

## EXPERIENCES OF SELECTED UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES LOS BAÑOS (UPLB) COMMUNITY MEMBERS DURING MARTIAL LAW IN THE PHILIPPINES

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### ABSTRACT

Martial Law in 1972 has always been a crucial part of Philippine history and it is important for Filipinos to learn and understand what happened during that period and how military rule made an impact on the country. People have different views of Martial Law; even students of the University of the Philippines Los Baños, who are expected to be critical of social issues, also have different perceptions. This research is an attempt to make young Filipinos know about the effects of Martial Law and to help protect the young minds from historical revisionism. This research aims to present the different experiences of selected UPLB community members during the implementation of Martial Law in the country. Specifically, it describes the life of the participants before and during the Martial Law period and how its implementation affected them. It uses case study as the research design. In-depth interviews were conducted among 17 participants and thematic analysis was done to make sense of the data. It was reported that much of these experiences centered on their family, academics, work/livelihood, and their perceived quality of life. Their Martial Law experience affected their current view of the Philippine government. They feel that the present condition of the country is similar to what had happened during the Marcos Administration. Extrajudicial killings and social inequality are still rampant. Power is held by those in government position and those who are in the upper echelons of society. What they have experienced in the past has made them more critical of the Philippine government.

*Keywords: government, history, human rights, Martial Law, social movements*

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## INTRODUCTION

The Philippines has a rich political and economic history. After being colonized for centuries, it gained its independence and was able to establish its own form of government. The country was seen as one of the most advanced in Asia in the 1960s. In fact, it was deemed a model of development, second only to Japan (Hays, 2015). During that time, when South Korea was a land of peasants, the Philippines was already one of Asia's industrial powerhouses (Hays, 2015). Many goods were being produced in the country; it even processed raw materials and had assembly plants for automobiles, television, and appliances (Hays, 2015).

In the 1970s, the economy of the Philippines declined. It was left behind by other neighboring countries (Hays, 2015). The country lost what it was able to achieve in the 1950s and 1960s because of corruption in government, cronyism, and mismanagement of resources (Hays, 2015). It has been ruled by political leaders who have different interests and goals. It is apparent in the case of the Philippines that the decisions, policies, and laws that political leaders created and implemented have had significant effects on the Filipino people.

One of the most notable memories in the history of the Philippines that left significant effects on the people was the country's experience of being under the rule of the military. On September 21, 1972, the former President Ferdinand Marcos put the entire Philippines under Martial Law by signing Proclamation 1081. This was done on the basis of "lawless elements" whose aims are to unlawfully take over political and state power in

the country, overthrow the government and change the existing political, social, economic, and legal order (The Official Gazette of the Philippines, 2018). These lawless elements are of the armed movements, especially that of communist groups whose membership is strengthened through recruitment from among the peasantry, laborers, professionals, intellectuals, students, and mass media personnel (The Official Gazette of the Philippines, 2018). These movements were against various issues, including imperialism, land reform, price hikes, and poor labor conditions. There were actions to control these movements, but these were found to be inadequate and ineffective to contain the rebellion and lawlessness. The communist groups have increased the number and area of operation of its front organization (The Official Gazette of the Philippines, 2018). It has also intensified recruitment and training among the masses, especially the youth. Consequently, the *Kabataang Makabayan* (KM), the *Samahang Demokratiko ng Kabataan* (SDK), and the New People's Army (NPA) significantly increased in membership (The Official Gazette of the Philippines, 2018). There were establishments of insurgency camps across the country. School dropouts rise, and students were thought about to join the insurgency (The Official Gazette of the Philippines, 2018). A military vessel carrying firearms was seized and used against the government. Radical group sympathizers infiltrated media (The Official Gazette of the Philippines, 2018). Because of all of these aforementioned reasons, Ferdinand Marcos placed the Philippines under Martial Law by virtue of the powers vested upon him by Article VII, Section 1, Paragraph (2) of the Constitution. This has given him the power of the commander-in-chief, taking over the Armed Forces of the Philippines. As commander-in-chief, he had to maintain order

by preventing and suppressing all forms of lawless violence as well as any form of insurrection or rebellion and enforcing obedience among all citizens (The Official Gazette of the Philippines, 2018). Moreover, it also ordered the detention of anyone who will conduct an exact insurgency or rebellion against the government (The Official Gazette of the Philippines, 2018).

The proclamation of Martial Law in 1972 brought changes to the life of millions of Filipinos. When Marcos placed the country under Martial Law, Filipinos were deprived of their civil rights and suffered from presidential dictatorship and military authority (The Philippines during Martial Law, 2005). Some Filipinos might think that the declaration of Martial Law brought good things to Philippine society; however, positive statements about the Marcos regime have also been debunked. Debates on this issue are also found even in social media. This is evident in the posts and comments that can be seen online. Chua (nd) reveals in his article that the Marcos regime is actually the darkest period in Philippine history. When the military was used to control and force the people, human right violations became very common. People experienced different kinds of torture—physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual (Chua, nd).

### **The Filipinos under Military Rule**

The Philippines underwent a period when social order was chaotic. There were insurgencies and social movements. Many people were fighting for their rights and freedom.

### ***The beginning of Martial Law***

During the time of Marcos as president, there had been a growing dissatisfaction with political order and economic management. A University of the Philippines 1984 report (Martial Law Museum, nd) mentioned the notoriously growing state-run monopolies, increasing national debt, and grave corruption in the country. With these, there were a series of resignations of former allies of the government and the firing of Marcos defiants. This led to the eventual rise of Marcos cronies. As a reaction, militant protests and student activism took to the streets the call for social change. Armed struggle surfaced, especially during the formation of the New People's Army (armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, CPP-NPA). Marcos has got to find a way to control the growing communist insurgency. This had been one of the many reasons Martial Law was declared. According to Marcos, the growing number of militants meant a greater threat to the government. However, according to the history of NPA, before Martial Law, there were only around 350 members who made up the group. The rise in membership of the CPP-NPA was brought about by the declaration of Martial Law (Proclamation 1081, 1972 as cited in The Official Gazette of the Philippines, 2018).

There were other identified precursors to Martial Law. One of the famous, yet unverified story, was that of the Jabitah massacre. The news regarding the massacre of Muslims in Luzon even more provoked the Muslim separatist movement. This means that when there are more insurgencies, there are more reasons to declare Martial Law. The Plaza Miranda bombing led to the suspension of the

writ of habeas corpus, allowing warrantless arrests to control the communist insurgency (thought to be the attackers in the bombing). It was a long prelude to Martial Law (Bantayog ng mga Bayani, 2015).

The memoir of Juan Ponce Enrile reported that Enrile was asked by Marcos to study the powers of a president as the commander-in-chief under the 1935 constitution (Enrile, 2012). He was then asked to prepare documents implementing Martial Law in January 1970 (with Minerva Gonzaga-Reyes). This was a confidential document. Marcos also asked Alejandro Melchor and Jose Almonte to study how Martial Law was done in other countries and its consequences. The results of the study tell us that while Martial Law may accelerate development, in the end, the Philippines would become a political archipelago, with debilitating, factionalized politics. They then concluded that the nation would be destroyed because, apart from the divisiveness it would cause, Martial Law would offer Marcos absolute power, which would corrupt absolutely (Enrile, 2012).

### ***The shackles of Martial Law***

Marcos would claim to lead reforms that would be beneficial to the country and the Filipino people. He made the Armed Forces of the Philippines to be his personal army so he can maintain his power (Brilliantes as cited in Yu, 2006). In doing this, he made his power legitimate by constructing extensive fishing port, hydro-electric dams, and a nuclear power plant. He even exploited the forest and the country's mineral resources, which have led to the displacement of many Filipinos, especially

the marginalized sectors. These projects affected the masses and benefited the allies of Marcos (Yu, 2006). It was also mentioned that resistance was met with repression. Marcos did not allow the Filipinos to practice their freedom of speech and assembly and strikes were also suspended. Additionally, he cancelled all existing media franchises and made rumor-mongering punishable by imprisonment. Furthermore, he consolidated power by effectively abolishing Congress and holding the judiciary hostage by forcing them to submit a resignation letter (Salonga as cited in Yu, 2006).

Many people died during the Marcos regime; these were the people who revolted against the military rule. Reyes (2016) reported that 3,257 have been killed by the military during the Marcos dictatorship. This happened within a 10-year period, from 1975 to 1985.

Several accounts were published regarding the situations during Martial Law. Hong (2006) interviewed Mr. Siasat, a man from Cavite. Mr. Siasat talked about his memories of Martial Law. He highlighted the curfew during that time and how the police had mistreated the people. He also mentioned that there had been no proper justice system and this had made the villainous acts of the president's allies possible. Another dark reality during Martial Law was the existence of a black market. According to Siasat, people needed money because of extreme poverty. Child labor existed as well. One notable statement mentioned was about the kidnapping of people who go against the government (Hong, 2006). Quimpo and Quimpo (2012) also had painful stories about Martial Law. They stated that seven out of 10 siblings were involved in the revolutionary

movement since they were fighting against military dictatorship. Five of them were arrested and two of them died. The Quimpos highlighted the struggles faced by their family and the sufferings brought to them by Martial Law. Ordonez (2016) also shared that, with the imposition of the military rule, he had found himself, together with his wife and son, in Malaysia with cancelled passports. He received a letter stating that Filipinos in the United States were trying to organize anti-Martial Law groups. They exerted efforts to gather people and invite speakers to talk about the perils of Martial Law. Ordonez and his wife also organized a group of Filipinos and Canadians and established an anti-Martial Law Coalition based in San Francisco (Ordonez, 2016).

### **The University of the Philippines Los Baños during Martial Law**

The University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) was initially established as the University of the Philippines College of Agriculture (UPCA). It was the first unit of the University of the Philippines to open after the war, with Leopoldo Uichanco as dean (Bernardo, 2017). Since then, UPCA has been at the forefront of agricultural research; in the 1960s, 90% of all agricultural research in the Philippines was conducted at the campus. In particular, the university has led in experimentation and knowledge generation on tropical agriculture up to this moment (OVCRE, 2020). Aside from academic traditions, UPLB was also known for its peculiarity when it comes to students' lives on campus. Students had social events where they could connect with other students to divert their isolation from their families. These social events

included parties organized by different organizations of students from the same provinces. During those times, campus-wide social gatherings were also encouraged (Lontoc, 2017). However, UPLB experienced instability from 1970 to 1972. During that period, there was already a movement for independence. The opposition against the Marcos regime was gradually being strengthened. The movement was very active as UPLB students and employees were joining labor strikes and demonstrations. UPLB students staged a 13-day strike against government policies and increase in oil prices. Former students of the university reported that they barricaded the UPLB gate and the national highway at Los Baños Crossing, causing a traffic jam. UPLB student activists fought for issues within and outside the university. When Martial Law was declared, Marcos began issuing letters of instruction and presidential decrees. The University encountered various academic, administrative, and fiscal problems that were rooted in the unfair treatment from Diliman. The issuance of the decrees became an opportunity for UPLB to be apart from UP Diliman. The UPLB activists drafted a presidential decree for converting UPLB into an agricultural university. This move was supported by the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) and the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR). The draft was sent to the president on October 14, 1972. The University was then gaining its strength.

During Martial Law, the facilities of UPLB, such as the auditorium, cannot be used for |

symposia. Discussions about the political situation were held in the Humanities steps and were also encouraged in class (Cinco, 2016). In 1973, the *UPLB Perspective*, which is also the first student publication during Martial Law, was established through the Council of Student Leaders, with the aim of bringing relevant issues to students and to the UPLB community (UPLB Perspective, 2018).

Movements for independence were rising. Consequently, stories of atrocities, warrantless arrests, and torture among UPLB constituents filled the air. There were UPLB activists who were detained, killed, or simply disappeared. One of them was Jessica Sales, who taught Social Sciences at UPLB before being a research associate in the Department of Agricultural Education. She is remembered for encouraging sociopolitical discussion in her class. She disappeared in July 1977 and, up to now, there was no official record of her arrest, and her body was not found (Bantayog ng mga Bayani, 2016). Other UPLB activists who disappeared were Rizalina Ilagan, Cristina Catalla, Gerardo Faustino, Aloysius Baes, Rodelo Manaor, Manuel Bautista, Ma. Leticia Ladlad, and Modesto Sison (Cinco, 2016; Barahan, 2017).

Six years after the declaration of Martial Law, UPLB underwent a reorganization as it became an autonomous university. UPLB started to improve its organizations and administrative affairs. Various national centers of excellence were established (Bernardo, 2017).

### Existing speculations about Martial Law

Several speculations still linger in the minds of many Filipinos, particularly the youth who never had an experience of Martial Law. Even

UPLB students hold different views. In social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook, diverse comments can be seen about Martial Law and the Marcos regime. The most apparent of all is related to the burial of Marcos in *Libingan ng mga Bayani* and labeling him a hero. Some say Marcos is a hero, while others despise him. Other netizens do not take a stand regarding the issue since they did not experience living under military authority.

The literature talked about Martial Law in the Philippines, but none of these explored the experiences of the UPLB community. This is what this study offers. It presents different real life experiences of the UPLB community members during the Martial Law period. It also reports how their life has changed as a result of the implementation of Martial Law. Through this, the UPLB community at present will have a better understanding of what happened among the members of the community in the past.

### Objectives of the Study

As an attempt to make young Filipinos know about the consequences of Martial Law, this study aims to explore the experiences of the people who lived under military authority and see how those experiences affected them in various aspects of their lives. It specifically aims to identify common responses and reactions of participants to Martial Law, describe the lives of selected participants before and during Martial Law in the Philippines as UPLB constituents during those times, describe how Martial Law affected the participants, and lastly, discuss how their Martial Law experiences affected their perception of the

Philippine government and political leaders at present.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the UPLB community. This was chosen for two reasons: 1) UPLB is an academic institution that involves people who demonstrate strong political engagement and 2) it has members who had direct experience of Martial Law.

The participants of this study are those who satisfied the following criteria: 1) born in the late 1950s and early 1960s and 2) a student or employee of UPLB during Martial Law. Since they were at the university prior to or during the declaration of Martial Law, they can describe their life before and during this particular period in Los Baños. They can narrate the changes that happened to them and to the UPLB community due to the implementation of Martial Law.

This study involved 17 participants. These selected members of the UPLB community experienced life under Martial Law (1972-1986). The number of participants reached 17 because the researchers kept on gathering data until they reached the saturation point and redundancy of responses. Eleven of these participants were males and six were females. Majority (12) were students enrolled in either BS Agriculture or BS Forestry. Two were faculty members, one was a research assistant, and the other one was a student who became a research assistant and a faculty member of the College of Agriculture, the former name of the University of the Philippines Los Baños.

The study is qualitative in nature. The case study research design was utilized in order to explore the experiences of the participants during Martial Law. A case study is a qualitative

approach in which the researchers explore a bounded system (a case) or multiple-bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information. The researchers view this design as the most appropriate for this research because it allows the examination of data, which is most often conducted within the context of its use (Yin, 1984), that is, within the situation in which the activity takes place. The data were gathered through in-depth interviews with the participants and key informant interviews with some UPLB faculty who have vast knowledge in history and know the community very well.

Thematic analysis was used in processing the data. The researchers looked for similarities in the experiences of the participants before and during Martial Law.

## Ethical considerations

The researchers valued confidentiality and anonymity of the participants in this study. The real names of the participants were concealed and they were assured that all information gathered through interviews would be used solely for the purpose of this study.

As social scientists, the researchers have prior knowledge and sentiments about what the country has experienced during the Martial Law period. However, before the conduct of the study, the researchers tried to suspend all their biases and judgment in order to focus on

the responses of the participants. They made sure to look at both sides of the stories shared by the participants. They recorded both the positive and the negative aspects of the participants' experiences.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The experiences of the UPLB community members were explored in this study. Through key informant and in-depth interviews, the researchers were able to come up with narratives that tell how the participants experienced Martial Law during Marcos' regime.

The story of each participant focuses on their lives, before, during, and after the implementation of Martial Law. The researchers were able to explore the participants' family life, work/livelihood, academics, leisure activities, interpersonal relations, and their quality of life, and how these aspects of their lives were affected by the implementation of Martial Law in the country.

The participants were born in the 1950s and 1960s. Four out of the 17 participants experienced life in UPLB even before Martial Law was declared by former President Marcos. With this, they were able to talk about the life of students in UPLB, their activities, organizations, and even about the very rural setting of the campus during that time. Twelve participants, however, only experienced life in UPLB during Martial Law. These were the students/employees who only entered the university at the time Martial Law was already being implemented. Some participants experienced life in UPLB after Martial Law was lifted.

The participants may have entered the university under different circumstances. However, one common thing about them is that they are all part of the UPLB community who experienced changes in their life due to military rule. In addition, they all said that their experiences related to Martial Law have effects on how they view the current government.

### **The life of participants before the declaration of Martial Law in the Philippines**

The narratives of four participants who experienced life in UPLB before Martial Law was declared in 1972 were discussed. They were the ones who have seen and experienced the simple life in the university before military rule. It was found that, during that time, many students in the university were already joining rallies in order to promote awareness about issues related to controversies in the use of weedicides that were used in the Vietnam War and were tested in the College of Forestry. Other societal issues such as monopolization of the economy, corruption in government, imperialism, fascism, and bureau-capitalism were also some of the reasons mass movements were then present.

Other participants in this study were still in high school before the declaration of Martial Law; however, they have already heard social issues, witnessed militarization, and taken part in some social movements. Others were already aware of the activities of Kabataang Makabayan, and they have already supported

some of the activities of the said organization. They took part in exposing social issues to the



people by giving them pamphlets and by organizing group discussions. Other participants mentioned that there were fewer activities during that period, and students were more focused on their academics.

### **Responses and reactions of the participants to Martial Law**

Most of the participants exhibited adverse reactions when Martial Law was declared. There were fears and anxieties among them. They knew that freedom would be restricted because the military was monitoring their actions and activities. They had to be cautious of their actions. However, despite having an unsafe condition and knowing that their life was at stake, the participants still came up with away to make other UPLB community members aware of the danger and negative effects of militarization within the campus—through student activism.

Almost all of the participants had experienced joining rallies and mass movements in order to show their resistance to military rule. It was dangerous for them, but they used strategies like organizing a quick gathering at the Humanities steps. Then, after a few seconds of shouting and yelling, they would immediately disperse because they knew that they would be caught by the police or the military. They even used “pasa bilis” and coding strategies in order to communicate their message to other students because group gathering was prohibited. Another way of conveying messages was by writing songs and poems that subtly exposed the Marcos dictatorship. Some students engaged themselves in teach-ins and

discussions about social issues, done secretly in an apartment or a dormitory.

One unique response that the researchers got from this study was from one participant who mentioned that he was positive about Martial Law. He witnessed the conflict of the military group and the militant group at Grove; he even knew that freedom of the people was restricted during that time. However, for him, military rule somehow helped in instilling discipline among Filipinos. Since their actions were controlled and their activities were monitored, Filipinos had to be disciplined enough to prevent themselves from being arrested and imprisoned. For him, Martial Law was needed by Philippine society at that time. However, he also recognized the fact that being in a state of military rule must not be permanent. It was just necessary for a given period of time.

### **Daily experiences of participants during the Martial Law period**

The narratives of the participants were analyzed in this study and themes were identified from various aspects of their lives, such as family, academics, work, and their perceived quality of life.

### ***Martial Law and the family life of the participants***

The data gathered from the selected participants highlighted five themes: family influence, unaware family members, concerned family members, supportive family, and low-income family.

*Family influence:* The participants revealed that some of their family members influenced their engagement in rallies. Social awareness and love for country were also values that they have acquired from their family. These are the reasons why, during the time of Martial Law in the Philippines, they had to fight for what they believe was right. They have observed various

issues in Philippine society, and most of these affected them, if not, at least their friends or family members. Many Filipinos were captured, tortured, and killed under the military rule; people were deprived of their rights. For some participants, their knowledge of the social reality during that period was actually strengthened through their interaction with their family members.

*Unaware family members:* Most of the families of the participants have no or little knowledge about their participation and involvement in social movements and campus activism. Many of them have experienced joining and leading rallies, which aimed to criticize the government and to make the Filipino people aware of the repression and violation of rights caused by the implementation of Martial Law. Yet, their families were not informed about such activities. One of the reasons was because Los Baños is far from their places, and there was a lack of communication technology at the time. Another reason the participants opted not to tell their parents about what they had been doing as members of student organizations and student council in the university was they did not want their parents and other family members to worry about them. Under military

rule, the life of the people, particularly those who were opposing the government, was very dangerous. They knew that, if their family would find out about their efforts in promoting social awareness and opposing the Marcos regime, their families will get more anxious and worried about them.

*Concerned family members:* Some of the participants' families knew about their involvement in rallies and movements inside the campus, and there was no restriction given to them by their family. However, it is also important to note that, despite having no restriction, there was also no encouragement given to them to continue their engagement in activism and/or organizations that promote social and political awareness. In addition, concern from their parents or other family members was still there. The families were still worried, and they knew that any moment, it might lead to death. However, since the family knew that they were fighting for their rights, they had no choice but to let them continue.

*Supportive family:* Some of the families of the participants were supportive of their involvement in mass movements and student activism. No adverse reaction was given to them when the family learned about the teach-ins and other activist-related actions. This was because their families knew how important it was for them and how their efforts could benefit the Filipino people. One of the participants shared how her mother helped through prayers.

*"Alam mo sabi ng nanay ko, yung mga nangyari sa [aking] kabutihan ay pinagdadasal ko tuwing gabi...sa tingin niya providential... Tapos kahit*

*nakabalik na ako sa school, she would hear some relatives from Manila praising her, 'Ang swerte mo may anak kang ganyan.'* [My mother told me that she prayed for the good things that happened to me, she thought it was providential... then, even when I went back to school, she would hear some relatives from Manila praising her "you're lucky to have a daughter like her.]

**Poor family:** Some of the participants came from poor families. They knew how difficult life was during that time, and it became more difficult because of the oppressive government. They have experienced having nothing; that is why they wanted to change their situation.

For one participant, being a member of a poor family obliged her to become more focused on her studies so she can be financially stable in the future. Being poor somehow hindered her from becoming more involved in social movements because she had to prioritize her academics first as she was thinking of her family's welfare.

### ***Martial Law and the work/livelihood of participants***

The data gathered from the selected participants of this study highlighted two themes: 1) no substantial effect on work and 2) activism as practiced at work.

**No substantial effect on their work:** Participants shared that they continued working even if many changes occurred because of Martial

Law. They worked as typical employees at the university. Lita shared:

*"I've been working, yung trabaho ko medyo okay yung ahh pondo namin, maraming pondo for research, research assistant ako. But ang hindi ko sigurado is bata pa naman ako noon ehh at tsaka minimal naman yung involvement ko sa management."* [I've been working, my job has no problem with funds, there is a lot of fund for research. I was a research assistant. I was still a newbie and hence I had minimal involvement in management.]

As to students, they focused on their studies and worked either as transient aides or student assistants.

**Activism as practiced at work:** For other participants, activism was embedded into their work. For the faculty, they incorporated critical discussions about the different social issues inside the classroom, brought about by academic freedom in teaching. However, this academic freedom was suppressed, and the situation inhibited them from fully expressing their sentiments about social issues. Also, Martial Law prevented them from incorporating discussions of societal issues in the classroom since there were individuals who were secretly observing them. Though there was suppression, some of the UPLB employees were still able to work underground by supporting the student activists in terms of monetary and other forms of assistance, such

as allowing them to use UPLB facilities and equipment. For students, activism was

embedded in their role as student leaders. They promoted students' social welfare. For those who have left the university, they were still active in promoting the rights of the marginalized sectors, reporting societal issues to a broader set of audience as part of their job.

### ***Martial Law and the academic life of the participants***

Four themes emerged from the experiences of the participants: 1) academic as a priority 2) absence in classes due to participation in rallies, 3) being academically excellent in class, and 4) climate of fear.

*Academic as a priority:* Participants related that, although they were aware of what was happening in their surroundings, they chose to focus on their studies for various reasons. They said that their parents were observing them, they want to maintain good scholastic records, and they look forward to a bright future so they can help their families. As one of the participants mentioned:

*"Syempre priority mo pa rin school, 'yung klase mo. Kaya kahit may meetings, may activities, pagbalik mo diyan, mag-aaral ka. Lalo na pag may exam kayo, aba eh alangan namang hindi ka mag-aral, di bagsak. You are here because you are studying, not for the extra-curricular."* [Of course, school is still your priority. So even if you have meetings and activities, you will study when you return especially if you have exams. You will fail if you will not study. You are here because you are studying, not for the extra-curricular.]

There was also one participant who said that he was just focused on his studies and not even aware of what was happening on campus until student leaders informed other students.

*Absence in classes due to participation in social movements:* For some of the participants, their attendance in class was affected as they participated in social movements. They experienced skipping classes. Being part of a social movement entailed time in as much as they go to rallies and prepare placards and other materials to be brought during these rallies. They also had teach-ins to discuss societal issues and social realities. One even experienced leaving the university to go underground. Mira shared:

*"...I got involved in an entrapment operation by the military. [I] was helping in the communication of the movement by that time. But the circumstances were very light compared to the stories or after that time...the head of the arresting team was one of the PMA graduates na tumira sa apartment namin...I had my driver's license with me, that's why they were able to identify me... I was just kept in the office for about two or three weeks... Kinonvince nila ako that I have the capacity, materially and intellectually, to go back to school and in that sense they were probably successful kase na-convince ako to go back to school and they released me."* [...I got involved in an entrapment operation by the military. [I] was helping in the communication of the movement by that time. But the circumstances were very light compared to the stories or after that

time... the head of the arresting team was one of the PMA graduates who once lived in our apartment... I had my driver's license with me, that's why they were able to identify me... I was just kept in the office for about two or three weeks... they convinced me that I have the capacity, materially and intellectually, to go back to school and in that sense they were probably successful because they've convinced me to go back to school and they released me.]

*Academic excellence in class:* Despite engaging in social activism and being absent in classes due to participation in rallies, some participants shared that they were able to excel in their respective degree programs. Because of their involvement, they were able to express opinions and share insights in classroom discussions. For some, they believed that to become good student leaders, they need to become good students first. As mentioned by Mar:

*"Kung kailangan lumiban ka, lumiban ka dahil and priority mo ay yung tulog ay yung cost na pinapaburan mo so kailangang magpuyat ka, magpuyat ka pero at the same time ipinapasa namin yung mga subjects namin so at the same time oo at the same time nag-excel kami sa klase namin nagta-top kami sa mga exams."* [If you need not attend class, then don't. If you need to be an all-nighter, then go, but at the same time we pass our subjects, at the same time excel in class, we top the exams.]

*Climate of fear:* Discussions about societal issues were incorporated into the class. However, because of Martial Law, there were

moments that they were very cautious about what they were going to share in class. This is because of the fear that once caught by the agents, they will be killed. Nonetheless, this was not a hindrance to fully engage themselves in promoting the rights of the people and to fight for democracy. They were able to think of other strategies that helped them expose the illness of society.

### ***Martial Law and the participants' perceived quality of life***

The data highlighted four themes under perceived quality of life: 1) climate of fear, 2) military harassment, 3) suppression of freedom and rights, and 4) poor life condition.

*Climate of fear:* Just before Martial Law was declared, there was great unrest in society. Rallies and demonstrations were staples on the streets. At first, the government practiced high

tolerance for these. But people were already afraid—afraid of what is to come. This fear, later on, became overwhelming fear when Martial Law was declared. Those who defied the government and administration were imprisoned. Some rallyists were tortured. Some were killed. This is backed up by the study of Hong (2006) that showed no proper justice system under the military rule.

The participants began to fear for their own lives, their safety, and the safety of the people they love. They were careful about what they would express because it could be against the government. They were afraid to go out in the streets by themselves because they might be taken. As Lina said:

*“Pero alam mo nung time na yun, talagang nakakatakot. Nakakatakot. Hindi ka puwedeng... hindi katulad noong pre-Martial Law na open di maka-express ka ng [opinion] mo. Ito, hindi. Hindi ka basta [makakapagsalita] kasi hindi mo alam kung sino yung kaharap mo. Iyan ba ay ahente ng military, kasi may mga spies talaga. May mga dinadampot.”* [You know that time really is terrifying. It’s terrifying. You’re not allowed to... unlike pre-Martial Law that you can still express your opinions. After the declaration, you should not just talk, because you don’t know who you were talking to, if it was an agent, because there were spies, indeed. There were also people being abducted.]

**Military harassment:** Because of the declaration of Martial Law, the military was granted special powers, which included warrantless arrests and the right to persecute. There was harassment when militant groups were dispersed. There was harassment when people forcibly have taken out of their homes. There was harassment in the tortures and extrajudicial killings. Sonny shared his experience related to this:

*“Hmmm, ira-ransack muna nila yung bahay mo, mangunguha sila ng ebidensiya. So, ang hobby ko noon ay photography so ang dami dami kong collection ng ano photographs ng children ko, mga ano ko, hinalungkat nila yan naghahanap sila ng ano, uhhh nagtuturo ako ng political philosophy na nga Western Thought 2, so may mga libro ako sa shelf na Mao Zedong, uhhh etc. kinuha nila lahat yan, uhh dalhin*

*mo yan sabi niya wag mong bibitawan yan, kase gagamitin lang ebidensiya yon. Dinala kami sa ano sa Camp Eldridge.”* [First, they’ll ransack your house looking for evidences. Photography was my hobby back then. I have a lot of collections of photographs of my children, they’ve searched those, they grabbed all of those including the books in one of my teaching subjects, Western Thought 2, they insisted bringing all of those for they will use them as evidence. We were arrested and brought to Camp Eldridge.]

**Suppression of rights and freedom:** During Martial Law, some fundamental rights were suppressed. According to the participants, the freedom of speech and self-expression, especially talks against the government, were forbidden. This is consistent with what Salonga mentioned in Yu (2006), freedom of speech and assemblies were not allowed during that time.

Television networks, radio stations, broadsheets, tabloids and magazines, both national and local, were closed. Only the government-run media was left to operate. The right to assemble was also forbidden. They are not allowed to gather in groups or they will be suspected of treason. Due to the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, suspected criminals were subjected to warrantless arrests and court-less trials.

**Poor life conditions:** Consistent with what Hong (2006) reported, poverty was high during that period. In this research, some of the participants described the poor living condition they experienced and witnessed in the country. Prices of commodities were high. There was

also drought, which contributed to the poor conditions. Lita said:

*“Mahirap na yung buhay noon e. Nung panahon ng Martial Law, kaya nga andaming na-organize noon e. 20 days na walang rain. Walang harvest. Talagang pumipila yung mga tao sa bigas. Nung time na yon. Tapos yung mga bigas na nabibili nila, may mga kahalong mga bato. May mga ano. Kasi nga, kasi nga walang harvest.”* [Life was difficult during the Martial Law period. There was no rain for 20 days. There was no harvest. People had to fall in line for rice back then. And the rice that people buy had some rocks in it. Because there was no harvest.]

One of the participants came from a poor family and shared that it was difficult for him just to survive and thrive in his studies.

### **The implementation of Martial Law and how it affected the participants**

The implementation of Martial Law in 1972 affected many aspects of the lives of the participants. As discussed above, many of them lived in fear during the Martial Law period. They wanted to express their opinions, but it was not very easy for them to do it, they still had to think of ways to express their opinions and subscribe to their principles without being caught by the military. Their freedom was restricted, and they had to experience military harassment.

For many of them who were students when Martial Law was implemented and even during those times when Martial Law was lifted, its effects were still being felt. Martial Law

somehow induced psychological effects, particularly among those who have been harassed and imprisoned. It was also found out that some of these participants had peers and family members who were captured, killed, or never found again. This experience was so traumatic that, even until now, for one participant, it still has a huge effect whenever he talks about it.

On the other hand, some of them found Martial Law as an instrument that somehow helped the UPLB community members learn more about their abilities. Despite being fearful and being in an unsafe condition, they became strong and brave to defend their principles. They fought for their rights even if their lives were at stake. They became creative and assertive.

Their academic life may have been affected by their engagement in rallies and mass movements. They may have had to learn how to manage their time wisely, but, for them, it was a worthy experience because they learned many things about social reality outside of the four corners of the classroom. They learned more about life by joining these social movements.

Amid situational constraints brought by Martial Law, the personal disposition of the participants pushed them to be more politically active. Despite the violence, repression, and fear, all of them were able to continue performing their different roles (son/daughter, husband/wife, student, friend, etc.).

## Participants' perception of the Philippine government and political leaders at present

The participants recognized the idea that their Martial Law experiences affected their perception of the Philippine government and political leaders at present. Some of them said that the situation of the country during the Marcos administration continues to be the same to this day. Extrajudicial killings are still present, and only a few people have access to social resources. There is still social inequality, and the system is still serving the elites. They even mentioned the song titled *"Tatsulok,"* which was originally performed by the activist folk-rock group, *Buklod*. The song reflects the social inequality existing in the country. It highlights the idea that, as long as those people in power are still in their position, the system will always be the same. As Mar stated:

*"So eto naman ang pagsasamantala ng mga nakapwesto, mga kapitalismo at yung pag bureacrat sila rin yung mga nasa gobyerno na uhhh hawak din nila yung ano yung ekonomiya noh kaya may paghihirap na nangyayari".* [Those who are in the political seat are taking advantage of their position, including other capitalists, the bureaucrats were the reason we are suffering.]

Other participants also mentioned that their Martial Law experiences made them more critical of the current government. Looking at the current situation, they see Martial Law coming back, and history is repeating itself—news about rampant extrajudicial killings,

proposition to change the constitution, and the gradual removal of democratic rights.

The findings from this study point to one participant's view on education. He hopes that the higher education curriculum will be changed to one that will train students to serve the country and not become just technocrats, a curriculum that will produce students who will develop technologies out of their genuine care of the people and not for profit. According to this participant, the university has a vital role in teaching the young not only to be knowledgeable but also to be someone who can discern and think scientifically, critically, and analytically, especially in the presence of modern technology.

For most study participants, the Marcos regime was a subversion of what was happening today. What is happening now is a crime against humanity because there is an instigator, which is the state. The intention was good but the means were not appropriate.

## CONCLUSION

The experiences narrated by the participants centered on their family, academics, work, and perceived quality of life. Their experiences gave a clear picture of what life was during the Martial Law period. Through their narratives, the young generation would be informed of the hardships faced by many Filipinos who lived under military rule.

This particular period in history brought various experiences to members of the UPLB community. Aside from the uncertainties they had in their everyday life, they still faced challenges that pose restrictions to what could have been a normal life for them. Though



holding on for their own lives, they still had to make vital moves for them to thrive and succeed in their life aspirations. Despite the difficulty, they had to live by it and survive. Students and employees, through their Martial Law experience, became more critical of the current government. They believe that the Duterte administration is merely a repetition of the Marcos administration. Because of what they have experienced, it is no longer easy for them to trust the government. This would require the Philippine government to exert extra efforts to gain the confidence of the Filipino people. There is a need to have more transparency in the government to avoid corruption, to ensure due process and thus avoid unjust treatment and extrajudicial killings, and more programs or projects that would really address the needs of the people, not programs that will be used to further political interests.

This research is qualitative in nature. It was able to gather rich information from the participants. However, it is also good to conduct quantitative research—i.e., a study that will correlate these experiences to how these UPLB community members participate in political activities and electoral process at present.

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