

Temporary Resort Closure: Lived Experience of Resort Owners Amidst COVID-19 Pandemic in the Island Garden City of Samal

Orantes, Welvin A¹; Oblianda, Leomar Jay R²

^{1,2}Island Garden City of Samal

^{1,2}Province of Davao del Norte, Philippines

Email address: ¹welvinorantes2195@gmail.com, ²leomar.oblianda@gmail.com

Abstract— The global pandemic crisis due to COVID-19 has affected all industries worldwide. The condition of the tourism industry is certainly unprecedented. This phenomenon has affected the Philippines since we are one of the tourist destinations sought by local and international tourists. This study aimed to describe the struggles, strategies, and viewpoints of resort owners during the temporary closure of resorts in the Island Garden City of Samal. We employed a descriptive phenomenological research design. Ten resort owners participated in the semi-structured key informant interview (KII), and the data were analyzed using Colaizzi's method. Results revealed the following themes: economic loss and employment loss for their struggles; flexible work arrangement and reduced number of employees for their strategies; and public safety and security and operating with strict implementation of safety protocols for their viewpoints. Although the temporary resort closure affected the entire resort operation, the informants found a way to keep some of their employees staying by providing flexible work arrangements and maintaining the resort's physical facilities. The resort owners also express their willingness to comply to help stop the disease from spreading.

Keywords— Resort Closure, COVID-19 Pandemic, Qualitative Research, Phenomenology, Philippines.

I. INTRODUCTION

Before the global crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism industry is considered one of the fastest-growing industries globally and has a dynamic effect on the economic development of every country (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2020; Ugur, 2020). Not until March 11, 2020, when the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that the world was confronted with a new global pandemic – COVID-19 or coronavirus disease 2019, this will be another challenge for the global and national economy, especially for the tourism industry (Rutynskyi & Kushniruk, 2020; Folenas & Metaxas 2020). The COVID-19 Pandemic has presented unpredictable events for the delicate tourism industry. The extremely transmittable coronavirus lingers to frustrate the sector and raises serious doubt about the industry's present and future survival (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2020).

To date, the Philippines has recorded the second-highest confirmed cases and deaths in ASEAN, next to Indonesia, and is also experiencing a great loss in the tourism sector because of the temporary closure of businesses or flexible work arrangements (Ocampo & Yamagishi, 2020). In Island Garden City of Samal, the tourism industry through the development

of resort accommodation is one of the major sources of income of the City due to its famous white sand beaches (Dejadena, et al., 2015), but because of temporary resort closure and limited travel, many people working in the tourism industry has lost its job (Hafsa, S. 2020). Accommodation businesses, including the resort owners, face countless losses (Hafsa, S. 2020).

Amidst this background of a rapidly growing global pandemic, the researcher would like to investigate the lived experience of resort owners in the Island Garden City of Samal, who have also absorbed most of the impact of the temporary closure of businesses related to leisure due to the strictly imposed lockdown and community quarantine of the Local Government Unit (LGU) as advised by the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF).

In understanding how the COVID-19 pandemic affects the tourism businesses, including the resort owners, the researcher presented a literature review focusing on the phenomenon's realities. It starts by discussing the progress of the tourism industry before the pandemic and is followed by the declining stage of the tourism industry during the pandemic.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The tourism Industry before the Pandemic

The tourism industry is one of the key drivers of success in world trade and prosperity (Hossain & Jahan, 2018; Islam et al., 2018). In the study of Lew (2011), eyeing the World Tourism Organization's trade numbers alone, the economy of tourism undoubtedly positions about fifth or sixth in international trade, about slightly smaller than the agriculture industry. As the World Tourism Organization foresaw, the future vision for the tourism industry is very promising. It was forecasted that the tourist will reach 1.602 billion people in 2020. Meanwhile, the Asia-Pacific region reaches 438 million, generating trillions of dollars in global income in 2020 (UNWTO, 2011; Sutawa, 2012).

Before the existence of the COVID-19 Pandemic, followed by the implementation of "lockdown" and other restrictions that delayed the operation of tourism businesses, traveling around places in national and international settings had become the most favorite thing around the world, especially by the younger ones (Bui, et al., 2013; Morrison, 2016;), this makes many countries continue to progress by arranging travel

accommodation, promoting cheap tourism packages, providing proper knowledge for the local community in participating in tourism development, arranging tourism objects, enhancing the professionalism of tourism actors to attract tourists in able to for the host country to increase tourism visits, that perhaps gradually rise the foreign exchange earnings, which will lead to an increase of the economy, at the same time, benefit the locals around the tourist destination (Nissan, et al., 2011; Nayomi et al., 2015; Dewi 2020;). Furthermore, it is also believed that the tourism industry has the potential to solve problems such as poverty and unemployment; for that reason, it once became one of the top priorities of every country (Mejia et al., 2020).

In ASEAN countries, the tourism industry is also measured as one of the key contributors in making revenue (WTTC, 2017); from 2001 to 2014, the total figure of tourists from the international market improved to 105 million in the year 2014, while it only reaches 42 million back in the year 2001. This substantial improvement emphasizes that huge revenue will come from these countries, including the Philippines, providing more financial outcomes and growth opportunities (Haseeb et al., 2019). Aside from economic development, the tourism industry in the Philippines has also been a great help in encouraging mutual understanding between other nations (Vizconde, 2012).

The tourism industry in the Philippines, with the effort of the Department of Tourism, is activating its resources to improve or develop some potential tourist destinations, especially those regularly visited by domestic and foreign tourists, and transform them into tourist havens (Crisostomo, 2013). Mindanao, one of the cities with many resort chains for tourist accommodation, is now on the island of Island Garden City of Samal and is called IGACOS. Moreover, because of the city's developments, particularly in the tourism sector, both local and international tourists are fans of IGACOS due to its affordable cost of travel and accommodation and its promising spectacular view of the landscape and attractive white sand beaches. (Crisostomo, 2013).

Tourism Industry During Pandemic

Over the last 40 years, the world has experienced numerous pandemics/epidemics, yet no single crisis had a similar effect on the global economy as COVID-19 (Gössling & Hall, 2020). The condition of the tourism industry is certainly unprecedented (Gössling & Hall, 2020). Within a few months, the global tourism operation system moved from tourism (Seraphin et al., 2018; Dodds & Butler, 2019) to non-tourism. This is supported by what we can read in newspapers and articles, and some are illustrated by blogs, presenting the photographs of popular tourism sites by contrasting the "before" and "after" scenes (Condé Nast Traveller, 2020), and behaviors such as fear and motivation are strongly influenced by what we can hear on the news and social media. (Kristiansen et al., 2007; Kantar, 2020).

Current events are considered an integral part of the global tourism industry (Mohanty and Choudhury, 2020). Currently, this COVID-19 Pandemic records a negative situation for all industries, but especially for the tourism industry, concerning

limited travel or no mobility at all since the virus is continuously spreading throughout the globe (McKibbin & Fernando, 2020), and the fear of the tourists or travelers being infected by the virus has impacted the tourism industry worldwide as it also stopped the normal life of every individual (Hoque, et al., 2020). Activities that are related to the tourism industry have been undesirably affected due to restrictions to travel, including domestic tourism, visits to cultural events, and hotel and restaurant visits; and numerous great events have already been postponed or, worst, have been canceled (Hoque et al., 2020; Gössling & Hall 2020; Jiang & Wen, 2020; Nicola et al., 2020) and these events, in the past few years, unquestionably become the significant part contributing tourism development (Getz & Page, 2020).

The travel conduct, the recently taken prophylactic measures, age, the handling of food and drinks, and numerous different impacts assume a basic part in the probability of being infected with one of these diseases (Lück, 2004). Along with this, travelers greatly contribute to the transmission of epidemics or pandemics between locations (Holligsworth, et al., 2006). As a result, airlines must suspend their international flights as per government direction to mitigate the risk (Zhang et al., 2020). Since the center of understanding health and global change corresponds to the relationship between pandemics and travel (Burkle, 2006), tourists, undoubtedly, are concerned about their health and security (Mao et al., 2010). The uncertainty in beating the disease triggers a great feeling of extra danger when traveling internationally, which diminishes the perspectives of every individual to pick international destinations (Rizova, 2020). For this reason, global tourism has slowed down (Gössling & Hall, 2020). The phenomenon of tourist crises frequently prompts a deficiency of security outcomes. It can, thus, substantially affect the travel choice of the individual traveler and movement conduct overall (Dreyer et al., 2010). Furthermore, inbound tourism is rapidly declining, as forecasted by the United World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and for the year 2020, international arrivals could decline by 20 to 30% relative to 2019. In terms of the accommodation sector, the number of guests has declined significantly, by 50% or more, as resorts and hotels are being closed (Gössling & Hall, 2020; Koe, 2020).

In the Philippines, as the implementation of Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) occurs, the tourism sector has just felt the negative effect of the pandemic on its presentation a whole lot sooner, department of tourism reported that in the first quarter of the year, the international tourist receipts declined to PHP85bn, and it is lesser compared to the revenues in the same period last year (PwC Philippines, 2020). This research examines the condition of resort owners, particularly in the Island Garden City of Samal, who are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. On May 1, 2020, when ECQ started in Mindanao under the executive order of the President (Philippine National Agency, 2020), resort owners in IGACOS were obliged to close their resorts as it is known as part of the non-essential travel.

One of the immediate responses during this period is Flexible work arrangements, alternative arrangements, or schedules from the usual work time. Briefly, workplace

flexibility arrangements are projected to design a win-win working relationship while realizing and recognizing the essence of both employers and employees. For all parties, flexible work arrangements are purely voluntary. This certain arrangement should be acknowledged as a balanced agreement between the two parties and must be assessed. This might benefit office productivity and efficiency (Unicef, 2020). Implementing flexible work arrangements could be a good practice as an internal mechanism to manage external pressures (Oshi & Nwuche, 2020).

It is also believed that flexible work arrangements will enhance productivity, reduce rates of turnovers, and reduce the unemployment rate (Bean, 2018; Karim, 2018; Kotey, 2017; OECD, 2020). Furthermore, embracing the flexible work arrangement is a great strategy for businesses to survive, thrive, and withstand the challenges given by the COVID-19 pandemic, as it is also applied by other more developed countries that are ahead in its implementation. (Oshi & Nwuche, 2020).

During the pandemic, it is known that employment in the tourism and hospitality industry has been dramatically affected by stay-at-home orders caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic, estimated (Kurmann & Ta, 2020; Kartseva & Kuznetsova, 2020), as the crisis has led to temporary, or in some cases, permanent loss of employment (Comfort, 2020). When the travel restrictions started, from the month of March 2020 to May 2020, there is an estimated 75 million job losses around the world as a general count in tourism and hospitality industry, and the world is heading for economic decline (Newsome, 2020; World Travel and Tourism Council, 2020; Worldometer, 2020; World Economic Forum, 2020; UNWTO, 2020).

Tourism Industry During the New Normal

Amidst the continuous spreading of COVID-19 throughout the world, some countries are now adopting the "New Normal" (Garjito, 2020), as the governments of numerous nations in this world presented it far before we truly knew the exact sense of it (Thomas, 2020), but in the study of Roger McNamee, the term "New Normal" means the willingness of numerous individuals to observe the new guidelines throughout the period of time due to various considerations, which will be an essential thing to do to resolve the tyranny of urgency (Labarre, 2003). On the other hand, the main reason behind this urgency of many governments is to raise their domestic economy, as it is known that it is affected during crises (Thomas, 2020). The operation in the new normal is to continue at least the movement of the different industries (Buheji & Buheji, 2020), as strategies are crucial in this crisis (Dickens, et al., 2020). In general, protocols such as wearing a mask, social distancing, and frequent handwashing are set to prioritize the safety of each tourist by preventing the spread of COVID-19 (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2020).

During the period of the new normal, many countries such as Mexico, Thailand, France, Turkey, and Indonesia have allowed the tourism business, such as resorts and hotels, to operate, but with the highest standard of requirements and

policies (Dewi, 2020). One of the most important requirements of a tourism business is to provide the highest standard of sanitation (Dewi, 2020), and by prioritizing it, the tourism industry will be modified into several new forms, such as staycation (tourists prefer to stay in the hotels or resorts rather than roaming around the tourist destination) and solo traveling (tourists prefer to use their own or private vehicle rather than using public vehicles such as bus (Yuswohady, 2020), and these new form of strategies are eventually adopted by Bali Indonesia to recover their lost in the economy due to COVID-19 (Belinda, 2020; Paramita et al., 2020). In India, one of their plans to attract tourists is to adopt the "food in-room dining". In this way, the tourist doesn't need to queue in the restaurant of the hotel or resort, but their food will be delivered to their room, though this was already practiced before the pandemic, and prioritizing it, will be quite effective in minimizing the guests or tourists going in and out of the restaurant (Roy et al., 2020). Meanwhile, in China, they emphasize the importance of Tourism Crisis and Disaster Management (TCDM) to alleviate the impact and help with the recovery. Currently, the tourism industry in Taiwan is slowly recovering from the impact of the pandemic (Yeh, 2020), as the residents of China have also believed that their government has a highly perceived ability towards tourism recovery (Fong et al., 2020).

While the tourism industry is slowly recovering from the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the businesses related to this sector are expected to create extensive change to their operations under the new normal environment to ensure the health and safety of the tourists and employees and enhance the willingness of the tourist to patronize their service (Gössling et al., 2020).

Strict implementation of guidelines is an essential way to continue the operation of tourism businesses under the new normal; it indicates that visible sanitizing efforts and avoiding transmissions such as constantly providing hand sanitizers at the entry, staff, and customers wearing masks and gloves, limiting the number of tourists, implementing social distancing and good training for employees to practice health and safety protocols are significant for safety precautions, as the tourist or guests also expected that these practices are essential for a tourism business (Gursoy et al., 2020). In addition, the imposed lockdowns have better results for safety and security than having no lockdown at all (Sharov, 2020).

III. METHOD

For this study, we employed a qualitative phenomenological design. Phenomenology is the study of human experiences (Creswell, 2007; van Manen, 1997). Specifically, we followed the descriptive phenomenological approach to understand the live experience of resort owners during the temporary closure of resorts due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the Island Garden City of Samal. Following Husserl's philosophy, a descriptive phenomenological method describes "Experiences are experienced very carefully and when the raw data are obtained, a thorough phenomenological psychological data analysis is made from the perspective of phenomenological psychological reduction" (Giorgi and

Giorgi, 2003). Distinguishing between the two phenomenological methods of Heidegger and Husserl, Giorgi (2007) preferred the latter because it is “intended to deal with every type of object and its appearance is the basis from which research activities should take place” (pp. 73-73). This study focused on the live experience during the temporary closure of resorts due to the COVID-19 pandemic in Samal. We especially delve into their struggles and coping mechanisms. As a descriptive phenomenological approach, we focused on understanding their experiences, not putting our own interpretation because our goal was to see what struggles they faced during that time and how they made strategies to cope with their business. We listened to their stories so that we could make a careful description of the phenomenon. We tried to consistently subscribe to what Husserl suggested by seeing the phenomena as they are (Shosha, 2012).

Study Participants and Sample

We ensured the informants were the intended individuals who qualified on the criteria set for this study. The criteria included the following: (a) The informants must be Filipino and must be the owner of the resort; (b) The informants must all the time be involved in the day-to-day operation of the result, meaning he/she is in touch with the resort’s operation; and (c) All informants have at least three years’ experience/residency in the resort (4) the resort should be a business category. We limit the inclusion to a minimum of three (3) years as owners because they are well-known for the operation and situation of the resorts. We believe that having at least three (3) years of experience, they already encountered many good and bad operations in the resort. Ten (10) resort owners could participate in the Key Informant Interviews (KII). The number was within the range suggested by Morse (1994).

In recruiting the informants, we asked the City Investment and Tourism Office of Samal to help identify the informants following the above criteria. We asked if they knew the resort’s owner and who satisfied our criteria. We received several referrals from the office; after getting the names of these qualified participants, we wrote letters asking for their participation and sent them via email. We also made SMS messages, personally messaging them in Facebook Messenger, and asked if they would participate. For those who gave positive responses, we then set the interview date.

Due to the nature of the study and the difficulty of getting informants, especially the resorts that have already closed temporarily, we utilized purposive sampling. This sampling technique enabled us to select informants who had experience with the phenomenon and could give credible information (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). We selected the informants who were Filipino owners and worked in the resorts of the Island Garden City of Samal.

Data Collection

The data’s main sources were from the Key Informant Interviews (KII) responses. According to Kumar (1989), KII is usually chosen because a limited number of participants are required to convey information about a phenomenon. We decided to use this technique because very few satisfied the

inclusion criteria. Also, the locations of those who agreed to be interviewed were hugely dispersed. Some of the resort locations are located in the far-flung areas of Samal. The interview was semi-structured with the use of interview guide questions. We asked permission from the informants to record the interview using an audio recorder. We tried to make the interview conversational to make the informants comfortable. As noted by van Manen (1997), we used the interview to establish a conversational relationship with the informant and to find material as a means and technique to bring meaning to the phenomenon.

In the data gathering, we followed the data collection circle identified by Creswell (2007). First, we located our intended informants who satisfied our inclusion criteria through the recommendation of the City Investment and Tourism Office. Hence, we employed purposive sampling. Second, we established a proper rapport with them before the start of the interview. We allowed them to use their first language. Third, we collected the data through the key informant interview. The interview location depended on the informants’ preferences, although most interviews happened in their resorts. We asked them questions based on the main purpose of the study. The interview was in English, Tagalog, the local dialect of the informants, using the following three research questions: (a) What were the struggles of resort owners when the resort was temporarily closed during the COVID-19 Pandemic? (b) What are their coping strategies when experiencing a resort’s temporary closure? (c) What are the viewpoints of the resort owners in the resort’s temporary closure?

For each research question, we prepared interview guide questions. For example, for the first research question, we asked questions like, “What were the struggles of resort owners when the resort was temporarily closed during the COVID-19 Pandemic?” or “What are the disadvantages of the closure of the resort?” For the second research question, we asked, “How did the resort owners handle those situations? What are their strategies for coping with the situation?” For the third research question, we asked them, “What are their viewpoints on the temporary closure?” and “What insights have they learned from this situation?” Then, we recorded the information using a mobile recorder (following the protocol of social distancing) and transcribed it later. Unfortunately, due to the resort’s areas and location, we had to deal with field issues such as delays in the agreed time. We also see that all the gathered data is kept safely. Finally, we did the analysis and interpretation after the interviews using the method suggested by Colaizzi (1978), as this method was reported to be effective for descriptive phenomenological research (Shosha, 2012; Wirihana et al., 2018).

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

In analyzing the data, we followed Colaizzi’s (1978) method. The seven steps in Colaizzi’s method are (as cited by Shosha, 2012, p. 33):

Step 1: To understand the content, each transcript should be read and re-read.

Step 2: For each transcript, significant statements that pertain to the phenomenon under study should be extracted. These statements must be recorded on a separate sheet, noting their pages and line numbers.

Step 3: Meanings should be formulated from these significant statements.

Step 4: The formulated meanings should be sorted into categories, clusters of themes, and themes.

Step 5: The study’s findings should be integrated into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon under study.

Step 6: The fundamental structure of the phenomenon should be described.

Step 7: Finally, validation of the findings should be sought from the research participants to compare the researcher's descriptive results with their experiences.

First, we read transcripts several times to fully grasp the informants’ responses. We did this part separately so that we could have an individual understanding of the actual response. However, before that, we had casual discussions after every interview.

Second, from the transcript, we identified significant statements. We contributed to this step by identifying significant statements from the transcribed data or transcripts. We then shared my outputs of identified significant statements by collating our outputs and putting them in our first table with three columns. The first column contained our identified significant statements. The second column had the pseudonym for each statement, its corresponding transcript, page, and line numbers. We reserved the third column for the next step.

Third, we formulated the meaning of each significant statement. We did this by analyzing the significant statement, which was the actual response, and providing the meaning of such a statement. Providing meaning was necessary because there were actual responses that an outsider could miss the meaning, especially since the interviews were in the local language. We ensured that what the informants said was what they meant; hence, we had the formulated meaning. We placed these formulated meanings on the third column of my first table.

After presenting the articulated meanings, we identified themes and emergent themes. We created the second and third tables to help us in the analysis. We grouped the formulated meanings into categories and later into theme clusters. In other words, we grouped “these formulated meanings into categories that reflect a unique structure of clusters of themes” (Shosha, 2012, p. 35).

For the cluster themes, we analyzed and arranged the formulated meanings that represented a unique structure or group of meanings, thus producing the theme clusters. Our second table contained the formatted meanings of the third column and themes from the first table. After identifying the theme clusters, we created another table for further analysis. The third table contained theme clusters and emergent themes. After analyzing the theme group, we found emerging themes and grouped them into a distinct structure. This step was finalizing the emergent themes that describe the phenomenon under study. See sample Tables 1, 2, and 3 below.

Table 1: Significant Statements and Formulated Meaning

Significant Statements	Code	Formulated Meanings
Ang among pag-register lisod kaayo kay wala man mi income, mao jud na problema namo sa mga beaches, kami tanan ani problema jud.	Mr. Laurente Resort Owner Beach ni Kap (T1)	Have a hardship to pay the yearly registration of the beach resorts
Lisod Kaayo kay amoang panginabuhian apektado man.	Mr. Laurente Resort Owner Beach ni Kap (T2)	Have a hardship to provide work for the employees
Lisod jud kaayo kay wala mi trabaho sa pila ka bulan halos tanan nako mga kauban nga empleyado kay wala pa nag balik kay dili man sila pud maka sure nga pirminti ang trabaho mao nangita nalang sila lain panginabuhian.	Ms. Ludivina Resort Supervisor Punta Elai (T3)	Have a hardship to provide work for the employees since the lock-down was started, as there is an uncertainty on when the resorts will resume its operation

Table 2: Formulated Meanings and Clustered Themes

Formulated Meanings	Clustered Themes
Have a hardship to maintain the employees, as the resort income is affected during the resort closure	Loss of income
Have a hardship to provide the needs and benefits for the employees because of no income due to absence of guest	
Having a hardship to provide 100% salary for his employee because there is no income.	
Had experienced difficult time as they do not have an income and cannot able to provide work for the employees	

Table 3: Clustered Themes and Emergent Themes

Clustered Themes	Emerging Themes
Loss of income	Economic Loss
Loss of business	

Fifth, we wrote the results based on the emergent themes, providing an exhaustive description of the phenomenon. The struggles, strategies, and viewpoints of resort owners in temporarily closing resorts in the Island Garden City of Samal. After writing the findings, we asked an expert to review them and check if we had provided an exhaustive description of the phenomenon.

Sixth, we checked the fundamental structure of the findings by checking on repetitive or redundant themes. In this step, we received help from the peer reviewers in refining the fundamental structure of the phenomenon. In the process, we removed some themes because they were redundant. After this process, we finally came up with two themes for struggles, two themes for strategies, and two themes for viewpoints.

Lastly, we asked the informants to verify our findings and see if these indeed described their experiences. We gave them a copy of the findings. For those who were hard to reach due to working from home, we sent them through email. We got their validation of the findings through the signed participant’s verification and consent form.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness was considered one of the most significant parts of the methodology (R. Tudy & I. Tudy, 2016) in a phenomenological qualitative study. Thus, the researcher will

subscribe to the four criteria set by Guba (1981). These are credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Fenton & Mazuwelics, 2008) for qualitative research design is commonly questioned (Bassey, 2002; Coben et al., 2013; Neuman, 2006) for the research process is delivered to be prone to personal biases and contamination by the researchers. The researchers ensured that experts carefully and precisely validated the questions in the interview guide. We also ensured that sensitive information and the confidentiality of the identity would not be publicized.

Transferability. This refers to the degree to which the context and setting are used as a medium where the research study can be transferred or the applicability (Merriam, 2009). The researchers certainly followed certain guidelines while conducting the research. The researchers also browsed other research about the study for some references. With this, future researchers will find our research a reliable data source and serve as a new research agenda for the upcoming research (Drotar, 2009).

Dependability. As researchers, we increased our trust in our chosen participants as they informed us of their past experiences and feelings. The researchers used different strategies as we conversed with them in gathering information. The researchers made the methodology reliable by clearly describing the data gathered from various sources and the interview (Tudy & Tudy, 2016) because rich data is an advantage in qualitative research (Charmz, 2006).

Confirmability. This refers to the objectivity of the researchers in getting the information of the informants or the participants (Shenton, 2004). During the interview, the researcher prepared for the consequences. Thus, the researchers did not tackle issues like entry and access, types of collected information, and potential ethical issues (Creswell, 2007). The researchers verified our chosen participants' interview transcripts by letting the participants review them. The audit trail was also included to keep their statement intact and accurate to what they say.

Ethical Consideration

The researchers thought we would be collecting data from people (Punch, 2005; Bailey, 1994). The researchers are aware of this. Since the researcher will get information from people, the researcher will ensure that the data gathered will be secured. To ensure the confidentiality of the participants, the researcher will observe ethical considerations (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006).

In our study, the researchers discussed ethical principles with various stakeholders, including respect for human rights, privacy, and confidentiality (Resnik, 1998; Royce et al., 2010). Issues and concerns were presented during the interview, including misinterpretations, honesty, openness, and privacy (Warusznski, 2002). To avoid these concerns, the researchers seriously considered anonymity, informed consent, and confidentiality (Richards & Schwartz, 2002).

Informed Consent. The researchers made sure to orient first the participants of this study. To certify this, the researcher achieved these standards (Silverman, 2014). The researcher provided all the significant information, including the benefits

they received and the risks they would take before the interview. In conducting our interview, to avoid the distraction of the relationship of the people included (Kaiser, 2009), proofs and consents will be presented to assure them so that trust among the participants will be secured. To gather the data, the researchers needed to be observant during the interview (Egudo & Mitchell, 2003). The researchers got the information from the participants who will voluntarily participate. Confidentiality as well will be secured. The mutual trust between the researchers and the participants was ensured. The participants' willingness to participate and cooperate voluntarily signed the participant's information to verify their involvement in this study. Furthermore, to ensure fairness and availability of the participants in the data gathering, the participants were notified of the data gathering schedule with the assistance of the local tourism officer of the province. This was justified when the participants had already affixed their signatures after fully understanding the informed consent form, where they agreed on the time and venue of the data gathering at the most convenient time and place. This is to ensure that the discussion of the study procedure is clearly understood by the participants in the study.

Privacy and Confidentiality. Researchers put into their minds that they were collecting data from people (Punch, 2005; Bailey, 1994). The researchers are aware of this. Since they got information from people, the researchers ensured the data gathered would be secured. To ensure the confidentiality of the participants, the researchers observed ethical considerations (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006).

IV. RESULTS

Based on the purpose of the study, we presented the results into three clusters- a discussion on the struggles, strategies, and viewpoints of resort owners during the temporary closure of resorts in the Island Garden City of Samal.

Struggles of Resort Owners in the Temporary Closure of Resorts Due to COVID-19 Pandemic

Our first line of inquiry focused on the whistleblower struggle. After the interviews, we analyzed the data, and two themes emerged. These were economic loss and employment loss.

Economic loss

Economic loss was the largest theme in tourism support services, with many business owners concerned about their finances. One of the shared experiences among the resort owners is economic loss. Before the pandemic, the income of the resort is very good. Many tourist arrivals (local and international tourists), especially during weekends. Almost all the cottages are fully booked, especially during peak schedules like holidays, Saturdays, and Sundays. But when the pandemic started and the government mandate to refrain from and restrict leisure travel, the tourism industry declined, resulting in income loss.

Sa pag-sugod jud sa lockdown, dili mi aware, so pag-announce sa LGU depressed jud mi tanan pati akong mga empleyado mawalaan sad ug trabaho, kay among income dili man ingon ana sad

ka dako, nag depende rami sa turista diri sa samal (IT3-1). Had experienced difficult time as they do not have an income and cannot able to provide work for the employees

Moreover, due to the strict implementation of leisure travel and recreation, many guests have canceled their reservations and bookings, resulting in the resort's loss of income and struggling to provide salaries to employees.

Ika duha kay wala jud income amo resort kay gibawal ang guest, kanang mag lisod jud mi mag provide sa needs sa employees (IT5-2). Have a hardship to provide the needs and benefits for the employees because of no income due to absence of guest

It is also believed that due to this incident, the resort's operation for next year will be re-challenged as they have second thoughts about renewing their business permits because they believe that this pandemic is uncertain.

Ang among pag-register lisod kaayo kay wala man mi income, mao jud na problema namo sa mga beaches, kami tanan ani problema jud (IT1-1). Have a hardship to pay the yearly registration of the beach resorts

Based on the sharing of the informants, the resort owners had difficulty attracting tourists due to the possibility of spreading the virus, which resulted in no guest arrival. In addition, due to no tourist arrival, no income/ revenue will motivate them to operate and apply for business permits for the next year.

Employment Loss

Any major crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic tends to cause major shake-ups in the market, and redundancies of certain jobs are to be expected. Some resort owners have decided to close temporarily and let employees some employees go. Others have limited their staff to minimize the cost of salaries and wages.

Nahirapan din kami, though hindi tinangal ang mga empleyado pero wala silang duty, naghintay lang kami sa next operation this January kung mag open, labing isa po lahat mga empleyado ngayon dalawa nalang (IT7-2). Struggling to maintain the employees due to the temporary closure

Lisod sa owner mag hatag ug sakto nga sweldo kay ako nga nag supervise sa resort gibabaan man ug 50% akoang sweldo kay sila pod wala man income sa resort, kay tungod sa pandemic hinay ang sulod sa negosyo, unya sa akoo pod akoo ko gi babaan (IT10-1). Having a hardship to provide 100% salary for his employee because there is no income.

Moreover, due to the resort's maintenance, only a few employees were allowed to work to maintain the cleanliness and orderliness of the resort.

Second struggle is the maintenance of our resort. The daily maintenance of our resort and the balance of our manpower to maintain it, has a really big gap, so there are places that we cannot maintain anymore, such as the 80 rooms we can only maintain

20 rooms, so those things (IT8-2). Struggling to maintain the condition of the resort as there is a big gap between the remaining number of employees and the total number of rooms and facilities to maintain

Third is the security: bigger resort, fewer people, less security because we can only operate 50 percent nalang (IT8-3). Struggling to maintain the safety and security of the resort due to a lack of manpower

The narratives of informant T8 depicted that despite the crisis and the resort's closure, the owners are still trying to preserve the resort's image by maintaining its order. But with the limited number of staff being held on duty, it is an additional task to them.

Strategies for coping with the challenges when experiencing a resort's temporary closure

We asked the informants how they coped with all the challenges they experienced and what their strategies were. Two emerging themes were identified after analyzing all their responses using Colaizzi's method. These were flexible work arrangements and reduced the number of employees.

Flexible Work Arrangement

The resort owners implemented their strategies to cope with the challenges they faced during the temporary closure of the resorts. One of their strategies is to provide a flexible work schedule to their remaining staff.

Akong gibuhay pud sa akong empleyado kay ako rang gi on-call kay kami ra man pd pamilya ga atiman sa resort (2T1-1). Instead of giving the employees a full-time job, the owner decided to make them as part-time or on-call worker.

Regarding pod sa among mga empleyado ga pulihanay nalang pod sila ug duty dili na pernaminti (2T4-3) Make the employees as Part-time or on-call workers.

Another strategy that the owners implemented was informing them in a meeting. The owners met with the employees and informed them that they could no longer operate due to the cancellation of bookings brought about by the restriction on leisure travel. Some were given half-day project-based work to maintain the resort's structure.

For our employees, we had to create a decision to inform them in our meetings that we will maintain a few people. We will not fire them but tell them they can no longer have a duty because we are temporarily closed. So yung iba pina flexible work lang namin just like half-day or project-based lang, to give them work, and we also ask them to do multitasking (2T8-1). Maintain only a few people to work for only four hours a day or project-based and ask them to do a multitasking job

The narrative of (T8) enforced this strategy to retain their employees. Although the resort employees did not have the regular eight-hour duty, they still provided work and continued their salary per work arrangement.

Reducing the number of employees

Like other tourism sectors, many resort owners were concerned about laying off employees.

We do not terminate everybody; if the resort opens, we welcome them back (2T8-2). Temporarily laid off their employee until the operation will get back to normal.

In the informant's statement (T8), they did not terminate their employees. They just let them stop the resort's operation, and when the time comes to allow the operation, they are still welcome to return as resort employees.

Sa safety ang maintenance we need to create a structure wherein we open a portion of the resort, but in reality, we are maintaining the entire resort but we are only opening a part of it which cannot sustain the overall expense (2T8-5). Created a structure with a few employees that they have and do multitask to maintain the overall condition of the resort.

Another strategy of the resort owner (T8) is that he manages to restructure the work of employees and do multi-tasking jobs to sustain the expenses. This is a win-win solution for both the employer and his employees.

For our employees, we had to make a decision in informing them in our meetings that we will maintain a few people. We will not fire them, but we tell them that they can no longer have a duty because we are temporary closed. So yung iba pina flexible work lang namin just like half-day or project based lang, to give them work, and we also ask them to do multitasking (2T8-1). Maintain only a few people to work for only four hours a day or project based and ask them to do multitasking job

Finally, to give justification to all the employees, a meeting was held to inform them about the current situation and the plan of the organization. Luckily, the organization decides not to fire them but to give them flexible work arrangements to reduce daily expenses in operation.

Viewpoints of the resort owners in the resort's temporary closure

We asked the informants about their viewpoints of the resort owners in the resort's temporary closure. They also shared their opinions on the resort's temporary closure. Based on their responses, the following themes emerged. These were public safety/community safety and the strict implementation of safety protocols.

Public safety/safety of the community

A theme that emerged in this sector was public safety/safety of the community. These comments ranged from health concerns about COVID-19 to the willingness to comply to help stop the disease from spreading.

Sa ako nga side nalipay pod ko nga kadto nga panghitabo (pag-close sa mga resorts) kay dili man basta basta pod ang pandemic, unya matakdan ta (3T1-1). Contented with the temporary closure since this Pandemic is something should not be compromised.

In the informant's statement (T1), he cited that he was happy with the temporary closure of the resorts. Public health and safety is one of the crucial things to be considered,

especially since resort operation involves direct contact with guests and employees.

Kani nga paagi sa gobyerno mas mayo jud ni kay safe man atong kinabuhi ani nga mga panahona, not unless tugotan na sa gobyerno paabrihan, para ma safety pod ang Samal (3T1-2). Agreed with the government's mandate that it is better for the resorts to be temporarily closed for the overall safety of the local residents of Samal.

Another statement is that he is in favor with the government's mandate to temporarily close the resort since the virus can spread easily and affect people's lives. He is also concerned with the safety of the community.

Sa side pod namo, para raman pod ni sa atong safety, so naa jud chances nga ang COVID-19 mka sulod jud diri sa atoa sa Samal(3T5-1). Agreed with the temporary closure to avoid the chances of COVID-19 transmission in the Island Garden City of Samal

Finally, the informant (T5) agreed that this temporary closure is not just for the sake of one but for everybody. If the virus eventually spread on the island, it would be a big problem. Moreover, most informants have agreed that the temporary closure of the resort could bring safety to the local residents.

Operate with strict implementation of safety protocols.

A theme that emerged in this sector was operating with strict implementation of safety protocols. These comments ranged from the viewpoints of the temporary closure of the resorts.

In my opinion, strict implementation rather than closing the resort, because the money has to flow in, they need to open because happy the government is, as they don't need to lay off their employees, di katulad sa resort employees, who will give their benefits diba? (3T8-1). It could be better if the LGU Samal allows the resort to operate with a strict implementation of guidelines and protocols rather than closing it.

The informant's statement (T8) mentioned that as much as they are concerned with safety and security, they also need to implement safety protocols strictly. He mentioned that it is okay to operate, but there should be a guide on safely monitoring the inflow of guests. They must also operate to compensate their employees, and income should flow.

Sa ako lang, kung mu follow lang unta ta sa protocol, dili lang unta e-close jud, pero mao man order sa ato LGU mag sunod rapod ta, kay wala man ta mahimo mao man ang mando (3T3-3). Suggests that if only the beach resorts will follow the safety protocols then there's no need for the temporarily closure of resorts

Another viewpoint of the resort owner (T3) is that there is no need to close the resort if the protocol is observed. But with the government's mandate to temporarily close the resort, she will follow.

Mas okay unta kung mag open lang gihapon siya basta mag follow lang atong mga guidelines

gani, ug tama nga mga proseso ug dili lang siya totally e-close kay ang samal gamay raman jud sad ang COVID (T4). Suggests that it is much better to operate and follow the guidelines and the correct procedure than closing the resorts since COVID-19 transmission is low in Samal

Finally, the informant (T4) mentioned that it's okay to operate when the protocol is strictly followed; after all, the local transmission is low, and it can be prevented as the resort's implementation of the safety procedure is high.

V. DISCUSSION

Interviewing the resort owners was fulfilling not only as a tourism industry professional but also as a researcher. It was also a source of enlightenment for us affected by this situation. As we have mentioned in the above context before the occurrence of the global crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism industry is considered one of the fastest-growing industries globally that has a dynamic effect on the economic development of every country (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2020; Ugur, 2020). The industry has had many changes as the government mandated lockdowns and travel restrictions. Indeed, the tourism industry has shifted to the temporary closure of businesses or flexible work arrangements. Their struggles, strategies, and viewpoints were information for us, other regional resort owners, and the community.

Operation of tourism businesses, traveling around places in national and international settings had become the most favorite thing around the world, especially among the younger ones (Bui, et al., 2013; Morrison, 2016;), not until March 2020 when the World Health Organization (WHO) has announced that the world was confronted with a new global pandemic – COVID-19 or coronavirus disease 2019. The resort owners identified their struggles with economic loss and employment loss.

Employment in the tourism and hospitality industry is dramatically affected due to estimated stay-at-home orders caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic (Kurmann & Ta, 2020; Kartseva & Kuznetsova, 2020). The restriction of leisure travel has affected the resort's income and some of the jobs of the resort employees. The struggle of the resort owners led to their decision to retain or layoff some of their employees due to a lack of tourist arrival, as mentioned in the study of Comfort (2020) that this crisis (Covid-19 pandemic) has led to temporary or in some cases, permanent loss of employment.

To address some of their struggles during this pandemic, some resort owners have come up with a flexible work schedule to help their employees retain their jobs. Although this strategy could mean cost to them, they still decide to make it happen to help their staff to have work. This result is paralleled by the study of Oshi and Nwuche (2020), which mentioned that flexible work arrangement is a great strategy for businesses to survive, thrive, and withstand the challenges given by the COVID-19 pandemic, as it also applied by the other more developed countries that show to be ahead in its implementation. (Oshi & Nwuche, 2020).

Finally, the owner's viewpoint in implementing temporary closure is a good move of the local government to restrict leisure travel from the island. The viewpoint is connected to the study of Sharov, 2020, that imposed lockdowns have a better result for safety and security than no lockdown.

Another suggestion that might be possible for them is to implement safety protocols in the resort strictly. It is good to know that the tourism industry is recovering from the economic loss brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Adjusting to the New Normal operating is undoubtedly a good start for the resort owners. As mentioned in the study of Gössling et al. (2020), the tourism industry is slowly recovering from the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Businesses related to this sector are expected to create extensive changes to their operations under the new normal environment to ensure the health and safety of the tourists and enhance the willingness of the tourists to patronize their service.

Gursoy, et al. (2020) also added that the strict implementation of guidelines is an essential way to continue the operation of tourism businesses under the new normal. It indicates that visible sanitizing efforts and avoiding transmissions such as constantly providing hand sanitizers at entry, staff and customers wearing masks and gloves, limiting the number of tourists, implementing social distancing, and good training for employees to practice health and safety protocols are significant for safety precautions, as the tourist or guests also expected that these practices are essential for tourism business. This means that there is hope in the future of this industry that if it returns to normal, the tourism industry will be promising to those who want to travel for leisure activity.

Implications of the Study

The study findings are important value material for other resort and service sector owners. Many business owners, particularly in the hospitality and tourism industry, are experiencing a sharp decline in business due to travel restrictions and lockdowns that resulted in cancellations or lack of bookings for the future. In this indeterminate time, the tourism industry is extremely helpless. Micro, small, and medium enterprise businesses are especially vulnerable, often surviving on a short season to generate revenue for the rest of the year.

The study findings are also a good source of information for employees in the tourism and hospitality industry. The resort owners' struggles, strategies, and viewpoints may help them understand that this pandemic greatly affects this sector. The tourism industry relies on primary income sources: services directly to guests and visitors. Since travel restriction is strictly implemented, no bookings and reservations are made.

Furthermore, the findings could be useful for the government sector in evaluating the effect of this pandemic and making a move to assist the most affected industries, especially those resorts that have retrenched their employees due to this pandemic.

Thus, operations in the new normal are becoming popular, and the industry is taking the opportunity to start again. There are certain guidelines for a safe work environment for visitors and employees. The strengths of this study are more about the opportunities of the resort owners; their struggles, strategies, and viewpoints will become life lessons to them as they face the new outlook in tourism and hospitality in the new normal. This study not only widens our understanding of the live experience of the resort owners but also opens other areas of interest to dig deeper into the strategies to cope in the future.

However, we recognized some limitations in this study, such as the geographical setting, which is limited only to resorts in the Island Garden City of Samal. We must acknowledge this limitation because in phenomenological research, the researcher must be transparent, including bias (Janesick, 2011). Also, we are not able to show, based on the responses of the informants, how this pandemic will change their future plans for the resort. Given this limitation, investigating their plan to follow the protocol in the new normal could be good research to undertake. Also, an in-depth study on people’s perceptions and reactions towards travel restrictions to leisure travel could be another interesting topic to paint a bigger picture of understanding this phenomenon. Lastly, this study does not compare the experiences of other tourism industries, which could also be worth consideration for future research.

Final Remarks

This study highlights the struggles, strategies, and viewpoints of the resort owners during the temporary closure of the resorts in the Island Garden City of Samal. The findings describe their struggles of economic and employment losses brought about by lockdowns and travel restrictions to leisure travel. However, the resort owners used flexible work arrangements and reduced the number of employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. They continue their resort operation but are only limited to the resort’s maintenance and cleanliness to avoid wear and tear on the resort’s facilities. They also consider managing to keep their employees by scheduling work with them at least three times a week. Those affected by losing their jobs are advised that they can return to the resort and be hired as resort employees once travel restrictions are restored and lifted. Even when faced with challenges, organizational resilience, and human kindness are evident as their viewpoints on public safety and security and operating with strict implementation of safety protocols are important. This means that life is more important than profit.

Finally, the findings would mainly benefit the informants and other service sectors affected by this pandemic. They might consider the results as their basis in conducting plans for future operations, particularly organizational resilience.

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