

Correspondence

Improvement of water quality amidst COVID-19 pandemic: a paradoxical picture

The continuity of the COVID-19 pandemic drastically changes almost everything—from socialization to economic activities and from education to environmental conditions. People even regard such a global crisis as an exclusive negative phenomenon. However, this also allows for some aspect of human existence and society to be examined which apparently brings certain ‘unseen blessings’. In a recent correspondence, the authors expressed the positive implication of the imposition of community lockdown due to pandemics to the air quality.¹ Additionally, this paper presents another environmental-related improvement specifically to water quality as a result of the government’s enactment of health measures. From an international research outlook, a study underlined that COVID-19 imposed lockdown ceased industrial and vehicular movements and the rate of pollutants into the ecosystem was reduced.²

In the Philippines, the department on the environment and natural resources anticipates the enhancement of water quality.³ The closing of restaurants and malls, and fewer clients from hotels had shown a decrease in the discharge of wastewater. This environmental recovery is a significant consequence since, with the advent of the pandemic, the necessity for clean water has increased to prevent infection.⁴ Nevertheless, a paradoxical depiction appears to emerge from this scenario. On the one hand, the country is aiming to eliminate or reduce the number of COVID-19 cases and infections, and on the other hand, water quality relies and significantly improve with the government’s ordinance of community quarantines and strict lockdown. With this, it confronts someone to answer the following question: Should the people and the country exclusively depend on the current global problem [the pandemic] in resolving this ecological problem [water pollution]?

A resolution can be found in looking into the individual and government levels concerning their crucial roles in the environment. In the individual sphere, though the encouragement of good sanitation like wearing a face mask and practicing social distancing help to lessen to be infected with the virus, people must also consider that we are connected to the

environment and by modifying the community protocols, (water) pollution may bounce back. Recycling, proper disposal and segregation of waste materials must be observed consistently even after the crisis. Importantly, a person should internalize the concept of the cause and effect relation of individual behaviour on the environment and education is one of the driving forces for the realization of this thought.

Lastly, at the government level, legislators and national officials have to improve and increase the number of wastewater treatment plants and sewerage systems that could accommodate, if possible, the entire population both for rural and urban areas. But establishment and construction are not enough, a systematized and scheduled evaluation (e.g. every after 3 years) is useful to maintain these environmental projects. Moreover, the government should address and build substantial toilets in the public and for the society’s poor families. A government and private (e.g. environmental organizations and experts) partnership can also be a venue to construct a sustainable plan. Convincingly, these are just some of the things that answer the paradox and aforementioned question.

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Conflict of interest

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