

Insight Summary

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically affected the entire world, made billions of people suffer, and catastrophically altered millions of economies. Understanding the scope and effects of the pandemic, our analysis attempted to identify the most efficient course of actions that an Asian country should take to minimize the impairment caused by the deadly virus, as they are the closest countries to the root of the pandemic, China. Focusing on analyzing the COVID-19 data of Asian countries from January to July 2020, we were able to gather insights into how these countries deal with the pandemic, as well as learn about what they should do to further thrive in this global crisis and provide recommendations.

Questions

What should an Asian country do to adapt and fight the COVID-19 pandemic?

What are the effective strategies for countries, especially those within proximity to the pandemic's country of origin, to implement in future pandemics?

Findings

By analyzing the death rates and number of confirmed cases of specific countries, we conclude the best way to minimize loss from the pandemic is to apply preventive policies, such as quarantines and border controls, conservatively at the very beginning of the pandemic. In applying preventive policies, we minimize the death toll as countries are going through the initial shock as well as significantly slow down the virus' spread rate in the future. We chose Vietnam and the Philippines as examples as they are similar in population and in proximity to the virus' origin, as well as the effects of these policies are shown most intensively.

Presented in *Figure 1*, at the beginning of 2020, the significantly high peak of the death rate was concrete evidence of our shock toward the deathly effects that this pandemic caused. It is clear that none of us had prepared ourselves, both mentally and physically, to conquer the virus. However, in acknowledging that it is nearly impossible to prevent the initial shock when experiencing a new deadly pandemic, we focus on examining the most suitable strategy to reduce the number of confirmed cases to lower the death toll.

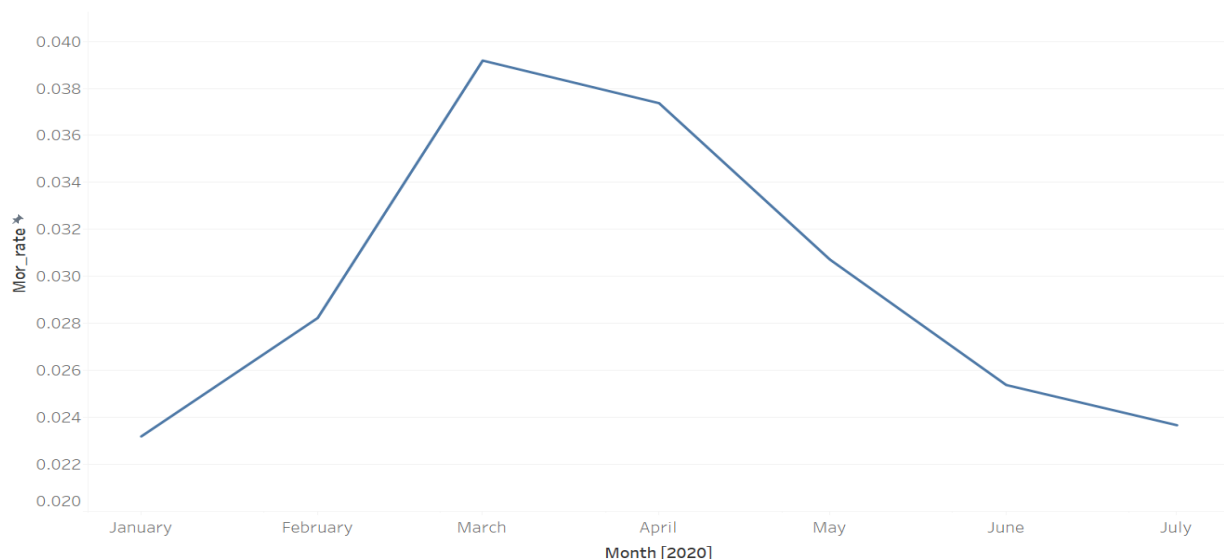


Figure 1: Mortality Rate worldwide over time

Specifically, Vietnam proactively imposed strict border controls as early as February 1, 2020, even before many other countries fully acknowledged the virus's threat. The Vietnamese government shut down all flights coming from China, as well as required a quarantine policy of 14 days for all people who entered Vietnam starting from February 1, 2020 (Vietnam Ministry of Health, 2020). These early acts had many significantly positive results on the pandemic situation in Vietnam, as they allowed this country to control the spread of the virus and focus its resources on the recovery of active patients. Precisely, Vietnam was able to maintain its death rate of 0% for 7 months until July 31 and its high recovery rates of more than 60% from April 2020, as shown in *Figure 2*.

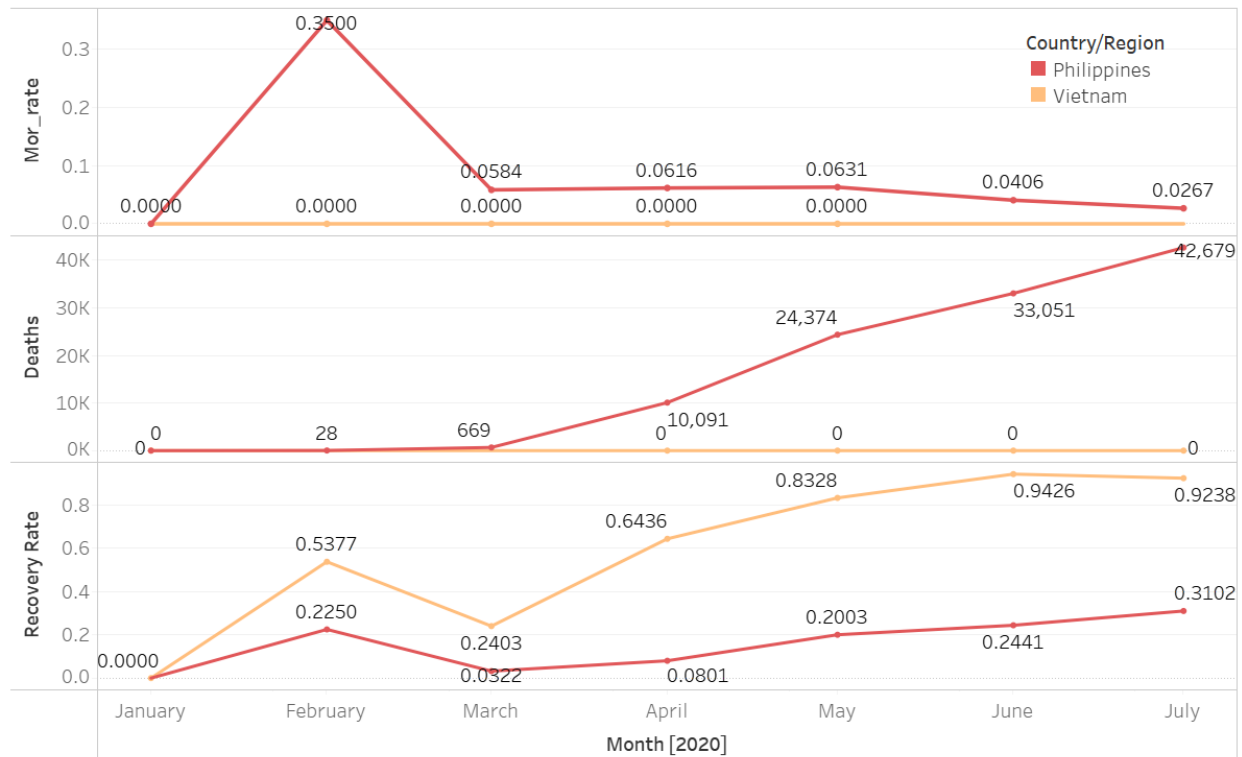


Figure 2: Mortality rate, Number of Deaths and Recovery Rate of Vietnam and the Philippines

In contrast to Vietnam, the Philippines initially opposed quarantines, causing delays in implementing strict measures. The doubts about locking down and social distancing have resulted in a drastic consequence in February 2020 in the Philippines, which is emphasized by the noticeable peak of confirmed cases, as shown in Figure 2. This sudden increase, which resulted from accepting flights directly from Wuhan, China, brought a shock to the Philippines and put this under a shortage of resources in medical care. Consequently, the Philippines experienced a mortality rate of 35%, intensively higher than any country in Asia at that time. Luckily, after being intensively criticized, the Philippines government decided to follow social distancing and lockdown procedures, which allowed this country to slow down the spread of the virus, adapt to it, and focus more on health care. After the application of social distancing and lockdown procedures, the Philippines was able to gain better mortality and recovery rates for 5 months after February.

It is also important to notice that despite their efforts, the Philippines had missed the golden opportunity to contain the virus. As shown in *Figure 3*, by July, the number of confirmed cases in the Philippines was 145 times more than that of Vietnam.



Figure 3: Number of Confirmed Cases in Vietnam and the Philippines over time

Summary

In summary, despite the similarities in population and proximity to China, the policies applied in Vietnam and Philippines resulted in drastic difference outcomes. Vietnam's early conservative approach proved to be an effective decision in saving lives and mitigating the virus' spread, while the Philippines' hesitation made them lose valuable time and resources to contain the virus, resulting in a significant number of deaths and confirmed cases.

Vietnam and the Philippines' experiences highlight the critical importance of early, decisive action when implementing quarantine and social distancing policies to effectively control the virus's spread and mitigate its impact on public health. These insights emphasize the vital role of prompt and science-based responses in the face of emerging pandemics.

Recommendations

Based on our analysis of COVID-19 data in Asian countries from January to July 2020, we *recommend early and decisive issuance of quarantine and social distancing policies*, exemplified by Vietnam's proactive approach. Future analysis opportunities include comparative studies of countries' pandemic responses, assessing long-term impacts, exploring healthcare system resilience, studying public perceptions, analyzing vaccine rollout strategies, and investigating global collaboration in pandemic response. These measures and analyses can enhance global pandemic preparedness and response strategies.