

# A Phenomenological Inquiry into the Lived Experiences of Service Crews Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

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## Abstract

*Fast-food chains are among the most profitable and common businesses in the market, which is also the best option for beginners in the business industry. Given that many fast foods were loved and provide satisfaction to a human's physiological needs, it also benefits the unemployed and part-timers. Thus, it is the primary source of employment worldwide from the food and beverage industry, counting these over a million employees in substantial multinational food and drink manufacturing companies – fast food service crews. Thus, this study intended to express service crews' insights on the challenges they are regularly facing. This study also aims to describe how pandemic makes the service crews' personal lives and work-life even more complicated. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was employed to describe the experiences of the participants. Hence, the study's findings were: (1) Service crews experienced many challenges during the pandemic. They had a hard time getting used to the new normal, and they feared getting infected with the virus that may cause them or their loved one's death. (2) For a long time, they had to work in food chains; service crews come up with several coping mechanisms such as positive-thinking and adjustment. Service crews learned that having a healthy mindset helps a lot when dealing with a challenging atmosphere, and they also learned the adjustments they had to make when facing circumstances. (3) Then, although the pandemic rendered problems and changes, service crews took this as an opportunity to take a break despite having worries about financial resources. Service Crews' positive experiences during the pandemic are about the closer relationship they build between themselves, their families, their co-workers, and with God.*

*Keywords: Sikolohiyang Pilipino, Fast Food Chain, Service crews, COVID-19*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Fast-food chains are among the most profitable and common businesses in the market, which is also the best option for beginners in the business industry. Given that many fast foods were loved and provide satisfaction to a human's physiological needs, it also benefits the unemployed and part-timers. Thus, it is the primary source of employment worldwide from the food and beverage industry, counting these over a million employees in substantial multinational food and drink manufacturing companies – fast food service crews (Geneva, 2007).

Furthermore, a horrible stereotype for service crews was mentioned accusing their job is a type of lazy work for people who want easy money, which is the exact opposite of what they do to provide for their families (Huddleston, 2018). Thus, they are receiving low wages compared to the workload they are managing each day, forcing them to look for part-time jobs to at least increase a little amount to their income.

The importance of a service crew member to the business's daily operations (Indeed for employers, n.d). Maintaining fast speed service, settling customers' concerns, and complying with the company's health protocols are also tasks done by a service crew that mainly strive for their patrons' satisfaction. Even without the threat of a pandemic, health and safety have to be observed by the food industry. As Jaco (2020) stated, customers, are vital in the food business in terms of success, in which they prioritized the health and safety of employees for their customers. The health inspectors and company manager monitored the maintenance of health and safety protocols within a food business. They pay attention not just to its appealing appearance but rather the health concerning the public, stated by Dundes and Swann (2008).

Today, food chains are still thriving and earning hundreds of billion dollars a year. Companies must have had healthy marketing strategies that keep the customers consuming their product repeatedly. Convenience is the best selling point of food chains by their scheme of order, serving, and eating, alongside the service crew's assistance. However, the best part is their marketing strategy, which is global recognition, by practically having branches everywhere. Their goal is not to have a single person far from a fast-food (Money Instructor, N.D.).

Food businesses are on top of the success until the global outbreak of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) continues to spread this year, which urges people to change the routine operation due to the virus's fast pace transmission. This pandemic leads most countries around the world to impose lockdown for safety measures. Work fields ordain suspension of operations adhering to the health protocols, affecting numerous people's jobs, including restaurant businesses (Restaurant Business Staff, 2020). Regarding this kind of situation, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Policy Brief (2020) stated that governments worldwide take measures by aiding an individual's financial needs during the lockdown. Despite the government's initiatives towards the economic issue, the pandemic still rendered millions of jobless people. Moreover, about 7.3 million of them were Filipinos, as Philippine Statistics Authority reported the unemployment rate in April this year. This high record of unemployed people magnifies a clearer vision of the Philippine labor market's economic shutdown effects (Lopez, 2020). Fortunately, the Philippine government is now moving towards reduced quarantine rules to bring back the work fields' operation after the economic recession during the first half of 2020 (Bautista and Lopez, 2020).

Eased quarantine allowed many establishments to reopen while tourism-related operations are still trying to get back on track, with a little restriction due to the pandemic. For everyone's safety, businesses limit the chance of the exposure of COVID-19 by closing the dining area and opening a safer way of transactions between the service crew and the customer (Iglesias, 2020). On the other hand, despite the security of the implemented safety measures, many people are still anxious about the thought of getting infected, especially those workers that are responsible for public services; they also fear infecting their household or loved ones. The companies, especially with the food business, strategically offered convenient services for the customers, such as pick-up, drive-thru, and delivery as alternative options, to avoid spreading the virus and any crowding in the area (Taylor, 2020).

As of now, employees are back to work even in the struggle of facing the effects of this pandemic. As mentioned by Slaydon (2020), wearing masks and gloves are uncomfortable to use at work according to the employees, but a good regimen in maintaining health in this kind of circumstances; managers also monitor the temperature of their employees in keeping track of their health and secure the safety for everyone. Despite the said struggles, the employees were grateful as they still have their job to work on, unlike those unfortunate ones who have lost their jobs because of the pandemic.

This study intended to express the insights of service crews on the challenges they are regularly facing. Thus, this study describes how pandemic makes the service crews' personal lives and work-life even more complicated.

### **1.1 Research Questions**

This study's main objective is to describe the challenges faced, coping mechanisms, and positive experiences of the service crews during the pandemic. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the challenges faced by a service crew during a pandemic?
2. What are the coping mechanisms of the service crew with the stresses rendered by the pandemic?
3. What are the positive experiences of a service crew during a pandemic?

## **2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **2.1 Faced Challenges by Service Crews**

Consideration of a significant trend that is related to the food and beverage business already causes difficulties. Another difficulty presented in the food industry is the shortage of workers. This situation occurs due to factors like age-related matters (retirement) or new job offers (Demetrakakes, (2020).

Even Guest User (2018) contemplates employees' shortage as the most significant problem most food chains face. Unfortunately, it is hard to find a suitable employee willing to fulfill the service crew's duties since it is a short-term option for most workers. Regardless of increasing the wages of the employee, it is still hard to reach their satisfaction.

The Crew Member Job Description (2020) describes an ideal employee's qualities for food chains; they should be friendly, reliable, and competent. Duties and responsibilities include assistance with the customers' concerns, punctuality, organization, and professionalism towards the co-workers and the management.

The primary tasks of a service crew include the preparation of food with good customer service. The usual scheme of fast-food workers is taking orders, preparing food, delivering it to the customer, and collecting the

payment. Then, sweeping, mopping, taking out the trash, and vacuuming carpeted areas were also added to their responsibilities, as stated by Adkins (2019).

Working as a service crew member contains typical duties, tasks, and responsibilities such as greeting the guests with a polite smile, cleaning all the tables after clients have left, and preparing the tables to welcome the next set of clients. Service Crews should also possess embodied skills like maintaining composure during rush hours, taking orders, and delivering them to clients as soon as possible, added by Job Description and Resume Examples (N.D.).

According to a website (LiveCareer, N.D.), the other responsibility of food chain employees during the shift is handling the customer's complaints calmly and effectively. This type of job also requires physical stamina as it requires the employee to stand for long periods.

Some people might think that working in a fast-food chain is an easy job. One of the reasons is that workers get paid a minimum wage. When, in fact, most fast-food jobs are challenging and stressful. Employees have to ensure that every customer is satisfied and that each customer's order is accurate (Levesque, 2016).

But the reality is, service crews' duty is more than their salary. Their wages range around P4,753 per 15-day pay cut. Aside from their duties and compensation, employees also had an issue regarding the concept of contractual labor, where either they would look for a new job or jump off from one branch to another when their contract ended. It is a considerable matter for them to provide for their family's needs (Bernal, 2020).

On the other hand, the study of Qin and Prybutok (2009) recognized the importance of service quality, food quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions in the fast-food restaurant. The two main presiding that will meet the customer's gratification are the service quality and food quality.

As Mendoza and Gempez (2018) study, the quality of employees' work performance might be affected by their matters, which the employees failed to recognize. Also, there are instances where an employee is not appreciated.

Employees wanted to originate metrics that will assess service quality, price/value, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intention. The outcome will give the variance of customer intentions, which are the service quality and customer satisfaction—resulting in a more focused employee in improving food quality and service quality, and customer satisfaction, Qin and Prybutok (2008).

The interaction of the environment with people involves both creation and discovery. Success is maybe due to how members of an organization interpreted the changes to their environment. In that case, a study by Barton (2017) suggests that it is vital for employees to undergo an Accurate Grading Quality Assurance (AGQA) assessment for the improvement invested for the company's and employees' further success. This study is a reminder to the companies who fail to consider and pay enough attention to the employees' human and social factors.

By that, every worker could create a mindset of job involvement, where an employee treats a job as part of one's lifestyle. In the study of Omar, Ahmad, and Mustaffa (2019), workers' involvement in their job enhances their satisfaction. It lessens the probability of quitting, resulting in an employee becoming more and more motivated to work at fast-food chains, which respond to a more remarkable performance on their services.

Job satisfaction is the main ingredient in creating a healthy atmosphere at a workplace that allows employees to encounter customer attitudes. Within the food industry, employees' attitudes shape their intention to behave towards their job. Also, employees' job satisfaction stimulates their performance in various sectors (Ekandu and Ukpere, 2014).

Aside from other personal concerns of a service crew, the strike of COVID-19 adds up to their challenges. According to Galanakis (2020), the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed COVID-19 as a global pandemic with thousands of people were infected and lost many lives. The virus spread through food transmission, so they also focus on food processing to be more guarded and stop spreading it.

COVID-19 breathes out fright towards millions of people smashing the lives of every individual, including their economy. The food and beverages industry is currently in the middle of its worst nightmare at coronavirus strike. Back then, health consciousness focused on diet and a healthy lifestyle, but now it is about buyers' fear resulting in panic buying, affecting the future supply chain (Iyer, 2020).

Some countries' governments implemented restrictions in which businesses and schools had to shut down for a while regarding the safety measures implemented to avoid the virus's spread. An online survey about food consumption was also conducted, which conveys changes in shopping and food trading. The results helped the companies strategize on handling the economy's current situation while minimizing the virus's transmission (Hassen et al., 2020).

As of now, the COVID-19 pandemic keeps on bugging the world, including the food supply chain and the food industry. Experts say that food transmission, surfaces, and the environment are open gates for infecting and

spreading the virus. The food industry should prioritize implementing safety measures as their consumers might get infected (Rizou et al., 2020).

In a study by Basu et al. (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic became striving torture towards the economy and its people. Although countries implemented immediate action against the virus, COVID-19 spread out very fast that it slipped out of control. Treatments or cures for this virus are still unavailable, leaving social distancing and wearing surgical masks as an alternative way of preventing the virus.

In just six weeks of lockdown due to the coronavirus outbreak, the employment rate dropped as food businesses took a break to prevent the virus's spreading. The food industry has to close the dining service and lay off their workers. Food businesses severely damaged since the shutdown in April (Maze, 2020).

According to Watsons (2020), COVID-19 has a massive impact on businesses and negatively hits them. Companies planned to reduce the hiring, unpaid leaves of absence, and workforce reduction. Due to the pandemic, the companies and employees had sudden changes. They increased their focus on their health care benefit programs, safety, well-being, and paid leave, and those are the top priority for the employees.

The COVID-19 pandemic has reached almost a million people affected. However, it also gives people a new way of living, which everyone requires to follow the protocols that are also known as the new normal. The outcome of the world's crisis affects the individual and affects the world economy (Nicola et al., 2020).

Food and beverage companies have already spent decades in the industry, despite having issues about unhealthy ingredients, verifying that the supply chain's interruption is not a new issue to the manufacturers. Yet, the COVID-19 pandemic still rendered different changes and problems to food manufacturing companies' operations (Thomas, 2020).

## **2.2 Coping Mechanisms f Service Crews**

Those challenges prove that working in the restaurant industry is never an easy duty, and indeed a stressful job. Busy meal periods bring a lot of pressure in preparing meals quickly without sacrificing quality. And one of the most advised coping mechanisms to this problem is to create lesser stress in the working environment in fast food restaurants (Radwan, 2013).

Since stress was lingering all over the body of service crews, there are these ways to escape from the unhealthy atmosphere; they are communication, positive thinking, encouraging mindset, avoiding negativity, and finally having some time to rest from overthinking (Lambert, 2018).

Stress is within living, and there are absolute remedies to this situation. It starts with time management and then finishing works on time so that sacrificing lunch break or spare time will not be necessary just to complete tasks. Instead of complaints, rather be grateful, passionate, motivated, inspired, and open-minded, and maybe with that, it will be easier to consider stress as a challenge (Moran, 2016).

So here are the other things that might help in avoiding stress. First, focus on solutions instead of blaming. Second, focus on oneself and barely mind others. Lastly, always look at the brighter sides, then take a rest and a daily meditation, avoid overthinking to prevent stress, added by Reimer (2017).

Fast food is one of the most significant ventures that bring work to the Filipinos. Being a part of it brings a lot of changes. Maybe, adjustments will do something for the coping mechanism of a service crew. Be reminded that stress is part of service crews' daily duty as they assist most customers with high self-privilege (Pittman).

On the other hand, the recent pandemic alarmed the economy, especially food chains, that there are many more to consider, such as health protocols. Although even before the pandemic, state and federal law required the industry of food and beverages to implement internal health and safety regulations for both employees' and customers' security. The food chain workplace is generally safe, and accidents may still occur at any moment to anyone. In action to the said concern, food companies observe occupational safety regularly (Wicks, 2018).

According to Sesotec (2020), the purpose of food safety in food chains is safety processing. In the mid-1980s, scientists worldwide agreed to Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) to control food safety hazards.

Workplace conditions are known to affect employees' health, safety, well-being, and job motivation. The working environment for service personnel may also affect service quality, customer satisfaction, and in the end, would have had an impact on a company's financial performance. The design of workplaces and equipment is one of the cornerstones for a sustainable work environment. It can either be a factor that increases the risk of ill-health, stress, and frustration. It can become a precondition for a work environment characterized by a good fit between the worker, environment, and organization (Osterman et al., 2017).

Safe, nutritious, and sufficient food is a right for everyone, but food-borne diseases and food contaminants may exist and from production transmit to consumption. Safeguarding the health of people, also known as consumers, lies under the responsibility of food producers. The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), managed

by food and health organizations, established science-based food standards and guidelines which improve food safety and promote policies for acceptable hygienic practices in food productions (Weiler & Fernandez, 2019).

CAC's raised awareness about food safety standards influenced the agricultural output for its quality and safety. CAC's guidelines indicate the state members have to harmonize with the given safety protocols to avoid unnecessary costs for all the producers and the consumers, stated by Lyons (2019).

During the pandemic, a type of service became the savior of food businesses called drive-throughs. This type of service offered by the restaurants helps the industry collect a similar revenue percentage before the pandemic. Unfortunately, drive-throughs were not able to cover the whole population of service crews this time. (Bellany, 2020).

Not long ago, the national government finally allowed the reopening of food establishments and the implementation of strict health protocols. Dine-in services are available for only 30% of sitting capacity in fast-food chains, with strict hygiene and physical distancing. In compliance with safety measures, food companies are monitoring the health of employees. (Adel, 2020).

Although digital service from food chains is already available in recent years, it does not necessarily mean that it promotes the removal of personal interactions with dine-in services. Due to the pandemic, people have to perform social distancing and wearing masks, which opens people's creativity in-home cooking rather than lingering around the fast-food services (Klein, 2020).

### **2.3 Positive Experiences of Service Crews**

Recruiting and retaining the best employees means reassessing wages and benefits offerings regularly. Working in the foodservice industry provides employees with great opportunities, for the employees (Paycor, 2020).

Gladly, working at food chains also includes advantages for workers as it can back them up when applying for a new job after the signed contract. Another advantage is that workers might get a chance to promotion. Although meeting a rude customer is stressful, it can still be beneficial for workers in terms of maturity and professionalism needed for the next/another job opportunity (Crews Europe, 2019).

According to Bye (2020), to attract and retain staff, restaurants need to offer better employment. A significant portion of the restaurant landscape is made up of part-time workers. Some benefits that they can acquire from the restaurants are the traditional benefits, better meal allowances, and sometimes same day pay.

Shalvey (2020) mentioned that pursuing a dream while working in fast-food consumes one's time the most. But here are some lessons that can be taught from working in a restaurant as an employee; earn patience and learning handling problems, learning to do multi-tasking, flexibility, and mannered communication.

Foodservice workers are also gaining career-oriented advantages, financial benefits, and industry perks to working in food services, enhancing their customer service skills, money handling skills, cash from tips, and free or discounted foods (Tucker, 2020).

Fast food restaurants are teen-friendly employers, which opens the child's opportunity to earn money and learnings from the workforce. This experience teaches the youth to become oriented in adulthood responsibilities and teaches them to make mistakes. Working teaches a teen about work ethics, which is good preparation for their career choice after college (Martinez, 2017).

The best part about working in the fast-food sector is that it attracts people worldwide. The euphoric feeling of receiving cash landing in the personal bank account every week/fortnight/month, the juice of working in fast food, Rimington (2020).

According to Sadarjoshi (2018), the employees' experiences from the company significantly impact them. Positive employee experience has a strong link with an enhanced customer satisfaction level because when employees are happy, they ultimately rub off their best to the customers.

The customers' level of loyalty happens when they are satisfied with a food company's products and services. Some variables can develop a customer's loyalty, like convenience, but satisfaction is their top reason. Companies keep an eye on the improvement and trends that would satisfy the customers (Solimun & Fernandes, 2018).

Due to consumers' demand, most restaurants innovated the service to satisfy their customers by implying a good strategy: the food delivery from the restaurant to a specific destination. In this kind of innovation, restaurants can help their customers (Meekisho, 2020).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) will emphasize the participants' convergence and divergence experiences. IPA is particular in qualitative researches as it is responsible for examining the small number of participants' lived experiences (Tuffour, 2017). The qualitative research method is the method used in this

study. Qualitative used to scan the values, attitudes, opinions, feelings, and behavior of a person; by these, the researchers may notice how the question affects the interviewee's life. Researchers are concerned with how individuals react and perceive the said topic or situation (ADPhealth, 2020).

The method that the researchers' are studying is phenomenological. The technique is an individual analysis, whereas it needs to know the interviewee's perception and everything beyond the person's lifestyle, experience, and knowledge. Also, share the ideas that were added from what the participants already know.

### 3.1 Participants

Qualitative data is a data collection through interactions with participants using interviews, surveys, questionnaires, or focus groups, and the participants have to be willing to speak about their experiences (Grabner, 2017).

This study's participants include six (6) males and four (4) females, working in different fast-food chains around Bulacan, Philippines. One (1) from Chowking Petron Marilao, one (1) in Mcdo Lolomboy, one (1) in Chowking Nlex, three (3) from Chowking SOA Nlex, and four (4) Jollibee Petron Marilao. All participants gladly accept the invitation to participate in this study.

### 3.2 Instrument

Interview guide was utilized to gather the information from the participants. This instrument was used to accommodate the knowledge of preparedness of the respondents. Personal bias is also avoided for lesser pressure and immediate response, giving the respondents greater anonymity feelings.

### 3.3 Procedures

The study took complicated steps to develop an efficient data gathering, considering the situation under the pandemic. First, set an appointment with the chosen participants to inform them and know their preference for the interview. Through the use of innovative technology and social media for communication, the interview was conducted. Along with a brief discussion regarding the interview, the questionnaire was sent to the interviewees. The interview was done privately, to the comfort of the interviewee's houses. Second, the interviewees returned the interview question with answers in private/ direct messages for confidentiality. Lastly, the participant's responses were collected and reviewed to encode.

## 4. RESULTS

Table 1. It shows the demographic characteristics of the participants in this study. The participants live in the residency around the province of Bulacan. They range from 20-34 years old, with six (6) males and four (4) females.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

Variables	Frequency
Age	
20-24	6
25-29	3
30-34	1
Gender	
Male	6
Female	4

The following data are the presentation and analysis of the data gathered from the conducted interview. For safety measurements due to the pandemic and consideration to the limited resources of internet connections, the interview was conducted by sending out the hard copies of the interview questions to the participant, with the interviewer's guidance. The shown data were divided into three major themes.

### 4.1 Challenges Faced of the Services Crews

**Table 2. Faced Challenges**

Challenges	Frequency
Dealing with customers and Exhaustion	8
Struggles with new normal	7

The fear of getting infected	9
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#### 4.1.1 Dealing with Customers and Exhaustion

The duties and responsibilities of service crews are exhausting enough even before the pandemic. There are struggles with some rude customers, but some respondents refuse to claim the situation difficult instead, tiring. Fernandez (2019) mentioned that food chain employees could not take breaks and have to deal with running out of food items, complaining to customers, and then receiving unlivable wages. Polaris said:

*"Hindi naman ganon kahirap, pagod at ngalay lang kalaban mo"*

The complaining customers fired up the busy schedule of service crews inside the food chain. Just like how Jin explained how hard it is to work as a service crew, he said:

*"nagiging mahirap lang ang trabaho ng service crew kapag sobrang dami na ng mga tao at nagkakaroon na ng complain at nagagalit na ang customers."*

Although their job seems complicated for other people, most service crews would instead claim that their job is just tiring and not that difficult. In just a matter of time, one day, when one gets used to the fast-food chain atmosphere, they will not mind the difficulties and exhaustion anymore.

#### 4.1.2 Struggles with New Normal

Compared to the complaints they have on food chains' regular duties, service crews seem to find it challenging to do the service due to the added health protocols in their companies and the financial worries. Service crews now have to memorize the additional health protocols to keep working. Sirius shared:

*"Sobrang hirap po talaga ngayon sa trabaho dahil sa dulot ng pandemiya, kagaya na lang po ng social distancing, pagsuot ng mask kasi po di po kayo nagkaka-iintindihan 'pag nag-uusap at doble ingat po dahil sa virus."*

While the other concerning response from the participant is the financial worry during the pandemic, Lens said:

*"Sobrang hirap kase walang trabaho wala ring pera"*

The pandemic makes it harder for the service crews to fulfill their duties. Every action is limited to the parameter of safety measures.

#### 4.1.3 The Fear of Getting Infected

Like any other people, most of the respondents are afraid of the COVID-19; they fear this pandemic for different reasons. First, service crews are scared to catch the virus, knowing that there is no cure for the infected people back then. Second, the fear of exposure to different people brings the virus to their loved ones. Third, the fear of losing resources for the daily needs. Lastly, scared of the thought of dying neither losing someone due to the virus. Here is the statement of Rigel:

*"Sa Pandemiya nagkaroon ako ng takot, dahil marami ng buhay ang nawala at ayaw kong mangyari sa akin o sa mga mahal ko sa buhay."*

This reaction results from how the pandemic covered people with fear, especially those who simultaneously expose themselves to different people and then go back home, not knowing if they would not harm their family. At the beginning of the pandemic, everything seemed just fine, but every morning passed by, and it scares people with the uncertainties in life.

#### 4.2 The Service Crews Coping Mechanisms

Table 2. Coping Mechanisms

Coping Mechanisms	Frequency
Positive-thinking	4
Mindful adjustments to fit in the Work	8

##### 4.2.1 Positive-thinking

Service crews are used to dealing with unexpected situations in their jobs, but the stresses under pandemic circumstances bring additional survival strategies. Of course, positive thinking is the first coping mechanism that people would use in reducing the burden rendered by the pandemic. Service crews resolve their problems during the pandemic by saving money and keeping themselves busy with their business. Other respondents learned that they should save money in preparation for any kind of circumstance, while others opened a little source of income, just like the answer of Sunny:

*"Raket lang. Nagtinda kami ng lugaw pandagdag para di kami totally zero."*

They suggested the best coping mechanism is prayer, keeping God's faith for priceless guidance to a better perception in life. Stellar said:

*"Pinatatag lalo ang pananampalataya kay God, mas naging focus sa goal sa buhay. 'Yan ang motivation"—she added.*

The resiliency of service crews is seen in their thinking and how they view life despite their hardships.

#### 4.2.2 Mindful Adjustments to Fit in the work

People adjusted everything due to the pandemic, from plans to life routines, just like how service crews adjusted to the new normal. Everyone has to bear the situation for a little while for the sake of all. Every action is limited in response to the COVID-19 safety measurement, as Sirius said:

*"Sobrang hirap po adjustment ngayong pandemic kasi po lahat ng galaw mo limitado tsaka kailangan mag-ingat ka tsaka kailangan mo sundin and protocols."*

It is not easy to adjust, especially when it involves lifestyle, but the pandemic changes everything from a regular way of living to new normal. People still find it hard to regulate the use of a face mask, but everyone has to consider other people.

#### 4.3 The Positive Experiences of the Service Crews

**Table 3. Positive Experiences**

Positive Experiences	Frequency
The building of stronger bond during the pandemic	4
Realizations during pandemic	3

##### 4.3.1 Building of stronger bond during the pandemic

Working is not just about the challenges and the coping mechanisms. It also includes positive experiences. In food chains, service crews found friendship towards strangers, namely the workmates. Some service crews get along well with their co-workers, as they found comfort from the people with similar stories. Other than friendship, service crews found an opportunity in quarantine. Operations were canceled, and respondents spent this time to relax and bond with their family, and of course, time for God, in accordance to the response of Rigel:

*"Naging okay ang samahan ng pamilya, nagkaroon sila ng bonding na di nagagawa mas nagging tutok sila sa gawaing bahay lalo na sa kalinisan sa kapaligiran dahil nga sa virus at syempre nagging mas malapit sa Panginoon."*

##### 4.3.2 Realizations During Pandemic

After the fulfillments in positive experiences, service crews shared some takeaway life-lessons from the pandemic. While others discover their abilities in cooking, or in helping themselves and helping someone else. Other respondents learn to set a goal, and they learn to value every little thing in life and then value the most significant matters, as chances and opportunities might be gone in just a glimpse, according to Hunter:

*"One thing I learned as pandemic hits is how important it is to stay focused on your goals even if all of your hopes had to put into a halt. This moment also reminds me that when some things has not gone the way you want it, it's important to look forward with a smile."*

Another lesson that was taught to everyone during the pandemic is the importance of health. Many people took for granted health with the availability of medicine, but pandemic teaches the respondents about the importance of well-being and health. Rigel said:

*"Natuto akong maging mas pangalagaan ang sarili ko, narealize ko kasi kapag ako nagkasakit mas mahihirapan mga magulang ko kaya mas nagging maalaga ako sa sarili ko bukod dun okay na ko sa mga karanasan ko."*

Finally, the realization hits people about how faith in God is powerful during the pandemic. Some respondents answer how prayers are a must during these circumstances, as faith is the salvation. Sirius said:

*"Natutunan ko sa aking sarili na wag mawalan ng pag-asa lagi lang po magpray kay Lord dahil walang imposible pagdating kay Lord"*.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This research shows how pandemic makes the service crews' personal lives and work-life even more complicated. The main categories were divided into three topics; the faced challenges, the coping mechanisms, and the positive experience of service crews during the pandemic. This study included how service crews perceived life despite the challenges in every situation and how they manage to cope with those circumstances.



### ***Faced Challenges***

No job has an easy description, so being a service crew is unimaginably challenging, exhausting, and stressful—spending all day working with feet rushing around and endless cleaning here and there. Aside from doing the duties in fast-food chains, service crews will have to deal with customers; doing service for other people is already tiring. Yet, there are rude customers to make their job even more challenging and exhausting.

A service crew's responsibility is a combination of duties and service; duties as an employee in a fast-food chain, and service that should satisfy the customers' dine-in. Service crews have two bosses to deal with, the employer and the customer, and both have to be satisfied and pleased by their crew's performance.

Under this pressure at work, the difficulties increased due to the pandemic. Some companies froze their operation in response to the government's call for safety measures. With this circumstance, some service crews have to stop working in the meantime and, according to them, "no work, no income." Luckily, a few months later, when the lockdown was lifted to modified quarantine, companies come back on their operations as well, but with limitations and restrictions, especially to those businesses that might gather a huge crowd. The employees and customers are now required to wear face masks and face shields for safety measures, making it hard for the service crews to understand their orders quickly. Social distancing means that the service crews now have to double their effort to do their service.

Knowing the risks of COVID-19 and being afraid of what might happen to them, service crews urge themselves to work carrying different reasons. Despite the danger around, service crews do not forget to be grateful for being the lucky ones for having a job during and after quarantine. Although there are many adjustments to make, service crews believe that they can endure the difficulties until they get used to the new normal.

### ***Coping Mechanisms***

Working in food chains is difficult, but coping mechanisms keep them winning over the stresses. First, the responsibility and determination, Service crews play different roles in society. Some of them are students at the same time a child of their parents. Some of them are already parents and have to support their family's financial needs. Those responsibilities are challenging, but they used them as motivation to keep going. Determination is another characteristic they possess in which service crews have specific goals to achieve, and they keep chasing it to keep motivated in working. Second, working under pressure and surrounded by stress needs proper time management. Lastly, their routine in working, they faced everyday working by moving on. Nothing will change if there is no courage to take a step closer to goal, that is why to cope with the stresses regularly, and pandemic, service crews learn to keep motivated and keep moving on as life goes on.

### ***Positive Experiences***

Working as a service crew is hard, exactly like how people perceive the description of their job. On the other hand, service crews still focus on their job's brighter side despite how tired, the stress they are, plus the world's crisis. Respondents still enjoy working; they state that they can have the right side, such as job and enjoyment. They always keep in their minds that trials and challenges will eventually help them be the best person. Knowing that they can acquire a new learning from working, we can say that they love their job. That's one of the advantages of a service crew. Working in this situation is hard, but they can still do it wholeheartedly for their families even if there are times that they are afraid of the virus but with the proper taking care of themselves and trusting God for protection. They can still work, and of course, they still have work to help their families with expenses. Positive experiences support their improvement and have a better relationship with their work and customers. They wouldn't see this crisis hinder them from working; still, they follow everyone's safety protocols. They were always thankful that even if there is a pandemic, they are safe and can learn new things by working in this kind of situation. Positive experiences help them also to be more engage and appreciate what and where they are now.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This study comes up with three (3) major conclusions: (1) Service crews experienced many challenges during the pandemic. They had a hard time getting used to the new normal, and they feared getting infected with the virus that may cause them or their loved one's death. (2) For a long time, they had to work in food chains; service crews come up with several coping mechanisms such as positive-thinking and adjustment. Service crews learned that having a healthy mindset helps a lot when dealing with a challenging atmosphere, and they also learned the adjustments they had to make when facing circumstances. (3) Then, although the pandemic rendered problems and changes, service crews took this as an opportunity to take a break despite having worries about financial resources. Service Crews' positive experiences during the pandemic are about the closer relationship they build between

themselves, their families, their co-workers, and with God. Aside from being bonded with their loved ones, another positive experience for them is the life-lessons they realized during the quarantine. They learned to move on, value their health, and build a stronger relationship with God.

Moreover, this study recommends that customers can help them by being more considerate to the service crews. They are human too, just like any other people, they are getting tired and sometimes lose cool. On the other hand, they still give out service to give every customer comfort they needed while eating. Every little act of kindness means many people, especially with the service crews, as they mostly interact with strangers rather than the people in their comfort.

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