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Research Article

Coping Mechanisms of Hospitality Industry Workers in a Tourism Destination during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic brought massive devastations to the different levels of society. The World Travel and Tourism Council had recently warned that Covid-19 pandemic could lead to a cut of 50 million jobs worldwide in the travel and tourism industry. A study conducted by Oxford reveals that Asia will be vilest to be affected by the pandemic and it would take time to recover its economy (Dogra, 2020). This means a wider and greater impacts to the different industries including the tourism sector. The study aims to explore the coping mechanisms of hospitality industry workers in Boracay Island during the Covid-19 pandemic particularly on their experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic and to determine the coping mechanisms of hospitality workers in Boracay Island being affected by the pandemic. The case study method through a qualitative analysis using Robert Yin's approach in the data analysis procedure to explore the data from the experiences of the key informants from the hospitality industry was used. Themes came out from the construct of the key informants like (1) hospitality industry workers experienced mental health, social, and economic issues, (2) The pandemic opens new opportunities and ways to cope with its effects. The output of this research is the proposed Danay, Danay, Escarilla, and Maming Model for Coping Mechanisms of Hospitality Industry workers during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Keywords: *Coping mechanisms, hospitality industry workers, covid-19, mental health*

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Background

The Covid-19 pandemic brought massive changes to different levels of society. Everyone was in a state of shock and awe. According to an Oxford economics research, Asia would be the hardest hit, and evidence suggests it may take months for the industry to recover (Dogra, 2020). According to FutureLearn (2021), Eighty-eight percent (88%) of firms reported a loss in sales between April and July 2020, and 67 percent reported a drop in sales between July and November 2020. Limited operations (58 percent) and customers' incapacity to visit brick-and-mortar enterprises were the leading causes of decreasing sales (38 percent).

One of the industries that were badly affected was the hospitality industry. This industry is purely dependent on tourists visiting a certain destination like Boracay Island. The closed airports, travel bans, and several restrictions set by authorities around the world put this industry to halt directly affecting hospitality workers extensively in terms of income (economic) and mass unemployment (social problems) which resulted in several problems.

In an interview with Philippine News Agency (PNA), Acting Mayor, Frolibar S. Bau-tista disclosed that the Municipality of Malay has lost around Php 12 billion since it was closed to tourists owing to the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) health issue. The shutdown of the Php 47 billion industry triggered a chain reaction that resulted in job losses and lost income. The town's revenue has dwindled both the labor and private sectors were severely impacted.

The purpose of this study is to explore the coping mechanisms of hospitality workers in Boracay Island during the covid-19 pandemic and what are the challenges they encountered during the time of disruptions and how they cope with this quandary that the covid-19 pandemic has brought. The researchers experienced the pandemic reason why they wanted to explore the coping mechanisms of hospitality industry workers in Boracay Island during the Covid-19 pandemic. A model on coping mechanisms for hospitality workers during the pandemic will be proposed.

Main Objective of the Study

This study will explore the coping mechanisms of hospitality workers during the pandemic. Specifically, it sought to answer the following sub-problems:

1. To explore the experiences of hospitality industry workers in Boracay Island amidst the Covid-19 pandemic;
2. To determine the coping mechanisms of hospitality workers in Boracay Island being affected by the pandemic; and
3. To propose a model for coping mechanisms for hospitality workers during times of disruptions.

Literature Review

The United Nations World Tourism Organization reported that one of the world's most important economic sectors is tourism. It is the world's third-largest export category (after fuels and chemicals), accounting for 7% of global trade in 2019. It can account for more than 20% of a country's GDP in some cases, and it is the world's third-largest export sector overall. Tourism is one of the most affected industries by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has had an impact on economies, livelihoods, public services, and opportunities across the globe. The company's entire value chain has been impacted.

Travel bans forced by COVID have caused widespread layoffs and business closures, as well as incalculable misery amid tourism stakeholders around the world. In the Philippines, 33% of all employees in the travel and tourist industry have been let off. The IATA travel pass provides us reason to believe that domestic and international travel will be available sooner rather than later. With this, we can begin the process of restoring our lives and economies (Masigan, 2021).

Tourism and hospitality industry workers were one of those affected particularly in the area of mental health, social, and economic aspects as this pandemic started (Charityvillage, 2021; SmartCompany, 2020), which is widespread, and uncontrollable compared to the stress experienced in everyday life (Main et al., 2011). According to Robinson, Martins, Solnet, & Baum, (2019) Mental stresses like, anxiety,

worry, fear, frustration, irritability, easily angered feeling helpless because of their situations. Workers are used to interacting with the customers, but because of the pandemic, there are changes between them. Health protocols like practicing good hygiene, self-isolation, social distancing, no physical contact, and wearing masks reduced the social life of the hospitality workers. Shutdowns of hospitality establishments on the island of Boracay during the pandemic created a domino effect on the workers. Some were laid off, reduced hours of work, and others left the island back to their residence to cope with their plights brought about by the pandemic.

Despite the ill effects of the disruption, hospitality workers find an idea to cope and to survive the pangs of the pandemic. According to Roggeveen and Sethuraman (2020), Consumers are also likely to become accustomed to new ways of shopping and that is online shopping. These trends created opportunities for those displaced workers to engage in online selling. Other workers think of an idea to go back to their provinces to source out their livelihoods considering Boracay Island is tourism dependent in terms of economy. When calamity strikes, disadvantaged people, such as migrants, rely on kinship networks. According to Clifford (1956), as mentioned by Tang (2021). Although it is stated that extended families are too disorganized to respond effectively to disasters, impoverished people are more likely to rely on family members than on outside support. Workers also considered improving their talents or expanding their understanding of their jobs. McKinsey (2020) posits that adaptability is the key to thriving in the future world of work as technologies change, employees rethink what they want from work, and customer expectations rise ever higher. Arent to this, all require a different set of skills, but one that will keep shifting. Ibarra (2020) opined that some workers disrupt their habitual routines and get them out of their comfort zones which leaves them big questions. While the pandemic is still spreading, employers are helping their workers in dealing with it. UNICEF (2020), suggests that companies must evaluate their business environment, work schedules, assistance to

their workforce, and the likes to help their employees cope with the loss in terms of financial, social, and even medical during the disruptions.

This study was conducted to determine the experiences of hospitality industry workers in a tourism destination and their ways of coping the pandemic. The researchers like others were directly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic led the study to explore the coping mechanisms of these hospitality industry workers and to propose a model for coping mechanisms of hospitality workers amidst the disruptions.

Methodology

The study employs a qualitative single case study to explore the experiences of key informants in hospitality industry workers in Boracay Island during the Covid-19 pandemic. Robert Yin's (2003) method of data gathering was used. This study was conducted in Boracay Island, Malay, Aklan from November 2020 to February 2021. The researchers selected the participants through a purposive sampling. A semi-structured interview guide was used to gather the data through online interviews via zoom. There were eight (8) key informants who participated in this study. The key informants were employees of the hospitality establishments in Boracay Island, Malay, Aklan. The data gathered were recorded, transcribed, read, and reread to form clusters to categories and categories to themes. Research protocols were observed as embodied in the ethical considerations throughout the conduct of the study.

Results and Discussion

The data collected from the interview online via zoom that was audio recorded were all transcribed, read, re-read, and scrutinized to form clusters to categories and categories to themes. The themes that came out from the narratives of the key informants are:

THEME # 1. Hospitality Industry Workers Experienced Mental Health, Social, and Economic Issue

The workers encountered problems mentally, socially, and economically. They experienced fear, anxiety, consciousness, and

depression because of the pandemic. Aside from mental problems, they also encountered difficulty in relating socially because of health protocols that were implemented in public places. And lastly, a great economic hard up was experienced during the pandemic because the island was fully dependent on the tourism industry.

THEME # 2. The Pandemic Opens New Opportunities and Ways to Cope With its Effects

To cope with the ill-effects of the pandemic, hospitality workers find new ways and opportunities by engaging in online business, domestic migration like 80-90% of key informants returned home to avoid additional expenses in renting accommodation, some updated their skills, others got into lower rank jobs or made a career shift just to survive economically and almost 90-100% of the key informants revealed that their employer sustained them during the pandemic.

Conclusion

The pandemic brought enormous impacts to the lives of everyone here and abroad especially those in the hospitality industry. Hospitality industry workers were tremendously hit by the pangs of the disruptions. Despite the odds, a lot find ways to cope and embark on new opportunities for survival and conquer the effects of the disruptions.

Recommendation

During the time of uncertainty, it is strongly recommended hospitality workers must be flexible to fit in with the changing world, acquire new skills and knowledge, and seize new opportunities that are available in the community to stay afloat and survive with the impacts of the disruptions. A proposed model for coping mechanisms in hospitality industry workers is highly suggested. Future research will be conducted.

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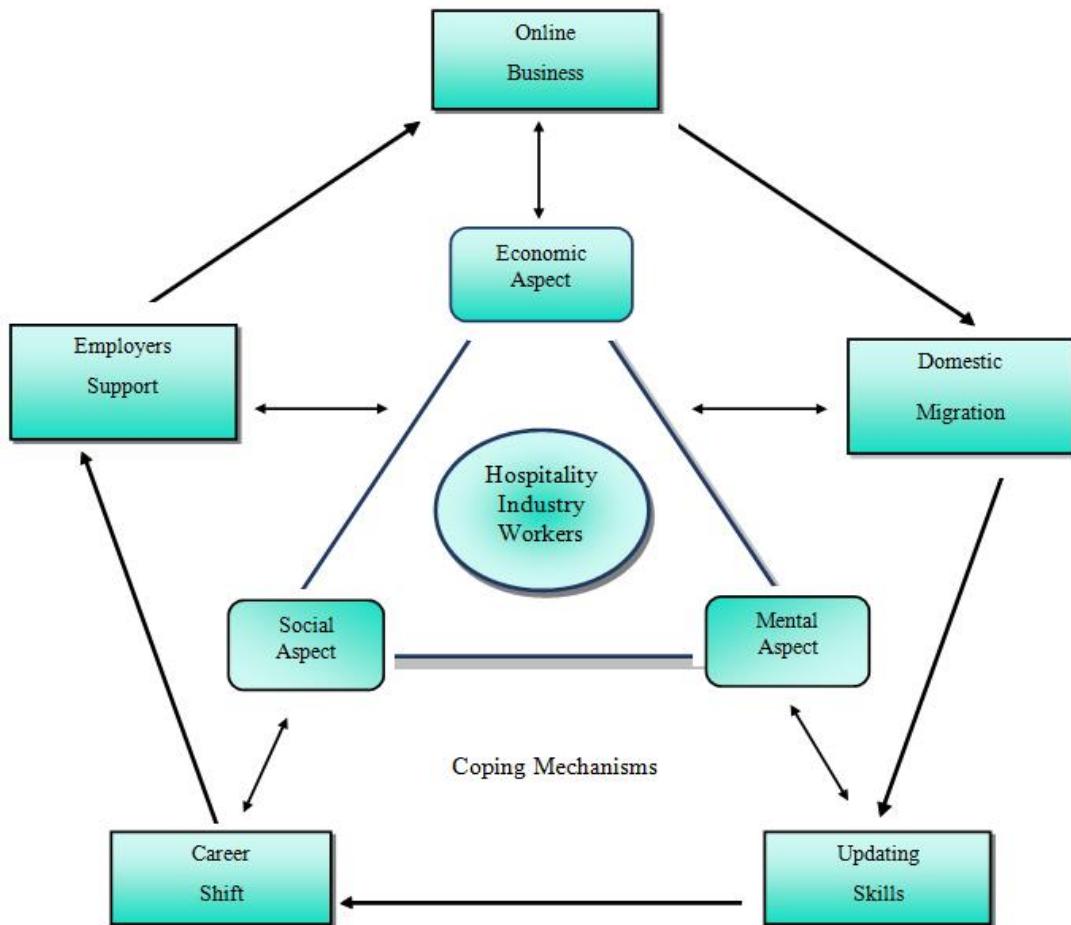
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Appendix A

Danay, Danay, Escarilla, and Maming Proposed Model for Coping Mechanisms of Hospitality Industry Workers during the Pandemic



The Covid-19 pandemic swept the globe in terms of business, economy, health, and other sectors. Everyone was in a state of shock. One of the most vulnerable economies that were badly hit is the tourism sector that was affected by transportation and other value chain activities.

Boracay Island is one of the top destinations in the country that was disrupted its economic and social activities due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Almost all establishments were affected by these disruptions that ended up enclosures. These sudden closures dramatically affected the workers that were largely dependent on tourism activities on the island in terms of economic, social, and mental aspects.

Filipinos are resilient and can withstand to the typhoons of life. The pandemic has its ounce of evil and opportunities as well. During the disruptions, new ways and opportunities came up. Part of these coping mechanisms is that people engaged in online selling activities as means to survive. Others chose to migrate or return to their place of origin to find a better livelihood, especially in the agricultural village. Other workers invest in career shifts by engaging in training and development for new skills. Some shifted their career from hospitality workers to other careers available in the community. Lastly, employers' support like financial assistance from the companies helps them sustain their day-to-day living.