



## Navigating Amid Uncertainty: Insights into Restaurant Managers' Job Satisfaction and Experiences during COVID-19

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### ABSTRACT

There have been many challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, most especially to the tourism and hospitality industries. The predicament of displaced workers has been witnessed on a global scale. Dine-in services have been substituted by digital orders through food delivery apps; this has accelerated the changes in consumer behavior that have resulted in workforce reductions; the results may have significant ramifications of the job satisfaction and experiences of restaurant managers. This study utilizes a sequential mixed-method approach that looks into the job satisfaction and experiences of restaurant managers during the first wave and lockdown (Early to mid-2020) to vaccine development and rollout (late 2020 – 2021) stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was revealed that restaurant managers were moderately satisfied with their jobs during the stages and that the qualitative components revealed the following themes: (1) Overworked, (2) Unappealing working conditions, (3) Inclined toward depressive feelings, and (4) Lucky to have a job. Further studies may be considered using different parameters that can be applied to gain insight into the various challenges that restaurant managers face in today's evolving market and to prepare businesses during a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. This research could provide valuable insights for developing intervention strategies for both businesses and local governments that may improve employee well-being even during times of calamity.

### RESUMO

Houve muitos desafios durante a pandemia da COVID-19, principalmente para os setores de turismo e hospitalidade. A situação difícil dos trabalhadores deslocados foi testemunhada em escala global. Os serviços de jantar foram substituídos por pedidos digitais por meio de aplicativos de entrega de comida; isso acelerou as mudanças no comportamento do consumidor que resultaram em reduções na força de trabalho; os resultados podem ter ramificações significativas na satisfação no trabalho e nas experiências dos gerentes de restaurantes. Este estudo usa uma abordagem sequencial de método misto que analisa a satisfação no trabalho e as experiências dos gerentes de restaurantes durante a primeira onda e o bloqueio (início a meados de 2020) até os estágios de desenvolvimento e implementação da vacina (final de 2020-2021) da pandemia da COVID-19. Foi revelado que os gerentes de restaurantes estavam moderadamente satisfeitos com seus empregos durante os estágios e que os componentes qualitativos revelaram os seguintes temas: (1) Sobrecarga de trabalho, (2) Condições de trabalho desagradáveis, (3) Inclinação a sentimentos depressivos e (4) Sorte de ter um emprego. Estudos futuros podem ser considerados, utilizando diferentes parâmetros que possam ser aplicados para obter insights sobre os diversos desafios que os gestores de restaurantes enfrentam no mercado em constante evolução atual e para preparar as empresas durante uma crise como a pandemia de COVID-19. Esta pesquisa pode fornecer insights valiosos para o desenvolvimento de estratégias de intervenção, tanto para empresas quanto para governos locais, que possam melhorar o bem-estar dos funcionários, mesmo em tempos de calamidade.

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## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused atypical predicaments for business organizations especially to tourism, aviation, and hospitality: these have been considered the most vulnerable sectors that absorbed the adverse effects of the crisis first (Chen & Chen, 2021; Jung et al., 2021). The pandemic significantly reduced the demand for services of the hospitality and travel industries and their workers suffered the most from the pandemic. Businesses have tried alternative measures to keep their hospitality businesses afloat including the closure of rooms, promotion of specials packages and rates, negotiating rent reductions, and setting-up food and beverage take-out delivery services, which is an added cost.

Travel restrictions and social gathering bans have been in place at a global scale and it has placed hospitality and tourism professionals in a difficult situation. The COVID-19 pandemic has been the cause of worry for these workers. They are concerned about their health and job security (Mahmoud et al., 2021; Yan et al., 2021). The pandemic was especially damaging for the hospitality industry, with a near collapse in developing and rising nations (Mahmoud et al., 2021).

The restaurant business generated profits and jobs in the industry was in demand 2019 when it peaked, but during the pandemic restaurant industry became fragile and subject to financial crises. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic devastated the global economy including the employment of many different sectors was challenged. It is crucial to understand the whole situation of the COVID-19 pandemic because it may minimize its detriment to the restaurant business, and to mitigate and effectively manage the restaurant business during the crisis that the restaurant may face in the future (Gomes et al., 2022). Economic hardship and uncertainty were the result of government-imposed lockdowns and curfews. The COVID-19 pandemic has created extraordinary situations and challenges that still manifest today (MacEwan, 2023).

COVID-19 has made restaurant service delivery challenging. Restaurant businesses need a clean and safe workplace to survive and adapt to the established regulatory requirements that aim to minimize the contamination and infection rate of the virus; these non-negotiable requirements are established by the local and the national government and non-compliance to the said requirements may lead to business closure. Many companies have to make hard decisions such as downsizing because of limited work schedules and limited operations of the business. There is also this fear of being infected that may result in a decline in client satisfaction (Mahmoud et al., 2021).

Hospitality and tourism workers during the pandemic must face concerns relating to job security, layoffs, wage cuts, work breaks, work-life balance, and financial stability, which lowers morale and trust in businesses (Zanabazar et al., 2022). Companies have even streamlined their workforces by requiring unpaid vacations. Contingency situations have

reduced employees' motivation to stay and trust in their employer, causing job instability (Chen & Chen, 2021).

Product and service quality have also suffered because of employee dissatisfaction and COVID-19; this is because when one continues to work despite the risk of COVID-19 infection, it causes mental and emotional stress, threatening employees' well-being. It is common knowledge that workers must perform at their best in challenging situations to attain a company's goals (Ardi et al., 2021). It has been a practice in the hospitality industry workers, that they must hide negative feelings and express only positive ones during work so that service workers' positivity can benefit the company. The service workers can employ emotional labor to achieve the hotel's emotional display standards while offering excellent service (Lam et al., 2022).

Job satisfaction increases customer service and organizational effectiveness because satisfied employees prioritize the demands and needs of the customers. Job satisfaction and employee morale are both essential factors of customer service and their organizational performance (Lam et al., 2022). The workers of tourism and hospitality sectors need to be motivated, fulfilled, happy, and engaged to satisfy customers as these workers rely on interpersonal relationships. It is because employee-consumer interactions are social transactions that affect customer satisfaction and loyalty. Service worker behavior can boost a hospitality company's success; this is much needed in the hospitality industry. Employee performance is crucial for success since these employees interact directly with customers (Vo-Thanh et al., 2020).

The human element holds significant importance in the hospitality industry. Overlooking the human element as one of the essential elements in the organization will subvert the organization's ability to respond to crises (Vo-Thanh et al., 2020). It is necessary to investigate the job satisfaction and work experiences of restaurant managers in the Philippine setting as the hospitality sector during the pandemic has received less attention. During the Pandemic, the restaurant industry still manages to continue and operate at a limited capacity and provide a noteworthy contribution in keeping the local economy going. Nevertheless, there may be similar studies available but it may vary geographically and temporally as various elements can influence the restaurant manager's experience.

Job satisfaction is important to an organization's performance and health during a crisis as it affects employee well-being, resilience, productivity, and the ability of employees to overcome challenges that affect their productivity. One of the businesses that kept the nation afloat was the restaurant industry. The industry's steadfast refusal to be defeated has contributed to the nation's economy. It also allowed businesses to explore resolutions and sought ideas for reinforcement of economic resilience and recovery during and after the COVID-19 pandemic and it was with workforce cohesion that resulted in its success. Many

industries benefit by retaining jobs, boosting consumer confidence, and strengthening the local economy. The response of the different businesses to any form of crisis is crucial for a country's long-term economic sustainability. By exploring restaurant managers' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic ; allows stakeholders to navigate the crisis and develop intervention programs to promote employee well-being, efficiency, and prepare the restaurant business for crisis. The aim of this paper is to help restaurant owners and policymakers develop forward-thinking business strategies during crises.

Employee job insecurity has main causes like layoffs, downsizing, and mergers affect diverse range of industries. Some workers may feel insecure because different types of work interpret risks or pressures distinctively. Job insecurity also causes stress and harms job attitudes and mental health. To add, job anxiety increases risky behaviors, such as substance addiction (Jung et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic was harming people's mental and physical health. It has caused social upheaval and emotional stress aside from the economic challenges; Employee dissatisfaction was widespread during the pandemic. It is important to put on high regard for one's mental health. Mental health is crucial to one's overall survival. Mental health initiatives should be present in the workplace as it benefits both employees and the business owners (Ardi et al., 2021).

Job satisfaction is a factor in mental health and it is regarded as important to a positive work environment. Comparing the actual work environment to expectations boosts workplace satisfaction. employees' performance impacts the company's productivity and success employees' performance plays a huge role in this. Job satisfaction can view the quality of one's working life. The improvement of job satisfaction relies on a supportive and inviting work environment (Ardi et al., 2021; Mahmoud, 2021). Due to COVID-19 losses, many business downsized and cut costs. Employees fear losing their jobs more than COVID-19 infection. Worrying about losing one's career and finances causes anxiety and the fear of being unemployed takes time to overcome. (Khan et al., 2021).

Employees who feel that they are valued by their employer are more likely to stay and perform excellent levels of customer service when they are satisfied with their jobs (Chen & Chen, 2021). Cheng and Kao (2022) stress that job satisfaction level are low due to the challenge in meeting the service standards resulting to lower performance. Lam et al. (2022) states that employees in uncomfortable environments are less satisfied with their jobs. Job satisfaction boosts performance and workplace stress lowers productivity. Business success is a team effort between the company and the employee; It involves the willingness to take chances, solve work challenges and allow creativity to boost productivity. However, management's most significant challenges are performance improvement and people development (Islam & Al-Shams, 2021; Puspitawati & Atmaja, 2021).

The Objectives of the study was: **a)** Determine the job satisfaction and the challenging work experience of restaurant managers during the First Wave and Lockdown (Early to Mid-2020) to Vaccine Development and Rollout (Late 2020 - 2021) stages of the COVID-19 Pandemic: We believe that this objective is crucial as it provides a measurable assessment of job satisfaction and the challenging work experience of restaurant managers throughout the different phases of the COVID-19 pandemic. An assessment highlight the consequence of the pandemic and, with this, the related strategies on the well-being of restaurant managers and supervisors may be cultivated. **b)** Explore the feedback of restaurant managers in their work experience during the First Wave and Lockdown (Early to Mid-2020) to Vaccine Development and Rollout (Late 2020 - 2021) stages of the COVID-19 Pandemic: This qualitative phase of the student consolidate the insights and experiences of managers during the pandemic. This also presents valuable details for both academics and practitioners interested in understanding how such unprecedented events influence the work environment.

## METHODS

The conceptual framework of the study captures a mix of quantitative and qualitative data to gain deeper insight on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic among restaurant managers in the workplace. We crafted the questionnaire to capture the respondents' level of job satisfaction and work experiences throughout the pandemic. Respondents conveyed their thoughts, experiences, and challenges in the qualitative phase through writing. Data integration allows a straightforward way of drawing conclusions based on respondents' experiences. Thus, this allowed us to generate themes and afford a better understanding of the challenges faced by restaurant managers because it goes beyond quantitative measurements and offers a more holistic view of their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Conceptual framework

**Figure 1.**

Conceptual Framework of the study



The experiences of restaurant managers were analyzed using a sequential mixed-methods approach. Philippine-based Filipino hotel and stand-alone restaurant supervisors and managers with at least five years of experience are the respondents of the study; we looked into their satisfaction and experiences during the First Wave and Lockdown (Early to Mid-2020) to the Vaccine Development and Rollout (Late 2020 – 2021) phases of the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus began with a descriptive quantitative method, concentrating on job satisfaction and statements reflecting the manager's worries and stress.

The questionnaire underwent a reliability test, scoring a .80 result, and was validated by local professors in Cebu City. A 5-point Likert scale level of satisfaction and level of agreement with a calculation of a.79 interval were used as a response anchor in the questionnaire. The following response scale anchor designates 5 as in very satisfied and strongly agree, 4 as in moderately satisfied and agree, 3 as in neutral and neither agree or disagree, 2 as in dissatisfied and disagree, and 1 as in very dissatisfied and strongly disagree. Due to the nature of the study, which involved an unknown, limitless population, the following details were established: the sample proportion is 50%, the margin of error is 5%, and the confidence level is 95%.

$$n = z^2 \times \hat{p}(1 - \hat{p}) / E^2$$

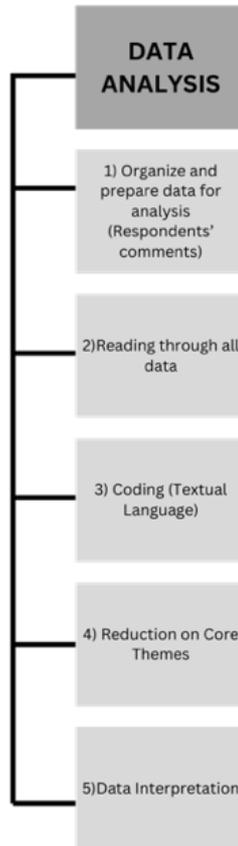
$$n = 1.96^2 \times 0.5 (1 - 0.5) / 0.05^2$$

$$n = 384.14$$

Based on the results of the formula for the unknown population sample size calculation, there should be at least 384 respondents. We were able to gather three hundred and eighty-four completed replies. We ensured that the respondents were anonymous and avoided adverse consequences. In addition, respondents can quit at any time without any consequences. The comments were examined, classified, and put into themes.

The process of feedback analysis is shown on Figure 2; The trends and variations of their responses were examined and analysed carefully. Based on the study's qualitative findings, the key themes were derived from the enciphered remarks.

**Figure 2.**  
Data Analysis for Qualitative Data



### **Quantitative Results and Discussions**

The quantitative results of this study highlights the level of satisfaction of the respondents. These factors can be addressed as a basis for improvement that may contribute to a positive working environment and employee engagement even during a crisis. Table 1 findings show that the respondents expressed a moderate level of satisfaction with their work. The lowest marked statement with a mean score of 2.40 points out to their workload. The statement attaining the highest rating implies that the managers are moderately satisfied with the benefits provided by their companies, as represented by a mean score of 3.98.

**Table 1.**  
Restaurant Managers Level of Job Satisfaction

<b>Job Satisfaction Assessment</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>
<i>Please indicate your level of satisfaction with your current role and responsibilities.</i>	3.43	Moderately Satisfied
<i>Rate your satisfaction with the benefits provided by the company, considering aspects such as healthcare, retirement plans, and other perks.</i>	3.98	Moderately Satisfied
<i>Please assess your satisfaction level regarding the workload assigned to you, taking into account factors such as task variety, challenges, and achievable goals.</i>	2.40	Dissatisfied
<i>Indicate your satisfaction level with your monthly income, considering factors like fairness, competitiveness in the industry, and alignment with your expectations.</i>	3.84	Moderately Satisfied
<i>Evaluate your overall satisfaction with the organization as a whole, encompassing aspects such as company culture, leadership, and communication.</i>	3.35	Neutral
	<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>Moderately Satisfied</b>
	<b>3.20</b>	

\* Legend: Very Satisfied (5.00-4.20) ; Moderately Satisfied (4.19- 3.40); Neutral (3.39- 2.60); Dissatisfied (2.59-1.80); Very Dissatisfied (1.79- 1.00)

According to Park et al.(2021), Job satisfaction is linked to improved productivity of the employee. There is a need to provide support to employees to enhance their satisfaction. Perceived organizational support, defined as the assistance organizations provide to their employees significantly enhance job satisfaction and increase corporate loyalty while reducing turnover intentions among. Employees who are satisfied with their work are more motivated and engaged, directly impacting the quality of service provided. Thus, employees' satisfaction is crucial in identifying and projecting individual and organizational achievements and their inclination to leave the company. Therefore, employee who tends to be less satisfied impact job commitment and turnover. COVID-19 pandemic and other crises have the potential to hamper the regular interactions of service workers; these workers may experience

psychological, physical, and economic challenges worsened by the presence of uncertainty and the risk of unemployment (Stamolampros & Dousios, 2023). A recent study conducted by Feltmann et al. (2023) noted that the mental well-being of hospitality employees was greatly affected during the pandemic more than any other business.

The statements in table 2 capture the experiences of the restaurant managers; this section had an overall mark of 4.10 indicating that respondents agree that they have encountered the typical worries and obstacles at work resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Employees experienced increased psychological distress and widespread concern throughout the pandemic; these are due to some factors such as workplace stress, dread of mortality and infection and separation from friends and family.

**Table 2.**  
Workplace Experience of Restaurant Managers

<b>Workplace Experience During the COVID-19 Pandemic</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>
<i>Please indicate your level of agreement with the statement: "I am worried about losing my job due to the pandemic."</i>	4.05	Agree
<i>Please express your level of agreement with the statement: "I am doing more work during the pandemic."</i>	4.23	Strongly Agree
<i>Indicate your level of agreement with the statement: "I am worried about laying off more employees due to the pandemic."</i>	4.35	Strongly Agree
<i>Share your level of agreement with the statement: "I am worried about contracting COVID-19 while working."</i>	4.51	Strongly Agree
<i>Indicate your level of agreement with the statement: "I am worried about my mental well-being due to COVID-19."</i>	3.64	Agree
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>4.10</b>	<b>Agree</b>

*\*Legend: Strongly Agree (5.00-4.20); Agree(4.19- 3.40); Neither Agree or Disagree (3.39- 2.60); Disagree (2.59-1.80); Strongly Disagree (1.79- 1.00)*

New working conditions rapidly enforced to prevent COVID-19 infections; this also results in a heightened sense of apprehension regarding to COVID-19 infections which causes people to withdraw from society and distrust others. Anxiety was a common effect felt by most in the world during the pandemic, the effects of the pandemic may have jeopardize people's physical and emotional health (Bufquin et al., 2021; Mahmoud et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2021). Restaurant workers relied on tips, they lost money as customer traffic dropped. Since tips often comprise a substantial part of a restaurant worker's income, the reduction in customer traffic had a direct impact on their earnings. To add, restaurants had to enforce safety protocols that resulted in a decreased seating capacity. Social distancing protocols or temporarily shutting down restaurants reduces the number of patrons and consequently the tips that restaurant servers collect.

### Qualitative Results and Discussions

The comments of the respondents were analyze using a thematic analysis approach. The restaurant managers were grappling with multiple challenges all throughout pandemic. Table 3 presents the key themes that surfaced based on the analysis of their comments. The themes are the following: Theme 1: Overworked (time anxiety, long hours shift, always tired); Theme 2: Unappealing working conditions (feeling unsafe, fear that staff might leave, difference in pay); Theme 3: Inclined toward depressive feelings (feeling depressed, hopelessness) and; Theme 4: Lucky to have a job (grateful for work, able to provide for self and family).

**Table 3.**

Thematic clustering to create core themes

<b>Core Themes of the Job Experience</b>	<b>Textural Language</b>
<b><i>Overworked</i></b>	<i>Time anxiety</i>
	<i>Long hour shifts</i>
	<i>Always tired</i>
<b><i>Unappealing working conditions</i></b>	<i>Feeling unsafe</i>
	<i>Fear that staff may leave</i>
	<i>Difference in pay</i>
<b><i>Inclined toward depressive feelings</i></b>	<i>Feeling depressed</i>
	<i>Hopelessness</i>
<b><i>Lucky to have a job</i></b>	<i>Grateful for work</i>
	<i>Able to provide for self and family</i>

### **Theme 1: Overworked**

Theme 1 Sheds light on the experiences of restaurant managers of being overworked. The challenges and strains associated with it. The statements explore the impact on individuals who find themselves grappling with the demanding management responsibilities.

#### ***Time anxiety***

- *"I no longer feel I have a day off. I used to feel like this before the pandemic... the feeling is much worse, since it seems like the COVID-19 scenario never ends."*
- *"I don't have enough time to do my tasks... I can't keep up."*
- *"I fear that COVID will not end."*

#### ***Long hour shifts***

- *"I have rendered more hours work since we have to let go several employees..."*
- *"I used to manage only one branch. Now, I handle three restaurants at the same pay rate..."*

#### ***Tired all the time***

- *"I need a vacation but, in this scenario, where would I go?"*
- *"I am so tired finding options for the restaurant to survive. If it gets you (COVID-19) ... the stress is more overwhelming... I feel like during my day off, I don't get to relax at all. I must convince myself to think positive... I may no longer have any work... I don't have a plan B."*

Moral anguish, extreme worry, fear of illness, depression, and stress have all been reported as side effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has damaged employees' job security, stability, and satisfaction (Cheng & Kao, 2022). These findings align with results reported by other publications in the literature of Feltmann et al.(2023) the pandemic induced considerable anxiety among those employed in the hospitality industry workers in South Korea to the extent that many contemplated quitting.

Feltmann et al. (2023) also mentioned that hospitality workers in Stockholm may find financial hardships; they further mention that a significant proportion of workers needed to be registered for unemployment insurance due to the prosperous state of the industry and continuous recruitment efforts preceding the pandemic.

## **Theme 2. Unappealing working conditions**

Theme 2 highlights the challenging aspects of the unappealing working conditions in the workplace environment of restaurants managers during the pandemic.

### ***Feeling unsafe***

- *"This line of work is very unsafe, that's how I see it..."*
- *"I know someone who used to work here got COVID-19, and the hospitalization cost more than how much we make in years. Truth? We are not safe. No one is. The ridiculous safety measures are all for show so that customers feel that we are taking steps of precaution, but nope. The safety guidelines won't do any good. We are breathing the same air as someone who has COVID, and we might not know who ...."*
- *"My staff feel unsafe (even with the vaccinations), but they think it comes with the job we try our best to take precaution."*
- *"Four of us had COVID, and we got it from work.... I live alone...Nobody was there to take care of me... It wasn't easy... I thank my staff. They left food at the door of my apartment, so I don't have to go out."*

### ***Fear that staff may leave***

- *Due to the intermittent work schedule, there are several who left...."*
- *"There is no stability, No security in our line of work. Some of the staff have left and worked at call centers. Others are looking for other opportunities."*
- *"Many of them (waiters) came back after the lockdown then thought of leaving and settling life in the province because of the work schedule... Even if dine-in is allowed... What they were receiving (servers' salary) ... was not enough to live off... I tried to help prevent them from leaving...I lend them money (to send to their families)... I also helped look for an affordable place for them to stay..."*

### ***Difference in pay***

- *"I am earning less than before ... My workload is more stressful..."*
- *"I took a substantial pay cut, and my work doubled... we have to let go of many good workers...."*

Bufquin et al. (2021) found that on-duty personnel during the COVID-19 pandemic had higher levels of psychological distress, drug use, and alcohol use than furloughed personnel. Feltmann et al. (2023) also found that prolonged COVID-19 symptoms and financial compensation during illness raised worries about getting the coronavirus, spreading infection,

and positive cases. COVID-19-related anxiety was positively correlated with stress, while fear of spreading the virus was favorably connected with concern. In the study of Karatepe et al. (2021) Turkish hotel workers found that COVID-19-related stress, such as the fear of catching the virus, hurts their mental health. Feltmann et al. (2023) indicate that US research linked COVID-19 dread to employment instability and psychological fatigue in restaurant workers. Not only was fear of catching COVID-19 was linked to stress, but fear of spreading it was also linked to concern. The government-imposed restrictions limiting people's activities, including eating out, to control the situation.

### **Theme 3. *Inclined toward depressive feelings***

Theme 3 Explores the restaurant managers' emotional landscape where the predisposition to feelings of depression was evident and observed.

#### ***Feeling depressed***

- *"I feel so depressed...I have been experiencing hair loss and weight loss...."*
- *"I know I am depressed... I googled the symptoms, and I am experiencing it until now..."*
- *"I am so depressed because I have lost my father and some people I know due to Covid-19, and you see so many postings about death on Facebook... other people you know are gone... and you have to continue to try to at least survive for your family. I was not able to see him (father) during his burial... I cannot afford to travel... I feel I might lose the job... I fear they might let go of me, like what happened to others... My wife no longer has work, so I have to at least pause my grief and continue... it's hard..."*
- *"I have never been low in my life, only this time (referring to the COVID-19 pandemic)."*

#### ***Hopelessness***

- *"I feel hopeless...."*
- *"Will we ever go back to normal? It does not seem so..."*

The optimal mental health state of functioning of an individual is their positive mental health, and an individual with positive mental health is aware of their capabilities and can effectively manage regular life demands, they are also productive and successful in their work, and actively contributes in a positive way to their community (Bufquin et al., 2021). It is important that companies provide for their employees both social and organizational support during any form of crisis (Park et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly

impacted the mental health of restaurant personnel Feltmann et al. (2023). Employers can provide access to information and support to their staff about services. Business organization should include its priority to allow free and unrestricted assistance to employees experiencing deterioration in their mental health (Bufquin et al., 2021).

#### **Theme 4. Lucky to have a job**

Theme 4 reflects gratitude of being fortunate to have employment even during challenging times. The statement emphasizes the acknowledgement of the restaurant managers of the positive aspects of job stability during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### ***Grateful for work***

- *"I am very blessed in spite it all... I still have a job..."*
- *"Still somewhat thankful that God has given me a chance to work... There are lots of challenges, but I am lucky..."*

#### ***Able to provide for self and family***

- *"I am older it's hard for me to find another work at this state. I am blessed at least I get to have a job and provide for my family."*
- *"I need to hold on, my wife and I are expecting, and this job comes with the benefits we need, and the pay may be not as high before COVID. I understand that my situation is not the worst..."*

It is known in the field of tourism and hospitality industry that employees usually encounter various difficulties during crisis, such as job insecurity, layoffs, reduced income, interruptions in work, and issues in maintaining work-life balance and livelihood. These mentioned difficulties are considered additional elements that contribute to heightened levels of stress in which diminishes employee job satisfaction and organizational trust (Zanabazar et al., 2022). Even in the face of adversity Filipinos demonstrate resilience and keep an optimistic viewpoint. While most Filipino survivors navigate based on their experiences of disasters or crisis, a subset of individuals may suffer from prolonged anxiety and display negative responses in which may lead to mental health problems such as psychological trauma if they do not receive support (Anga & Diaz, n.d.).

Despite the pandemic, restaurant managers are moderately satisfied with their work. But it must be noted that, the decline in the number of restaurant patrons due to the restrictions imposed by the government significantly reduced workers monthly income such as the tips they receive, which puts them in a difficult financial situation. Restaurant managers recognize the challenging job market given the limited employment opportunities during the pandemic; They would instead remain employed within their respective companies.

Restaurant managers acknowledge the uncertainty of their job and have to accept the outcome of job lay off is the increased workload. However, the concerns of restaurant managers go beyond job security and workload as they are also concerned about their mental health that is caused by the constraints that comes along the pandemic and regulations the government is enforcing. Still, even with the given predicament restaurant managers must ensure uninterrupted operations of their business.

As Park et al. (2021) emphasized, employees have four distinct needs these are *hope, trust, compassion, and stability*. The needs may only be realized through harmonious work-life balance being practiced even during a crisis. The local government may provide direct aid to employers that allow access to aid for employees who need mental health counseling and financial assistance such as, application of unemployment benefits. In these cases, it is generally recognized that having the support of the government is vital. The lack of planning and lack of inclusion of prompt financial assistance to tourism stakeholders both business owners and employees may adversely impact tourism, hospitality, and other industries' long-term recovery (Alonso et al., 2020).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Restaurant managers' express concerns on their mental health due to stress, anxiety, and social isolation levels brought by COVID-19. They have been confronting setbacks such as feeling depressed and exhaustion due to myriad challenges that they need to address, especially perpetuating business operations during the crisis. Even with the increased workload and the stress that comes with the pandemic, Restaurant managers dread that they might lose their jobs; this may cause significant adverse emotional and psychological effects to them. Despite the challenges, restaurant managers are thankful for their job as they observe that not everyone has been able to continue working during the crisis; this realization heightened their awareness of their financial obligations allowing them to be gracious to the fact that their work provides for them and for the families.

The pandemic highlighted the need for comprehensive mental health support systems and strategies to address the range of issues people face. The study underscores the daunting circumstance of the restaurant managers and their resilience.

The study shows the importance of the government's role in creating policies that supports the restaurant business and counteract any crisis that may affect not only the hospitality sector but in different industries. To gain more nuanced perspective of the various challenges that restaurant managers face in today's ever-changing landscape; it may be essential to carry out additional research that uses various indicators of resilience; this can present viewpoints that may formulate standards for effective interventions and strategies that would elevate employee wellness in the face of adversity.

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