

# Employee Experience in Hotel Quarantine Facilities: Basis for The Development of Crisis Management Framework

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## Abstract

Due to the Covid-19 virus, everything has undergone a significant pivot, including livelihood, access to medicine, and the movement of products and services. One of the most affected industries is the hospitality and tourism sector. There was a sudden shift from the regular operation of a hotel to becoming a quarantine facility for isolated guests. Hence, this research explored the employees' experiences working in a hotel quarantine facility as a basis for developing a human resource crisis management framework. This study utilized basic qualitative research to explore the employees' experiences working in hotel quarantine facilities. Consequently, this study revealed that among the hotel changes are adjustments to how operations are carried out, how services are provided, and how many staff choose to stay despite the risk of contamination. In accordance with that, most employees experienced psychological and physical problems due to the increased risk of contamination from the virus and the fact that the employees were separated from their families.

**Keywords:** *Human Resource, Crisis Management Framework, Hotel Quarantine, Isolation Facility, Personal Protective Equipment, Health Protocols, Covid-19 virus*

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## **Introduction**

In Tuguegarao City, the coronavirus outbreak has caused adverse effects on tourist arrival, with its ranking as highest number of cases among the other local government units in Cagayan Province in August 2021 (Rappler 2020). As a result, hospitals and quarantine facilities within the city were swarmed with patients. Therefore, in order to provide a solution to the shortage of quarantine facilities, the local government unit of Tuguegarao city then permits the hotel establishments to operate as quarantine facilities for asymptomatic, symptomatic, and locally-stranded individuals. In doing so, employees experienced long work hours and emotional problems relating to the risk of working in a hotel quarantine facility. Furthermore, because of the required social distancing, hotel employees have limited customer/service interactions and cannot meet the brand standard (Goh, 2021). In addition, the Department of Tourism accredited three hotel quarantine facilities in Tuguegarao City. Meanwhile, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020) found that there are 5.3 percent of employees in the hospitality industry quit their occupations in May. This starkly contrasts the leaving rate of 4.1 percent in February 2020 before the pandemic. The percentage is a high record for the hospitality industry, and it is higher compared to the general quit rate of roughly 2.5 percent (ABC Action News, 2021). Based on a national poll of over 1,000 hospitality workers, almost one-third of informants have left the business and have no plans to come back. However, when employees are asked why they leave their job in the hotel quarantine facilities, the most common responses are related to health and safety concerns, risks of contamination, low wages, and mental health problems (The Conversation Journal, 2020). Although there were numerous studies conducted on the condition of medical workers (Kang et al., 2020; Walton et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2020), there has been very limited study about the conditions and adaptations of employees in a hotel quarantine facility. Therefore, this study explored the experiences of employees working in a hotel quarantine facility.

## **Methodology**

This research study utilized basic qualitative research by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) to guide in understanding, designing, conducting, and presenting the qualitative research study. The study was conducted in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan. The informants of this study are employees, specifically the three (3) front desk clerks, one (1) housekeeping staff, one (1) maintenance staff, and one (1) hotel supervisor working in hotel quarantine facilities in

Tuguegarao City. Purposive sampling was used in determining the participants who are employees from the list of accredited quarantine hotel facilities identified by the Department of Tourism (DOT). Through interview method of data gathering, the respondents were given open-ended questions with follow up questions to further explore their responses and the topic of interest. The interview lasted about 5-8 minutes for each respondent.

## **Findings**

Based on the review of the informant's answers, the study with the major themes: (1) experiences of employees working in a hotel quarantine facility and (2) coping mechanism measures during a crisis. The identified reasons for staying employed in a hotel quarantine facility include financial necessity, dedication to serving the hotel, and willingness to help the medical frontliners while the challenges encountered while working in a hotel quarantine facility were fear of contagion from the virus, changes in working assignments, and dealing with behavioral issues. The identified coping mechanism measures during the crisis were provision of adequate protective equipment, and implementation of health and safety procedures in hotels.

## **Conclusion**

While hotel employees have become frontline catering to the needs of isolated guests, they were not prepared enough for the crisis which impacted their regular operations and standard procedures. Despite the possible risks concerning their employment, hotel employees still prefer to remain in their respective jobs due to financial necessity, dedication to serving the hotel, and willingness to help the frontline during the challenging times. One of the most important considerations is also that employees are the company's most important assets and are in charge of carrying out crisis management strategies as necessary. This study suggests actions to be implement by the HR department as a framework for holistic approach to the crisis and risk management. The framework suggests three phases: Phase 1 is the pre-crisis stage, wherein the hotel management should conduct an orientation on the nature of the hotel itself, employees' roles and responsibilities, wages and benefits, nature of work, and monitoring of employees' health status; Phase 2, during a crisis, requires identifying any possible losses of human resources that involves determination of costs and damages, provision for adequate compensation to the employees at risk, constant communication and feed backing, and physical and mental support system; and Phase 3, the post-crisis, requires a need to restore misplaced employees to their original posts, and reorientation to the new environment.

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