

# IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL HEALTH OF THE MICROTEL BY WYNDHAM SOUTH FORBES EMPLOYEES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to know the impacts of COVID-19 on the mental health of the Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes employees during the COVID-19 pandemic using Husserl's transcendental phenomenological approach. This study aimed to understand the lived experiences of the employees regarding their mental health. This is a qualitative study that utilizes a phenomenological research design. The study's target population is the employees whose working period and mental wellness are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic at the Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes. In data collection, researchers conducted a survey questionnaire for the employees that worked before and during the pandemic at Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes. The researchers interpreted and analyzed the data via Colaizzi's Structure in Data Analysis for phenomenological research. According to the results of the researcher's study, the majority of respondents were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in their mental health, job, and financial situations. Despite working under the COVID-19 pandemic, some of them remain optimistic about life. The researchers strongly encourage this study for the following recipient: It is recommended for future researchers and future employees of the Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes to evaluate the lived experience of the employees that labored during the new normal of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Keywords:** COVID-19 Pandemic, Mental Health, Employees, Hospitality Industry, Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Fear.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

For the past many years, the hospitality and tourism industries have proceeded with development and become one of the fastest developing financial areas in the world. In any case, the solid recorded development ended in 2020 in the midst of the worldwide coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Travel and the tourism industry became one of the most impacted areas since the actual beginning of the infection spread. The pandemic has cut global vacationer appearances in the primary quarter of 2020 to a small part of what they were a year prior (Aref, 2020). Many tourist sites throughout the world suffered, and there are no clear indicators as to when the sector will recover to pre-pandemic levels (Lopez, 2021). This is a period of significant uncertainty for many employees in many firms. Travel prohibitions, skeletal teams, remote employment, and social isolation are becoming the new normal as a result of the coronavirus outbreak. These new modes of working are creating issues and worries in many businesses.

The COVID-19 pandemic's residual impacts have caused extraordinary hurdles for the Philippines' hospitality and tourism industry. Inbound and domestic travel restrictions have impacted demand, resulting in a significant decline in occupancy rates and income, as well as the displacement of tourism and hospitality professionals. Only businesses with valid Department of Tourism certification were allowed to operate during the peak of the shutdown in the Philippines. A large number of employees lost part or all of their income, while others lost their jobs as many establishments shut down due to COVID-19. One of the affected hospitality establishments in the country that experienced COVID-19 impacts is Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes in Municipality of Silang, Cavite. Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes had a total of twenty-five (25) working employees across all four (4) departments before the pandemic. When the pandemic began, the number of employees in all departments plummeted nineteen (19).

International limited-service hotel chain Microtel by Wyndham is a division of Wyndham Hotels & Resorts. Globally, it has more than 300 hotels, including 14 in the Philippines. With 20 well-known lodging brands and more than 9,000 properties in more than 80 countries, Wyndham Properties & Resorts is the largest hotel franchising corporation in the world. Wyndham South Forbes Microtel is located at South Boulevard South Forbes Golf City Municipality of Silang, 4118 Cavite and was built in 2014 and is rapidly rising South Forbes Golf City, just minutes from Ayala Westgrove and Nuvali, an eco-paradise. It has 61 guestrooms with world-class amenities, like chiropractic-approved beds, and stunning views of Laguna Lake and the surrounding rolling countryside. Aside from the proven comfort of its rooms, our hotel features wireless internet access, a cafeteria, and an 80-person capacity function area.

At the height of the pandemic, the Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes was identified as one of the establishments authorized for strict quarantine by the Bureau of Quarantine as of June 11, 2020 (Anon, 2020).

In this light, the study investigated the changes in the mental health of Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, given what was happening, the researchers ought answers to the following questions:

1. How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect the working period of the employees of Microtel South Forbes?;
2. What are the changes in the employees' workload in their department amidst the pandemic?;
3. Do the employees experience more stress than before the pandemic?; and
4. What are the coping mechanisms that the employees use to reduce the pressure when it comes to their mental health?

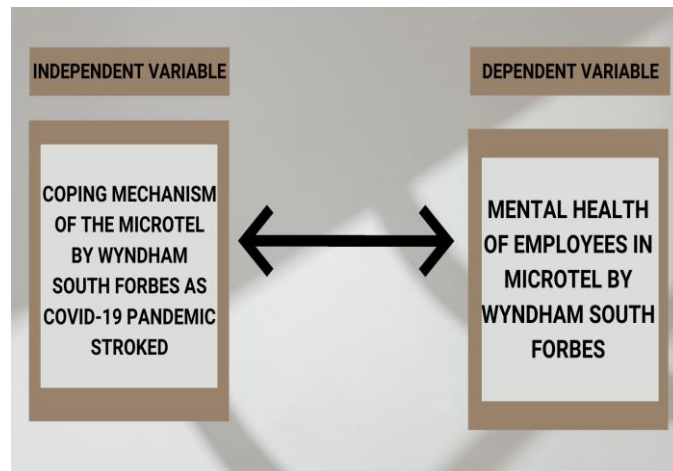
This study focused on determining the mental health challenges of Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes employees during the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to the present. The respondents of this study were the employees from the departments from Accounting, Sales, Front Office, and Housekeeping. Due to the tight COVID-19 procedures, the study is structured in a one-semester framework and is limited to an online interview. As a result, other parameters not specified in this study were not be investigated.

The significance of the study is that it can be a useful tool for management to understand the mental health of struggling employees in Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes and take action in creating programs and policies that will benefit them. Likewise, the study will benefit the researchers by knowing how to cope with mental health during this pandemic and will provide a better understanding of how mental illness can affect a person's life. The study will also benefit future researchers as similar studies can be done with regard to the mental health of employees amidst the pandemic.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study utilized Husserl's transcendental phenomenological approach, adapting coping theory and the IV-DV conceptual framework. The transcendental phenomenological approach was developed by the father of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, a German philosopher and mathematician who founded the phenomenological school. He is one of the 20th century's most prominent thinkers who introduced the concept of bracketing or "epoche" as it is the way that researchers bracket or isolate their past experiences, emotions, and knowledge about a certain topic so that it would not affect the results of the study—preventing the researcher's personal perception from getting into the data (Tassone, 2017). The researchers may inadvertently incorporate their personal interpretations instead of discussing the true point of view of the respondents. The transcendental method and adapting coping theory are two methods used to assess the association between social workers' coping strategies with job demands and psychological distress during the COVID-19 pandemic. The transcendental method ensures that bias and perception are excluded, while the coping theory helps to explain the concept of adjustment. Chowdhury (2019) conceptualizes adjustment as a dynamic, multi-dimensional approach that includes

dealing, emotional and mental representation, absorption, adaptability, encouragement, family emphasis, and management effectiveness. Galiana L et al., (2020) states that the goal of coping strategies is to compensate or reduce stress situations.



**Figure 1: IV-DV Conceptual Framework of the Study**

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study. As shown in Figure 1, the IV-DV conceptual framework depicts a continuous process with defined stages of the correlation between the independent and dependent variables, which the researchers aim to determine. The independent variable in this study involves the adjustment of the employees of the Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes when the COVID-19 pandemic started while the dependent variables include the mental health of the employees of Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes. Furthermore, this study focuses on defining the continuous relationship between the coping mechanisms of the employees amid pandemics, to their mental wellness. It is continuous because the independent variable, which is the adjustment mechanisms of the employees, will continuously affect the dependent variables which pertain to their mental health. However, it is not reversible. Though it will show how the coping mechanism of employees has affected their mental health, given that a significant relationship is present, it cannot be the other way around since the independent variable is constant, and therefore, cannot be altered by the dependent variables. All in all, this schematic diagram was utilized by the researchers to better understand what happened, what is occurring now, and what the community's future plans are, specifically those that center on the involvement of Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes. Other studies and literature that may help understand the study's context are presented here.

The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on companies all around the world. Hotel firms, for instance, are vulnerable to health emergencies like this outbreak, and as a result, the physical separation regulation has resulted in significant sales losses. As claimed by Punay, M. (2021), when the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, it dealt a tremendous hit to the Philippine hospitality business. Travel limitations restrict consumers from booking hotels and resorts, causing these businesses to struggle for room occupancy and, as a result, consistent income. According to Colliers, hotel occupancy in Metro Manila decreased from 71 percent to 25 percent in the first half of 2020 due to a dramatic drop in international arrivals. Furthermore, a large number of hotels have closed their doors and laid off hospitality experts and workers.

On top of that, hotel rooms have been turned into sanctuaries for front-line personnel exposed to the coronavirus. The Department of Tourism has enabled selected hotels to function as venues for workshops, training, and seminars, among other things, to give hotel owners and operators access to clients, provided that venue occupancy is limited to 30%. While minor gatherings have been permitted, hotel owners must adhere to the Inter-Agency Task Force standards.

In relation to IATF Resolution No. 140 (2021), commissaries, restaurants, other food preparation establishments, and cafés may perform their indoor dine-in services in the venue or elsewhere with a seating capacity of twenty percent (20%), and with their al fresco or indoor seating alfresco dining options at the site or with a seating capacity of 50% (fifty percent). Outdoor tourism attractions, as specified by the Department of Tourism (DOT), will keep on being authorized at a thirty percent (30%) venue capacity while adhering strictly to basic public health norms. Indoor game courts and settings, as well as indoor tourist attractions, are not permitted to operate.

According to Sonmez et al. (2020), hotel employees who are considered at higher risk of COVID-19 infection report more severe mental health issues. Employees exhibit nonattendance behaviors to limit the risk of infection (Torales et al., 2020). In line with that, Ghaderi, Z., King, B., and Hall, C.M. (2022), reported that employees in the hospitality industry are

anxious as a result of the increased workforce reduction, either due to the fear of being fired off or confusing job descriptions. Furthermore, workforce restructuring increases employee job insecurity, leading to withdrawal behavior. In addition, employees are enduring job stress and severe workloads as a result of downsizing. Employees' anxiety over job instability and changing organizational rules are related to negativity (Khawaja, K. F., Sarfraz, M., Rashid, M., & Rashid, M. 2021). Moreover, as mentioned by Dimitropoulos, P. E. (2017), employee anxiety and depression due to job performance and employment uncertainty have greatly contributed to the economic crisis, workplace changes, and fear about the COVID-19 pandemic's future. Hospitality sectors, according to studies, have greater fixed expenses. They are vulnerable to market failures, such as those in the food service and hotel service industries.

It is undeniable that the COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented crisis for industries worldwide. In particular, hotel corporations are at risk due to health crises such as this pandemic, and so they have experienced dramatic sales losses from decreased occupancy rates due to the physical distancing rule. Furthermore, Jung, H., Jung, Y., & Yoon (2020) mentioned that the hotel industry was one of the first to experience an employment shock, wherein there was a sudden decrease in employees and an increase in those on temporary leave. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (2020), the highest unemployment rate of 17.6% was registered during the first implementation of Enhanced Community Quarantine in April 2021. As of February 2021, the labor force survey of the government revealed an 8.8% unemployment rate, which is equivalent to 4.2 million people (Employment Situation in February 2021 | Philippine

Statistics Authority, 2021). It is undeniable that the pandemic, along with the poor government response, has unfortunately sparked this high percentage of unemployed workers in the Philippines. Unemployed workers during this time have manifested grit in different ways, such as passion towards the business venture, positive attitude towards failure, adaptability, perseverance, and growth (Lopez, Piso, & Rivera, 2021).

As part of the hotel and leisure industry, the Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Adhering to the Department of Health's rules, in an effort to safeguard both its staff and visitors from the dangers of COVID-19, the multinational network of limited-service hotels known as Microtel by Wyndham has immunized 100% of its workers. Furthermore, owing to the current coronavirus scenario, The Microtel hotels are introducing additional protocols to ensure the safety of their guests and team members to stop the spread of COVID-19 virus. As a result, certain services and amenities that are regularly accessible at their hotels may be reduced. Those visiting hotels in regions that only admit "essential travelers" must follow all guidelines and limitations and may be asked to present identification proving that they are "essential travelers." The company has properties in prime locations around the country. In accordance with the updated health and safety guidelines, these include setting up hand-washing and sanitation stations, checking body temperatures, deep cleaning and sanitizing high-touch surfaces, and keeping an eye on physical distance in public areas on the hotel grounds (Loyola, 2021).

The indoor dine-in service was limited to twenty percent (20%) of the seating capacity. Indoor games/activities were also restricted by the IATF, and due to restricted consumers from booking, causing a struggle for consistent income, which led the company to a downfall. To maintain existence, Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes hospitality and tourism businesses, like everyone else, had to rethink and restructure as well as adapt to a new normal.

A skeleton force additionally keeps on working under the rules to support its occupants. Figure 2 shows the current organizational structure of Microtel South Forbes.



**Figure 2. Organizational Structure of Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes**

Because of the Covid 19 pandemic, the Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes downsized its workforce to fill the voids left by the pandemic as shown in Table 1. The visual model of the data from Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes presented in Table 1 was the number of employees of Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes that occurred before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, the Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes had a total of (25) twenty-five active employees. Since the pandemic began, the Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes were having a struggle with restricted customer booking which led the company to an inconsistent income and became a downfall that made them reduce their employees to (19) nineteen employees. All members and visitors are required to use face shields and face masks as well as to sustain social distancing. Many departments were understaffed, resulting in an excessive burden. Therefore, human resources in the Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes have begun to use flexible work schedules. The Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes had to adjust to the new normal and restructure its business in order to survive. The corporation even formed its own COVID-19 team, forcing them to confront the realities of the new normal for the hotel and tourist industries.

According to Arnaldo (2020), the corporation implemented "process re-engineering" procedures. Microtel's business strategy is based on delivering minimal services, but it is even more constrained in terms of housekeeping services, room setup, and facilities. They also adopted tighter staffing for all hotels, including skeleton crews, shorter workdays, forced leave, eliminated/consolidated roles, and postponed hiring and to preserve its financial situation, the company closed several hotels temporarily, postponed construction expenditures, and adjusted their debts.

**Table 1: Number of employees in Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes before and during the COVID-19 pandemic**

| POSITION        | PRE-PANDEMIC | FY 2022 | FY 2023 |
|-----------------|--------------|---------|---------|
| General Manager | 1            | 1       | 1       |
| Accounting      | 3            | 2       | 2       |
| Sales           | 2            | 1       | 2       |
| Front Office    | 6            | 4       | 4       |
| Housekeeping    | 13           | 9       | 10      |
| Total           | 25           | 17      | 19      |

With many hotels operating on skeleton employees and attempting to earn a profit, the relationship between management and employee is altering. Reducing the workforce and maintaining smart and talented employees have become the foundation of approaches required to remain competitive while adhering to COVID-19 regulations. Due to the pandemic and a lack of employees, employees' responsibilities are shifting and they are being allocated to job fields in which they are not skilled (Fox, 2021). As stated by Beatrice (2021), human resources in the hotel business have begun to use flexible work schedules. Many hotels and restaurants have changed their employees' work days and hours and formed distinct sets of shifts. A study by Teng-Calleja (2020) examined the organizational actions of employed workers in response to the new normal. These include having flexible work arrangements; establishing physical health and safety measures; providing access to material resources; offering financial support; conducting mental health and well-being programs; and constant communication of short-and long-term plans. An employee's performance could likewise be affected, thus expanding consciousness of the risk of COVID-19 comparable to the sort of working environment measures executed may likewise build an employee's fear and stress. Many individuals report more dread, stress, and mental pressure over the virus (Sasaki et al., 2020). As specified by Yu, Park, and Hyun (2021), negative external factors, like pandemics, can show themselves in different types of pressure on hotel employees. Such work pressure can be translated into negative perspectives and ways of behaving for hotel employees and can likewise adversely affect hotel companies.

However, the advancement of positive emotional wellness empowers the improvement of the functioning environment and is related to a positive effect on representatives and the impacts of their work assignments. According to Bulińska-Stangrecka and Bagieńska (2021), because of different factors adversely influencing the prosperity of employees, for example, the anxiety toward sickness or social segregation, it is turning out to be critical to keeping up with sound connections in a distant working environment. Understanding the systems that increase work fulfillment and add to the improvement of mental prosperity will empower directors to go to fitting lengths to establish an agreeable workplace.

Most experienced struggles due to a sudden decrease in their already problematic income, but some also used it as a motivation to start businesses or freelance. Knowing about these mental health problems of their employees may help other people make healthy choices. Previous studies indicate that the employee's performance is being affected due to stress and mental pressure, all because of the COVID-19 pandemic (Sasaki et al., 2020). The employees' coping abilities may be



limited and could ruin their mental health. Poor mental health may result in many poor decisions, which is why this study may help employees share and bring out the negative experiences that led them to have mental health issues.

In this light, the situation in Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes is very timely and appropriate to be explored to reveal the lived experiences of the employees regarding their mental health. The researchers can suggest guidelines for the Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes management on how to understand or recognize the mental health of struggling employees in the workplace based on the findings of the study.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The researchers executed a qualitative phenomenological research design in order to understand the lived experiences regarding the mental health of Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes employees. Husserl's Transcendental phenomenological research adapted as it seeks to describe rather than explain, through the use of bracketing in which the researcher's past knowledge, experiences, and perceptions will be isolated—this will allow the study to focus solely on what the workers are experiencing amidst this pandemic and avoid any bias from mixing in the data (Tassone, 2017). It must also be noted that it describes only the lived experiences of the workers, not their perceptions, and must focus only on this, without any explanation or unnecessary narrative or analysis to follow.

The respondents are the employees from Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes who experienced the effects of the pandemic on their mental health. Since this study was conducted online/virtual, the advantages are that it can be done with the aid of online platforms that are preferred by each respondent, so there is no need for the researcher to actually go to the site and just do the interview online to save some time and allow more slots for the interviewees. The respondents for the study were selected using exponential discriminative snowball sampling to get the relevant data necessary to serve the purpose of the study (Blog F., 2021). Exponential discriminative snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that permits the researcher to identify variables with uncommon qualities. This is a recruitment strategy in which respondents are asked to direct the researchers to another potential respondent; in this situation, the researcher screens possible factors before including them in the sample population. The detailed examination is limited to variables that match the specifications wherein it chooses a certain number of respondents from each group or division in a population. In this study, the researcher invited those who are in those four (4) departments of Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes.

A total of nineteen (19) respondents from the departments of Accounting, Front Office, Housekeeping and Sales of Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes were invited to participate in the study. Researchers selected these departments considering that they have heavier work pressure in relation to providing customer service while figuring out how to keep contamination from COVID-19 infection, while the remaining seven departments are excluded by the researchers due to a shortage of employees to interview and have the low possibility to interact with the customers. The selection criteria are as follows:

- Full-time and regular employees;
- At least 2 years of working in Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes;
- Male or female;
- Ages 20–50 years old; and
- At least a high school graduate.

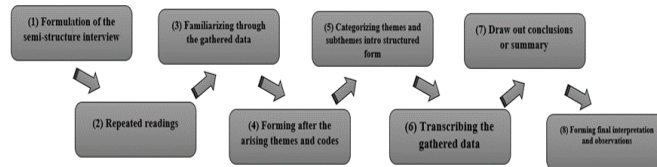
Furthermore, the respondents voluntarily participated in the study. They were asked to affix their confirmation by obtaining informed consent.

In light of finding the essence of the study, the following steps were the undertaking of the researchers with respect to the data collection as shown in Figure 3. For phenomenological research, a questionnaire survey is the most appropriate one to conduct. Due to the limitations imposed by the pandemic, all interviews were conducted online via survey, with the researchers providing an easily accessible Google Form that requires an essay-type answer. The researchers conducted a survey questionnaire with a duration of three (3) weeks. The Google form provided does not require any demographic questions for the interviewees' privacy and ethical considerations. Instead, it has an open-ended question for them to narrate their thoughts and opinions, but they must fill out their department. The data gathering using the Google form lasts one week, and a personal data sheet is given to all the participants, which includes their name, age, gender, date of birth, civil status, highest educational attainment, occupation, number of years in employment, role in the department, and others. For ethical considerations, the survey form will not require any personal information to be filled out, but it will include an

agreement stating that the interviewee willingly and voluntarily answered the questions and that the researchers will keep their identity safe before gathering the information. The survey questions will be written by the researcher and will be based on the issues stated in the Statement of Problem. The information gathered during the interview will be presented as transcribed data.

The data was analyzed via Colaizzi's Structure in Data Analysis revealed emergent themes and their relationships by exploring the fundamental structure of an experience.

The visual model of the qualitative analysis presented in this figure was adapted from Colaizzi's Structure Analysis for phenomenological research.



**Figure 3: Adapted Colaizzi Structure Analysis**

Wirihana, Welch, Williamson, Christensen, Bakon, & Craft (2018) described this analysis as a methodology that begins with the formulation of the semi-structured interview, followed by the repeated readings and familiarization of the gathered data, forming after the arising themes and codes from it, then categorizing these themes and subthemes into a structured form to draw out conclusions or summary of the lived experiences of the respondents. Lastly, the final interpretations and observations based on this structure and answer the research questions. This approach utilizes the bracketing method introduced by Husserl to set aside the personal emotions and perceptions of the researcher. For validation, no statistical tests like Cronbach's alpha could be administered as this is a qualitative study. The research adviser and other panelists are the ones who validated this.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings in the 19 survey questionnaire findings, analysis, and interpretation of data gathered that has been distributed to the employees of Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes. Nineteen (19) people work for Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes, ranging in age from twenty (20) to sixty (60), with an average tenure of one month and a maximum of (10) ten years. 42.1% of employees were women, compared to 57.9% of men. 51.9% of the workforce were single, compared to 41.2% of married people.

#### GUIDE QUESTION 1: “HOW DID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AFFECT THE WORKING PERIOD OF THE EMPLOYEES OF MICROTTEL BY WYNDHAM SOUTH FORBES”

For the questions; *How many working days do you have before the pandemic started? How do you think the process of dividing your working days has been done? And How many working days do you have as of the moment under the COVID-19 pandemic?*

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| “Long working days due to stay in”   |
| “Very stressful due to force leave of other employees due to long working hours”   |
| “Very tiring but challenging   |
| “Skeletal manning base on requirements”  |
| “Working days depends on the occupancy and needs on manpower in the operation”   |
| “The company use skeletal manning/or they arrange schedule of who when how many employees that need to go on site to perform their job and there are also employees that stays in Microtel just to be safe and to perform their job according to the schedule” |
| “The company they create schedule that employees they can work 3 days a week”  |

As a result of the current study, the working hours of eighteen (18) employees were modified; they had fewer hours and days to work due to skeletal manning and the COVID-19 pandemic, and they were both agitated and challenged by the new method of working days, while one (1) employee continued to work on a regular schedule due to in-house responsibility.

**GUIDE QUESTION 2: “THE CHANGES IN THE EMPLOYEE'S WORKLOAD IN THEIR DEPARTMENT AMIDST THE PANDEMIC”**

For the question: *How does the pandemic affect your working performance?*

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| “More health and safety measures were followed, sometimes it became a hindrance in communicating with guests.”   |
| “It affects the transportation going to work and also increases the fair”  |
| “Big impact due to adjustment due to worry about my health and my family as well”  |
| “Regarding in my performance actually nothing has changed since every time I work, I’m doing my best to do my job”   |
| “It became twice stressful as before due to fear on getting the COVID-19 itself”   |
| “Because of the pandemic, Microtel is forced to make arrangements for its employees as to what will be their set up. They use skeletal schedule which can affects every one's work performance because not everyone cannot work on site” |

The working performance of eighteen (18) employees was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as a result of increased safety measures, adjustments to new restrictions and skeletal manning that created obstacles in communicating with guests and restricted and expensive means of transportation. Being more alert because of the dread of having COVID-19 itself and worried about their family's health increased their stress. However, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, one (1) employee did not impair its performance by performing the best thing in his or her work.

For the question: *Did you maintain your working position? If yes, what is the difference between working before and during the pandemic?*

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| “I did not maintain my working position, the difference between working before and during pandemic is it is easier to go to work before pandemic because there is a lot of public transportation unlike during the pandemic”   |
| “Yes, I maintain my position in our department. The only difference is we are working from home during pandemic with limited access and now we are working from office”  |
| “Yes, the difference is before we work to give enjoyment, satisfaction a place where they call the hotel their home while during pandemic almost the same but in addition, we have to be fully aware on what could be the possible thing to happen and to study by following guidelines from the government to make sure everyone is safe during their stay” |
| “No, because more workload has been distributed to everyone”   |

The fifteen (15) respondents kept their employed positions, yet all the nineteen employees (19) were assigned to alternative tasks due to the pandemic. Communicating with guests has never been more difficult; work has quadrupled as a result of a



lack of manpower; new laws and regulations must be followed; there is little expertise in the field due to working from home during the pandemic; and health is always a concern on site.

For the question: *Did they assign you to a new work field? What kind of work was added to you?*

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| “Yes, from front office associate to sales executive”  |
| “Yes, from supervisor to assistant housekeeping head”  |
| “No, because of lack of front office associate”  |
| “No, but due to lack of manpower we had to leave the work to the other department”                   |
| “No, but there are added assignment like for example sanitizing the whole using the misting machine” |

Due to the pandemic, two (2) workers were moved to a new work field, while the others remained in their existing ones. However, all nineteen (19) employees faced an increase in workload that met the increased safety rules and regulations requirements as well as cleanliness measures.

**GUIDE QUESTION 3: “DO THE EMPLOYEES EXPERIENCE MORE STRESS THAN BEFORE THE PANDEMIC”**

For the question: *How did COVID-19 affect your mental wellness?*

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| “Big effect in my mental health wellness. clear in all laboratories but my doctor diagnosed is anxiety”  |
| “During the pandemic we experienced a lot of negativities because we just isolated ourselves at home, we cannot do things that we used to do, I think that is one of my many reasons why we develop mental disorders like anxiety and depression.” |
| “It was affected us by having the fear of contact with the covid 19 suspect as a front office associate you will be speaking with many guest that is why you battle the fear of being also a suspect of COVID-19 every time your shift is done”    |
| “I became more cautions in communicating with guest, since they are more active in social media, guest became more sensitive”  |
| “COVID-19 does not affect my mental wellness. I always think positive and always have a way around to solve my problems especially on my financial side  |
| “COVID-19 didn't affect my mental wellness”  |
| “Not too much due to positive thinking and by being mentally strong”   |

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the mental health of thirteen (13) employees. It made them more cautious in communicating with the guest; overthinking and fear of the virus itself made them more observant for the guest's health; worried of the virus that might greatly affect their health and career; having anxiety or depression due to pandemic isolation; while six (6) employees did not let the pandemic affect their mental wellness by thinking positively and being mentally strong; improving knowledge by reading at the same time.

For the question: *Is there any concern about your work environment that can trigger your stress? What are those?*

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|---|
| “Feeling entitled guest”  |
| “Probably workmate na bigla na absent”  |
| “Uniform, due to heightened protocols we had to use PPE while cleaning the rooms and the hotel premises”  |
| “It can be avoided, but every time there is a deadline that needs to be rushed, to be finished immediately, or we tend to consume long hours/ heavy workloads. those are things that can trigger my stress in my working environment but when it comes to the employees here in Microtel, they are good I think they built a good foundation "they are family"” |
| “Yes, guest type and weather”   |
| “I don't have any concern on my work environment because all of us employees here in Microtel are good co-worker and they can build a family”   |
| “Anytime you can expose to people have positive in COVID-19”  |

There are ten (10) employees who are concerned about the work environment, which is provoked by self-proclaimed visitors, the weather, uniform, a hurried task deadline, a fear of having the COVID-19 virus, and colleagues who do not show up for work without prior warning. While nine (9) employees have no problems because their coworkers are skilled at supporting each other to perform particular tasks, they are just one team and family in Microtel.

For the question: *During the outbreak of COVID-19, have you had any problems with your work or daily life due to any emotional problems?*

|   |
|---|
| “Yes, anxiety change my life always feel fear, over thinking, negative thoughts, as a result I am always at the hospital”   |
| “Yes of course because before the pandemic we used to live like everything was easy for us, we have easy access to so many things but when pandemic happened it was like we were all shocked. During that time, I'm always sad, always stressed and always mad and I feel like I'm going crazy na. We lost our connection with the people we love was sad. social media wasn't enough that time I could really tell that I had emotional problem” |
| “I had emotional problems because I'm the only one working in the family trying to provide all the needs and wants of my family especially my daughter”   |
| “In terms of my work I did not encounter any problems however, it did in my daily life because we cannot go out due to quarantine”  |

Thirteen (13) employees had problems with work or daily life due to emotional problems caused by the pandemic's isolation, loss of physical connection with the people they love, lack of public vehicle transportation, and being the breadwinner of a family during the pandemic, which resulted in anxiety and depression. Six (6) employees, on the other hand, had no issues with their regular jobs or lives.

**GUIDE QUESTION 4: “WHAT ARE THE COPING MECHANISMS THAT THE EMPLOYEES USE TO REDUCE THE PRESSURE WHEN IT COMES TO THEIR MENTAL HEALTH AND FINANCIAL STATUS”**

For the question: *How do you cope with your mental wellness during the pandemic?*

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| “Eating healthy foods, surrounding myself with good people and learning from encountering bad people”                |
| “I just go with the flow it is really hard to cope mental wellness on my anxiety specially the first year diagnosed” |
| “By communicating with my family and friends regarding of how i am being affected by the pandemic to release stress” |
| “Making sure to have time with my daughter also watching movies and cooking”   |
| “Being positive and have faith”  |
| “We exercise every day and dance and I limit the foods I take”   |

As a result of eating healthy foods, staying close to their families, exercising, learning self-discipline, talking to someone they trust, doing new things, communicating with their families, praying every day, being positive, going with the flow, and having faith in God all the time, all employees coped with their mental wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the question: *What healthy and unhealthy habits are you using to be stress-free?*

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|--|
| “My unhealthy habits are staying up late and my health habits are exercising and spending time with my family”   |
| “Healthy: thinking and reading good quotes for mental health and not thinking too much<br>Unhealthy: sometimes staying on the bad things that happens to me that day and might go to overthinking” |
| “Healthy habits are exercising, eating healthy foods, and unhealthy habits are watching movies, using my cellphone most of the time”   |
| “More fruits and vegetables, sometimes drink alcohol”  |
| “Sleeping and eating food, unhealthy is smoking”   |

There are five (5) employees who have healthy habits such as exercising to relieve stress; four (4) employees who eat more fruits and vegetables; one who sleeps for a long period of time and sets his or her mind to be more focused on the goals being pursued; and the other who plants and spends time with their children and families. They do, however, have harmful behaviors such as consuming alcohol, vaping, smoking, eating junk food, spending too much time on social media, and working long hours.

For the question: *How do you overcome your stress regarding your financial status?*

|   |
|---|
| “I usually to manage our budget and prioritize needs over wants”  |
| “Financial problems are really stressful especially for us with limited or low-income earners but somehow, we managed to deal |

|   |
|---|
| with it. we reduce our consumption of electricity. we created a sari sari store to help and we sell kakanin for extra income” |
| “I tried doing online selling and start to budget expenses”   |
| “Farming while staying in province”   |
| “Setting my priorities before anything else”  |
| “Not stressed. I just discipline myself. do not buy unnecessary things”   |
| “Have faith in God”   |

The sixteen (16) employees began by establishing their priorities before anything else, tried online selling and began to budget expenses, managed their budgets and prioritized needs over wants, engaged in farming while remaining in the province, informed the family to develop a survival strategy, changed and adjusted the way of life to accommodate the new normal, and overcame stress related to the financial situation. One (1) employee used discipline to avoid feeling stressed about their financial situation, while two (2) employees had confidence in God for their financial situation.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The findings indicate the mental health of the Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes suffered during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic, which began in March 2020, has already lasted more than a year, causing social isolation and disruption in people's everyday lives. Because some employees may experience despair, stress, or anxiety as a result of not having enough time to acclimate to their new employment, the study will quantify the impact on their mental health. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, this study used a phenomenological design to investigate the mental health of the Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes. The online survey was used to solicit answers from the respondents.

Furthermore, the research used a qualitative analysis of the workers at Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes, which may yield valuable insights or conclusions concerning the workers' experiences throughout the pandemic. The information that will be used to draw conclusions about the employee's mental health in the country throughout this pandemic, which will then be used to provide treatments as needed.

The choice of a phenomenological research design for the online survey is one of the study's limitations, since it implies that contrasts will be primarily between participants at a specific point in time.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath will have long-term effects on employees' mental health. Mental health treatments are required to counteract mental instability. Furthermore, the hotel should provide an environment that encourages Filipino staff to be cognizant of their mental health. The outcomes of the study will aid in tailoring possible coping mechanisms to the individual needs of Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes employees, hence improving psychological resilience.

The researchers strongly encourage this study to the following recipients: It is recommended for the future employees of the Microtel by Wyndham South Forbes to evaluate the lived experience of the employees that labored during the new normal of COVID-19 pandemic and useful tool for management to understand the mental health of struggling employees. This aims to provide future researchers with an overview of the literature that has been published so far on COVID-19's effects on the hotel industry which they may use as references in their future research. It will also benefit the hospitality industry by knowing how to deal with stress and mental health based on the lived experience of the employees who participated in this study since people still associate mental health problems with embarrassment. Under the stress of a pandemic, the hotel industry has the advantage of influencing how their people think and make wise decisions.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involved with any parties in this research study.

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