

วิถีชีวิตของพนักงานต้อนรับบนเครื่องบินหลังการถูกเลิกจ้างจากสถานการณ์โควิด-19

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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาในครั้งนี้ มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อเรียนรู้และทำความเข้าใจประสบการณ์การถูกเลิกจ้าง รวมถึงการรับมือกับสถานการณ์โควิด-19 ที่เกิดขึ้นอย่างกระทันหันและไม่ได้คาดการณ์ล่วงหน้า อันส่งผลกระทบต่อหน้าที่การงานของพนักงานต้อนรับบนเครื่องบิน การศึกษานี้เป็นการศึกษาตามแนวทางของระเบียบวิธีวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพแบบปรากฏการณ์วิทยา โดยใช้การสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้างและการสังเกตการณ์ระหว่างการสัมภาษณ์จากผู้ให้ข้อมูล 15 ท่าน ผลที่ได้จากการศึกษาในครั้งนี้ ทำให้สามารถถ่ายทอดความรู้ที่ได้รับจากประสบการณ์ของพนักงานต้อนรับบนเครื่องบินมาทำความเข้าใจภาวะการถูกเลิกจ้างของพนักงานในสายอาชีพอื่น ๆ ในสถานการณ์ต่าง ๆ ได้ ทั้งนี้ จากการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้กระบวนการแก่นสาระ สามารถอธิบายภาวะการถูกเลิกจ้างของพนักงานต้อนรับบนเครื่องบินได้ 5 หัวข้อ ก) ปราศจากประสบการณ์ที่คล้ายคลึงกัน สถานการณ์นี้กระทบกระเทือนจิตใจ ข) อะไรจะเกิดขึ้นก็ต้องเกิดขึ้น ค) การสนับสนุนที่มีคุณค่า ง) ท้ายที่สุด ฉันท์รอด จ) คาดการณ์ถึงสิ่งที่ไม่ได้คาดคิด นอกจากนี้ ผลจากการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลนำมาสู่การอภิปรายข้อมูลเชิงประจักษ์ที่สำคัญ 4 ประเด็น รวมถึงการนำผลการศึกษาไปใช้ในทางปฏิบัติและข้อจำกัดของการศึกษาในครั้งนี้

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Lived Experiences of Laid-off Cabin Crew due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

This study examines the lives of cabin crew who were impacted by COVID-19-related layoffs. The purpose of this study is to learn from their experiences that came from an unexpected situation related to their career. This study aims to understand and describe how cabin crew managed themselves after being laid off due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Phenomenology was implemented in this qualitative study using semi-structured interviews and observations of 15 participants. The contribution of this study is to transfer the knowledge regarding the experience of laid-off cabin crew to other employees in other pandemics. By using thematic analysis, five themes emerged; a) without similar experiences, it is shocking, b) whatever will be will be, c) valuable supports, d) finally, I survive, e) expect the unexpected. In addition, resulting from the analysis of data, four important points arose. Practical implications for the study are discussed, as well as limitations in this research.

Keywords: Human resource management, Employee separation, Laid-off experience, COVID-19

Introduction

Following the devastating impact of the coronavirus at the beginning of 2020, the air travel industry was severely disrupted. Airline services immediately saw a dramatic drop in demand (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020). The airlines were forced to reduce expenses and rely on cash reserves and loans to survive until air travel demand recovered (International Air Transport Association [IATA], 2020). As payroll of flight crews and cabin staff is a major fixed expense for the airline industry, the airlines decided to lay off these professions first to keep the balance between the airlines' expenses and flight operations. These large-scale layoffs caused massive problems for a slew of individuals, with the two most common complaints coming from the personal and financial shock that comes from a sudden interruption of employment.

Life after termination during the COVID-19 pandemic is the interest of this study. As emotions are typically elicited by external incidents (Prinz, 2004), emotions also affect behaviors in various circumstances (Skinner, 1953). Therefore, to overcome this difficulty in cabin crew's life, one thing that plays the important role in this situation is social support. McConnell et al. (2015) explained high social support from family and friends would overcome loneliness, hopelessness, and anxiety. Besides the support from others, laid-off cabin crew need to have strong wills to survive as a positive motivator to live their life in the well-being way (Kira, et al., 2020a; Kira et al., 2020b).

Verily, it would be beneficial to understand the laid-off cabin crew's reactions toward the mass layoffs and how they responded. This could allow both employers and employees to understand how to respond to this level of life-altering news. Accordingly, the main research question of this study is what the experiences of those who were laid off due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To answer this research question, we must first understand how fired cabin crew members managed themselves after being laid off. Second, it should be equally important to discuss the ways that these individuals moved on. Finally, many courses of action could be concluded with respect to mass termination, both for employers and employees. The contribution of this study is to transfer the knowledge regarding the experience of laid-off cabin crew to other employees in other pandemics.

Conceptual Framework

Understanding Emotions and Behaviors

In order to understand responses, some knowledge on emotional responses was necessary. Prinz (2004) explained emotions are essentially extracted by external incidents. Typical emotional episodes contain several components. For example, emotionally-driven thoughts, bodily changes, and specific action tendencies are all a part of the process of emotional response. Emotion theories explain different responses to the issue. As the feeling can also be regarded as the essence of

emotions. James (1884) and Lang (1985) proposed the source of emotional feelings with the feeling theory of emotions. If emotions are feeling and emotional feelings are feelings of bodily changes, then emotions are feeling of bodily state changes. As emotions and bodily responses are linked causally, once bodily feelings are gone, there seems to be nothing left to the emotional experience. However, many changes of the body cooccur with emotions leading to behavioral responses.

Rather than identifying emotions with neuronal responses to bodily changes or bodily feelings, one might identify emotions with the behaviors to which bodily changes dispose us (Prinz, 2004). Further, according to Skinner (1953), emotions affect behaviors in various circumstances. Emotions are not behavioral dispositions but rather are behavioral responses to rewards and punishments which could be described as a behavioral conditioning theory. Positive emotions help us to be open-minded and creative which lead to easier problem-solving (Isen et al., 1987). In contrast, negative emotions tend to promote more narrow attentional focus such as anxiety and sadness which may lead us to depression (MacLeod & Mathews, 1991; Öhman et al., 2001). Consequently, emotions with feeling, neural responses to bodily states, and behavioral responses are interrelated (Prinz, 2004).

Importance of Social Support

Social support can be defined as individuals' perception or experience in terms of being involved in a social group where people mutually support each other (Hajli et al., 2015). It is an interactional process in which the individual is providing and receiving the material, informational, and emotional support to and from others (Helgeson, 2003). Although there is a distinction between perceived social support and received social support exists from the perspective of the stress and coping on social support (Cohen, 2000), it is believed that the relationship between perceived and received social support should be relatively high, especially when the support demand matches the type of support provided (Cutrona & Russell, 1990). According to McConnell et al. (2015), person with high support is less lonely. Thus, social support from friends and family plays an important protective role in hopelessness and anxiety. Raffaelli et al. (2013) also mentioned that family support played a unique role in buffering the negative effects.

Meaningfulness of Will to Survive

Will-to-exist-live and survive (WTELS) was proposed as a master intrinsic positive motivator (Kira, et al., 2020a; Kira et al., 2020b). WTELS provides cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and mental health implications (Kira et al., 2021). It also seeks and exchanges social support (Kroenke et al. 2006) and resilience (Rutter, 2012; Ungar, 2015). The resilience concept refers to positive adaptation or the ability to maintain mental health despite experiencing adversity (Wald et al., 2006) to protect well-being under stressful circumstances (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Therefore, resilience plays a

significant role in people's life by adapting themselves toward crisis to survive and move on. Optimism is one of the key personality traits that affect resilience (Tusaie-Mumford, 2001; Yu & Zhang, 2007; Gómez-Moliner et al., 2018). People confidently predict that they can survive the difficult times and find good things awaiting them in the future (Scheier & Carver, 1985). Moreover, socioeconomic status is also highly relevant with the will to survive within a competitive society. Socioeconomic status can be a protective factor against stress and is associated with greater resilience and higher well-being (Cosco et al., 2016).

Methodology and Methods

Methodology

In order to correctly begin to analyze the effects of the layoffs, proper research methodology must be introduced. As phenomenology studies the conscious experience of individual's points of view attached to social phenomena (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008), it mainly focuses on understanding the meanings of human experience related to a particular phenomenon (Husserl, 1970). Based on phenomenology, this study aims to help people in-depth understand of lived experiences of laid-off cabin crew due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The interpretation of these meaningful experiences can lead to a better understanding of everyone's perspectives under the same phenomena (Thawornphun & Manunpichu, 2010). Since this is a study of a recent phenomenon, the practical applications of the data can be perceived as a sort of wide-open field of exploration. From the study, sociological as well as psychological data can be harvested, and can be applied to both psychological and labor-related studies.

Methods

As phenomenology was implemented in this qualitative study, a semi-structured set of interviews was conducted. The purpose was to gain information regarding the participants' experiences. Research participants were selected by using a network sampling strategy (Glesne, 2016). Fifteen participants were selected for this study, based on the idea of purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002). Two selection criteria for purposeful sampling directly were used. First, the participants were all Thai cabin crew who were laid off from the airlines based in Thailand due to COVID-19. Second, they had to have worked for the airlines that they were laid off from for at least five years. The latter stipulation ensured that each participant was well-adjusted to their job and had enough tenure to have an outcome on their reaction. As Ryba (2020) described normally employee engagement is highest when employees are new until after year one then the engagement decreases, however, after 5 years on the job, it increases again.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the sampling was terminated when no new information was forthcoming from new sampled units. Therefore, the information from 15

participants reached the data sufficiency to answer this research question and achieve research purposes. Each participant was interviewed via Zoom for a duration of approximately 55 minutes. Before starting the first interview, all participants were informed any personal information of participants was anonymous and the recorded data would be deleted after finishing the transcription. Everyone agreed with the verbal explanation on the consent and the purposes of the interview. The visual records were started after the consent.

Each interview was conducted using an introduction conversation to build rapport. Then the six interview questions were asked:

- a) What were your reactions after you received confirmation that you were laid off?
- b) What steps did you take to overcome those reactions?
- c) What kinds of support did you receive during that time?
- d) How did you manage to move on from the situation?
- e) How do you feel about what you are now?
- f) If you could advise others who are going through the same situation as you, what would you say?

These questions were asked along with a few probing questions to elaborate on the answers. The interviews were conducted in English, as every participant uses the English language regularly in their current workplace.

During the interviews, unstructured observations were used so every behavior seen can be written down as much detail as possible. It is a method that allows collecting comprehensive and rich data while interviewing (Given, 2008). The recorded observations about the interviewees' expressions were to better understand the context of the laid-off cabin crew being interviewed. Trustworthiness was applied using three techniques of Lincoln and Guba (1985). First, thorough descriptions were developed from interview transcriptions. Second, each person involved with the study was allowed to examine the transcript of their interview. All participants agreed with the transcripts. Finally, some reflective commentary was added to settle clear positionality in this study.

Data Analysis

As thematic analysis aims to understand social phenomena, the important aspect is to classify data into categories by codes (Glesne, 2016). Therefore, transcripts and observation notes from the interviews were read and coded. After the first reading, 59 codes were identified. However, while the similarities and differences among these codes were recognized, a second reading was deemed necessary. After the second round, the codes were collapsed into 34 categories. Finally, these 34 categories were sorted into five themes.

Study Results

This section explores each of the five themes and important experiences in the life of cabin crew after being laid off due to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- a) "Without similar experiences, it is shocking." This explores reactions after they received confirmation that they were laid off.
- b) "Whatever will be will be." This explores the steps to overcome reactions.
- c) "Valuable supports." This examines the way the fired employees sought comfort following involuntary separation.
- d) "Finally, I survive" This category discusses the ways that the participants managed to move on.
- e) "Expect the unexpected." This section attempts to distill suggestions and advice from the shared experiences provided.

These categories were thusly named as a sort of reflection of the attitudes of many of the interviewed participants.

Without Similar Experiences, It is Shocking

As external incidents essentially lead to emotion (Prinz, 2004), unfortunate incidents like the COVID-19 pandemic tend to promote negative emotion and narrow attentional focus such as anxiety and sadness (MacLeod & Mathews, 1991; Öhman et al, 2001). From the interview, I found out that previous experiences potentially affect emotion of the laid-off cabin crew. If cabin crew were laid off from the previous airlines, they seemed to have less till no feeling towards this situation. For example, participant A, "Yeah, absolutely, I was shocked. But anyway, from my experiences, I had been laid off two times already. So, when it happened again, I was not that surprised." and participant E, "This was not the first time I was laid off so I had previous experience with another airline. I knew what to expect. I had already been through it twice so I can get over it again."

Also, if the laid-off cabin crew had experiences in changing their jobs, they tended to have less feeling such as participant B, "It is normal. I went through this feeling for just a few minutes. For me, it was simply because I changed jobs many times. That's why I had experienced it in my life before." Unlike the one without experiences, they tended to have very deep emotions towards it, participant C:

I actually felt stunning. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know what was going on and they didn't explain anything except said that it was about the covid situation. So in my mind, I felt very frustrated because didn't know what to do. I didn't know what my life would be like at that time. I felt worried about my future. I didn't know how long would it take and make this situation better.

Besides their emotions, their actions are another thing that I would like to understand in this study. As emotions with feeling, neural responses to bodily states, and behavioral responses are interrelated (Prinz, 2004), it seemed that the ones who had less till no feeling expressed little action and could behave normally, for instance, participant D, "Actually, there was not much action when I received the layoff information because it's not my first layoff. So. If it was the first one, I would act differently." and participant E, "This is life. It's normal. This is one of the things I had to expect. So actually, there's no reaction, just like OK." Nevertheless, the ones who had negative emotions emerged more actions like participant I:

So, for me, I tried to gather all the information from my colleagues and my supervisors about what they were going to do. I tried to get all information from the senior who had been fired before from other airlines. I asked them about their former experiences. At that time, what did they do? what were they going to do next?

In addition, regarding the duration of their feelings and actions, the experienced laid-off cabin crew tended to spend less time with this reaction, for example, participant G, "That's why I had experience in my life before. So for me, it's just a few minutes. After that, I realized that I had to move on with my life." And participant H, "It took me only one night because I already had experienced this kind of scenario so many times already. Then the next day I started thinking that's OK, this was what happened. So, whatever. Yeah, I had to move on." For participant M who had no experience with the lay-off, it took a longer time to deal with the reaction for example; "I could not tell how long it took for me to move on from the feeling. I just thought that I had to do it as soon as possible." Therefore, experiences play an important role to help laid-off cabin crew to overcome this negative circumstance easier than the ones without similar experiences.

Whatever Will Be Will Be

All participants mostly described the same steps to overcome their reactions. Beginning with the first thing that they had to accept that this laid-off situation was real and it was happening, for example, participant G, "I thought that I wouldn't give up, whatever will be will be. I tried to accept it." After that they tried to think positively towards it by changing their mindset, for example, participant J, "I also change my mindset and prioritize my thinking. What is important?." Then they put everything behind them and push themselves to move on, for example, participant F, "After that, I thought about myself and what I should do at that time?." These steps are related to Prinz's (2004) explanation that once bodily feelings are gone, there seems to be nothing left to the emotional experience as emotions and bodily responses are linked causally. In particular, once the laid-off cabin crew could reduce their emotions towards the situation by accepting it and thinking

positively, their behavior turned to act in a way that can move forward and left those negative emotions and behaviors behind them.

Further, if the laid-off cabin crew had more important things to do at that time, they tended to overcome the reactions quicker. They tended to focus on the thing that more important to them than the negative emotions like participant K:

My situation was different from others because I got two things at the same time, job loss and sickness. At that time, sickness was more severe than the other issues so I chose myself and I put everything behind me. It helped me to overcome the reactions of lay-off.

Participant O also mentioned the importance of the health issue that needed to be focused on at that time:

I had a medical situation that I had to go through an operation as well at that time and it took me a few months to recover. It was the time that I could look after myself. At that time, I was not worried about finding a job.

Moreover, it seemed that the experienced laid-off cabin crew turned out to be advisors providing information from their experiences to others. This role could help them to feel relieved in this situation as their experiences were useful for others, for example, participant H:

After that, I advised somebody else. So many people asked me what should we do? What happened? Why it happened? Oh, I just said that life is uncertain, anything can happen. I tried to advise other people by asking them about their capabilities. Instead of being upset, I knew that it was a very difficult situation for all of us but you had to think about your future. What should you do then?

Valuable Supports

According to McConnell et al. (2015), the person who received high support from friends and family is less lonely, hopeless, and anxious. Therefore, social support played an important protective role in reducing the negative consequences (Raffaelli et al., 2013). From the interviews, social supports that the laid-off cabin crew received can be divided into two types; emotional support and financial support. Emotional support was given mostly by their family members, for example, participant K, “Mostly I got support from my husband. He said ‘That’s it. It would have happened. And the next thing that you have to do, you have to think about your future. You have to.’” For participant N, “I got support from my family. Of course, because I talked to them, they said ‘it’s OK. If you don’t have a job, it is fine.’” Also, participant L “Family support from my mother. She had never pressured me on finding jobs which took a lot of pressure from me. It made me feel less worried and stressed. It’s like mental support.”

Friends and colleagues are also important sources of social support that were mentioned during the interview, for instance, participant M:

At that time, I had a lot of supports from my friends as well because they also got the same experience. We talked about it and we helped each other. I could go through it easily because I got many people, good people around me who have positive energy, not only the colleagues in the same airline but others too. They didn't complain and talk bad about the company or put negativity on me.

Participant G also explained the support provided by colleagues “So I called my family first and my colleagues, especially the one who had been fired. They told me what to do and provided me the information of job applications which I could try to apply for.” and participant I, “Some good friends also supported me about my resume and everything related to jobs.”. In addition, participant K also mentioned the social support that actually could be provided by anyone around the laid-off cabin crew, “For emotional support, everyone around me always told me ‘It’s OK. I could find a job soon. It’s fine. It’s not a big deal.’ These are things people say to make me feel better.” Besides social support from their family members, friends, and colleagues as external supports, internal support from themselves is also valuable, for example, participant F, “I found ways to support myself by listening to music that I like, or watching the series, in order to distract myself from stress.” and participant O, “My real support is actually myself. I didn't think too much about what had happened. Just move on. Just try to take a break.”

In addition, financial support given by their airlines came in the form of compensation. The airlines provided them a very fair and decent amount of compensation which then turned into the budget that all laid-off cabin crew could rely on during the time that they were looking for a new job, for instance, participant M:

Actually, the money that we received for compensation from our company also took off the financial stress. At least I had this amount of money which I could survive for a bit longer period of time. It really helped. Luckily at that time, I had no debt so I just spent only on daily expenses which was not that much.

Participant J also mentioned the importance of financial support from the airlines:

The company actually was quite fair. They gave us very decent compensation. If you had no expenses, I think it's enough to last most people for about a year. But if you have expenses and other financial commitments maybe six months. So if you remove yourself from the emotion, having money to use for six months or one year. It should help you

through enough to find another job. So they didn't really abandon us and give us nothing. It's fair compensation.

Finally, I Survive

Regarding the will-to-exist-live and survive (WTELS) model, two elements are included in this model; exchanging social support (Kroenke et al. 2006) and resilience (Rutter, 2012; Ungar, 2015). After seeking and exchanging social support, the laid-off cabin crew had adopted the concept of resilience referring to positive adaptation to maintain mental health even experiencing adversity (Wald et al., 2006) and to protect their well-being under stressful circumstances (Connor & Davidson, 2003) like this COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, the laid-off cabin crew were confident that they can move on from this difficult time and find good things awaiting them in the future (Scheier & Carver, 1985) for instance, participant L:

At that time, I started to act on the list that I had to do. I put To-Do List and then I went through it step by step. It was about thinking and the way I looked at things, how I changed hard times to opportunities for myself.

Participant H described very clear steps how to manage to move on from the situation:

Actually, I set my goal first. Then I reduced my anxiety to the lower level because I had something to do which was very important more than getting upset. I concentrated on how to get a job more than crying. I tried to search for jobs from the job-hunting website.

Participant D also emphasized the importance of prioritizing and setting goals:

I just prioritized and did what needed to be done. I also needed to be realistic and at the same time kept an open mind but I also needed to know what I wanted so I didn't have to waste my time trying so many things. I just set goals and targets for myself then made it closer to my target as much as possible.

As many participants raised socioeconomic status factor during the interviews, it showed that socioeconomic status also plays an important role as a protective factor against stress and is associated with greater resilience and higher well-being (Cosco et al., 2016). Many of the laid-off cabin crew concerned about their expenses and debts, for example, participant N, “What I am going to do in terms of monetary commitment, like bills to pay.” and participant C:

I had to plan on my expenses and debts to minimize the risks because I didn't know how long would it take to be better and how long did it take for my new job? I needed to accept and adapt myself to real life.

In addition, it seemed that if cabin crew had invested some kinds of business during their work as cabin crew, they tended to move on much quicker as they had something to focus on, for instance, participant A:

Actually, before it happened. I had already started investing something like funding to the company that needed cash flow. So it was what I did while I worked as a cabin crew. So there were so many things that I have to learn. So I didn't have that much time to be sad because I was so tired and stressed about setting up my own business. I didn't even have time to worry about what happened in the past. I was looking forward to changing my life.

Even though most of them managed to move on from the laid-off situation and got new decent jobs or things to do, they still have negative emotions towards themselves such as participant A, "I'm so tired, physically and mentally. I know that it's such a long way to go. So many problems with my business now. Because you know, this pandemic affects everything." However, some of them are still jobless which leads to more negative emotion even though they can move on from the laid-off situation for instance participant D:

Now I feel worried because it has been two years. It has been a bit long and I still here no job. It seems like jobs are only available for younger people. It always has a restriction mentioned on the job advertisements. So I become a bit stressed and frustrated about this right now.

Also, participant B who went through the treatment process regarding the health issue. Though feeling proud, still exhausted with the new lifestyle:

I feel proud of myself. I feel that I can overcome anything in this life because I went through the hardest things at the same time, two of the toughest things for other people at the same time, so I feel like anything cannot beat me at all. But now I have entered into a new lifestyle that I didn't get used to. I mean, I haven't worked like this before. So now I feel a little bit exhausted because it's different from what I used to do.

After all participants have been through difficulty in their life due to the laid-off situation, one thing that really surprises me is all of them would like to return to be cabin crew once again whenever the situation is better. It seems that cabin crew are who they are. Even some of them are in good positions right now, they still miss flying and definitely want to go back whenever they can. They are still waiting for chances and looking forward to becoming cabin crew again every day, for example, participant C:

To be honest, I really want to go back to fly even though it has been one year and a half and I already got a new job. I still love flying and I think I would say as if there are any chances, I will go back. I can come back and be a university lecturer after three or five years, it's not too late. So I still have a couple of years to enjoy flying.

Participant E described good reasons why all of them still miss flying:

After a while, I think once you fly, it's very addictive. Given the opportunity, I think most of us will go back even though we have good jobs. It's not about the money. It's not just lifestyle. It's everything about it. It's a non-stress job. It's fun. Once it's finished, it's finished. There's no bringing it home. I think it's more about freedom.

Expect the Unexpected

All participants provided almost the same suggestions which can be divided into two groups; for current employees and unemployed ones. These suggestions are not only for the cabin crew but also for other employees in other organizations and industries facing the similar circumstances. Mostly the advices for current employees are about the awareness of and preparing for unexpected situations, for instance, participant N, "So be ready and be prepared for changes. It's simple and it's normal." and participant I, "Always plan for unexpected situations." Meanwhile, they should always develop themselves which could be formal education or short courses for example participant L, "They must continue to improve themselves even they are laid off right now or still have a job." And participant O, "I would say education is worth paying for because we don't know the future. Learn more about hard skills and also soft skills.",

The current employees should also save money and invest as much as they can while they have chances, for example, participant F, "Also, be like an economical person and save a lot of money to invest. When you cannot work or have no jobs anymore, it helps" and participant B, "The next thing is about saving money because financial support can take away the stress for you." Furthermore, participant J advised a very good idea about having a second or third job:

Then probably people can have many jobs at the same time when you are still employed. In case you are laid off then you have already started doing something. After the layoff, you still have at least one job left. That was something that I actually regret. In my generation, we have a perception that when we work for a company, we work for that company. We don't have to look for something else. I didn't start planning long enough. So it's normal to have several jobs as a backup. Don't take life for granted while you still have a job because at some point you might lose it all of a sudden.

For the unemployed ones, the suggestions are all about how to deal with the situation. All participants advised the same direction that the unemployed ones should be positive, adjust the mindset and focus on themselves, for example, participant N:

First, stop blaming yourself, I think that's the main thing. It's not your fault. As long as you do not bring a bad feeling to yourself then you can look for different opportunities. Right now, the opportunity is wide open. So just look at the opportunity and have a good mindset towards yourself.

Participant J also mentioned taking rest which would help to clear the mind before starting to plan for the future:

I think they really need to take a rest. I think that is important because resting gives them a clear mind. They need to overcome the shock and whatever of being laid off. If it's your first time, it is a life-changing event and it is shocking. So you need to take a break then overcome it. That's number one. Number two, what you need to do is change your mindset and prioritize.

Then they can see the opportunities around them. Meanwhile, they can improve their skills and be ready for any opportunities, for example, participant E, "Don't limit yourself. I don't want to do this because socially people look down on it, for example, selling things online. Just be open to many things." Participant C also provided very good suggestions on the opportunities:

There are still opportunities around you. You just have to discover all the new things. You must focus on yourself and it may be a good time for you to improve or change yourself. Don't look at it as the worst thing, but think about it as a new opportunity in life. So be ready and be prepared for changes. It's simple and it's normal. Just accept it and then look at the good side and move forward.

After that they can set the goals and prioritize what they need to do for their future, for example, participant I:

You need to set a goal. What it is that you want. You don't have to be happy with it, but you need to be comfortable with it. It needs to match or almost match your existing expenses and whatever you have going on in your life.

Therefore, not only cabin crew, but also everyone should be mentally and financially prepared for any unexpected and immediate circumstances that would happen to them. Once people prepare for it, they should be able to handle and cope with the negative situation much better.

Discussion

First, as emotions often hijack behavior responses (Prinz, 2004), they are capable of manipulating behaviors in various situations (Skinner, 1953). In this study, different cabin crew had a variety of different emotions towards the same set of circumstances. Right after the cabin crew received confirmation that they were laid off from the airlines, they all admitted to reacting emotionally and behaviorally. Some expressed deep negative emotions. Meanwhile, some were so calm and did not reveal much emotion. The results seemed to illustrate that experience was one of the key factors that affected the different emotions. Cabin crew members who had experienced a layoff before tended to have less of an emotional response overall, and tended to bounce back from the setback faster. Those who had not been through such a situation before tended to have longer and more pronounced emotional reactions, and they generally took longer to recover as well. The reason for these reactions could be attributed to experience, though other factors could certainly be involved. However, for this discussion it is assumed that a person who has lost a job before would tend to be more ready and able to react.

Second, there is an attempt to ascertain the level of optimism among those participants. According to Scheier and Carver (1985) optimism is a belief that good things will happen in the future while resilience means the ability to adapt and maintain mental health in diversity (Wald et al., 2006). This study revealed that every participant tried to establish and/or maintain some level of optimism. After all participants managed to be optimistic toward their circumstances, then they tried to be resilient which really help them to pass through this difficult time. Therefore, laid-off cabin crew had to look forward and be resilient to live their life in a well-being way while facing a huge unexpected change in their life so that they could find out the solutions and survive from this crisis.

Third, in this study, it was discovered that all of those participants had two types of support in common: financial and emotional. Even though they came in different forms, the purposes were the same. These kinds of support have been demonstrated a link to how people respond to hardship (Hajli et al., 2015; McConnell et al., 2015; Raffaelli et al., 2013). Emotional support was provided by their family, friends, and colleagues. However, some of them found that self-support is also very important to get rid of stress. Financial support was another important consideration for the laid-off cabin crew, as they needed to worry about their daily expenses and debts. Accordingly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, receiving social support would help the cabin crew to overcome the problems much quicker. Therefore, any kinds of social support could help the laid-off cabin crew to put themselves in order emotionally and behaviorally so that they can move on to the new chapter in life.

Finally, even though each participant had both different reactions and different levels of support, one thing that every participant had in common was the will to survive. As these individuals received social support, their outlook changed, as did the way they coped with the sudden loss of

their job. Similarly, resilience could play an important role in positive adaptation (Connor & Davidson, 2003). When coping with kind of career interruption, each individual ultimately had to make the choice to get up and keep moving. The will to survive creates an innate, possibly automatic instinct to pick oneself up and try to recover. A major question, however, is how long it takes a person to recover, and that is often influenced by the support a person receives.

Conclusion and Implication

This qualitative study provides an understanding of the experiences of the cabin crew who were laid off due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The study results indicate the important knowledge of how cabin crew managed to move their life forward after losing their jobs. As internal and external elements can be identified from this study, internal elements consist of the laid-off cabin crew's will to survive, optimism, resilience, and self-support to overcome the unfortunate situations. While social supports from family, friends, colleagues, and company as external elements are as important as internal elements. Further, social support can be in the form of emotional support and financial support which play significant roles in laid-off cabin crew's life during difficulty.

In addition, the financial support indicated in this study mostly came in the form of compensation. As employee separation is a part of human resource management, organizations need to involve in supporting their employees when it comes to involuntary turnover like lay off. Despite terminating any employees is a very difficult task, the organizations need to make the decision (Noe et al, 2020). Therefore, organizations must be mindful and handle this situation with the utmost care when announcing this information, as it affects the employees' emotions and future. Furthermore, as mentioned in the study results, after being laid off, participants relied on financial support from their airlines, thus organizations should pay attention to this concern regarding the employee separation process. As fair and decent compensation that participants mentioned in the study results could help them to relieve stress and cover their expenses and debts by the time, they were looking for a new job. This could also turn into emotional support that losing a job is not the end of the world and that other opportunities exist.

In conclusion, the greater implication is to establish some sort of post-employment "crash mat," or at the very least some kind of protocol for future layoffs of this kind. Indeed, a wide-scale examination of the lives of fired individuals could help not only establish better company initiatives in the unfortunate event of downsizing, but could also put in place a better financial contingency plan. Finally, this study could be useful for other cabin crew and groups of employees in other pandemics to prepare themselves for the unexpected situation. Similarly, this study can also serve as a warning to all employed individuals that mass layoffs are, unfortunately, a reality of the workforce. Examining the lives of those terminated should create awareness for those in the unpredictable service industry, and allow them to have their own contingency plan.

Nevertheless, there are two limitations in this study. First, even though the semi-structured interviews and observations during the interview were implemented as methods for this qualitative study, the interviews were conducted via an online application. This channel may reduce the ability to observe participants clearly and smoothly due to uncontrollable technical issues, for example, the delay of the motions and the frozen screen. However, conducting the interviews under the COVID-19 circumstances, the online channel is very helpful. Without this pandemic, face-to-face interviews and observations would be efficient methods in this study.

Second, a focus group is another useful tool that should be implemented in this study to increase better understanding of laid-off cabin crew's experiences under the phenomenology approach, as participants can express multiple perspectives on a similar experience. However, due to the available time of participants, the pandemic situation, and the social distancing concern, focus group sessions could not be organized on short notice. Without the time and situation concern limitation, focus groups will be one of the mandatory methods to increase the reliability of this study.

Appendix

Participation Information

Participants	Background	Current work
A*	44 years old with the experiences of 16 years as cabin crew	Business owner
B**	44 years old with the experiences of 17 years as cabin crew	General menage
C**	35 years old with the experiences of 14 years as cabin crew	University lecturer
D*	50 years old, with the experiences of 17 years as cabin crew	Unemployed
E*	46 years old, with the experiences of 21 years as cabin crew	Housewife
F**	40 years old, with the experiences of 15 years as cabin crew	Foreign relations officer
G*	37 years old, with the experiences of 11 years as cabin crew	Localization/Translator
H*	48 years old, with the experiences of 20 years as cabin crew	Unemployed
I**	37 years old, with the experiences of 13 years as cabin crew	Secretary

J**	41 years old, with the experiences of 16 years as cabin crew	Housewife
K**	36 years old, with the experiences of 8 years as cabin crew	Online seller
L**	42 years old, with the experiences of 18 years as cabin crew	Cabin safety officer
M**	42 years old, with the experiences of 14 years as cabin crew	Online seller
N**	35 years old, with the experiences of 10 years as cabin crew	Freelance
O**	34 years old, with the experiences of 10 years as cabin crew	Waitress

Note. *Laid-off experience **Without Laid-off experience

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