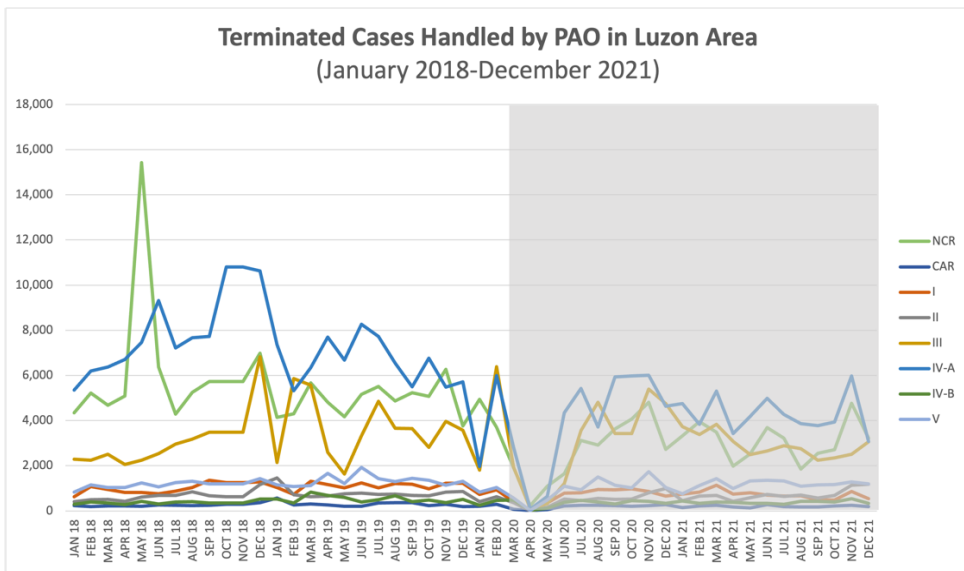
Figure 3.3. shows the number of criminal cases newly accepted by the PAO regional offices located in the Mindanao area. There are six regional office in Mindanao, namely, Regions IX-A, IX-B, X, XI, XII, and XIII. The region with the highest number of cases is Region X, followed by Regions XI, XII, IX-B, XIII, and IX-A.

As shown in the graph, the number of cases in the six regions in the Mindanao area is fluctuating. However, it can be seen as well that the ranking above seems to be consistent in the majority of months covered. As in the other cases, cases saw a decline in March 2020 when the government imposed restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Here, though, the decline started a month early, or in February 2020. The gray area as shown in the graph indicates the period when the restrictions continue to be imposed. The cases started to increase again from March 2020 and saw a peak in the months of June and July

2020. It bears emphasis that a perusal of the graph would tell us that after the decrease of cases from the initial imposition of restrictions, the cases immediately went up and the increase, while fluctuating, seems to be more than the cases before pandemic.

As much as the new cases were gathered in the 17 regional offices of PAO, the terminated cases were also collected and examined. Similar to the new cases received, the terminated cases were also divided into the three island groups, namely, Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The following figures show the trend as to the terminated cases for the period of January 2018 to December 2021.

Figure 4.1. Terminated Criminal Cases Handled by the Public Attorney’s Office in the Luzon Island from January 2018 – December 2021



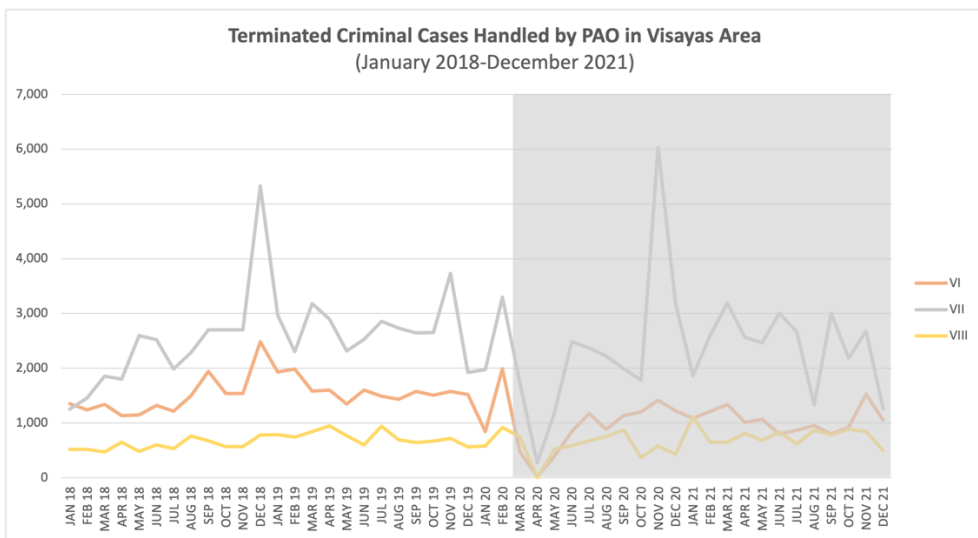
Source: Public Attorney’s Office

Figure 4.1. shows the number of criminal cases handled by PAO in the Luzon area which were terminated during the period covered – January 2018 to December 2021. While there are eight regions in the area, three regions stood out

as to the number of cases terminated, namely, Regions IV-A, NCR, and Region III, which represents the top three. They are followed by Regions V, I, II, IV-B, and CAR. The said order is similar to the number of new cases received as discussed above.

The terminated cases started to decline in February 2020, a month before the government-imposed quarantine restrictions. The significant drop of cases was evident in April 2020. This applies to all the eight regions in the Luzon area. While it started to increase again from April to May 2020, said increase was not as huge as it was before the pandemic. It is interesting to note, however, that by the end of the covered period, in December 2021, the number of cases of the top three regions seem to converge but they still remain as the regions with highest number of cases terminated.

Figure 4.2. Terminated Criminal Cases Handled by the Public Attorney’s Office in the Visayas Island from January 2018 – December 2021



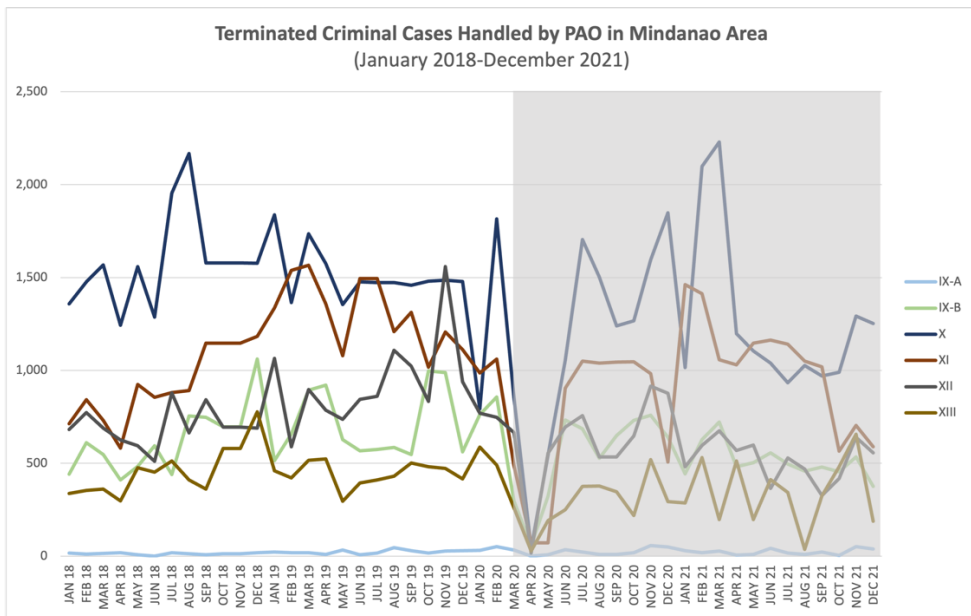
Source: Public Attorney’s Office

Figure 4.2 shows the trend of criminal cases handled by PAO in the regional offices in the Visayas per month, from January 2018 to December 2021. Similar to the newly handled cases in the Visayas, Region VII is also the region with the highest number of terminated criminal cases. It is followed by Region VI and Region VIII.

The graph shows that the cases started to decrease from February to March 2020. In April 2020, the cases had a significant drop in all the three regional offices, with Region VII slightly higher than the other two. This period pertains to the start of the imposition of quarantine measures including the lockdown, which is indicated by the gray area in the graph. From April 2020, cases started to increase again for all three regions.

It bears noting that for Region VII, from an increase in the cases starting in April 2020, the cases for the region peaked in June 2020 and eventually declined again. By October 2020, however, terminated cases started to rise again until it reached its highest peak in November 2020. Interestingly, this is also the same month when the number of newly accepted cases reached its peak within the period covered.

Figure 4.3. Terminated Criminal Cases Handled by the Public Attorney’s Office in the Mindanao Island from January 2018 – December 2021



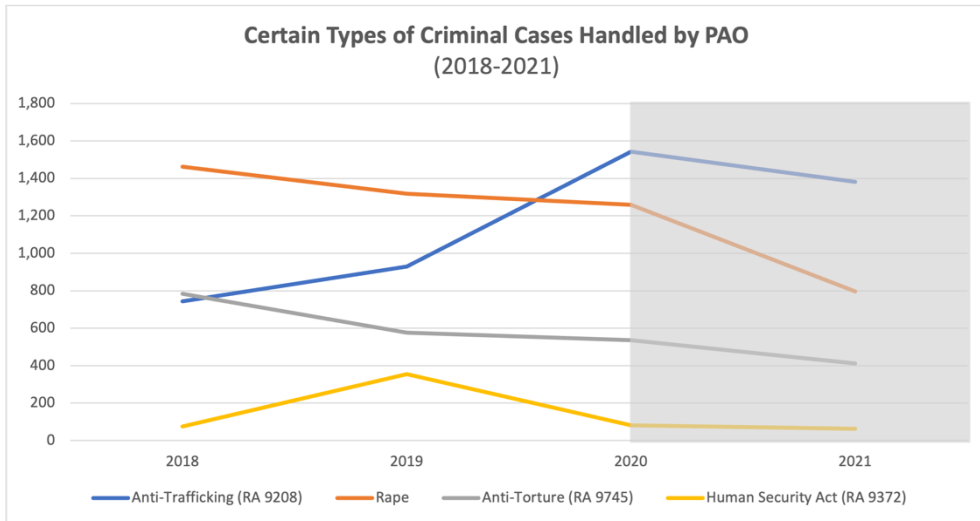
Source: Public Attorney’s Office

Figure 4.3. shows the terminated criminal cases handled by the PAO regional offices located in the Mindanao area. There are six regional offices in Mindanao, namely, Regions IX-A, IX-B, X, XI, XII, and XIII. The region with the highest number of cases is Region X, followed by Regions XI, XII, IX-B, XIII, and IX-A.

A perusal of the graph shows that the number of cases in the six regions in the Mindanao area is fluctuating, similar as to the trend for the newly accepted cases. The terminated cases saw a decline in March 2020 when the government imposed restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Such decline started a month early, or in February 2020. The gray area as shown in the graph indicates the period when the restrictions continue to be imposed. It bears emphasis that the graph would tell us that after the decrease of cases from the initial imposition of

restrictions, the cases immediately went up and the increase, while fluctuating, seems to be more or less similar in terms of trend pre-pandemic.

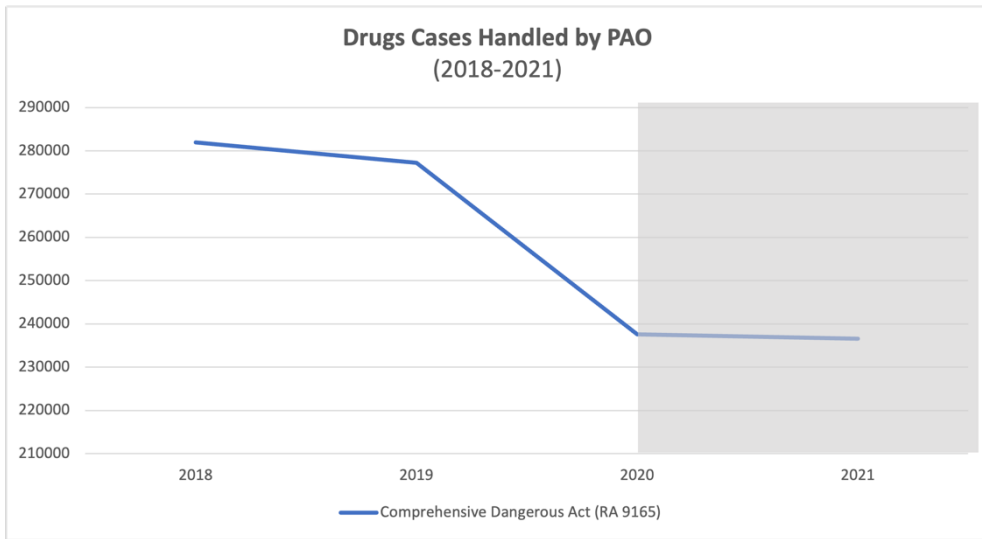
Figure 5.1. Certain Types of Criminal Cases Handled by PAO in 2018-2021



Source: Public Attorney's Office

Figure 5.1. shows the number of criminal cases handled by PAO per year for the years 2018 to 2021. The specific cases shown are anti-trafficking, rape, anti-torture and human security act. For anti-trafficking it is shown that cases increased from 2018 to 2019, but the number was still below 1,000. In 2020, however, when Covid-19 started, the cases significantly increased and exceeded the 1,000 mark. By 2021, the cases dropped but it was still above 1,000, which became higher compared to the periods before Covid-19. This graph shows that during Covid-19, there were more cases of anti-trafficking handled by PAO than pre-covid. The number of rape cases was decreasing for the period covered. The decline, however, was evident in 2021 which only totaled to 796. As to anti-torture cases, the trend was also decreasing but there was a huge dip in 2021 at 411. For human security act cases, the number was highest in 2019 and then declined in 2020 and 2021.

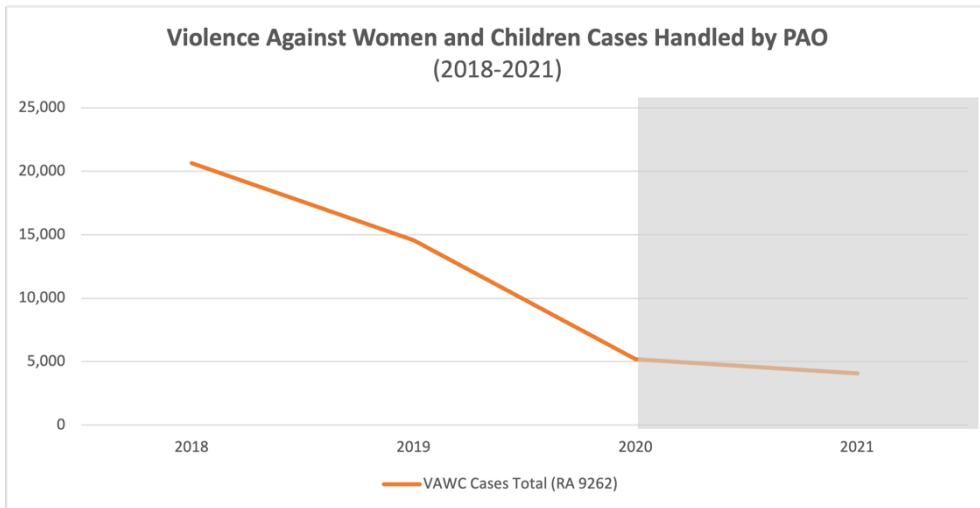
Figure 5.2. Drugs Cases Handled by PAO in 2018-2021



Source: Public Attorney's Office

Figure 5.2. shows the number of drugs cases handled by PAO. It can be seen that the number of cases has a decreasing trend. However, it is apparent that the number significantly dropped in 2020 when Covid-19 started. From 2020 to 2021, the number slightly decreased. It bears emphasis that even during Covid-19, the number of cases being reported and handled by PAO is high. This high number may be attributed to the government's anti-drug campaign even during the pandemic.

Figure 5.3. Violence Against Women and Children Cases Handled by PAO in 2018-2021



Source: Public Attorney's Office

Figure 5.3. shows the number of cases handled by PAO pertaining to cases of violence against women and children. Similar to drugs cases, the trend is also decreasing. From 20,635 cases in 2018, the cases dropped to 5,175 in 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic started. This is approximately a 75% decrease in the number of cases. There was a slight decrease in 2021 as cases dropped to 4,083. This huge drop may be attributed to the failure to report due to mobility restrictions especially for women and children during the pandemic.

4.3. Social Distancing Rules

The quarantine measures adopted is the independent variable in this study. Thus, in order to determine and identify the measures and the level of severity of measures imposed, there is a need to examine the different quarantine levels implemented and are still being implemented in the Philippines. The following

table shows the different levels of quarantine, measures and when it was first implemented:

Table 2. Quarantine Levels Implemented in the Philippines

Quarantine Level	Measures	When first imposed
Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equivalent to total lockdown - Mass transportation is limited - Only the authorized persons outside residence (APORs) are allowed to move outside the place of residence - Employers to set-up alternative work arrangements (work from home) - Those under 18 years old and above 65 years old, as well as people with comorbidities are banned from leaving their homes - Mass gatherings not allowed - Limited operations for certain sectors - Essential construction projects were allowed to resume if they comply with the guidelines set by the Department of Public Works and Highways 	March 17, 2020
General Community Quarantine (GCQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less strict than ECQ - <i>GCQ with some restrictions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-contact sports allowed - 40% capacity allowed for: gyms, historical museums, meetings, conferences and exhibitions - 50% capacity allowed for: indoor sports courts, personal care services, outdoor tourist attractions - <i>GCQ with heightened restrictions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-contact sports allowed - 30% capacity/operation allowed for: personal care service, outdoor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - June 16, 2021 - July 30, 2021

	<p>tourist attractions, other establishments accredited by the tourism department</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 20% capacity for indoor dining while 50% for outdoor dining 	
Modified General Community Quarantine (MGCQ)	- An area needs to be under this level before transitioning into the “new normal”	May 16, 2020
Alert Level System]
- Level 1	- Imposed when case transmission is deemed low and utilization rates of hospital beds and intensive care units are also low	September 16, 2021 in Metro Manila
- Level 2	- Imposed when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - case transmission is low and decreasing, and hospital beds and ICU utilization rates are low - case transmission is low and decreasing, and hospital beds and ICU utilization rates are increasing - case transmission is low but increasing, and hospital beds and ICU utilization rates are increasing 	October 20, 2021 outside metro manila (Aguilar, 2021)
- Level 3	- Imposed when case transmission is high and increasing and hospital beds and ICU utilization rates are increasing	
- Level 4	- Imposed when case transmission is high and increasing and hospital beds and ICU utilization rates are high	
- Level 5	- Imposed when case transmission is critical, and hospital beds and ICU utilization rates are also critical	

The following table shows the number of cases during Covid-19 and the corresponding quarantine levels implemented in the Philippines. The ECQ and GCQ levels were implemented from March 2020 to October 2021. On November 2021, the government started to implement the Alert Levels nationwide.

Table 3. Quarantine Levels Imposed by month per region from March 2020-December 2021

Month	NCR	CAR	I	II	III	IV-A	IV-B	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX-A	IX-B	X	XI	XII	XIII
MAR 20	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ
APR 20	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ
MAY 20	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ
JUN 20	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ
JUL 20	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ
AUG 20	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ
SEP 20	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ
OCT 20	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ
NOV 20	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ
DEC 20	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ
JAN 21	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ
FEB 21	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ
MAR 21	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ
APR 21	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ
MAY 21	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ
JUN 21	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ
JUL 21	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ
AUG 21	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ
SEP 21	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ
OCT 21	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ	ECQ
NOV 21	L3	L3	L3	L3	L3	L3	L3	L3	L3	L3	L3	L3	L3	L3	L3	L3	L3
DEC 21	L2	L2	L2	L2	L2	L2	L2	L2	L2	L2	L2	L2	L2	L2	L2	L2	L2

ECQ
GCC
Alert Level 3
Alert Level 2

To determine whether there was a significant difference in the number of cases during the different community quarantine levels imposed, a Welch’s t-test was conducted. The following graphs show the results of the t-test for the terminated cases and new cases received, analyzed per region and the Philippines as a whole.

Table 4. T-test results comparing the terminated cases during the different levels of community quarantine

Area	mean		variance		N		df	t Stat	P(T<=t)	t Critical
	ECQ	GCC	ECQ	GCC	ECQ	GCC				
NCR	1874.14	3259.38	1059423.14	645610.09	7	13	10	-3.09	0.01	2.23
CAR	141.00	220.92	7601.71	1394.45	8	12	9	-2.45	0.04	2.26
Region I	476.00	823.46	62170.67	19466.27	7	13	8	-3.41	0.01	2.31
Region II	448.88	619.92	43237.55	41321.72	8	12	15	-1.82	0.09	2.13
Region III	2158.11	3542.27	1509985.61	1371820.82	9	11	17	-2.56	0.02	2.11
Region IV-A	2854.71	4764.54	3483730.57	700681.60	7	13	7	-2.57	0.04	2.36
Region IV-B	210.67	382.18	57714.33	2566.53	3	17	2	-1.23	0.34	4.30
Region V	716.60	1178.20	293729.30	60429.31	5	15	5	-1.84	0.12	2.57
Region VI	674.38	1119.50	123237.13	31773.36	8	12	9	-3.31	0.01	2.26
Region VII	1864.14	2699.15	825230.81	1304928.14	7	13	15	-1.79	0.09	2.13
Region IX-A	14.50	22.22	40.50	272.65	2	18	3	-1.30	0.29	3.18
Region IX-B	453.50	551.00	9465.00	34624.00	4	16	9	-1.45	0.18	2.26
Region X	1079.67	1269.93	19678.67	363252.53	6	14	16	-1.11	0.28	2.12
Region XI	575.75	997.00	342136.92	76616.53	4	16	3	-1.40	0.26	3.18
Region XIII	277.00	317.25	29020.67	20069.00	4	16	4	-0.44	0.69	2.78
PH*	1063.61	1234.78	1283074.13	1818499.73	90	250	186	-1.17	0.24	1.97
	L3	L2	L3	L2	L3	L2				
PH**	1464.00	1311.53	2933042.00	1867731.10	2	32	1	0.12	0.24	1.97

Table 5. T-test results comparing the new cases received during the different levels of community quarantine

Area	mean		variance		N		df	t Stat	P(T<=t)	t Critical
	ECQ	GCQ	ECQ	GCQ	ECQ	GCQ				
NCR	1921.43	3462.62	1288233.95	323367.92	7	13	8	-3.37	0.01	2.31
CAR	125.13	241.50	4394.98	10340.45	8	12	18	-3.10	0.01	2.10
Region I	372.29	751.23	37976.57	23568.86	7	13	10	-4.45	0.00	2.23
Region II	609.13	805.00	89457.55	49995.64	8	12	12	-1.58	0.14	2.18
Region III	2117.11	2964.64	1650029.36	1301303.85	9	11	16	-1.54	0.14	2.12
Region IV-A	3203.43	5075.23	4239774.62	752395.19	7	13	7	-2.30	0.06	2.36
Region IV-B	167.00	398.76	34428.00	8466.82	3	17	2	-2.12	0.17	4.30
Region V	717.40	1203.87	333330.30	94151.70	5	15	5	-1.80	0.13	2.57
Region VI	830.00	1299.08	206035.43	24632.81	8	12	8	-2.81	0.02	2.31
Region VII	1907.75	3024.08	893765.64	1157290.45	8	12	16	-2.45	0.03	2.12
Region IX-A	15.50	30.61	220.50	620.84	2	18	2	-1.26	0.34	4.30
Region IX-B	445.50	569.19	14803.00	50210.03	4	16	9	-1.50	0.17	2.26
Region X	1162.33	1292.00	22443.07	277669.69	6	14	17	-0.84	0.41	2.11
Region XI	776.25	1261.19	664151.58	180010.70	4	16	3	-1.15	0.33	3.18
Region XIII	353.75	380.44	60150.25	15772.00	4	16	3	-0.21	0.85	3.18
PH*	1138.14	1289.04	1474784.26	1877090.76	91	249	179	-0.98	0.33	1.97
	L3	L2	L3	L2	L3	L2				
PH**	1391.00	1204.56	2761250.00	1670309.42	2	32	1	0.16	0.90	12.71

*Cases during ECQ and GCQ are compared (March 2020-October 2021). Regions VIII (only one instance of ECQ) and XII (no instance of ECQ) are not included.

**Cases during Alert Levels 2 and 3 are compared (November 2021-December 2021)

Based on the t-test conducted, there were no significant changes in the number of cases, both terminated and newly received, during the different levels of community quarantine nationwide. However, based on the analysis per region, the changes were significant in NCR, CAR, Region I, Region III, Region VI-A and Region VI as to the terminated cases. On the other hand, the changes were significant in the NCR, CAR, Region I, Region VI, and Region VII as to the number of new cases received.

4.4. Hypothesis Testing

In this study, the aim was to determine whether the covid-19 had an impact on the disposition of criminal cases handled by PAO, as well as access to

justice of the indigent clients. To restate, the following are the hypotheses of this study:

Hypothesis 1: The COVID-19 pandemic caused further delays in the resolution of cases handled by the Public Attorney's Office.

Hypothesis 2: The COVID-19 pandemic caused problems with indigent clients' access to justice, courts and lawyers due to the imposition of measures for its containment.

In order to test these hypotheses, Welch's (1947) t-tests were conducted to compare the differences before and during covid and to determine if such difference is statistically significant. Here, the data gathered are from January 2018 to December 2021 or 48 months. Since the quarantine restrictions were imposed on March 2020 and cases were almost close to zero during this month and the two months following, namely April and May 2020, the said three months will be excluded in the analysis. This is to make determine whether covid actually made a significant impact on the criminal cases handled by PAO. The time considered to be under Covid-19 is only 19 months while the pre-covid months would add up to 26 months. Hence, instead of using a paired t-test, which would not work since there are different number of values involved, the Welch's t-test was used. It is useful and more appropriate for dissimilar sample sizes and when variances cannot be presumed to be equal.

4.4.1. Hypothesis 1: The COVID-19 pandemic caused further delays in the resolution of cases handled by the Public Attorney’s Office.

For hypothesis 1, a Welch’s t-test was done on the terminated cases using the 26 months for pre-covid from January 2018 to February 2020. On the other hand, the 19 months during covid based on the data available is from June 2020 to December 2021.

Table 6.1. T-test Results on the Terminated Cases

mean		variance		N		df	t Stat	P(T<=t)	t Critical
Pre-Covid	Covid	Pre-Covid	Covid	Pre-Covid	Covid				
29047.27	22478.32	25039529.80	14389109.23	26	19	43	5.01	0.00	2.02

Based on the Welch’s t-test, there was a statistically significant difference in the cases ($t=5.01$, $p=0.00$) between pre-covid and during covid.

4.4.2. Hypothesis 2: The COVID-19 pandemic caused problems with indigent clients’ access to justice, courts and lawyers due to the imposition of measures for its containment.

For hypothesis 2, a Welch’s t-test was done on the newly accepted cases using the 26 months for pre-covid from January 2018 to February 2020. On the other hand, the 19 months during covid based on the data available is from June 2020 to December 2021.

Table 6.2. T-test Results on the Newly Accepted Cases

mean		variance		N		df	t Stat	P(T<=t)	t Critical
Pre-Covid	Covid	Pre-Covid	Covid	Pre-Covid	Covid				
26072.96	23305	8294300.438	8282357.78	26	19	39	3.19	0.00	2.02

Based on the Welch’s t-test, there was a statistically significant difference in the cases ($t=3.19$, $p=0.00$) between pre-covid and during covid.

Table 6.3. Summary of Hypotheses Tests

Hypothesis	Remarks
H1: The COVID-19 pandemic caused further delays in the resolution of cases handled by the Public Attorney’s Office	Supported
H2: The COVID-19 pandemic caused problems with indigent clients’ access to justice, courts and lawyers due to the imposition of measures for its containment.	Supported

While the overall data on the number of cases nationwide indicate that there are indeed significant differences in the number of cases before and after Covid-19, it cannot be said for the number of cases per region. The following shows the t-test results per region and island group:

Table 7.1.1 T-test Results on the Terminated Cases in Luzon

Area	mean		variance		N		df	t Stat	P(T<=t)	t Critical
	Pre-Covid	Covid	Pre-Covid	Covid	Pre-Covid	Covid				
NCR	5479.23	3170.16	4750817.62	777028.25	26	19	35	4.88	0.00	2.03
CAR	274.38	214.53	6570.41	1769.60	26	19	39	3.22	0.00	2.02
Region I	1043.38	768.79	44447.69	28508.62	26	19	43	4.85	0.00	2.02
Region II	703.92	675.47	49079.99	48461.49	26	19	39	0.43	0.67	2.02
Region III	3427.08	3241.16	1988640.39	995003.14	26	19	43	0.52	0.61	2.02
Region IV-A	7060.42	4602.05	3655801.53	886783.72	26	19	38	5.68	0.00	2.02
Region IV-B	441.42	387.84	18457.37	3817.81	26	19	37	1.78	0.08	2.03
Region V	1227.65	1193.58	54249.84	49194.15	26	19	40	0.5	0.62	2.02
LUZON	19657.50	14253.58	14854668.98	6446315.37	26	19	43	5.66	0.00	2.02

Table 7.1.2. T-test Results on the New Cases in Luzon

Area	mean		variance		N		df	t Stat	P(T<=t)	t Critical
	Pre-Covid	Covid	Pre-Covid	Covid	Pre-Covid	Covid				
NCR	5071.58	3297	654408.33	480259.11	26	19	42	7.90	0.00	2.02
CAR	237.88	218.26	3697.23	7694.87	26	19	30	0.84	0.41	2.04
Region I	822.73	667.84	20483.32	39596.14	26	19	31	2.89	0.01	2.04
Region II	601.92	830.58	8591.91	17926.48	26	19	30	-6.41	0.00	2.04
Region III	2871.15	2816.16	1073159.42	971308.25	26	19	40	0.18	0.86	2.02
Region IV-A	6241.35	4943.16	1577492.96	839096.36	26	19	43	4.01	0.00	2.02
Region IV-B	364.46	386.63	14131.54	10514.25	26	19	42	-0.67	0.51	2.02
Region V	1112.81	1206.16	15218.88	85512.81	26	19	23	-1.31	0.20	2.07
LUZON	17323.88	14365.79	5463465.39	4734766.40	26	19	40	4.36	0.00	2.02

As shown in the table, the results for the whole of Luzon show that the changes in the number of cases before and during covid is significant, both as to the terminated cases and the new cases received. However, only four regions, namely NCR, CAR, Region I, and Region IV-A showed significant differences out of the eight regions in the Luzon area as to the terminated cases. On the other hand, also four regions show significant differences as to the new cases, specifically NCR, Region I, Region II, and Region IV-A.

Table 7.2.1. T-test Results on the Terminated Cases in Visayas

Area	mean		variance		N		df	t Stat	P(T<=t)	t Critical
	Pre-Covid	Covid	Pre-Covid	Covid	Pre-Covid	Covid				
Region VI	1466.46	1229.89	114346.02	47410.65	26	19	42	2.85	0.01	2.02
Region VII	2597.73	2701.16	437425.5646	1140153.36	26	19	32	-0.37	0.71	2.05
Region VIII	583.04	713.79	18956.43846	21728.9532	26	19	37	-3.02	0.00	2.03
VISAYAS	4647.23	4644.84	468197.4646	1292680.92	26	19	27	0.01	0.99	2.05

Table 7.2.2. T-test Results on the New Cases in Visayas

Area	mean		variance		N		df	t Stat	P(T<=t)	t Critical
	Pre-Covid	Covid	Pre-Covid	Covid	Pre-Covid	Covid				
Region VI	1529.04	1080.16	111700.04	43574.70	26	19	42	5.53	0.00	2.02
Region VII	2584.54	2572.26	628714.26	1009024.98	26	19	33	0.04	0.97	2.03
Region VIII	675.77	711.53	19300.34	32572.71	26	19	33	-0.72	0.48	2.03
VISAYAS	4789.35	4363.95	1308714.32	1149441.94	26	19	40	1.28	0.21	2.02

In this table, it can be seen that the number of cases in the Visayas area as a whole had no statistically significant changes before and during Covid-19. However, analysis per region shows that Region VI and Region VIII showed statistically significant differences in the number of terminated cases while only Region VI showed statistically significant change in the new cases received.

Table 7.3.1. T-test Results on the Terminated Cases in Mindanao

Area	mean		variance		N		df	t Stat	P(T<=t)	t Critical
	Pre-Covid	Covid	Pre-Covid	Covid	Pre-Covid	Covid				
Region IX-A	20.00	25.21	137.20	273.84	26	19	31	-1.17	0.25	2.04
Region IX-B	674.73	571.63	33794.20	13829.36	26	19	42	2.29	0.03	2.02
Region X	1528.00	1334.89	64628.80	152648.88	26	19	29	1.88	0.07	2.05
Region XI	1108.46	995.68	70055.14	64661.89	26	19	40	1.44	0.16	2.02
Region XII	811.38	588.74	44826.41	23736.09	26	19	43	4.08	0.00	2.02
Region XIII	457.85	344.63	10855.10	22723.02	26	19	30	2.82	0.01	2.04
MINDANAO	4600.42	3860.79	394322.17	441361.40	26	19	38	3.77	0.00	2.02

Table 7.3.2. T-test Results on the New Cases in Mindanao

Area	mean		variance		N		df	t Stat	P(T<=t)	t Critical
	Pre-Covid	Covid	Pre-Covid	Covid	Pre-Covid	Covid				
Region IX-A	25.00	36.68	172.80	800.12	26	19	24	-1.67	0.11	2.06
Region IX-B	578.85	580.32	11516.86	30882.67	26	19	28	-0.03	0.97	2.05
Region X	1304.69	1352.68	35221.58	98609.67	26	19	27	-0.59	0.56	2.05
Region XI	1017.46	1270.05	36374.90	168724.27	26	19	24	-2.49	0.02	2.06
Region XII	796.42	637.26	13669.93	9722.09	26	19	42	4.94	0.00	2.02
Region XIII	379.42	417.37	4867.13	16900.80	26	19	26	-1.16	0.26	2.06
MINDANAO	4101.85	4294.37	168455.98	343444.02	26	19	30	-1.23	0.23	2.04

As to Mindanao, the table shows that as a whole, there was no significant changes in the number of cases before and during covid as to the new cases received but significant as to the terminated cases. As to the terminated cases per region, only the cases in Regions IX-B, XII, and XIII are significant pre-covid and during covid. However, only regions XI and XII had statistically significant changes.

In summary, it shows that nationwide, the number of criminal cases handled by PAO in the Philippines showed a statistically significant change, both as to terminated and newly received cases. It must be noted, however, that it cannot be said for all the regional offices operated by PAO. Based on the t-tests conducted on each regional office, there were nine regions which showed significant change in the number of terminated cases they handled before and during covid, while only seven regions for newly received cases.

4.5. PAO Lawyer's perspectives

To supplement the secondary statistical data gathered, the study also investigated how the PAO lawyers perceived the impact of Covid-19 on the criminal cases they handle as well as their experiences as practitioners. This was done through interviews with PAO lawyers (two each per island group), who were asked to answer the following issues: work interruption during lockdown, shift to digitalization, prevalence of cases.

4.5.1. Work interruption during lockdown

Respondents were asked to describe how work was interrupted, especially during the first lockdown. They were asked if they had issues pertaining to mobility or ability to travel, access to files, and pending cases.

As to mobility, most respondents had no difficulty when it comes to appearing in court since there were no face-to-face hearings during lockdown. When required to attend offline as when they are physically needed to represent indigent clients apprehended in areas where lockdown is imposed, there was also no difficulty due to the exemption granted to lawyers. (Merez, 2020).

However, when it came to access to files, respondents were divided. Some experienced no interruption since office files were always accessible. For some, though, it was difficult, if not impossible for them to get access to files, which are traditionally only accessible offline. Due to the suddenness of the imposed

lockdown, the courts were also unable to give them access to the files needed for their respective cases.

As to pending cases, the respondents were consistent in their response that they were interrupted. Particularly, respondents point out that there were interruptions as to the inevitable rescheduling of hearings due to the non-availability of court personnel, lawyers and/or witnesses due to the restrictions in place. Consequently, since there were no hearings and were just rescheduled, pending cases were hampered and increased in number. They also observed that when it comes to cases pertaining to Persons Deprived of Liberty or PDLs, their cases progressed more slowly because of the limited access to computers in jails.

4.5.2. Shift to digitalization

Covid-19 has forced and prompted a shift in the use of technology in almost all fields, including the criminal justice system (Evenstad, 2021). Consequently, PAO lawyers had no choice but to experience and actually move towards digitalization. Respondents were asked how they were able to adapt to the shift in their practice as public attorneys. In particular, they responded as to how they contacted their indigent clients, access to technology (both on respondents and their clients), virtual hearings, and their dealings or transactions with the prosecution, court, or the police.

Respondents explained that the ways in which they contact their clients remained the same as when there was no Covid-19 yet. They had to provide phone numbers and/or email to clients as their means of communication. Addressing the

needs of the clients through phone calls became more customary during the pandemic.

Accordingly, since there was a need for more access to cellular phones and other technological devices as well as internet to contact clients, PAO lawyers had to have more resources. Respondents expressed that they were provided extra amount of load for texts, calls and mobile data. It was important to make sure that they had sufficient mobile data allowance in case of urgent matters such as online inquest proceedings. Aside from use of cellular phones for transactions pertaining to their cases, PAO lawyers also had to make use of laptops especially during court hearings. On the other hand, as to the indigent clients' access to technology and internet, the respondents explained that their clients had to ask nearby government offices which are willing to provide them access to a device and internet connection.

In the Philippines, the Supreme Court conducts virtual hearings through Microsoft 365 videoconferencing tool, or the MS Teams (Yates-Roberts, 2020). Hence, for some PAO lawyers who had no prior experience in using MS Teams, they had to learn how to use the same. In addition, some respondents also had to buy webcam and microphone to be able to attend to their hearings properly. Aside from the device, there was also a need for a quiet room conducive for the online hearing and a stable internet connection. Based on their experience, the respondents stated that virtual hearings through MS Teams, although relatively new, were generally manageable except for instances when they would have bad or intermittent internet connection.

The shift to digitalization also pushed PAO lawyers to make changes in their dealings with the prosecution and the police. For inquest proceedings, respondent PAO lawyers were consistent in saying that they had to resort to communicating through phone calls, or use of mobile applications such as Facebook messenger or Viber.

While the shift to digitalization required the PAO lawyers to make a lot of changes in their transactions and dealings pertaining to the cases they handle, especially criminal cases, it could not have been all negative. During the interview, respondents were asked if there were advantages with the said shift. The responses were mostly related to transportation and accommodation cost, time, and lessened risk to life.

As to cost for transportation and accommodation, respondents were all in agreement that because transactions were mostly done online or through phone calls, they were able to save for transportation cost, decrease expenses on gas, and avoid traffic. There was also no need to spend on accommodation since transactions are remotely done. This is an advantage compared to when transactions had to be done offline and PAO lawyers had to travel and book for accommodations especially when their cases require them to do so. Thus, since there is no need to travel, more time is saved. Another advantage is that the risk to life is lessened. The respondents were all concerned about their health and were cautious about the risk if they get exposed to the virus. Hence, they consider the shift to digitalization as an advantage considering that their risk of exposure is lessened due to avoidance of face-to-face transactions.

The respondents were also asked as to their perception on whether work can be done remotely with the same results as when it had to be done face-to-face. Some responded that they can be as productive as they were when they had to do the transactions face-to-face and that hearings done online were convenient for lawyers and parties. However, some also noted that while convenient, hearings and trials would still be better done face-to-face as evidence are readily available for scrutiny and proceedings are properly recorded. Some still think that online hearings are prone to miscommunication due to intermittent internet connection.

When asked about their perception on the adaption of the legal sector with the digital shift, respondents stated that while a lot were able to easily learn and adjust, not all were able to adapt. Some old lawyers who are not technically advanced, and a lot of indigent clients who do not have access to technology due to lack of cellular phones or internet, had difficulty adapting. The respondents were all in agreement that to make things work, stability of internet connection must be improved and make technology more accessible to lawyers and indigent clients. They specifically suggested that there should be a call center to guide the parties on how to do the videoconference hearings and that jails should be provided more budget and access in order for them to enhance their capacity to do videoconferencing.

As to whether they expect the continuation of the use of digital means in the legal field even after pandemic, the respondents pointed out that while there are advantages in shifting to digitalization, most courts would still go back to the old

way of conducting cases, particularly hearings. They highlight that it is difficult to observe the demeanor of witnesses if hearings are virtual. Another issue encountered during remote hearing is the difficulty of examining and accessing the records and documentary evidence. Thus, respondents think that while virtual hearing is convenient, saves time and transportation cost, face-to-face hearings would still be the better choice post pandemic. They are, however, expecting that it may still be adopted as a hybrid for transactions not requiring the scrutiny of documentary or object evidence.

4.5.3. Prevalence of specific cases

Lastly, respondents were asked whether there are particular cases which became more prevalent during Covid based on their experience. For some, they handled more cases pertaining to violation of quarantine protocols. Others handled more cases on dangerous drugs and sexual abuses or domestic violence.

Chapter 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

This chapter presents the conclusion of the study, and its relation to the research purpose and main research questions. This chapter will also include some policy recommendations, and the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

5.1.1. Disposition of Cases

Based on the findings of the study, it has been shown that the Covid-19 pandemic, including all the measures adopted in order to contain the virus or mitigate its effect, significantly affected the disposition of cases. While the data available did not accurately show how long the cases are resolved since the PAO could not provide data on how long the cases have been pending before its resolution, it was shown through the number of terminated cases that the same has been significantly reduced because of covid.

It must be noted, however, that while cases significantly dropped during the early imposition of restrictions brought about by the different levels of community quarantine, the number of cases terminated, and new cases resolved eventually saw an increase in the following months. This indicates that the PAO was able to adjust quickly in the way they respond to the cases they handle during the pandemic. Based on the 2020 Accomplishment Report of PAO, the office renovated its processes and adopted alternative modes of transacting with clients and courts. The PAO was able to make use of technological tools to still fulfill its

mandate despite the difficulty brought about by the mobility restrictions. Because of these innovations, the PAO was still able to give legal assistance to indigent clients, which may explain why the number of cases after the strictest restrictions quickly recovered.

“Justice delayed is justice denied,” hence, for indigent clients who have no other hope but the assistance and representation of PAO lawyers, knowing that their cases are making some progress is very important. With the covid-19 pandemic, however, some interruptions were inevitable, which lead to the delay or belated termination or resolution of cases

Therefore, it is necessary that the PAO and the government know how to respond to crisis, as huge as Covid. As mentioned, criminal cases involve matters of life and liberty and therefore it must be given top priority.

5.1.2. Access to Justice

Access to justice in this study pertains to the indigent clients' ability to be able to communicate with lawyers and the technological means. Based on the data gathered, it was clear that the Covid-19 pandemic also posed a significant effect on the number of new cases accepted and handled by PAO. This means that access to lawyers became more difficult for the indigent clients. Based on the interviews conducted as well, it has been evident that clients had to suffer more because of covid. For instance, some still had to find a government agency or office which can

accommodate them and allow them to use technological device in order for them to communicate with their lawyers or attend hearings.

Access to lawyers, as we have found, is not just an issue for the indigent clients. It is also an issue for the PAO lawyers as well. Without the necessary tools to do their work as representatives of indigent workers, the latter's right to access to justice is also interrupted. Hence, it is necessary that in order for the lawyers to continue improving their skills and tools to adapt to the changing environment in order to make sure that justice is accessible to the clients.

It bears stressing, however, that the decrease in the number of new cases received may also be attributed not just to the difficulty of clients to access courts and lawyers due to the pandemic but also to the decrease in the number of crimes that occurred during the same period. As discussed, mobility restrictions were imposed during the community quarantine levels, hence, it may also be possible that the crimes actually committed during the said period might have decreased as well and this might have affected the number of cases received and handled by the PAO.

5.2. Recommendations

A global pandemic like Covid-19 can easily disrupt the normal course of things, thus in order to mitigate the negative effects future crisis may cause, it is

important that organizations such as the Public Attorney's Office be prepared. This is especially because the PAO's role in the justice system is crucial.

Based on the interviews with PAO lawyers, most of them prefer to do trials and hearings in the traditional way or face-to-face. However, they are open to having a hybrid manner of doing their transactions through remote technology. It is therefore necessary for the office to determine which transactions may be done online or remotely and those which need to be done in person. After its determination based on the needs and capacities of each regional office, guidelines on how they should proceed with such transactions must be in place. The office can also maintain certain work models and processes, such as paperless processes to make sure that documents and files can still be accessible without having to go to the office physically. This also decreases the possibility of loss of important files and documents. These should be included in the office's manual which shall guide the PAO lawyers as well as other practitioners.

Considering that the hybrid form might be the norm in the coming years, the PAO needs to be equipped with the necessary means. It is recommended that the PAO include in their budget the provision of technological tools and support for the lawyers and clients. Budget is a necessary resource so the office can have access to technology. In particular, there is a need to invest on technological tools and stable internet connection. While there is already a tool in place that has been allowed by the courts such as MS Teams when doing video conferences, it is recommended that they expand and make use of other tools which will be more convenient for them and for the clients. The PAO offices should determine which

tools are more effective based on their needs and resources. It will also help if they will consider the factors relating to the environment where they conduct virtual transactions such as lighting, camera angles, and background settings. This will help avoid miscommunication and may add to the client's better access to justice through the PAO lawyers' services.

It will also help the office if they will have a capacity development for lawyers. Aside from the regular trainings, it be useful if lawyers will have IT training considering that the digitalization of the legal field will continue, although traditional ways of doing things may be better in specific transactions. This training will increase their community situational awareness and leadership as well. It is recommended that their current system of electronic visitation for clients who are in jail should be maintained and improved continuously. In addition, it would also be an advantage for both the lawyers and the clients if lawyers will be trained more on how to deal with the indigent clients whether offline or online.

Lastly, it is also recommended that PAO lawyers have a more improved communication and dealings with the actors of the other pillars of the justice system such as the prosecution and the police, whether online and offline. The office should also advocate the integration of corrections or jail bureaus into public health planning, as well as the reduction of number of inmates to decongest the jails and to reinforce partnerships and to ensure delivery of services to clients in times of crisis.

5.3. Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

This research is limited in a sense that the data is very much dependent on what can be provided by the Public Attorney's Office. Hence, while it might have been more ideal to get the specific types of cases per month and per region, the same cannot be obtained.

Another limitation is that the measurement as to delay is not very accurate because the only data obtained are the terminated cases. Therefore, it does not take into consideration how long the cases have been pending. It does not specify when the terminated cases started.

Considering that it seems that we have to live with Covid in the next couple of years, for future research it is recommended that study be conducted focusing on the impact of online hearing. Moreover, future research should also consider expanding to more years as more data will be available then. Future research should also consider other factors that might have occurred such as the impact of vaccination.

While it has been mentioned that criminal cases are more urgent than the other cases such as civil case, administrative, etc., it might also be interesting to study on such other cases. To get a broader picture of the criminal justice system, future researchers may also consider investigating on how cases are handled by the different pillars of the system, such as prosecution, police and the citizens.

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국문초록

코로나19가 필리핀 형사소송에 미치는 영향

: 검찰청의 형사사건 조사를 바탕으로

Rona Francia Lucero PALINES

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글로벌행정전공

코로나19는 형사사법제도에도 영향을 미쳤다. 대유행 기간 동안, 법률 업무와 거래의 정상적인 과정이 크게 중단되었다. 법정이 폐쇄되고 재판과 청문회 같은 절차를 원격으로 진행해야 했다.

이 연구는 Covid-19와 이에 대응하기 위해 채택된 예방 조치가 필리핀의 형사 사건 수사 및 절차에 어떤 영향을 미치는지 조사하려고 한다. 특히 이번 연구는 정부의 주요 법률 사무소인 필리핀의 PAO(Public Attorney's Office)가 개인 변호사의 서비스를 받을 여유가 없는 가난한 사람들에게 무료 법률 지원과 서비스를 제공하는 데 있어 취급하는 형사 사건을 조사했다. 이 연구는 법원 및 변호사와의 접근 뿐만 아니라 사건의 해결 방법을 조사함으로써 전염병이 사건 처리에 어떤 영향을 미치는지 조사했다. PAO의 공식 데이터를 수집한 후, Welch's t-테스트를 수행하여 Covid-19 이전 및 동안 접수된 종료 사례와 새로운 사례의 수에 큰 차이가 있는지 확인하였다. 테스트 결과는 코로나19가 실제로 케이스에 상당한 영향을 미친다는 것을 보여주었다. PAO의 2차 자료를 보완하기 위해, 공변호사들도 인터뷰했다. 인터뷰를 통해 그들은 코로나19가 실무자와 의뢰인이 정의에 접근할 수 있는 데 영향을 미쳤다고 인식하는

것으로 밝혀졌다. 그들이 처리하는 사례에서 원격 거래의 부정적인 효과와 긍정적인 효과를 접했지만, 그들은 여전히 전통적인 거래 방식으로 돌아가기를 기대하였다. 다만 특정 사례들에 대해서는 원격 소송에 열려 있는 것으로 밝혀졌다.

주요 키워드: 코로나19, 형사사법관, 사법권, 변호사, 변호인

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