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From Downturn to Upturn, An Economic Lift of Local Business Entrepreneurs in Qatar as Affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Phenomenology

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Abstract: ***Background: Globally, local entrepreneurs have experienced an economic downturn brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. Local businessmen in Qatar are not an exception. Method: This qualitative research paper utilized the phenomenological approach as it sought to understand the lived experiences of business owners in Qatar who are experiencing financial decline relative to the central question: "How do local business owners deal with financial decline brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic?". Findings: The verbal ponderings and statements of the respondents revealed three major themes that local business partners had experienced before their businesses finally reached an upswing. These are (1) CUSTOMER RELATIONS, dealing with Acknowledging Achievements, Attaining Customer Values, and Operating Responses, (2) ADJUSTMENT REMODELING, focusing on Building Foundations, Adapting to Changes, and Coping with Mishaps, and (3) BEHAVIORAL DEVELOPMENT which is about Dealing Impacts, Relieving Stress, and Addressing Liabilities of the businesses impacted by the pandemic. Conclusion: Local Business Partners had a continuous downturn to a series of events revolving around its business, however, most of the respondents are satiated with operating the facility under circumstances. Recommendations: This study recommends that business owners here in Qatar enable themselves to be knowledgeable of the phases behind the strategies of managing a business. These can aid the entrepreneurs in their decision-making skills for the business to prosper. The upcoming related studies should further enlarge the concept of businesses as it will help begin a broader perception of the local businesses.***

Keywords: Qatar Business Owners, Entrepreneurs, Finance, Recession, Financial

I. INTRODUCTION

To limit the spread of COVID-19, the Qatari government has implemented a number of precautionary action, including the closure of companies, schools, and universities, as well as social separation. The threat of a pandemic, along with social distancing efforts, has impacted consumer demand and business–customer relations in Qatar, accelerating an existing digitization process. As more organizations deal with the issues of the COVID-19 epidemic, Qatar has seen an increase in the usage of digital technology in a variety of industries (Ben Hassen et al., 2020). "A recession is most likely attributed to a trough in the business cycle phase that follows a contraction, during which time economic demand is substantially reduced (Barmier, R., 2020)." A critical recession is called depression or inflation. During a recession, the reduced demand for goods and services results in an overall decreased gross domestic product level, which creates high unemployment levels. In a stable economy, approximately all businesses enjoy the more significant accomplishment. Disposable revenue is great, unemployment is low, and consumer trust urges people to elevate their money back into the economy by acquiring essential and nonessential goods and services. While this may be viewed as a positive outcome, the downside is that many local businesses find themselves over-extended if the economy starts to waver, producing mass layoffs and business failures (McQuerrey, L., 2019). According to Bemarket (2021), during an economic strike, many local businesses face numerous difficulties. Consumers become concerned regarding their career stability and, in turn, are also expected to be careful with expenses, which leads to reduced income for local business owners. A passive profit stream can make it challenging for a local business to compensate mortgagers, negatively affecting its long-term viability. A business suffering economic strains is considerably less likely to qualify for capital expenses and services, limiting increased opportunities. Numerous local businesses also are compelled to downsize their workforce during a sluggish economy. This restricts their ability to attend customers and contributes to the unemployment rate, which advances the economy.

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According to Bemarket (2021), during an economic strike, many local businesses face numerous difficulties. Consumers become concerned regarding their career stability and, in turn, are also expected to be careful with expenses, which leads to reduced income for local business owners. A passive profit stream can make it challenging for a local business to compensate mortgagers, negatively affecting its long-term viability. A business suffering economic strains is considerably less likely to qualify for capital expenses and services, limiting increased opportunities. Numerous local businesses also are compelled to downsize their workforce during a sluggish economy. This restricts their ability to attend customers and contributes to the unemployment rate, which advances the economy.

This study aims to assess the financial stagnation and the economic transition of local business owners in Qatar. This will also help the Philippine School Doha students to be more conscious of the difficulties a local business owner goes through, and this study will show the phases and solutions a local business owner does to sustain the business.

II. METHOD

A. Research Design

This qualitative research method applied a phenomenological approach to study the participants' lived experiences and behavior. According to Neubaeur et al. (2019), focusing on the individuals' lived experiences is a form of phenomenology under Qualitative research. It is a powerful mode of inquiry. This type of appeal allows the researcher to suspend their hypotheses on what is right or wrong, what makes sense or makes no sense, and seek to look at the world through the participants' eyes.

B. Research Locus and Sample

This study was conducted at Philippine School Doha. It is a recognized Filipino learning area located in Doha, Qatar, and has persistently served the Filipino community's consistently rising population. The school has provided excellence and success to its community. PSD was selected due to the particular circumstance that it provides availability and practicality to the researchers.



Figure 1: Location of the Country of Qatar taken cc: Google Maps



Figure 2 Location of Philippine School Doha at Al Messiah, Doha, Qatar

The Researchers chose eight participants who are business owners in Qatar and have or are experiencing financial stagnation. These participants were chosen purposely following the set criteria.

These are: (1) The number of years they stayed in Qatar; (2) Their occupation; (3) Educational Attainment. These participants run their own businesses, which will significantly exhibit their business strategies in managing and handling financial problems and challenges in running their businesses.

The respondents are Filipinos working onshore in the Petroleum industry, with more than ten or more years of experience. Within the work-field, both genders are appropriate for the study. Preferably, the survey's target participants are Filipino migrants' onshore workers who are married and have a family to grasp the hard work and effort needed to maintain balance.

C. Data Collection and Ethical Consideration

Two types of instruments were employed to collect the needed data for the study. The researchers made use of the robotfoto to acquire the participant's demographics. A robotfoto refers to the participants' personal data sheets (Guzman & Tan, 2007; Dipasupil et al., 2020). In addition, a twenty-nine semi-framework interview guide was also developed to gain knowledge and see other perspectives based on the participants' experiences. The participants' verbatim responses were collected through the use of a recorded zoom meeting call. The participants' permission to cooperate in the study was sought first through the use of the consent letters given to them prior to the interviews' conduct. Confidentiality is assured and sustained throughout gathering the information and was only shared with the research committee involved.

D. Data Analysis

The researchers established the themes in the study to gather and understand what the participants wanted to say. The researchers applied the inductive technique, which includes: (1) Transcribed the recorded responses into the written text; (2) rendered the responses of each participant into the researcher's perception. (3) Translating the responses from emic to etic; (4) Shaped ideas for each response; (5) Organized the responses and ideas into sub-themes and themes with the use of the dendrogram; (6) Provided a diagram of the findings also known as the simulacrum.

III. FINDINGS

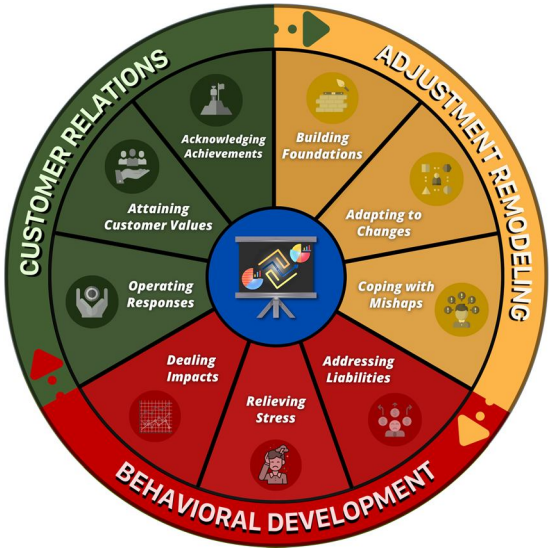


Figure 3: Simulacrum

The simulacrum is a virtual representation of the results of the data collected. The shapes and figures portray a significant part of the study. The presentation board in the middle is the prominent structure of the simulacrum, having its own symbolism of the study wherein it shows a deeper understanding of the respective owners and looks into the determination despite the difficulty in sustaining a financial stagnation. A circular shape with inner circles that divides into parts where it shows the different sub-themes of the simulacrum.

It also consists of a variety of different colors in the main themes; green demonstrates connection and responsibility, red shows action, yellow depicts accommodation to change. At the same time, the blue color of the structure in the middle shows the combined explanation of all colors of the simulacrum.

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The present study shows the economic decline that the local business owners had to go through in these tough situations. Business men resolve their issues by allowing the fundamentals of an enterprise to succeed in their purposes and goals. This allows an enterprise to supply their goods and services and are mostly the source of employment.

The present put forward a phenomenology on the journey of local business owners sustaining financial stagnation. The verbal ponderings and statements of the respondents revealed three major events that local business partners had to experience.

The first theme is Customer Relations which leads to the owners' association with the consumers leading to their own accomplishments and feedback. The sub-themes for Customer Relations are Acknowledging Achievements, Attaining Customer Values, and Operating Responses. The second theme is Adjustment Remodeling which focuses on how the owners transformed their business to improving and how they dealt with monetary insufficiencies; The sub-themes for Adjustment Remodeling are Building Foundations, Adapting to Changes, and Coping with Mishaps. The third theme is Behavioral Development dives into the lives of the owners' and how their respective businesses have changed their own health in connection to the business. The sub-themes for Behavioral Development are Dealing Impacts, Relieving Stress, and Addressing Liabilities.

A. Customer Relations

Relationship with the customers is one of the first major factors when it comes to establishing a good bond. Customer Relations dives into collective verbalization of how the owners give the sense of control to the customers, the business owners' understanding of how they approach their customers on improvement, and how the owner's academic achievements help in understanding the feedback their customers give.

1) Acknowledging Achievements

The local business owners' curricular and academic accomplishments did not have a big impact on how they run their businesses. Most respondents aim to have businesses with the determination that they have. Their resolutions on their situations impacted how they operated in their work. A verifying statement of one of the participants stated:

When I was in college I was not into the achievements; I was into the extracurricular activities. I was just happy back then that I passed my grades. It does not define who you are if you have high grades or not, if you have noteworthy accomplishments when you were in college then that's a plus, but it really goes down to determination. As long as you have a degree and have a dream and you are motivated to achieve that then you will be good. (P1)

2) Attaining Customer Values

In reaching the quality that the business partners' wanted for their customers, their focus was on the engagement they had with the customers. Being updated with customers' liking of certain products by changing their menus. Another factor is how the passion of the business partners' affected the status of the businesses in general. These participants stated:

Our business before was a coffee shop so we saw that the market for the coffee shop is not that high compared to normal beverages so what we did was we considered what the customers would like to pair with the food that they have, and we opted to convert the coffee shop into a nonalcoholic bar so that you will be able to cover the rental of the shop, the salary of the staff, and also the other overhead expenses. You need to consider what would sell the most and list down all the negative and positive sides of your decisions. You have to be innovative and be a game changer in this situation especially during the ongoing pandemic. (P1)

We order what we only need, we do not order bulk that we cannot pay for. We do pre-orders for our goods, afterwards when we receive our orders we will be able to calculate additional items that we may order so that we can access around three or four. The expenses are made with limits to justify a fair amount on the net gain, we are flexible and the money that we gain won't go wasted. (P3)

It was very important to have the supply side very strong first and then move into the kind of service we wanted to get. We made sure that it is very important to build the supply side of the business and then move into the demand that comes from the customs. (P7)

You study the business; you study everything about that business. You have to know for example, the suppliers, you have to know the prices, you have to know how much would be the rent, you have to know how much would how many your staff would be and how much money are you going to give as a salary with all of that. Then you are able to check the net, the gross and then from that gross, you deduct the expenses. (P8)

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Just enjoy it and every moment though is with passion, be passionate when starting a business, do not start something on business that you are not passionate about. My passion is becoming a leader of the people and I know we can accomplish a goal if I were the leader. (P3)

We do not consider it as a franchise but we will maintain it as a family business. Being active, we are consistent in posting and promoting products that are in the shop, so in order to receive positive feedback even the negative ones but we do not mind these because we cannot please everyone. (P4)

To stay active is to have a constant engagement with the customer. For us, we always take the effort to reply to customers. We have a dedicated team, or either me, my customers, or my business partner are constantly engaging to our customers. We even take the effort to visit our active and loyal customers. We give them free gifts, and ask for feedback. As you know, we do Questions and Answers with customers every month. We always make sure that our standards are up to mark, and our customers will always remember us. This is how we stay active in our customer base. (P5)

3) Operating Responses

Using opportunities to their advantage, the business partners gave correct and honest information to other businesses who wish to have business proposals with them. All of the decisions that the business partners used were dependent on the viability of the proposals that were given to them. These participants stated:

There are so many opportunities here in Qatar on how to make your business grow and in terms of the proposal to be effective in readily handed feedback, we started building it when we started operations and during the operations, we had lots of lapses lots of rooms for improvements and that is what we are working on from day to day like what I told my supervisor the staff of Loming Barako I always wanted to have a continuous improvement. When another day comes, let's find another way on how to improve further and that's what I think Loming Barako is different from other businesses. (P3)

We made sure that I wrote anything that we hand out to our business partners or the merchants who work with us. The most important thing that we always take care of is to give the right information. We do not over promise anything to our partners or something that we can do or we cannot achieve in the given stipulated time. We gather feedback from our partners, from our customers, from the merchants in order to make us always better. (P7)

B. Adjustment Remodeling

Making changes to a business model is inevitable in order to have development where the business would benefit from. Starting from a basic vision would eventually evolve into making more difficult decisions that people around the business partners would benefit from. However, making difficult decisions in a career where one is in charge of another person's livelihood would put unprecedented outcomes where the partners' have to sacrifice for their employees. Employees also demand a higher position to either gain more experience or to have a higher salary pay.

1) Building Foundations

Most of the owners who were not Qataris had to join forces with Qataris who were willing to do so. The proprietors had to wait for their company to last a particular period of time before they could be sure it would be profitable in the future. These participants stated:

It's going to be tough for them because here in Qatar you can't start without a Qatari partner, so when we started our partner was just a sponsor so he did not completely invest and shared money. Because of the pandemic it was really difficult to get funds from the Philippines, because everyone is struggling. When we started this business, it was pandemic so up until now we are still submitting proposals to possible Qatari's to invest or to partner with us so we can have a full blast operation. if everything's okay then it would be safer for us to open this to the public. (P1)

Obviously, everyone wants to start a business here in Qatar. But, if you are not Qatari, you obviously have to find a Qatari partner to set up a business with you. In other words, you should find a partner that has a strong mindset, has a good idea for planning, and can handle any problems that the business will encounter someday to establish a better foundation. (P5)

There are pros and cons of owning a business, I believe that an advantage of having a sole proprietorship business is you are the boss and the leader, you can choose employees if needed, second you have the control, third you can attain your decisions based on your knowledge and research, and fourth you will not be able to have stress that often since you can work freely and not much pressure since you do not have investors. The disadvantages are if you do not take charge of your fundings properly, second are the opinions of the other people that can be withdrawn to you as an owner but it may be a good thing since a saying, two brains is better than one brain and it is a benefit in order to have an expand to the business but lack of cooperation is the problem when two

partners starts to work together and different ideas are everywhere, even if is a trusted friend, when it comes to business most likely when money talks it becomes different, so in my opinion being solo to your own business is foremost better to me. (P4)

The business partners' strategies in choosing how to give employees their way to advance on their roles in the company was based on the secureness of the personnel they were handling. Some of the business partners' employees were promoted on the account of reduction of costs in the company. These participants stated,

In the restaurant business an example where this will apply is if I plan to expand, for example, I have a chef and I have two cooks in my current restaurant. If I plan to expand, I won't be getting a new employee from the Philippines or within Qatar, to run that business. It is safer to get someone who you already work with and who you trust within your current restaurant to manage the second restaurant. For that case, then one person would move up the ladder. One cook will become a chef in the second restaurant. One cashier may become a manager in the second restaurant." (P8)

"We just started our business but we've already established our own policies and procedures which are aligned with the business operation. Secondly, we are working towards the salary grade of our employees. This will give them opportunities to improve every day and will have a step up. We are going to establish one more branch and we don't want any clashes with the salary level of our seniors and the newcomers." (P3)

2) Adapting to Changes

From a few months to years, most business partners have to modify their methods. The partners did not anticipate that it would take so long to reorganize themselves and their businesses. Some of the online businesses were negligibly affected because of their online foundation. The participants stated that:

We have been like this for seven months and still we have not recovered yet, maybe this pandemic will take you more than a year or two, to say that your foundation is already sturdy. So, hopefully by then we would have vaccines for this virus. (P1)

To be honest my business was not affected by the new normal considering that it is an online business where customers would pick up their order or I would deliver them personally but we did have to be more strict with the sanitation of the items. (P2)

The moment we opened back the dine-in is already normal for us it just so happen that we are operating 30% but actually we were able to pay on our expenses and we are still good this is what I told you a while ago that the pandemic is a pandemic other people is considering it as a major problem for the economy do not set your mind in such way use the particular time when other are slowing use that particular time to grow don't go as per the flow if they are slowing down push through and say I am different from you guys that's what I did I used that time to improve my business.(P3)

The effect of the COVID-19 to the business is minimal, it did not have a good impact on us because the time when the pandemic has started, our products such as the albums did not release at the same time with the delivery here, so what happened is that it slowed down as well for us since everyone is in the edge of a crisis, a lot were scared that most of our customers did not want to buy from the shop first. We came up with an idea to keep the business rolling, is to show them how we disinfect and clean our products, eventually when we showed this to them and they are now at ease. (P4)

Ever since COVID hit Qatar, we have already taken that action, because I know that it wouldn't be a one-month problem. It will take a longer period. We took some actions in the first month. It's like we did the transition from the start. I'm just waiting for COVID to be eradicated, and then we'll go back to normal. But if we don't get back to normal, unfortunately, then we'll be doing the same thing, as we've done from the past few months. (P8)

3) Coping with Mishaps

Some business partners encountered various types of barriers that they were unable to overcome. To tempt new customers, the majority of the proprietors resorted to developing a new product or marketing approach. Some were greatly affected as their suppliers were overseas, and the pandemic has halted their way on how to import supplies. These participants stated:

I think the lack of progress was when the pandemic just started, everything was put to halt, people stopped ordering or pre-ordering items. To progress I had to find time to sell and manage my business. I sold all sorts of goods and items last year. I sold desserts. Now I went back to selling cases. It still depends on the owner or seller. (P2)

With regards to stagnation and the flow of production, we failed this during the pandemic. Since all of our products are coming from South Korea, and needs a courier to deliver here in Qatar. During the pandemic one of our courier which is the EMS (Express Mail Service), has blocked Qatar so we had to wait for almost one month to see how things are going to be handled and we are able to have a new courier that came which is the UPS (United Parcel Service), the only problem with the new courier is that they have limited weight per box and not like EMS, we can order as much as we can in one box, what we are grateful for is that our customers

understand the situation that the expenses were a bit expensive with the new delivery but we will try to adjust even though it will decrease our profit, as long as we still are intact with some and the business is still rolling, it will be fine. (P4)

The majority of business partners suffer from lack of finances or capital as a result of the pandemic, although some company owners did not suffer from these situations. These participants stated,

All of the business owners are struggling when it comes to the capital infusion because we don't have assistance from the government. Though we appreciated those times that they gave us free months of rent but then a lockdown happened so we couldn't really use those free months wisely because people weren't really going outside at that time. We earned only through the deliveries, but it was really hard because not all of the profit of the orders will go to you, you would still pay a portion for the delivery charges. (P1)

My capital is not enough based on my plan so I thought of other ways, alternative options to continue the business with what capital I have got without taking any loans from banks. Another option is to get shareholders. Based on the capital that is on my hand I think of lots of strategies, alternatives like for example let's revise the design in such a way that it will only utilize only low-class materials which will still look elegant and good and I was surprised at the first month we already got big we already got a huge profit and we used this to design the interior when the interior was not yet complete so whenever we get profit we always keep making improvements for example on the ground floor there is some signage on the wall I did it during pandemic so others are probably are keeping their money saved but for us, I'm confident that we can surpass this pandemic and then I think that the restaurant is much better than before. (P3)

During this time, we don't have as many customers. Before the pandemic we decided to get the services of deliveries. If we didn't take that initiative before, then we would not have any income. Unfortunately, the delivery services don't suffice with what the expenses the restaurant is having on a monthly basis. So, we have to get it from our own pockets just to pay for the salaries and the rent. (P8)

We've not seen a scenario where we have insufficient funds overall because we had a very good backing when it comes to the kind of sponsors we have or the kind of partners that we're working with. That did not affect or we did not face any challenge. But because of the pandemic, our hands were tied when it came to dealing with people who were in debt and the businesses being shut. (P7)

C. Behavioral Development

1) Dealing Impacts

Some employees of local business partners were affected psychologically and emotionally by the possibility that the company they worked for may close. These factors lead to more worries for the business partners. These participants stated:

Of course it would be affected mentally and emotionally because they're relying on us, so, all you have to do is be open with them, because you are responsible for that because you are the boss. So it's for them to know what you need and for you to know what they need, all of you would help each other. (P1)

My staff got really scared when handling the deliveries and even the customers were scared so what I did was improve our delivery packaging by adding plastic films to make the food secure and even added a quality check. It's really heavy taking in people from my city in the Philippines and even if they were not in the same city as me I had to take responsibility for them just like how I take responsibility for my family they also have their own families so I have to take responsibility for them that's why all the problems that someone takes will make them a strong person. (P3)

I think for example, when Qatar announced the closure of all cafes in late March or early April, my employees suddenly will not do anything for two weeks, and I think that's the bar, we still pay them a full salary. So I don't think they face any monetary challenges. But, I think it's the mental and emotional thing where you can't do anything you can go out that really affects them. (P5)

The majority of the business partners had a difficult time in terms of their physical well-being. Some of them would be required to perform their own labor, while others would be required to cover for employees who were not present or unavailable for a specific period of their business hours. These participants stated:

I had a hard time physically at the time I was delivering from door to door and it was very tiring but I enjoyed interacting with my customers mentally I had no issues with that but emotionally I would often take it personally when a customer cancels it makes me frustrated often times I went out my anger for a few minutes. (P2)

Sometimes we get customers that have a pesky behavior and we cannot remove them since our shop is online. There are customers that keep asking, many that are inquiring but then they would cancel it afterwards, yet it is fine with us that we take this into consideration. Mentally, it can be draining, stressful, and sometimes it can be frustrating when most of the buyers would tell us they

would cancel the orders because they are out of town so we have to wait longer but we need to understand them. Especially right now, the one that orders from us does not have a stable income and as well-being financially stable, they would give us a tip around 5 to 10 riyals which was fine, as long as they are able to come up with these kind actions. This is also one of our strategies, being patient in order our customers won't forget about the business. (P4)

For physical, my staff is limited, where we only have enough staff members. If one of the guys is out for example, because of a sickness, that's a toll to me, because I have to do labor. So that the restaurant won't close, I have to assess the remaining guys. For emotional, you can see if there are problems. Usually, it's the staff, sometimes they don't listen to you. It's normal even though you're very close to some of them. Some of them would push for what they believe is correct. That would resolve fights. As a business owner, you have to deal with all of those stresses. But at the end of the day, it's you who will decide but you should be deciding based on what is right and what would be good for the restaurant and the staff. (P8)

2) Relieving Stress

The stress that the business owners encountered throughout the change might be reduced by having somebody to chat to, such as family members and friends. Some adapted to how particular areas of their business impacted their overall business and made adjustments, as a result, to alleviate the stress they were experiencing. These participants stated:

You have to find time by yourself with God, because he can be your source of strength, friend and to overcome stress, although you have friends to tell your problems to and give you their own solution, God is still the best, my only secret is I always go back to the Lord because I believe that it's his plan that I'm on this path, because he guided me into this direction, I also believe that he will sustain, he will provide us at the same time he will guide me, he will guide us with our decisions and for our business and to make our life better. (P1)

During the transition, it was really not affecting us mostly the stress, that is the beauty of having a family business, not much pressure is put on me and my family, no targets and laws, what we sell is what we promote and what we brand. We do not take double time, we take it step-by-step, we do not hassle things but we try to utilize our time. I believe this type of idea is a wide aspect to us that we rarely get stressed and pressured. (P4)

I think talking to people, and having a business partner that you know the best can constantly exchange ideas. Finding each other's ideas, and sharing the burdens and challenges means to know that someone is constantly attacking you in terms of your ideas, so that you don't feel stressed out. It makes you feel you have a partner in crime to help you through the difficult times or just speak to any people in general. (P5)

I just absorb everything. That's the only thing you can do as a business owner, because you're the last line of defense. If you fold, everything else folds, so you have to strengthen yourself. But in order for you to do that, you have to run the numbers. Check where you can adjust. In finances where you can adjust too slowly so that you can have a workaround on a particular problem. In this case, we adjusted the salaries of the staff. I have adjusted their timings. I adjusted the timing of the restaurant. I did research. I studied how the restaurant operates on a daily basis during this pandemic. And then I adjusted the timing and there is a plan now to also adjust the prices because the price of our food hasn't been adjusted for more than 10 years. The cost of the food ingredients 10 years ago is lower than the cost of ingredients now. (P8)

3) Addressing Liabilities

Most of the local business partners explain the pressure they feel as a result of being responsible and sympathetic with their employees. They recognize that their staff relies on them, and they must be aware of this. These participants stated,

It's hard since some of them come from the same province or place as me and I have to be responsible for them. I'm carrying it all on my shoulder and because of those circumstances, it has strengthened me. (P3)

We communicate. If there is an issue or a problem or in terms of the monetary side, we talk it out, whether the status is stable, what we can do with expenses if we can cut it off for the month to sustain financial stability. In that case, we are able to plan adequately and we do not have a hard time with budgeting. (P4)

I would not take it as a burden because when you own a business, you have to be very soon. You have to be very empathetic towards the people you work with. If you don't understand what they go through, it can be very difficult for you to understand how to manage your people. Being empathetic towards people is important, being in their shoes to understand what they are going through is very important. (P7)

Very big responsibility, because everyone will be dependent on you. Staff is dependent on you for their salaries, the restaurant is dependent on you so that it will thrive. It's a huge burden. If you're just starting, then it will overwhelm you. You gain experience running the business. You will know how to deal with those burdens, you will know how to make good decisions. If you have a

business, it's not like once the business is up and running, you don't study or expand your knowledge. You should continuously check your knowledge on that business. Do research because in that way, it will help you become a better owner for your business. (P8)

IV. DISCUSSION

Entrepreneurs had been the foundation of the economy, especially amidst the pandemic. The Ministry of Public Health has unveiled a four-phase strategy to gradually abolish current COVID-19 limitations. Qatari officials announced on May 29 that their National COVID-19 Vaccination Program has immunized over one million individuals (Missionqa, 2021).

Despite the pandemic, Qatar had started to lift restrictions on businesses. Thus going back to normal. For phase 2, Workplace capacity increased to 80%. Allow for a maximum of 15 individuals in critical business meetings. Allowing 40 percent capacity outside eating at restaurants and cafés and 30 percent capacity inside dining for "Clean Qatar" certified eateries for vaccinated guests only (Abilash, 2021).

Qatar has been gradually being brought back to the usual as they have started to transition. Qatar has been hit particularly severely by COVID-19, both in terms of worldwide volume and price, as well as the local health effect (more than 120,000 instances documented by September 9, 2020), making it the GCC's second most exposed country. Despite this, Qatar has the second-lowest fatality rate within this group of nations because of strict containment measures, active testing and tracing regulations, and the efficacy of the Qatari health care system (73 deaths per one million population). In Qatar, about 240,000 tests per million have been done, with no evidence of a new wave. Qatar's real GDP growth will resume in 2021 as oil prices stabilize around US$42 per barrel, global LNG demand increases, and the non-energy economic mood improves after the epidemic is under control. (World Bank Group, 2020).

A. Economic Transition

Businesses having a transition may have different reasons. Small businesses battling economic deficiencies in their first few years of operation is a common sight. For these small businesses to thrive, it is vital to plan and execute methods and techniques to assist the transition, whether it is to expand, depart, or back away from the business. During a business transition, the owner should concentrate on placing the firm in the best possible situation to aid the new ownership team. These transitions may be difficult, hazardous, and full of minute details. The owners' primary focus is the company's long-term success (What is Business Transition? - Business Transition Alliance, 2019). It also implies that the changes have a beginning and a goal, as well as a set of regulations to follow in order to reach any part of the progress. Previously, with little integration into global markets, economies were firmly governed by those in power and were commonly affected with no right conduct of the business. Privatization, liberalization, macroeconomic stabilization, and legal and institutional reforms are three examples of known effects of economic transformation on the community and in businesses. (Trivic and Petkovic, 2015).

Although ownership plays a significant role in a business, yet it has flexible changes or it gradually means to flow within the society. As a result, it goes through a series of constructions aimed at developing market-based institutions, which affect practically every element of human interactions.

Economic downturns impact companies by tightening their credit conditions in which economic transition comes in place. The company concerned may be forced to pay their maintenance bills in smaller amounts than their original budget in which the company’s ability to pay their debts may be impaired. (How Do Recessions Impact Businesses? - Investopedia, 2020)

B. Customer Relations

Customer Relations enables businesses to develop a connection with their customers, which leads to increased customer loyalty and retention. Customer Relations is a management approach that results in greater profitability for a corporation since customer loyalty and revenue are both traits that impact a company's revenue. A Customer Relationship solution, at its most basic level, establishes an interface for a collection of information that allows organizations to identify and engage with consumers in a scalable manner (Kulpa, 2017). Customer data such as previous purchases and interactions might aid customer care professionals in providing fast and efficient service. Through monitoring, businesses may detect patterns and insights about their consumers by collecting and accessing customer data (Chai et al., 2017).

Customer relations enables businesses to acquire insight into their customers' behavior and change their company processes in order to deliver the utmost service possible to those consumers. Customer relations, in essence, aids a company in recognizing the worth of its customers and capitalizing on better customer connections. You may pay greater attention to your customers' demands if you

have a deeper understanding of their wants (Customer relationship management, 2021). Customer relations is about more than just business; it's also about forming strong personal bonds between individuals. The growth of this form of connection propels the company to new heights of prosperity. It is quite easy for any firm to recognize the true requirements of customers and assist them to serve them better after this emotional and personal relationship has been established (Importance of Customer Relationship Management (CRM), 2015).

One of the most difficult aspects of success in business is producing high-quality items. However, that is not the only aspect that ensures the company's triumph. Consumers nowadays don't simply focus on the quality of the products but also on how you portray your company. They care about how companies advertise their products and how it benefits them after purchasing from the company. (Customer Relations - The Nitty Gritty Details You Need to Know (Convert Rank), 2021)

C. Adjustment Remodeling

Businesses from all sectors had to react fast when the Covid-19 epidemic spread rapidly in early 2020. Some employees began working remotely, while others were forced to continue operations with full or limited on-site employment. Others were compelled to close their businesses entirely. With the passage of time, some firms were able to reintroduce employees to their workplaces while also ensuring that they could offer a safe and healthy workplace (How businesses have adapted to Covid-19 | IOSH, 2020).

The pandemic in Qatar has intensified the effect of these five factors, putting more pressure on localizing the workforce, putting institutional response capabilities to the question, and reinforcing the necessity of digitization and longevity. Overall, the increased pressure increased the sense of desperation for all GCC countries' economic transition plans, forcing decision-makers to intensify attempts on problems such as building a strong private industry, upskilling local talent, localizing supply chains, and accelerating digital transformation. Despite the severity of the situation, Qatar has certain advantages that can help it overcome these obstacles. The assets of the Qatar Investment Authority serve as a backup to withstand economic difficulties and promote economic reform initiatives if needed. In contrast to rising global polarization tendencies, the reinstatement of travel and commercial relations with neighboring GCC nations this year aided Qatar's regional cooperation (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2021).

D. Behavioral Development

The COVID-19 epidemic has impacted everyone differently. The weight of these unusual times may be heavy and have a big influence on our mental health, whether it's transitioning to a new work-life arrangement, losing a job, or losing a loved one. Many workers are experiencing unforeseen issues with their mental well-being and needing help while at work since they are forced to deal with these added pressures while still having to work. As a result, many businesses are refocusing on or discovering how to handle, for the first time, their employees' mental well-being (Mental Health in the Workplace During COVID-19: How Can Employers Help? 2020).

Though it may seem cynical to look for reasons to be optimistic in an outbreak that has killed (and continues to kill) hundreds of thousands, it is crucial to recognize just what coronavirus has done to break down barriers to mental health in the workplace. Managers have long rejected diseases like despair and stress as afflictions of the weak and frail, whether consciously or unconsciously. With nearly every member of the labor market impacted by the condition to some extent and in some form by 2020, it will be hard to avoid discussing both physical and mental health. Vulnerability is now being acknowledged as the indication of strength that it is in some circles (Cox, 2020).

Dealing Impacts increases the challenge of a business owner wherein its well-being distorts the amount to unwind or relax from reluctant handles in the business. Not only does it hinder the generalized impact on the organization, but it also affects the mental and physical attributes of the business' owners and employees, which in most parts, meeting the satisfaction of customers, retaining significant employees, and marketing in a saturated area.

In meeting the quality of high relationships of customers, this could be a factor for business owners to be aware of what the customer wants, and this is what helps grow the business' success. By all means, the business may overthink and study its own market just to satisfy their needs and wants. It becomes indecisive, which creates misunderstandings of thoughts, could also rehash from countless decisions that cannot be fulfilled. A lot has struggled and caused an impact that devastated most of the business handlers (Amy Morin, 2020). A portion of employees also struggled from qualities of the business or could not be satisfied between its work hours to its salary compensation. Some between four to five years transitioned to a new workplace because they dealt with not being appreciated for their hard work, which let them seek new workplaces. (Indeed Editorial Team, 2021).

Because of the coronavirus' significant impact, this is also a huge factor of business owners' breakouts since the flow of the business runs low, which details enough of stress and anxiety to owners and employees who are seeking opportunities in the future

yet with the unexpected crisis, trying to survive and deal with setbacks that were not prepared by the workplace which affiliates with catastrophic tasks in a short span of time. (Filip et al., 2021).

Relieving Stress is part of being human, in a business, this could motivate the workplace in a more positive outcome of reaching its short or long-term goals. Managing stress has different techniques to be cured while working, such as learning to control time management since it is crucial to almost all tasks to be done in the business. During leisure times, stress can be lessened by exercising to conduct a healthy and balanced lifestyle such as jogging, swimming, and cycling. Some also take their time out with families or friends, which creates linkages of socializing with people and out of the busy workplace, however this is also done by also relaxing by itself namely by getting enough sleep, it is important to get plenty of rest as a business owner since it will be tiring in the next or few days after an adequate of rest (Lauren Ragland, 2021).

Addressing Liabilities can be resolved with the correct tools. Liability is a potentially complicated legal issue that should be addressed in any shared-use agreement with the partnerships in the business. (ChangeLabSolutions, 2021).

Practically, a business will not be effective when there are no responsibilities to be done or actions to be held accountable. Businesses must always be ready to handle risks, and even before starting, these are fundamental standards already. Going through a phase in understanding employees, owners, or partnerships struggles must be emphasized in communicating in a well-organized situation or atmosphere. It is essential for both speakers to resolve any liability to be finished. Despite potential concerns, every now and then, owners shall be mature in any type of circumstances. However, for further refinements and an enhanced partnership, coping with a proper connection between the business ensures any issue will not frustrate vital ambitions and widespread greater opportunities. (Ian Havercroft, 2019).

V. CONCLUSION

This study aims to recognize the growth strategies of the business owners here in Qatar and how they cope with the financial stagnation of the business. As the researchers discover to seek answers to the specific question: “What are the common coping mechanisms of local business owners relevant to the internal economic recession?” The data and analysis that has been collected show the advantages and disadvantages of working in the business industry. Through examining each response, most of the respondents are knowledgeable of the coping mechanisms in experiencing financial stagnation of their business. The results of this research may be beneficial to students and other people with interest in the topic being discussed in this paper.

Transitioning into a business setting is a difficult process and has many phases. An emerging tendency of firms and sectors is to radically restructure and rethink current enterprises in light of larger societal developments, rather than just enhancing individual performance by reducing negative environmental and social repercussions. We suggest that the broader development shifts that are occurring result in a new stage in business practices, meaning major business transitions. (Loorbach & Wijsman, 2013)

As business owners and partners, one should have a connection towards their customers as it provides a good form of communication where customers can help improve the situation of businesses. Customer relationship management (CRM) has evolved from an approach centered only on forming economic links with customers to one that fosters both commercial and active communication with consumers. (Social customer relationship management: An integrated conceptual framework, 2019) Customer relations are an essential component of the company's operations, as it focuses on keeping in constant contact with its consumers. (Urszula ChrÄ…chol-Barczyk, 2019)

Local businesses in Qatar adjusting to the recent pandemic are all dependent on the ability of how the owners will react quickly and decide on the situations that require their expertise. A company's ability to be competitive depends on its ability to continuously innovate its business models. Throughout this process, the organization must test multiple assumptions about its marketing strategies by successfully and efficiently adjusting to unpredictable and changing client demands. (Gottschalk et al., 2020) Business partners not only create business concepts but also participate in more routine adjustments in reaction to external adjustments, such as developments in the level of sales. (Saebi et al., 2017)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, tension is rising and causes people to be more cautious. This begins with psychological effects on business owners who are working in the field and trying to stay relevant and be economically stable. It is natural for individuals to feel nervous and on alert during an epidemic since everyone is afraid of becoming sick. Qatar is no exception. Anxiety and sadness are very easy to develop when everyone is quarantined at home. (Johns Hopkins Aramco Healthcare, 2020) Because of the uncertainties around the likelihood of COVID-19 side effects, people may get nervous, and depression may follow. (Johns Hopkins Aramco Healthcare, 2020). The various conditions that business partners and owners have to go through while running a business, being responsible with the livelihoods of their employees, and having to deal with their own personal lives, they handle these situations with effects on their emotional and mental state.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

A. *Angela Laura J. Aldover* was born on April 20, 2004, in Batangas city. She is currently a Senior High School Student under the academic track ABM (Accountancy, Business, and Management) at Philippine School Doha. She transferred to Doha, Qatar when she was 3 years old then started at preschool up to present, she is studying in Philippine School Doha. The experiences motivate her to work hard with persistence and purpose. Throughout her life, she has gone through a lot, yet she still does her very best to continue with life. She aims to become a CPA in the future. She is planning to pursue a Degree in Bachelor of science in Accountancy at the College of North Atlantic Qatar. She is the youngest in her family, and at an early age, she managed to make her own decisions. Being strong minded and enthusiastic about everything she does is one of the reasons why she has a positive Perception of life.

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B. *Miles Stephano M. Carreon* was born on November 11, 2003, in Malolos, Bulacan. He is currently a Senior High School Student under the academic track ABM (Accountancy, Business, and Management) at Philippine School Doha. He studied at Philippine International-School Qatar where he learned and excelled in athletic fields such as basketball leagues in the said school. After moving to Philippine School Doha during his Grade 8 Junior High School, he continues to pursue his passion for playing basketball. Engaging in sports activities of the school such as Intramurals and PTA organized events. He is a consistent student-athlete of the schools he has attended. Throughout his life, he has encountered several hardships, however, he continues to be motivated and strive to reach his goals, aspiring to be an entrepreneur someday. He is planning to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Nursing at the University of Calgary in Qatar.

C. *Alyssa G. Gaspar* was born on April 14, 2003, in Doha, Qatar. She is currently a Senior High School student in Philippine School Doha, studying in the Accountancy, Business, and Management strand. In April 2022, she will graduate from the Senior High School department. After graduating, she plans to study college at Carnegie Mellon University Qatar. Business Administration is her planned course because she is an aspiring Businesswoman. She attended seminars such as events in the said university, "Experience CMU at Qatar". One of the projects in the Senior High School Department is the Celebration of Learning (COL), in which she is active in participating, she spent 2 years taking business subjects in her strand to establish her learnings and studies in the specific program she chose. She is also a strong-willed student who also participates in different extra-curricular competitions. She started school from Kindergarten until Senior High School education in Philippine School Doha. She likes joining singing or dancing shows as she wants to share with others her hobby. During her leisure time, she loves to dance, watch movies on Netflix, Tiktok, and scroll through her social media accounts. As a student, she aims to make her high school life successful and fun.

D. *Al Jr. P. Gomez* was born on April 17, 2003 in Oroquieta City, Philippines. He is currently a Senior High School Student under the academic track ABM (Accountancy, Business, and Management) at Philippine School Doha. He always focuses on his studies and can balance his social life with his academics. He has been attending Philippine School Doha from Kindergarten until his Senior years. He has also been attending another accredited private institute in the United States, Excel High School in which he pursued electives for additional credit. He is a determined individual as he has been constantly attending public-speaking activities and other extracurricular activities to continuously prove his academic excellence. After his graduation, in 2022, he aims to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences in Estonian Business School.

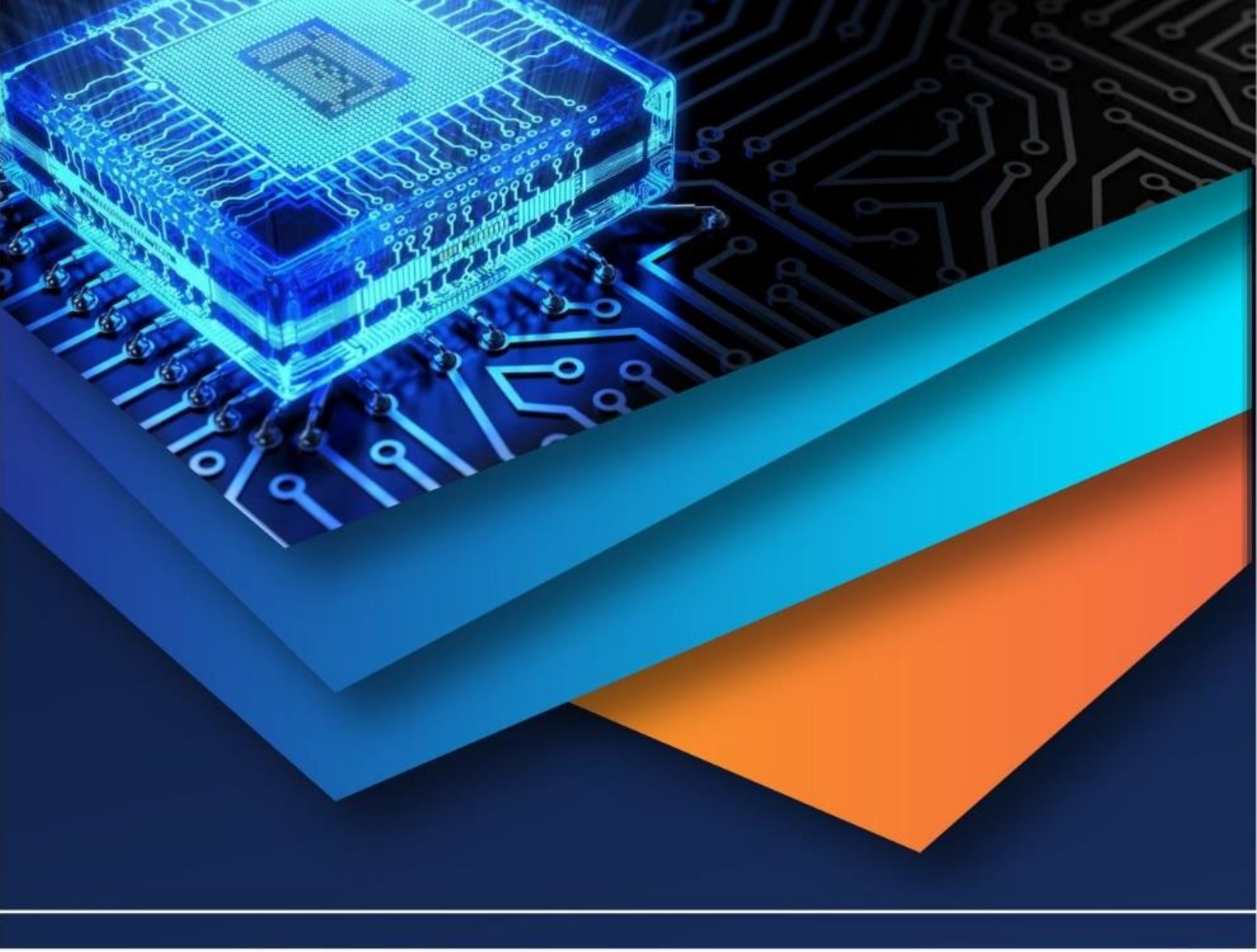
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