

The Impact of Covid -19 Pandemic on Hospitality Management Students at De La Salle University - Dasmariñas

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Abstract: This research is about the impact of COVID-19 on Hospitality Management Students of De La Salle University - Dasmariñas (DLSU-D). The study focuses on how the pandemic has disrupted academic purposes, professional growth, and personal well-being within this sector. By utilizing online survey forms, this research aims to capture the multifaceted effects of COVID-19 on these individuals. The surveys was serve as the primary data source, complemented by secondary sources such as scholarly articles and previous studies. The findings was provide insights into the challenges faced by students, the support mechanisms available, and the adaptations required to navigate the pandemic's uncertainties. This research seeks to inform future strategies and interventions to enhance resilience and preparedness in the tourism and hospitality sector.

Keywords: COVID-19, pandemic, Hospitality Management Students, hospitality sector.

1. INTRODUCTION

The global health crisis has brought about unprecedented challenges and disruptions in academic pursuits, professional aspirations, and personal well-being for students in these disciplines. COVID-19, a novel coronavirus, has had a huge influence on the world economy and human life. The tourism sector has been severely hit by extreme mobility restrictions (Farmaki et al., 2020; MacSween and Canziani, 2021; Ghaharian et al., 2021; Rahimizhian and Irani, 2020).

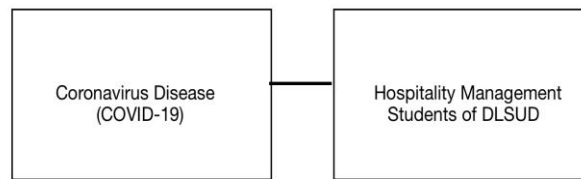
As a response, governments around the world imposed severe travel restrictions and closed their borders, virtually suspending international travel (Mao et al., 2021; Peterson et al., 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected not only the economy but also politics and society (Jaipuria et al., 2021). As the number of infected cases increases across the country, there is growing pressure to shut down the tourism industry/business. Social distance, community lockdowns, work-from-home, self- or mandatory quarantine, crowd control, and other measures are being introduced (Jaipuria et al., 2021; Sigala, 2020).

The need to conduct this study arises from the significant challenges faced by hospitality management students due to the pandemic. These individuals have had to adapt to remote learning, altered work environments, and uncertainties within the industry. Moreover, the teaching and training processes for hospitality management students have been disrupted, impacting their academic performance and future career prospects. Understanding these challenges is crucial for developing targeted interventions, support systems, and strategies to enhance resilience and well-being among the hospitality management students. This study aims to contribute to a better understanding of these issues and inform future preparedness measures for similar crises.

Research Paradigm

In this study, the relationship between the dependent and independent variables is crucial for understanding the impact of the pandemic on students in the Tourism and Hospitality Management field.



The dependent variable, which represents the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on students, is influenced by the independent variable. The pandemic has led to significant disruptions in the tourism and hospitality industry, including travel restrictions, closures of hospitality establishments, and changes in consumer behavior. These factors directly impact students studying in this field, affecting their education, career prospects, and overall well-being.

By studying the relationship between these variables, researchers can assess the extent of the impact of the pandemic on Hospitality Management students. This analysis can provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by students, the adaptations made by educational institutions, and the strategies employed to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on their academic and professional development.

Understanding the dynamics between the dependent and independent variables in this context can inform future decision-making, policy development, and educational strategies to better support students in the face of similar crises. It highlights the interconnectedness of external factors, such as global pandemics, and their direct influence on specific student populations and academic disciplines.

Statement of the Problem

The breakout of the COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted the tourism and hospitality industry, leading to disruptions in academic pursuits, professional growth, and personal well-being for Hospitality Management students of De La Salle University - Dasmariñas (DLSU-D). Given these challenges, this study aims to address the following key problems:

1. How has the COVID-19 epidemic impacted the academic performance and learning experiences of Hospitality Management students at DLSU-D?
2. What are the challenges faced by Hospitality Management students of DLSU-D in adapting to changes brought about by COVID-19, such as.
 - 2.1 remote learning,
 - 2.2 altered work environment,
 - 2.3 and uncertainties in the industry?
3. What support mechanisms and resources are available to help Hospitality Management students of DLSU-D deal with the pandemic's impact on their academic and professional careers?
4. How has the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the mental health and well-being of Hospitality Management students of DLSU-D, necessitating the implementation of various interventions?
5. In what ways have the practical experiences, internships, and career prospects for Hospitality Management students of DLSU-D been affected by the restrictions and safety measures implemented during the pandemic and how are they navigating these challenges?

By addressing these critical problems, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted impacts of COVID-19 on the academic, professional, and personal dimensions of tourism hospitality students and employees at DLSU-D. Identifying and analyzing these challenges is essential for developing targeted interventions, support systems, and strategies to enhance resilience, well-being, and preparedness for individuals within the tourism and hospitality sector amidst the ongoing global health crisis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism education is one of the essential cornerstones of the tourism industry. The tourism industry is a labor-intensive service industry that thrives on excellent customer service; thus, the industry must have a pool of well-trained and qualified employees (Unguren, Kacmaz & Kahveci, 2015). Effective and quality tourism education and training, thus, serve the ultimate purpose of creating professionally trained and qualified human resources required by the tourism industry (Unguren & Huseyinli, 2020).

The relationship between tourism education and the tourism industry is two-way in that whatever happens in the tourism industry affects the tourism education system and vice versa (Tiwari et al., 2020). Tourism education provision follows the industry's trend (Kunwar, 2018). Alas, this two-way relationship and the fact that tourism education is a crucial part of the entire tourism system tend to be forgotten (Seraphin & Yallop, 2021).

Within the context of COVID-19, the changes caused by the pandemic to the tourism industry resulted in the ensuing changes to the tourism education and training systems and the possible implications for work-integrated learning internship placements for the future generation of students, graduates, and industry professionals (Bilsland et al., 2020). Considering the closely interconnected relationship between tourism education and the tourism industry, Kunwar (2018) stressed that tourism education must grow in parallel with the tourism industry so it can provide valuable support to the industry.

Given that whatever happens in the tourism industry affects tourism education (and vice versa) and the devastating impacts of COVID-19 on the tourism industry, the effects of COVID-19 on tourism education can be devastating as well. Baum and Hai (2020) reported that the pandemic had intensified concerns associated with high annual turnover rates in the tourism industry (Dogru, Mody, Suess, McGinley & Line, 2020), resulting in job insecurity, seasonality of work, low wages, and preference for the cheaper workforce (Robinson, Martins, Solnet & Baum, 2019). Even before COVID-19, several prior studies that examined the attitudes and career plans of tourism students revealed that the majority of tourism students do not want to work in the tourism industry after graduation due to the structural characteristics of the sector (i.e., job insecurity, work seasonality, limited career opportunities, stressful and demanding working conditions) (Huseyinli, 2020).

3. METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative approach, utilizing open-ended questions for in-depth interviews. The COVID-19 pandemic is novel so not much is known about the evolving and increasing crisis. In the instance of novel problems where understanding must be developed about how things are happening, qualitative research is more appropriate than quantitative research (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Tetnowski and Damico, 2001; Kaushal and Srivastava, 2020). This study used non-probability criterion sampling, which seeks cases that meet some criterion that is useful for quality assurance (Creswell and Poth, 2018).

Research Design

This study used a descriptive research design to explore the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Hospitality Management students of DLSUD. A descriptive research design is appropriate for this study as it aims to provide a detailed and accurate portrayal of the current situation, including the challenges and adaptations experienced by the target population (Burns & Grove, 2005). Descriptive research is particularly useful in understanding phenomena as they occur naturally and identifying areas that may require further investigation (Polit & Beck, 2012). By using this approach, the study can capture the nuanced impacts of the pandemic on academic performance, career aspirations, and overall well-being, providing a comprehensive understanding of the issue at hand.

Research Locale

This study was conducted at De La Salle University - Dasmariñas (DLSU-D) in Dasmariñas City, Cavite, Philippines. The choice of DLSU-D was driven by its significant population of Hospitality Management students, providing a rich data source for the study.

Participants of the Study and Research Sampling

The primary participants in this study were students enrolled in the Hospitality Management program at De La Salle University - Dasmariñas (DLSU-D). The selection criteria included active enrollment in the program, with a total of 30 undergraduate students participating.

To understand the impacts of COVID-19, purposive sampling was used to select students directly connected to the Hospitality Management program. Additionally, maximum variation sampling was employed to include a diverse range of

backgrounds and experiences, while stratified sampling considered important demographic variables. Snowball sampling encouraged participants to suggest other eligible peers. This comprehensive approach aimed to capture a broad spectrum of experiences and perspectives related to the research topic.

Research Instrument & Data Gathering Procedures

In this qualitative research on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Tourism and Hospitality Management students at DLSU-D, specific data collection methods were employed to capture the nuanced experiences of the students. The study was conducted entirely online to follow COVID-19 protocols, given the post-pandemic context. Data collection took place through an online platform, using a video conference tool for interviews.

In-depth interviews were held with a diverse group of students using a semi-structured approach, allowing for open discussions about the challenges, adaptations, and coping mechanisms they experienced during the pandemic. These interviews were conducted via a video conference tool, audio-recorded with participants' consent, and transcribed for analysis.

Relevant documents, such as university announcements and guidelines related to the pandemic, were analyzed to supplement data collected from interviews, enriching the understanding of students' experiences. A structured framework for analysis was established using a coding process guided by the research objectives, allowing for the identification of key issues and experiences shared by the students.

Thematic analysis techniques were employed to systematically review the coded data, uncovering meaningful insights, connections, and trends within the responses. An interpretative approach was adopted to contextualize the findings and generate coherent interpretations that reflect the nuanced experiences of the students. Member checking was incorporated to ensure the accuracy and validation of findings by allowing participants to provide feedback on the analysis of their experiences. The results of the data analysis were presented in a comprehensive research report, structured to convey the findings, their interpretations, and the broader implications for understanding the impact of the pandemic on Hospitality Management students at DLSU-D.

Data Treatment and Analysis

The data treatment and analysis process followed a detailed and systematic approach to ensure a thorough examination of the collected insights. Initially, the transcribed data from the interviews were organized and prepared for analysis. The data was then analyzed using a three-phase coding process: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

In the open coding phase, each transcript was reviewed thoroughly, and meaningful segments of text relevant to the research objectives were identified. These segments were then assigned initial codes representing key concepts or challenges, such as "remote learning," "work environment," and "industry uncertainty." The open coding process allowed the identification of important issues faced by the students during the pandemic. These initial codes were organized into broader categories based on recurring patterns within the data.

After open coding, axial coding was employed to refine and organize the categories by exploring relationships between them. This phase focused on identifying how different categories were connected. For example, the challenge of remote learning was related to the lack of engagement and the technological issues that students encountered. Similarly, work environment challenges were linked to motivation and focus issues, and concerns about uncertainties in the industry were tied to student anxiety regarding future job prospects.

In the final phase, selective coding was used to identify the core themes that emerged from the analysis. This phase focused on linking the most relevant data to overarching categories, ensuring the themes captured the primary challenges and coping strategies experienced by the students.

The coded data was systematically reviewed using thematic analysis techniques, which allowed for the identification of significant trends and patterns. The thematic analysis helped to uncover meaningful insights and connections between different categories of data, providing a clear understanding of the issues faced by the students. Throughout the process, an interpretative approach was adopted to ensure that the findings accurately reflected the nuanced experiences of the students in the context of the pandemic.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A total of 30 undergraduate Hospitality Management students at De La Salle University - Dasmariñas (DLSU-D) participated in the study. The demographics, including gender and age distribution, are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Figure 1. Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	25	83.3%
Female	5	16.7%
Total	30	100%

Figure 2. Category of Ages

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18	2	6.7%
19	5	16.7%
20	8	26.7%
21	6	20%
22	7	23.3%
23	2	6.7%
Total	30	100%

1. Impact of COVID-19 on Academic Performance and Learning Experiences

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the academic performance and learning experiences of Hospitality Management students at De La Salle University - Dasmariñas (DLSU-D). The transition to online learning led to significant challenges, particularly a decline in motivation and engagement. Many students expressed difficulty maintaining focus during virtual classes. As one participant shared, "Mahirap mag-concentrate sa pag-aaral lalo na't maraming nangyayari sa paligid. Parang nawawala ako sa koneksyon sa mga kaklase ko at guro." Another student remarked, "Namiss ko yung mga real-time na feedback at discussion sa klase. Lahat parang malayo." One participant added, "Sanay akong magtanong at makipag-interact sa klase, pero sa online, parang ang hirap. Pakiramdam ko, para lang akong nakatingin sa screen. Mas mahirap matuto." This aligns with research by Adnan and Anwar (2020), which emphasized that online learning, particularly during a crisis, can lead to feelings of isolation and a drop in academic performance. The lack of in-person interaction compounded the difficulties students faced, with many highlighting that they struggled to adapt to the digital format without the direct support of their instructors and peers.

2. Challenges Faced by Hospitality Management Students

2.1 Remote Learning

A significant challenge students encountered during the pandemic was the shift to remote learning. Over 70% of participants reported difficulties with the virtual classroom environment. Many pointed out technological issues, such as unstable internet connections and problems with accessing course materials, which hindered their learning experience. One participant shared, "Ang hirap sa online classes kasi hindi ko masyadong ma-ask ang mga tanong ko at mag-participate sa discussions. Parang nakikinig lang ako pero wala akong masyadong engagement." Another student remarked, "Minsan, nawawala ang internet sa gitna ng lecture, kaya maraming detalye akong nami-miss." One student expressed frustration, stating, "Pakiramdam ko, araw-araw na lang, may problema sa internet, at minsan hindi ko talaga maintindihan yung nangyayari sa klase." This sentiment resonates with O'Keeffe's (2013) findings that the lack of face-to-face interaction and technical barriers can significantly reduce student engagement and comprehension. Despite efforts to adjust, students highlighted the limitations of remote learning, particularly in the context of their hands-on field of study.

2.2 Altered Work Environments

The shift to remote work created an additional set of challenges for students, particularly in managing their time and maintaining motivation. Many students struggled with the lack of structure and routine. One participant shared, "Mag-isa lang ako sa bahay at mahirap mag-focus. Minsan, nakakaramdam ako ng kalungkutan." Another student reflected, "Wala na akong routine, kaya nahirapan akong maging productive. Parang ang gulo ng lahat." One student also noted, "Sanay akong may schedule at may structure, pero ngayon parang disorganized lahat. Ang hirap magpatuloy." These experiences align with the findings of Wang et al. (2021), which suggest that remote work can lead to feelings of isolation and decreased productivity. The lack of a physical workspace and interaction with colleagues or classmates made it difficult for students to stay motivated and productive.

2.3 Uncertainties in the Industry

Many students expressed anxiety about their future job prospects in the hospitality and tourism industry, which was significantly impacted by the pandemic. The closure of businesses and travel restrictions led to concerns about the availability of internships and job opportunities. As one student shared, "Ang daming negosyo ang nagsara, kaya nag-aalala ako kung saan ako magtatrabaho pagkatapos ng graduation." Another noted, "Ang hirap kasi konti na lang yung job openings ngayon. Hindi ko alam kung saan ako pupunta." A third participant voiced, "Lahat nagbago dahil sa pandemya. Wala na akong kasiguraduhan kung anong mangyayari sa industriya na pinili ko." This uncertainty reflects findings from the World Economic Forum (2020), which highlighted that the pandemic disrupted job markets, particularly in sectors reliant on physical presence, such as hospitality and tourism. Students struggled to find opportunities to apply their knowledge in real-world settings, contributing to their growing anxiety about entering the workforce post-graduation.

3. Support Mechanisms and Resources

In response to these challenges, DLSU-D implemented several support mechanisms to assist students in coping with the difficulties brought by the pandemic. Participants noted the availability of various resources, including:

- **Online Counseling Services:** Mental health support was crucial, as many students turned to counseling to cope with the heightened levels of stress and anxiety. As one student shared, "Since isolated, mag-isa, talking to the guidance counselor really helped me manage my anxiety during the pandemic." This sentiment reflects the growing need for mental health services during times of crisis. Several students found virtual counseling sessions valuable, though some still longed for the more personal, face-to-face interactions that typically provide a stronger sense of support and connection.
- **Academic Support Programs:** The university also implemented several academic support initiatives to help students with the transition to remote learning. Virtual resources such as recorded lectures and online tutoring sessions were made available to ensure that students had access to educational support outside of class hours. Participants appreciated these efforts, with one stating, "The extra help from our professors made a big difference in understanding the material." The flexibility offered by these resources allowed students to review lessons at their own pace, helping them catch up and clarify concepts they found challenging.
- **Career Guidance:** Given the uncertainty of the job market, particularly in the hospitality and tourism industries, the university also offered career services. Virtual career fairs and online workshops provided students with tools to navigate the job market and prepared them for online job applications. One student remarked, "The career services ay nakatulong sa amin para sa resume na pwede namin magamit for online applications." These initiatives gave students the opportunity to connect with potential employers and gain insight into what skills were needed in the evolving job market.

While these support mechanisms provided crucial assistance, some students noted that these resources, while helpful, could not fully replace the benefits of in-person interactions. Nonetheless, the availability of such services helped students navigate the challenges of remote learning, mental health struggles, and uncertainty in their career paths during the pandemic.

4. Impact on Mental Health and Well-Being

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the mental health and well-being of Hospitality Management students at DLSU-D, with many students reporting increased levels of anxiety, stress, and loneliness. One participant shared, "Pakiramdam ko, sobrang bigat na ng lahat. mahirap na mag-focus at magpatuloy." Another student said, "May mga araw na hindi ko na kayang buksan ang laptop ko dahil baka hanggang dito nalang tayo" A third participant expressed, "Laging nag-aalala lalo na sa mga family na nag wowork. Laging takot kung anong mangyayari. Mahirap mag-aral kapag hindi mo

alam kung anong mangayayri sa mga susunod na araw at kung kelan ba ito matatapos." These sentiments highlight the emotional and mental toll the pandemic had on students, leaving them struggling to cope with the uncertainties and challenges of remote learning.

These experiences were reflected in research by Lee et al. (2020), which noted that the pandemic triggered a mental health crisis among students worldwide, marked by increased levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness. According to the study, the isolation and social distancing measures exacerbated these issues, as many students were forced to adapt to new, virtual forms of learning and communication. Lee et al. (2020) also emphasized the importance of universities offering targeted mental health interventions, including wellness programs and virtual support groups, which became vital during the pandemic to address these mental health concerns.

Consequently, universities have implemented wellness programs and virtual support groups to foster community and resilience. DLSU-D implemented wellness programs and virtual support groups. Some students noted that these efforts helped foster a sense of community despite the isolation. As one student shared, "Nakakatulong, pero wala pa ring tatalo sa pakiramdam ng makikita at makakasama mo ang mga kaibigan nang personal." This statement underscores the limitations of virtual interactions in replacing in-person connections. Despite the availability of these support mechanisms, several students still expressed a longing for more personal and direct forms of support, which many felt were crucial for maintaining emotional well-being.

The increased sense of isolation and the emotional toll it took on students emphasizes the need for continued and enhanced mental health support. While virtual solutions provided relief to some, the inability to replace in-person interactions left many students feeling disconnected and emotionally drained, signaling the necessity of stronger, more accessible mental health resources in the future.

5. Practical Experiences, Internships, and Career Prospects

The restrictions and safety measures during the pandemic disrupted practical experiences and internships for Hospitality Management students. Many students had internships canceled or converted to virtual formats, limiting their hands-on training. One participant remarked, "I felt unprepared for my future career because halos lahat online and I missed out on real-world experience." According to a report by the International Labour Organization (2020), these disruptions hindered students' readiness for employment in a field that relies heavily on practical skills.

To navigate these challenges, students sought alternative experiences, such as online workshops and virtual internships. One student shared, "I had to be proactive and find new ways to build my skills online," while another noted, "The shift to online internships was difficult, but it was the only option. I tried to make the most out of it." Many participants also utilized university resources for career guidance to adapt to the changing job market, with one remarking, "The career services helped me improve my resume and prepared me for online applications."

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Increased Stress and Anxiety: The COVID-19 pandemic significantly heightened stress and anxiety levels among Hospitality Management students at DLSU-D. Many students struggled with the uncertainty of the situation, concerns over their family's well-being, and adapting to the new learning environments, all of which affected their academic performance and mental health.

Challenges in Adapting to Online Learning: The transition to online learning was a major challenge for students, particularly due to the lack of face-to-face interaction and technological barriers such as unstable internet connections. Students found it difficult to maintain the same level of engagement and comprehension as in traditional in-person classes.

Disruption in Practical Learning: Hospitality Management students faced significant challenges in their practical experiences, internships, and career prospects due to restrictions and safety measures. The hands-on nature of their field was disrupted, leaving students feeling unprepared and disconnected from their studies and future careers.

Support Mechanisms: Peer support emerged as a key mechanism in helping students cope with the academic stress brought about by the pandemic. Students also appreciated university-provided mental health and academic resources, including online counseling and virtual classes, which helped alleviate some of the pressures they faced.

Impact on Career Prospects: The pandemic's restrictions negatively affected students' career prospects, particularly with fewer internship and job opportunities available. However, students adapted by engaging in remote internships, virtual simulations, and online skill development, supported by career counseling services from the university. **Mental Health and Well-being:** The pandemic took a toll on students' mental health, increasing feelings of isolation, stress, and uncertainty about their future careers. Accessible mental health services and well-being programs became essential in helping students manage these issues and build resilience.

6. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- 1. Enhance Technological Support:** The university should improve access to technological resources, ensuring students have stable internet connections and access to necessary devices. This can be achieved through equipment lending programs, subsidized internet packages, or partnerships with service providers. Providing digital literacy training could also help students adapt more quickly to online learning environments.
- 2. Increase Engagement in Online Learning:** To address the lack of face-to-face interaction and engagement, instructors should incorporate more interactive elements into virtual classes, such as group discussions, breakout rooms, and real-time feedback. Additionally, hybrid models that blend in-person and online learning can be explored to offer students more opportunities for hands-on learning when health protocols allow.
- 3. Support Practical and Hands-On Learning:** For students in practical fields like Hospitality Management, virtual simulations and remote internships should be further developed to mimic real-world experiences. The university should collaborate with industry partners to create meaningful virtual placements and experiential learning opportunities that keep students engaged and better prepared for the workforce.
- 4. Strengthen Mental Health Support:** Given the significant impact of the pandemic on students' mental health, DLSU-D should continue offering accessible mental health services, such as online counseling, stress management workshops, and virtual support groups. The university should also promote these services more widely and ensure that students know how to access them. Additionally, integrating mental health awareness into the curriculum can help normalize discussions around well-being.
- 5. Expand Career Support and Guidance:** To mitigate the challenges posed by fewer job opportunities in the hospitality sector, the university should expand career services by offering more virtual career fairs, networking events, and industry webinars. Career advisors can help students explore alternative career paths and develop transferable skills, while also guiding them in adapting to changing industry demands. **Promote Peer Support Initiatives:** Building on the success of peer support during the pandemic, the university could formalize peer mentorship programs, where upper-year students provide academic and emotional support to their peers. This can foster a sense of community and shared resilience, helping students navigate academic and personal challenges more effectively.

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