Worker Experience A Year into COVID: Job Demands and Resources in the Philippines

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This study aimed to examine the positive and negative job characteristics that impact employees' working experience in a country located in the Global South during the COVID-19 pandemic using the job demands and resources (JDR) theory as a framework. Data collection happened approximately one year after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines. Data came from a qualitative online survey of 122 workers which was then subjected to thematic analysis. For both demands and resources, four superordinate themes emerged: intrapersonal, interpersonal, work or task-related, and organization-related. Intrapersonal job demands included health and safety, and the complexity of working from home; intrapersonal resources included health protocols and information dissemination. Interpersonal jobs demands highlighted social interaction and leadership issues, while resources include communication and engagement programs. Work/task-related demands talked about technology, performance, and workload; its resources were on the promotion of work-from-home. Finally, organization-related demands looked at financial and job stability and organization capability; its resources were on work assets and new policies. Findings suggest the relevance of leadership and communication as both demands and resources, and the need for organizations to be informed and forward-looking during a crisis. This study further emphasized the utility of the JD-R theory in understanding experiences of workers during a crisis.

Keywords: Philippines, job demands and resources, leadership, communication, COVID-19

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The COVID-19 crisis has led to substantial social and economic disruptions around the world. Literature points to increased job insecurity, lowered income (Singh et al., 2020) and other considerable changes in work conditions, such as the abrupt shift to remote/hybrid work arrangements, an accelerated move towards digital technologies, and challenges to the work-family interface (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020). Organizations have attempted to provide support for their workforce through mental health and well-being programs, physical health and safety measures, as well as financial and material support, among others (Teng-Calleja et al., 2020). These efforts serve as resources for employees to cope with various challenges brought about by the pandemic.

Majority of the current published research on employee and organizational experiences during COVID-19 focus on the early part of the pandemic (i.e., using data gathered within the first half of 2020) (i.e., Meyer et al., 2021; Moreno-Jiménez et al., 2021). However, rather than a singular event, the pandemic can be viewed as a crisis, defined as "a sequence of events that can have substantial negative consequences if not managed appropriately" (Pedersen et al., 2020, p. 315). This suggests that the needs of employees and the responses of organizations evolve as the crisis unfolds. Moreover, this perspective highlights the importance of providing updated information to help understand challenges faced by employees and provide relevant solutions. As such, this study contributes to literature by exploring the positive and negative job characteristics (i.e., job demands and resources) that impact employee experiences (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014) approximately one year after the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The job-demands and resources theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011), which is widely used in organizational research, will be used as a framework.

It is important to contextualize COVID-19 work experiences because countries differ in their responses to the pandemic, resulting in unique challenges and responses (Venkatesh, 2020). The negative social impact may be particularly worse in less developed countries with less government or social support (Venkatesh, 2020). Thus, this study focuses on the job demands and resources from the perspective of employees in the Philippines, a country located in the global South.

The Job-Demands and Resources Model

This study is anchored on the job demands-resources (JD-R) theory which posits that the two central categories of work characteristics – job demands and job resources – impact employee experiences (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Job demands are "physical, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort and are, therefore, associated with physiological and/or psychological costs" (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007, p. 122). High job demands, such as work overload and performance demands, deplete employees' resources and lead to negative consequences such as strain, chronic fatigue, and physical illnesses (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). On the other hand, job resources are "physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that are either (a) functional in achieving work goals; (b) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; or (c) stimulate personal growth, learning and development" (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 312). Job resources, such as good leadership and team cohesion, satisfy workers' needs and help them achieve goals, thereby fostering work engagement and motivation (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

The JD-R theory is a widely used framework to examine employee experiences due to its broad scope, flexibility, and heuristic use (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). This flexibility allows for more contextualized approaches in different circumstances and populations. In line with this, it can be noted that although the JD-R model is often used in quantitative research to determine relationships between demands, resources and various outcomes, recent studies have also demonstrated its relevance in exploratory, qualitative research by identifying and describing demands and resources in nuanced work contexts (Ericsson, 2022; Naidoo-Chetty & du Plessis, 2021; Karatuna et al., 2022).

Demands and Resources During the COVID-19 Crisis

Much research has been conducted over the past decade on different kinds of job demands and resources (Schaufeli & Taris,

2014). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has substantially changed the nature of work globally (Venkatesh, 2020), necessitating an exploration of job characteristics during this critical period. At the same time, crises are not singular events; rather, they are viewed as consisting of phases with distinct features and durations (Pendersen et al., 2020). Majority of the current literature on demands and resources appear to pertain to those experienced by employees during the early phases of the pandemic (referred to as the emergence and occurrent phases), wherein there were early warnings about the spread of the virus, and lockdowns and restrictions were implemented (Pedersen et al., 2020).

Examples of demands that employees faced during these early phases of the pandemic included the implementation of new technology, the abrupt shift to remote or hybrid work arrangements (Venkatesh, 2020), and reliance on virtual teams (Kniffin et al., 2021). Other related stressors included role overload and operational discomfort given the changes (Kumar et al., 2021). Domestic challenges and work-family conflict also appeared to be heightened (Fisher et al., 2020). In addition, there were also broader social and economic realities that impacted work, such as job insecurity and adherence to strict social distancing and other preventive practices (Kniffin et al., 2021).

To address these demands, literature pointed to resources that may help employees during the crisis. These included increased job autonomy, virtual employee activities, social support (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020), and the provision of training opportunities and optimization of communication and transparency (Hamouche, 2020). In the Philippines, organizational responses to help employees adapt during the early part of the pandemic included flexible work arrangements, mental health and well-being programs, physical health and safety measures, financial support, provision of material resources, and communication of short and long-term plans (Teng-Calleja et al., 2020). Moreover, Filipino employees valued organization leaders who demonstrated care and compassion at the onset of the COVID-19 crisis (Caringal-Go et al., 2021b). In particular, "kumustahan" (check-up) sessions were identified as important avenues of support (Caringal-Go et al., 2021b; Teng-Calleja et al., 2020). These findings appear to be in line with Filipino cultural value of "kapwa" and the familial social

relationships that characterize many Philippine workplaces (Caringal-Go et al., 2021b).

The importance of examining job demands and resources during the COVID-19 pandemic is underscored by evidence from recent research on their impact on employee well-being. For example, stricter lockdowns and lower levels of social support and job autonomy lead to greater exhaustion among women employees in Germany (Meyer et al., 2021). Among health professionals in Spain, lack of personal protection equipment impacts demands on workload, fear of contagion and contact with death and suffering, which lead to secondary traumatic stress (Moreno-Jiménez, 2021). The JD-R theory was also used to examine the impact of leadership factors (autonomy-supportive leadership as a resource and autonomy-thwarting leadership as a demand) on the somatic burden, stress, and emotional exhaustion of teachers in Australia (Collie, 2021).

Again, much of these studies utilized data gathered during the early phase of the pandemic in the first half of 2020. Although crisis phases are not linear, as seen in the recurrent waves of COVID-19 spread around the world (Pedersen et al., 2020), there still appears to be a dearth of research conducted about job demands and resources that considers the period leading up to or during the 'aftermath' stage of the pandemic. In this stage, restrictions have loosened, and the focus has shifted from emergency and immediate actions to long-term recovery.

Context: The Philippines

In addition to contextualizing job demands and resources to the current experience of the pandemic, it is important to conduct nuanced studies on COVID-19 based on country context. This is because cultural nuances and other significant factors within countries affect their pandemic response, impacting employees and the actions of organizations in varied ways (Venkatesh, 2020).

This study was conducted in the Philippines, a lower middle-income country (De Vera, 2020) in the Asia-Pacific Region, with a collectivist culture and large power distance (Hofstede, 1980). The response of the Philippine government to the COVID-19 pandemic has

been described as "draconian"and "securitized" (Hapal, 2021, p. 238). In March 2020, the national government imposed a lockdown dubbed as Enhanced Community Quarantine or ECQ in the largest island of Luzon, that includes the nation's capital (Metro Manila), (Ranada, 2021). Under this ECQ, only organizations providing basic goods and services were allowed to remain open; BPOs operated with skeletal staffing, and the executive branch of the government as well as other private companies were mandated to work from home (Gregorio, 2020). Mass transportation was also suspended (Gregorio, 2020).

Since then, there have been different lockdown classifications implemented across the country, depending on the number of cases within a specific area (Ranada, 2021). For example, on March 29, 2021, one year after the first lockdown implementation, Metro Manila and some nearby provinces were again placed into the strictest quarantine status (ECQ) after another surge of cases (Gita-Carlos, 2021). Restrictions were similar to the earlier ECQ. Essential services like hospitals or transportation of essential goods were allowed to operate, but restrictions were in place for other types of establishments (e.g., telecommunication companies, banks, and manufacturing firms operated with skeleton workforce; dine-in was not allowed in food establishments). Moreover, mass gatherings were prohibited, mass transportation operated at limited capacity, and only authorized persons were allowed to go out to obtain essential goods. However, travel and quarantine passes were no longer necessary (Gita-Carlos, 2021). This lockdown was eventually downgraded to a less stringent classification two weeks later on April 12, 2021 (Galvez, 2021).

Economically, the Philippines posted the "worst growth performance among peers in the region" in the first quarter of 2021, and the country's "medium-term growth trajectory depends on effective pandemic containment, delivery of mass vaccination, and further loosening of mobility restrictions" according to a June 2021 report by the World Bank (Chua et al., 2021, p. vii). In terms of health, the country started its national COVID-19 vaccination drive on March 1, 2021, almost one year after the pandemic, with a goal of innoculating at least 50 million Filipinos by the end of the year (Tomacruz, 2021). However, as of June 19, 2021, the Philippines ranked second to last among nine countries in South-East Asia in terms of numbers in the

population who have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine (Rappler.com, 2021).

Reyes (2022) highlighted how organizations tried to adapt and pivot their corporate strategy to ensure business continuity amid the pandemic. Within the first year of the pandemic, there was widespread digital transformation. Other responses included increasing collaboration with competitors or other industries, future-proofing talent, and repurposing and shifting distribution channels (Reyes, 2022).

These broader socio-economic changes impacted the individual. With respect to mental health and well-being, a study conducted among Filipinos in the early months of the pandemic reported that 16.9% experienced moderate-to-severe levels of depression, 28.8% had moderate-to-severe levels of anxiety, and 13.4% had moderate-to-severe levels of stress (Tee et al., 2020). Meanwhile, a study on employee attitudes during the early part of the pandemic pointed to both favorable and unfavorable thoughts, emotions and behaviors toward work-related domains (Caringal-Go et al., 2021c). Examples of favorable attitudes included increased appreciation of work and improved prioritization and efficiency, whereas examples of unfavorable attitudes were disappointment towards employers and difficulties with working from home.

Significance of Study and Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to explore the job demands and job resources of Filipino workers one year into the COVID-19 pandemic. It is anchored on the JD-R theory, which provides a useful framework in understanding work-related challenges and support during this stage of the crisis. It can be noted that although the JD-R model can also include personal resources in addition to job resources (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014), a number of studies have already identified individual coping and crafting strategies among Filipino employees during the pandemic (see for example Caringal-Go et al., 2021a; Teng-Calleja et al., 2020). Furthermore, research during the early phase of the pandemic suggests that "individual level actions were shaped by the responses of the organization within which the person is a part of"

(Teng-Calleja et al., 2020, p. 47). Thus, the present study contributes to empirical literature on the experiences of Filipino workers during the COVID-19 pandemic by focusing on identifying a broad range of work characteristics that impact their work experiences and describing these in greater depth. In this manner, results can help provide updated evidence-based recommendations on how organizations can improve their employees' work experience through organizational systems, policies, and practices (Bilotta et al., 2021).

This study explores the following research questions. Approximately one year after the first declaration of COVID-19 lockdown in the Philippines,

1. What are the job demands faced by employees?
2. What are the job resources that may help them adapt?

Method

This research is part of a series of studies conducted by a university-based research and development center in the Philippines on how work organizations and employees experience and respond to the COVID-19 crisis. Data was gathered one year after the Philippine government first announced an enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) that restricted movement of people and altered the operations of many organizations.

Participants

Participants included Filipino employees 18 years old and older, have been with their organizations for at least one year (i.e., they had been employed even prior to the ECQ declaration), and reside and work in the Philippines at the time of the survey. Data came from 122 respondents that met the inclusion criteria (77% of the 158 total survey participants). Seventy-four percent of the respondents were female, with 50% being unmarried. Participants ranged from 22 to 68 years old with a mean age of 39 and average organizational tenure of 7.5 years. Forty-five percent of the participants have management-level positions, 30% were in supervisory roles, while 22% belong to the

rank and file. Respondents came from different Philippine industries including information and communication, health, education, finance and insurance, real estate, and manufacturing, among others.

Instrument and Data Collection

After acquiring ethics clearance from the University, the research questionnaire was uploaded to QuestionPro, an online survey platform. Data was gathered through convenience sampling and participants were recruited using social media and email blasts. Data collection was from March 5 to May 31, 2021, approximately one year after the first ECQ was declared in the Philippines. Active informed consent was obtained from the respondents by providing details about the objectives of the study as well as their rights as participants at the beginning of the survey. For this study, the qualitative answers to the following questions were focused on:

- What are your concerns or challenges at work given the current pandemic context (almost one year since the first ECQ was enacted)?
- Please describe company/organization practices or policies that make it difficult/challenging to work at this point of the COVID-19 crisis.
- Please describe what your company/organization is currently doing to help its employees adapt at this point of the COVID-19 crisis.
- Almost one year after the first lockdown announcement in the country, how can your organization help ensure your safety and well-being as an employee as you continue with work?

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to find patterns in the responses. The following steps proposed by Clarke and colleagues (2015) guided the analysis: familiarization with the data, coding initial patterns, searching for initial themes, reviewing, and defining the themes, and writing the report. A deductive approach that entailed interpreting the

data using the JD-R theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007) was used. More specifically, responses were first classified as either job demands or resources before identifying sub-themes under each major category. The reliability procedures proposed by Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Gibbs (2007) were used in the data analysis process. Qualitative data were first read, re-read, and analyzed independently by two researchers. Intercoding (cross-checking) discussions were subsequently conducted until agreements were achieved. The intercoded analyses were then presented to the two other researchers for refinements of the themes and classification of quotes to further enhance reliability and face validity.

Results

The resultant themes are divided into two major sections: demands and resources. The results also reported sample verbatim responses participants gave to the questions with their code numbers in parenthesis. In addition, response counts are shown in the tables that summarize the demands and resources to highlight which theme was repeatedly mentioned by the respondents, showing it is more relevant to them.

Demands

The demands mentioned by the respondents were clustered into four major sub-sections: intrapersonal, interpersonal, work/task-related, and organizational. Intrapersonal demands, which were concerns found intrinsic to the worker, covered issues of health and safety as well as the complexity of working-from-home. Interpersonal demands, or concerns that were in relation to another person, talked about issues in social interactions and leadership problems. Work/task-related demands, or issues that are primarily about the work that they are doing, focused on technological limitations, workload issues, and performance concerns. Finally, organization-related demands, or issues coming from an organizational lens, looked at financial and job stability, and the organization's capability. Table 1 summarizes the results for demands, their description, and the total number of responses in each.

Table 1. *Demands, Descriptions and Response Count*

Demands	Description	Response Count
Intrapersonal	Concerns intrinsic to the worker in terms of performing their jobs	28
Interpersonal	Concerns in relation to another person	23
Work/Task-related	Concerns focused on factors affecting how they execute their work	51
Organization-related	Concerns about their respective organizations	22

Intrapersonal Demands

Health and Safety. There was a clear fear of acquiring COVID-19. As one respondent shared, "there is this feeling of hesitation to still come to the office because oftentimes after a few days, I will receive a message that a person I encountered is either positive or has a family member who has COVID" (2). Another respondent said, "we don't even get free swab tests from the company considering we are meeting clients face to face. We don't also have a COVID-19 pre-screening or questionnaire to know if these clients have traveled recently or had experienced symptoms" (92). There were also expressions of fear when respondents said "there is no guarantee that I won't get infected" (98) since "asymptomatic persons may be lurking around" (9). This fear was underscored when they see "top management not following health and safety protocols" (61) as "the heads are taking Covid lightly" (80). Thus, the "leniency of some co-workers practicing strict public health standards" (51) was a concern in ensuring "the office is a safe environment for all" (127).

Beyond physical health, respondents attested to experiencing mental health issues. A respondent shared the effect of being the sole person at work, "I'm experiencing burnout from being the only one left in the team" (81). Another expressed the mental toll of having online activities, "I find it exhausting to be in meetings/workshops online for long hours" (25) producing "Zoom fatigue [where] online meetings/

training can be very exhausting" (5). Apart from fatigue, respondents were worried about their colleagues, stating, "I also worry about [my coworkers'] mental health being cooped up at home all this time" (38) which can lead to "feelings of fatigue and burnout" (3, 44).

Complexity of Working from Home. One major hurdle that led to feelings of burnout was working from home, given how the majority had insufficient working space. As one respondent said, "work from home can be very challenging... The limited space at home makes it difficult to creatively think and function" (5). This was affirmed by another saying, "I'm not too productive working from home" (40), resulting in "adjustments to [the] workload relative to home working environment" (7). Some noted the "availability of hard copy documents [were] stored in the office" (10) with "no back-up on the cloud or hard drive" (79). Respondents noted the "company expected everyone to finance their own WFH set-up" (64), "to set up your workstation and internet at home without any allowance" (98). Thus the "infrastructure is not yet in place to support WFH arrangements" (69).

As they coped with creating personal space, one demand was the intersection of professional and domestic life. One respondent said, "work and family stress gets mixed" (4), thus "maintaining work mode while at home is difficult" (19). One confessed, "it's so hard to separate my work life and personal life, especially since I work in my room" (46), producing "no delineation between work and home" (71). The challenge, therefore, was to create "time management separating work from personal tasks" (8), but this does not automatically spell success as "work-life balance, deal[ing] with and manag[ing] both work-related and household/family concerns at the same time" (120) placed additional strain.

Interpersonal Demands

Issues in Social Interaction. When it came to interacting with others, respondents found this difficult. Some said, "I cannot communicate with my colleagues as personal as I want to" (2) because "personal relationships are harder to establish online" (58). "Coordination with coworkers is challenging as well, you rely too much on email communications which limit personal interaction" (5) said a

respondent, which was affirmed by another, "all the social aspects of being in a workplace and interacting with co-workers are non-existent" (3). This "isolation and the feeling of disconnection" (7) resulted in "less communications, less bonding, fewer close contact in terms of work" (52). For others, "social interactions which renew the energy of the team are limited, affecting the team's energy" (84) and "emotional connection" (66).

Respondents also found "online meetings limited" (5), leading to "miscommunication from colleagues" (4). Another stated, "you cannot express all you want to say through text or email" (79). The message and sender can be a communication factor as one respondent noticed, "employees are more productive at night and send messages past work hours... [emails are] a bit hard to ignore, especially if it's from a manager or the management team" (40). Lockdowns also affected communication, such as "when there are regional offices in other countries having lockdown, it is difficult to get their responses, causing delay" (85).

Leadership Distress. Apart from how they interacted with their colleagues, respondents claimed that when "when top management isn't mindful of employee needs" (15), it did not sit well with them. While working from home, "supervisors bother any time they want" (73), disrespecting personal space or showing "they do not have sensitivity on work-life balance" (129). They have also heard leaders saying "'if you are not happy, the gates are wide open' [which] is not really that helpful at this time" (47). Others noted cultural differences affected leaders, "[my] bosses are from the US... [and] can sometimes be insensitive" (43). Respondents feel this insensitivity when organization leaders do not trust them. One stated, "management mistrusts [us], thinking employees working from home are vacationing" (80). This is further affirmed when someone stated, "heads don't believe in the WFH arrangement... [thinking] working from home is some sort of a vacation" (80). One expressed it was "not the organization but [the] leaders who are not agile or adaptable to cope with technology, leaders that do not display effective leadership" (56) but instead "incompetence" (4). Another stated that there existed "ineffective leadership" (114) because leaders showed "delayed decision-making" (36) during the crisis.

Work/Task-Related Demands

Technological Limitations. Respondents stated the remote work setup requires the use of technology to continue functioning. However, internet connectivity problems abate work continuance in a virtual setting. They experienced "slow or erratic internet connection mak[ing] it extra difficult to upload and download data" (3), a "lack of stable internet for almost all people especially in the provinces" (33), with "slow connection impeding production work" (95). This made some of the respondents just divert to "chat [instead] because of the poor internet connection" (5). Apart from connection issues, the digitalization of manual processes generated strains. For instance, respondents mentioned "digitalizing all the training materials and creation of an eLearning program and platform were not considered" (5). In addition, some found it "challenging to replicate or migrate existing programs online" (38). Echoing this, respondents affirmed the need to "convert things that we do to digital/online; however, there remain some things that can't be transformed immediately and may need to have a change in policy" (14). For respondents in the public sector, they added the use of "e-signature is not accepted in most government offices" (90).

Workload Issues. Despite the shift to a work-from-home scenario and issues with technology, "goals [have] not changed" (1) and there may even be an "increased workload" (61). Respondents experienced being "overloaded, [with a] high pressure to deliver revenue targets [that] are unchanging" (81) within "tight calendars/ schedules to finish work" (25). Respondents perceive that "the company operates as if there is no pandemic" (62) with employees "being stretched to do other functions" (85). This resulted to "heavier workload given colleague resignations and a freeze hire policy" (28) and employees "doing several projects at once" (106). Respondents from the academe emphasized schools "have more requirements for lecturers, like annotated lectures, video recordings, multiple proctoring set up, sync sessions" (73) since "a lot of school staff were retrenched" (103) creating "workload [that] seems to be heavier" (119). Alongside heavier workload, there seemed to be "no boundaries in work hours anymore" (70) as there is an implicit need to "work beyond office hours" (30). A

respondent shared, "department heads mandate their team members to keep their communication lines available 24/7 … thinking that since we're working from home, we should make ourselves readily available" (83). This "lack of structure in schedules" (44) and having "no time in and time out" (73) "puts pressure on employees to work after shift and on weekends" (117). At the same time, "meetings and emails during odd hours have increased in frequency, [creating] the sense that work is 'always on'" (3).

In addition, not all respondents were exclusively working from home as some had to report back to their offices. "While the default in our guidelines is the WFH [work-from-home] arrangement, most are forced to report on-site" (78) a respondent shared, given the perception that "working in the office is more productive" (62) as "face-to-face [is required] for important meetings" (80). Some companies ask "employees to report onsite for the sake of proving a point that we're not vacationing" (61). Yet, working in the office added extra demands as, "offices have shuttle support for staff going home and back to their areas of assignment" (24) raising the concern of "logistics for employees during the pandemic" (125). In addition, it is "high-risk when [they are] at the workplace" (113) since they are "exposed to the larger population" (29).

Performance Concerns. Workload concerns produced ripple effects on monitoring and managing performance. "Managing the team remotely" (62) impacted "productivity and performance monitoring" (33) since "it is challenging to monitor my team since I cannot see how they really work" (2). For some, "monitoring absent" (86) employees was difficult, while others worry about "how to ensure that what I do is being seen by my manager" (35). Though a respondent said having a "daily/ weekly performance monitoring record" (70) was a solution, the same respondent also said, "people assume you need to have work outputs to cover your 8-hr work sched(ule) by asking too much documentation" (70). For another, "it is a challenge to gauge your team's morale if you don't see them face to face" (99). Team and individual morale, among other factors, also resulted in performance considered below standard. As a respondent shared, there existed "slow performance of colleagues who are not knowledgeable about technology" (4). Another pointed out employees were finding "difficulty focusing on work and [produced]

decreased performance" (19), while another stated, "some colleagues are slacking off and not delivering their targets" (56). This resulted in lowered "quality and level of productivity of the employees in our organization" (107). Detrimental to productivity was demotivation as some found it "difficult to stay motivated" (3) or were experiencing a "wearing [of their] motivation" (7). As they felt "decreasing motivation and engagement of people" (27), it became clear there was a need to "ensure coworkers are engaged" (41) given that "we had to cancel all social activities'' (34) that might have helped boost morale.

Organization-Related Demands

Financial and Job Stability. Despite the workload, respondents felt they have not received adequate compensation. They experienced "no overtime pay" (4) despite extended work hours, "budget cuts" (27) in the organization, and "limited paid work days" (33). Some stated their "salary was converted to a daily rate that affected monthly income" (88). Others saw certain "changes in employee benefits" and that "work-from-home employees can only charge actual work hours" (126). With limited salaries, it came as no surprise that respondents worried about job stability. Alongside the "freeze hires [and] potentiality of furloughs" (27), respondents admitted thinking about the "overall uncertainty of the end of the pandemic which [will] affect career goals" (66). One respondent worried about "the security of tenure especially now that the economy is down" (94).

Organization's Capability. Respondents also expressed concern about the overall stability and liquidity of their organization. When thinking about the "long-term sustainability of the company" (55), respondents acknowledged "there is a threat to sustainable operations" (63). As one respondent stated, the organization needs to check its "ability to withstand the economic challenges" (99) given that "business [is] very dependent on quarantine restrictions" (102). Some were aware there would be "dwindling [in] resources [for] the organization" (120). With looming financial instability, respondents expressed sentiments if their organizations can easily adapt to the changes. Some noted, "the organization tends to be too compliant when it comes to certain finance, supply chain policies [which] are slow to change" (120). Respondents added the "issuance of original

receipts, and disbursement vouchers - that requires wet ink signature - hopefully might be addressed" (15) since "e-signature is not accepted" (90). One said the problem was "paperwork... For example, due to [tax] requirements, we are required to send physical copies of receipts for expenses... which [is] dangerous to bring personally" (35). This was affirmed when another said, "submitting documents through email" was not approved, showing a "need [for] a more systematic or automated system" (41). Thus, respondents noted the immediate need for organizational adaptation. One said, "changes in business models [are needed] to adapt to the changes in the business environment" (116). Some noticed that their organization "lack clear direction" (33) or was "not providing adequate assistance in terms of technology" (91) to align with business changes. One respondent even observed leaders in the company "are restructuring the organization business-wise [but] not for the betterment of the staff" (113).

Resources

The resources identified by the respondents were also clustered into the four major sub-sections: intrapersonal, interpersonal, work/task-related, and organizational resources. Intrapersonal resources, which were resources found valuable intrinsically to the worker, covered assurances of health and safety. Interpersonal resources, or those in relation to another person, talked about the value of communication and sharing information, improving employee engagement, and consulting employees. Work/task-related resources, or those that directly impact the work they are doing, focused on the promotion of conducting work-from-home. Lastly, organization-related resources looked at providing materials needed for work and adjusting organizational policies and systems. Table 2 summarizes the results for resources, their description, and their respective total number of responses.

Intrapersonal Resources

Health and Safety Protocols and Provisions. One important resource is the availability of processes that ensure safety and health, such as those related to COVID-19 testing, vaccinations,

Table 2. *Resources, Descriptions and Response Count*

Resources	Description	Response Count
Intrapersonal	Resources provided by the organization that were intrinsically valuable to the worker	31
Interpersonal	Resources in relation to another person	12
Work/Task-related	Resources focused on factors affecting how they directly execute their work	6
Organization-related	Resources that can be provided at the organizational level	18

and compliance to health protocols. "They provided us with monthly swab tests" (45) said one respondent, as well as "immediate testing for those with symptoms, immediate care for those with COVID, immediate contact tracing" (96) as required by the government. "Regular COVID rapid test" (20) or "antigen testing" (21) were also alternatives to the "bi-monthly mandatory swab testing" (39). Apart from testing, compliance with minimum health and safety protocols was highlighted. "Our occupational health and safety programs and policies are in place" (23) such as having "constant reminders on safety protocols, and anyone getting sick must strictly submit a medical certificate stating Fit-to-Work status" (85). In addition to the "consistent implementation" (126) of "strict observance of the safety protocols" (89), the office underwent "regular defogging or deep cleaning" (15), having the "office layout reconfigured to meet social distancing norms" (63) and allocating "face masks, face shields, vitamins" (113). One respondent shared they "have clear guidelines for return-to-work set-up [together with the] psychological preparation for returning to work" (64). Apart from that, respondents shared organizations were "making vaccines available for employees" (1) and were "offer[ing this for] free" (11). One respondent shared that "a vaccination protocol will also be helpful... [as] this would alleviate anxiety" (29). Although one respondent said "I am not asking them to shoulder vaccine costs" (30), others mentioned that the organization

should "facilitate staff vaccination for free or cost-share" (36) and to "also make it easy for employees to get their vaccination" (64). This "vaccine support" (126) is helpful "for employees who may have no access thru LGUs [local government units]" (25).

Information Dissemination and Psychosocial Support. In addition to having health policies in place, learning sessions about the virus were found valuable by the respondents. "Webinars on wellness, physical, emotional, mental health" (10) were important to "educate employees on the benefits of vaccination" (34). "Providing webinars about physical and mental health" (54), "awareness campaigns for onsite employees" (21), and "continuously educat[ing] employees on taking care of their health and wellbeing" (107) were essential to ensure "each employee's well-being is taken cared of" (79). Thus, "making mental health wellness programs more robust" (31) was found critical. A respondent requested to "provide mental health support, and safe offline activities" (55) such as "psychosocial counseling services" (113, 25).

Interpersonal Resources

Communications. To help respondents in this time of unreliable information, as a resource, the organization should "be more communicative to the staff, especially around the financial sustainability of the organization... Be clear why certain organizational changes are needed" (120). The organization should practice "transparency and consistent communication strategy implementation" (7) by having "clear communications on plans and strategies" (121).

Engagement Programs. The organization was expected to "keep [employees] engaged" (41) by making "HR arrange something social for employee well-being" (3). "It would be nice to have more frequent get-togethers" (44) such as giving "employees with similar interests an avenue to discuss and exchange content. Or more informal all-staff emails like what movies/TV series can be watched, mobile games to play, fun to do with family" (30). This resource of creating virtual social interaction with employees should be rooted in the organization being "more considerate of the plight of the staff" (16). A respondent shared one way the organization can help is to "understand employees'

needs and provide any solution" (88). This was affirmed by another saying, "listen to staff concerns around job retention, workload, [since the] staff can only take on so much workload" (120). "Listen to what [employees] have to say. Ask how [the organization] can help" (22) through "continu[ed] conversations" (27) added another.

Work/Task-Related Resources

Promotion of Work-from-Home Set-up. Respondents noted that organizations should "continue the work from home set up" (10) and develop "programs and initiatives that empower employees in working from home" (31) since this "setup is feasible in terms of safety and health" (44). "Working from home keeps us safe from COVID and saves travel time" (40) said a respondent, but another extended the idea saying the organization should "continue WFH but with normal working hours" (112). Those working in the academe shared the same sentiment saying, "implement strictly the no face to face classroom setting until all have been given vaccines" (103).

Organization-Related Resources

Work Assets and New Policies. As respondents state a preference for work-from-home, they expressed how organizations should "give or lend office and communication gadgets" (71) and provide "adequate compensation and health care benefits" (73). "Returning my salary to its original rate" (104), "increased compensation" (118), or having "overtime pay" (4) were mentioned. The organization was expected to "share the cost of electric bills and internet use" (36) and provide "subsidies for essentials especially related to work" (44) such as "communication allowance" (90). For those who ended up working onsite, the organization should "provide shuttle service for its employees" (15) "to prevent [the] staff to be contaminated" (77). As organizations move to onsite work, plans related to organization policies and systems were crucial for the respondents. They shared "flexibility with work schedule and deadlines" (43) or having "flexible work arrangements" (35) will "minimize the risk of exposure" (62) to the virus. To aid this, "digitalization" (126) of systems was considered

valuable. One respondent pointed "maybe they could also try to have measures in place so employees … don't feel obliged to work outside of regular work hours" (40). This was affirmed by other respondents who said, "employees are not robots" (4) and therefore the organization should "lessen our workload" (29) since "we're not a factory that needs to be working all the time" (81).

Discussion

Using the JD-R framework, this study investigated job demands and resources of Filipino employees one year into the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, it was able to present the challenges and means by which employees coped. Findings suggest that problems surface when job demands become burdensome and chronic while resources that can address these challenges are withheld, difficult to access, or unavailable. Therefore, for employees to benefit from such resources, organizations must carefully plan and organize measures in such a way that these are readily implemented, especially in times of crises and disruptions.

Overall, results confirm findings from prior literature which suggest job demands experienced by employees during the pandemic caused exhaustion, demotivation, and even frustration (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Based on the respondents' articulations, many shared how they experienced burnout and exhaustion due to heavy workload, attending meetings or workshops online for long hours, and navigating processes when organizational infrastructure may either be incomplete or ineffective. Others expressed frustration and demotivation when they could not communicate and collaborate effectively with team members, when they felt isolated and disconnected from colleagues, when organization leaders failed to guide them or take into account their needs and concerns, and when they were micromanaged to determine if they were doing actual work outside the confines of their offices. Consequently, their productivity (in terms of quantity and quality) suffered.

Many of the respondents' identified demands underscore the need for organizations to be informed, agile, and forward-looking. As mentioned, employees articulated how excessive workload, undigitized

business processes, lack of technological know-how, limited mental health programs, and problematic performance monitoring and management made work difficult. Based on these responses, it can be hypothesized that pre-pandemic, many organizations have not undergone digital transformation which made it difficult to transfer/convert processes online when COVID-19 struck. Thus, it followed that many employees experienced challenges in executing work seamlessly. In order to address this difficulty, organizations were hard pressed to digitize operations quickly. Moreover, many organizations had no template when it came to implementing remote or hybrid work arrangements (i.e., onsite work arrangement was the norm). Therefore, some leaders were understandably at a loss when it came to communicating and managing teams and performance. Consequently, these resulted in an uncalibrated workload, compromised work-life balance, and other challenges that affected the employees' morale.

In this study, the critical role of leadership also surfaced, both as a job demand and resource. Employees noted how important it is for leaders to be competent in two areas. The first involves relating with employees in ways that communicate sensitivity and trust, using an ethics of care approach. As articulated in studies (McGuire et al., 2021; Noddings, 2013; Bauman, 2011), a caring workplace involves leaders who support the well-being needs of their workforce because they understand and respect employees' individuality, personal circumstances, and relational nature. By adopting an ethics of care approach, leaders role model respect for boundaries, trust in the employees' ability to self-regulate, and champion employee well-being.

The second area concerns leadership skills which shows a need for leaders to be strategic thinkers, timely problem-solvers, and judicious decision-makers, especially during uncertain times. These are the same behaviors and skills highlighted by Caringal-Go and colleagues (2021b) on crisis leadership during the pandemic as employees identified the value behind leaders' capacity to 1) attend to the person (employee) by engaging in behaviors showing compassion and care, and 2) take charge and show the way forward by being proactive, decisive, and solutions-oriented. Overall, these two leadership areas influence how job demands and resources are managed and made available to employees, respectively.

In terms of job resources at the intrapersonal level, it is clear how initiatives to promote health and well-being alleviate fears and reservations about contracting the virus, especially for those who had to return to onsite work. Clearly, the presence of health and well-being policies and initiatives gave employees the assurance that their respective organizations put a premium on their safety which directly impacts their ability to perform their jobs. Once this basic need to stay healthy and protected was addressed, the value of communication and engagement activities as interpersonal resources came to the fore. When carefully planned and executed, communication processes and channels can effectively bridge direct reports and management, especially when there are lockdowns imposed and employees are working in various locations. Equally important to note is the fact that organizations cannot simply rely on virtual forms of communication to do the job when there are other issues that prevent maximization of the platform: poor internet connection, lack of money to finance reliable Wi-Fi, and lack of technological know-how. Also, some employees use virtual means of communication to control and/or micromanage colleagues' or direct reports' work hours. Worse, employees have raised concerns how online communication became punitive when others encroach on personal hours, weekends, or vacations. Further, online communication as means to connect with others on a personal level becomes problematic when confronted with a heavy workload that leaves little room for informal engagements nor social activities. Employee engagement, especially during disruptions and crises situations, should never be sacrificed or overlooked because it can help workers feel connected not only to each other but also to their organizations. Engagement activities can foster, among others, opportunities to maintain and build stronger relationships across levels in the organizations. Among peers, for instance, engagement initiatives can strengthen employees' feelings of being supported. Generally defined, social support in the workplace refers to the employee's belief that help would be available from others in demanding conditions (Mayo et al., 2012) – an essential resource used to alleviate the level of one's stress and anxiety (Hobfoll, 2002; Jang et al., 2018) especially in times of crises.

Consequently, work/task-and-organization-related resources need to be available and accessible to facilitate better employee performance even under variable conditions. In this study, it was evident that respondents relied on their organizations to not only provide the tools to carry out their tasks but also create and implement policies and strategies that can help make working conditions favorable. These resources, which are external to the employees and largely provided by organizations, help the former feel that their needs and concerns are recognized and acted upon. Availability of and accessibility to such resources can strengthen the partnership between employees and organizations because work/task-and-organization related resources become concrete manifestations of how a workplace cares for its workforce, whether these come in the form of simple technological tools to review and modernization of business processes, training programs to capacitate employees all the way to initiatives that aim to support mental health and well-being. Pandemic or not, it is imperative for organizations to periodically review policies and strategies to ensure the organization is operating strategically, acting proactively and not reactively.

Overall, findings from this study suggest that job demands, whether internal or external to employees, negatively impact their mental health and well-being. When job demands are unaddressed and/or become chronic, employees find it increasingly difficult not only to manage their productivity but also to relate meaningfully with others (i.e., family members and colleagues). Disruptions in their ability to focus, deliver outputs, and communicate and collaborate effectively tend to give rise to feelings of frustration, demotivation, and exhaustion. Therefore, it is imperative that job resources target these demands in a specific way. Results of this study point to how job resources (i.e., technological support, engagement activities, competent leadership, responsive policies and programs, etc) can assuage strong emotions in the midst of a crisis and enable employees to continue working. Organizations and leaders alike need to have an intimate understanding of the nature of their employees' needs and challenges, whether personal and work-related, to enable them to offer the appropriate type of support. When these resources are successfully utilized, employees' challenges may be reduced significantly – allowing them to fulfill personal and professional obligations and responsibilities with minimal issues.

Practical Implications

The large-scale effect of the pandemic, though predominantly damaging, has a positive aspect as well. It revealed that many organizations do not have contingency measures to strategize and continue operations in an unexpected crisis situation, and thus have the opportunity to review existing policies and processes. Results of this study may be used by leaders as reflection points in identifying ways to manage job demands. In the process of communicating and collaborating with stakeholders, management will be in a better position to make available resources that will not only safeguard employees' well-being but also maintain and encourage productivity.

Findings revealed some job demands may not be readily addressed at the organizational level because of financial, manpower, or operational constraints. Cognizant of the fact that highly distressful and chronic job demands can impair employees' functioning, line managers and supervisors can come up with measures to mitigate these demands' deleterious effects while more formal policies, procedures, and guidelines are being conceptualized.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

To enable organizations to understand possible differences in experienced job demands and resources needed to manage these, future research may explore how respondent demographics such as marital status, age, gender, job level, and industry influence the employees' experiences. Further studies may also explore personal resources used by employees in coping with job demands. Although some studies amid COVID-19 have focused on this (i.e., Caringal-Go et al., 2021a; Teng-Calleja et al., 2020), job demands in evolving work arrangements (i.e., hybrid or flex work) emphasize the value of capturing not just organizational but personal resources in dealing with job-related challenges. Similarly, a quantitative study that will investigate the buffering effect of job resources on employee well-being may be pursued in the future. To improve generalizability, forthcoming research may also expand potential respondents' access to the qualitative survey. In this study, only those with internet

access were able to participate, limiting participation. Using other data collection methods such as pen and paper surveys can be used to include those without internet access. Virtual and in-person focus group discussions (FGDs) can also be explored to enable an in-depth examination of the experiences. Finally, succeeding studies may adopt a longitudinal design to allow researchers to also evaluate timeliness and effectiveness of the resources provided to address employee concerns.

Conclusion

This study utilized the JD-R theory as its framework to investigate the job demands and resources of Filipino employees one year into the COVID-19 pandemic. Results revealed how, in times of crisis, job demands pose serious threats to employees' well-being and productivity. This is true when organizations adopt a reactive stance – merely troubleshooting or offering "band-aid" resources when more targeted and needs-based ones are required. Therefore, stakeholders are enjoined to collaborate to ensure that employees' experiences are understood, challenges managed, and potential risks are mitigated.

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