



MANNING THE RIGS: A STUDY OF THE LIFE-WORLD OF OFFSHORE WORKERS IN QATAR'S OIL INDUSTRY

¹Monaliza P. Cayatoc, MAG, RGC, ²Rex Gabriel G. Dinglasan, ³Naima Adelaide A. Dagdag, ⁴Jan Dale T. Ortiz, ⁵Tristan Zachary O. Sarmiento, ⁶Estelle Rose G. Cardino, ⁷Mohammad Jassim A. Aldam, ⁸John Reuben D. Berania

¹Faculty, ²Student, ³Student, ⁴Student, ⁵Student, ⁶Student, ⁷Student, ⁸Student

¹Senior High School Department

¹Philippine School Doha, Doha, Qatar

Abstract: *Background:* Offshore workers labor away from their families leading to often miss out opportunities especially having quality time with their families. *Method:* This qualitative research pertains to our central question: 'What are the common hardships experienced by offshore workers in the State of Qatar relevant to the nature of their work?' to discover and understand the lived experiences of offshore workers which is categorized under phenomenological research design. A twenty-five semi-structured interview was conducted to gather data; and were analyzed through inductive approach for theme development. *Findings:* Findings have shown the daily life cycle of offshore workers in the oil industry. The extracted four themes are Career Proclivities, Life Extremities, Adjusting Strategies, and Familial Necessities, respectively. *Conclusion:* There are variety of struggles offshore workers are facing in their daily lives. They also have factors supporting them in coping up with these struggles. *Recommendation:* This research suggest that offshore workers should cherish their time with their family especially when they are away on the rig.

Index Terms - Offshore, life cycle, struggles, career proclivities, life extremities, familial necessities

INTRODUCTION

Working offshore is very difficult because it means being away from family. Referred to by Cambridge Dictionary (2020) offshore is connected to the production of the oil and gas a distance from the land or under the sea Workers situated offshore are call offshore workers. They are professionals that are employed to work in an offshore installation such as oil platforms or rigs (OilScams.Org, 2015).

A life of an offshore worker is not a walk in a park. They must first undergo to various health screenings before being stationed in the oil rig (Thomson et al.). An oil rig is described as a drilling platform in the ocean that is used to search for oil crudes and natural gases (OilScams.Org, 2015). As cited by Mehnazd (2019) voiced that the environment of the rig is susceptible to accidents and injuries, making this field of work to be one of the most dangerous careers.

Lockhart (2015) said that working offshore requires constant commuting by the helicopter and having no escape from familiar ground. A small turn of events and the workers are stranded and this may add to hazardous working conditions. This means that the offshore workers life already very dangerous and discomforting by the time the step foot in that helicopter.

This study came about as there is a lack of exposure, recognition, and gratitude for the job which gives life to an oil rich country, Qatar. There is a limited number of studies to be found regarding the lived experiences of said offshore workers. For a country known for its abundance in oil and gas, the workers behind the success are not highlighted enough.

Compared to other jobs' workers, which we generally know how they operate and live, the knowledge people have over what goes on for an offshore worker is highly shallow. There have been multiple studies offshore related to the discovery, how operations work, the industry itself and the statistics. But most of these studies fail to include and highlight the cogs behind the entirety of the machine, which are the workers.

This study aims to give light to the world of offshore workers, what encompasses their struggles as well as their challenges. It examines the lifestyle of an irregularly scheduled and paced job. It examines a job with an angle from which danger and caution are big derivatives. It examines what drives and urges people to take on such a strenuous job.

It tries to unlock which ways and methods are being utilized to keep on going such a tedious job. It calls attention to not only the physicality and technicality of the job, but also the emotional and logical take as well. It also targets to address important social issues brought upon by middle class struggles, homesickness, opportunities, and more. It aims to give a clear distinction between what used to be and what people thought to be as offshore life and the present conditions of working offshore.

There is great significance for this study for it brings enlightenment to a new level of being and Overseas Filipino Worker. According to Lexico Oxford dictionary, an OFW is a person from the Philippines who is living and working in another country, typically on a temporary basis. The accumulated respondents of this study were limited to offshore workers with families according to the set parameters. But a new angle is generated from the prospect of an OFW living with their family, yet being away from their family again, which is essentially the life of the offshore worker.

METHOD

Research Design

The method used by the researchers is the Qualitative research; using the phenomenological approach to conduct their study, the researchers aim to boast an in depth understanding towards the lived experiences of the respondents and to fill in the readers with more knowledge about the lived experiences of an offshore worker. By using the Qualitative approach, the researchers can eliminate potential bias within the data to develop specific insights while having a smaller sample size. All of these components ensure that the study will have the best possible result that will guarantee the credibility and authenticity of the study.

Research Locus and Sample

This research study was conducted at the Philippine School Doha located in the State of Qatar. The location was chosen for it is where the study is suitable to be conducted.

The participants in this study were selected offshore workers that were known through the connections of the researchers. Four interviewees were chosen; the selection of participants was determined through the parameter that the researchers have set. The parameter was based on the following: (a) at least 5 years of offshore experience, (b) have nuclear family and (c) years of stay in Qatar.

The interviewees were interviewed privately and on the time that they preferred. The participants were the one who set the where and when the interview will occur. The researchers guarantee the utmost confidentiality of the answers of the participants.

Data Collection and Ethical Consideration

In the study, the researchers made a questionnaire that was validated by certain professional researchers which includes a consent letter for the respondents to sign that serves as a transparency that the respondents agreed to be interviewed. It was also stated in the consent letter that their personal information will be kept confidential. The questionnaire is composed of 1 central problem, 1 specific problem and 25 developmental questions. According to Participation Research Cluster, Institute of Developmental Studies "A semi-structured interview is a research method widely used in the social sciences, which forms the basis of many kinds of participatory research."

The researchers asked the participants for their time and experiences for the development of the study. It is guaranteed that their information is of great care. The researchers made sure that the confidentiality was executed completely in terms of the respondent's information and the data they have allocated. This confidentiality was maintained by the researchers by not giving out any information to others about the respondent's identity, background information, and the data they had provided.

Data Analysis

The researchers established a robotfoto to determine which respondents to gather. The researchers prepared consent letters that are to be distributed to the chosen respondents who agreed to be interviewed, the respondents chose the tie when and where the interview will take place. The researchers used the 25 developmental questions in order to gauge the lifestyle of the offshore workers.

The researchers did the emic to etic transcriptions of the recorded interview. Creating a dendrogram; they made the cool to warm analysis to determine the three main themes of their study. The emerged answers determine the sub themes which supports the main themes.

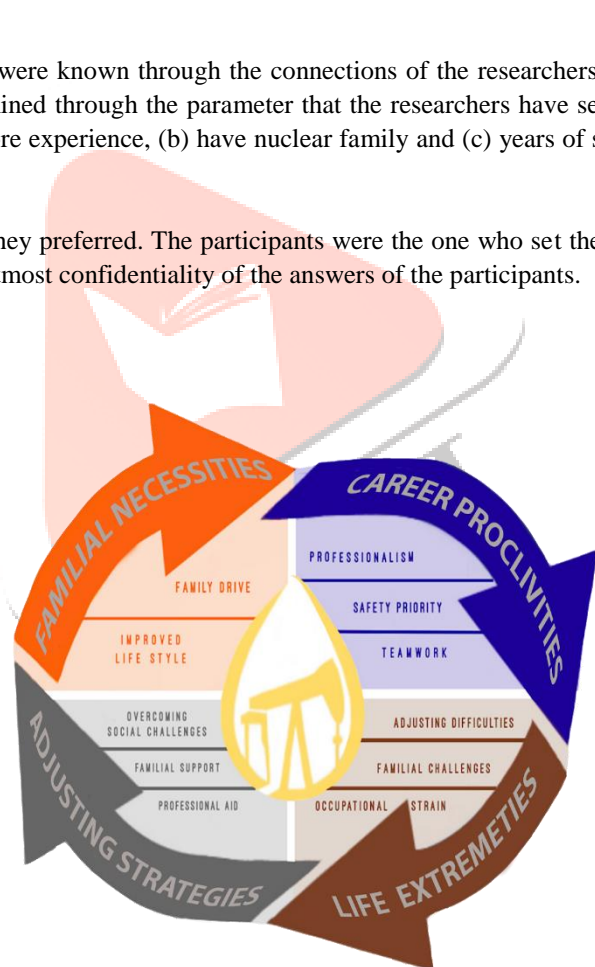


Figure 2. Simulacrum

The Life-World of Offshore Workers in Qatar's Oil Industry

Basing from the themes, the researchers made the simulacrum which represents the main idea of the themes and sub themes. Each figure and colors represent a significance.

FINDINGS

The simulacrum pertains to the different aspects of an offshore worker. The researchers extracted four themes – Familial Necessities, Career Proclivities, Life Extremities, and Adjusting Strategies, respectively. The first reveals the challenges both the workers' and their families experience, what both parties feel when they are apart. The second discusses the workers' priorities and job ethics, how they work and act on the rig. The third reveals about the struggles and limits of the workers in their working environment, how they cope to the extremely demanding workload they face. Meanwhile the last theme talks about the adjustment of the workers' every time they step on the rig, not only the new workers but also the ones currently employed, how they constantly adapt. The simulacrum is in the form of a cycle that starts with Career Proclivities and ends with Familial Challenges. Furthermore, the colors of each have meanings that are matched with their respective themes. The color royal blue was given to the theme Career Proclivities, the color means intelligence and trustworthiness, the brown color of Life Extremities means honesty, openness, and reliability, the color gray of Adjusting Strategies represents intellect and knowledge, being professional, and security, and the color of orange of the theme Familial Necessities represents positivity and enthusiasm, independence and being a risk-taker.

Familial Necessities

Offshore workers have one ultimate goal to strive and work hard, and that is for the betterment of the lifestyle of their family as gleaned from the interview with the participants. According to MSG Management Study Guide, inspiration is the word inferred from the word 'motive' which implies needs, desires, wants or drives within the people. It is the method of stimulating individuals to activities to achieve the objectives. Within the work objective setting the mental components invigorating the people's conduct can be wanted for cash, success, acknowledgment, job-satisfaction, team work, etc.". Offshore workers want to give their family the best life they could offer. For them, there is no absolute comparison between the hard work and striving in life if it is for the betterment of their family.

In order to overcome some of the life obstacles that we face every single day, we need motivation. Family is what drives offshore workers, what gives them the ability to surpass their limits, it's one of the main reasons why they have the will to wake up every day. As an offshore worker, their lives are not a walk in the park. They have to be away from their family, they have to sacrifice some of the time that they could have spent with their families. Being away from their families can be tough, but parents' will do everything just to give their family a comfortable life as voiced by the respondents:

...As a family man, I grabbed the opportunity to be in which job that pops up to provide the basic needs of my family.... (R1)

I chose to be an offshore worker. I came here to Qatar to find a stable job for my family...(R4)

First of all, the money, because one of the main reasons why we are working is for the salary, so you can earn for your family and for their future. (R3)

I want to give my family the best of everything. I want to send my children to schools with quality education, family is everything. Most parents will answer everything "for a better life". I wanted to secure my family's future and I believe Motivational Grounds Familial Drive that Qatar can provide me those things and it's also safe here in Qatar, that's why I decided to work here. (R4)

Being away from loved ones is the hardest thing for an offshore worker. But they believe that family is a strong motivation for those who strive and overcome battles in life. One respondent emphasized that if family is on the line, he will do everything.

My family is what drives me to work and earn for them. I believe that anything is possible if family is on the line. (R1)

In connection with the family as the main source of motivation of offshore workers, they are able to withstand the challenges in life they are facing. Because of this profession, they are able to improve the lifestyle of their family. They are able to provide their families with their basic needs and wants such as, sending their kids to schools with quality education, buying their own home and other luxuries that they could not afford before. A life that they could not have in their previous jobs is now something that they can have as expressed by the respondents:

I didn't expect for us to be able to have a home in the Philippines. I thought that we'll just rent houses for my entire life. (R1)

Because of this job we're able to buy everything we want and need. What my kids need for their education. We can eat proper food and whatever we want. (R2)

I think the bonding, and the family lifestyle, how they live, it's totally different. (R3)

The progress of my family when I took this job, be it clothes, gadgets, food, or a place to live in. Whatever my family needs I could provide them. This is my way of making time for them, by providing their needs and wants...(R4)

Being offshore really is a dangerous profession. From safety hazards and dangerous operations, offshore workers must comply in doing their respective task. One respondent said that he should be really careful working in the rig. He thinks of what will happen with his family if he gets injured or hurt. His family is his motivation is working safely and avoiding injuries as the respondent claimed:

As an offshore worker, these challenges help me in doing my absolute job. I now know how to handle these challenges. I always remind myself that I can do this, this is for my family. I motivate myself by talking to the mirror while saying "I can do this, I can do it, I can go back to my family a hundred percent alive. I live in that cycle. (R4)

Being an offshore worker comes with all kinds of sacrifices and difficulties, but despite those difficulties they have their family behind them, to motivate them. Their commitment to their jobs is exceptional but that commitment won't be possible if weren't for their families. Offshore workers come from all walks of life, but as they are different, they are the same. They move forward and work through their goals.

Career Proclivities

As defined by Indeed.com (2019), career integrity is being honorable, even when no one is around. People with integrity follow moral and ethical principles in all aspects of life. Integrity should extend to professional areas at work such as decision making, and interacting with colleagues. Employers who are committed to hiring employees with integrity are better equipped to provide high-quality service and maintain a positive reputation.

When employees have integrity, managers can trust the team is working diligently. With the professions on the offshore workers can be placed in hazardous conditions with long hectic periods. Oil drillings could cause dire injuries, but with compliance to safety protocols and the utilization of proper equipment, a safe working environment is assured. For jobs to get done most importantly with high-risk situations on the rigs, cooperation amongst the workers is much needed to prevent disasters.

Despite a difficult job, most of these offshore workers are able to provide the basic needs a family should have. Below are three of the many fragments of career integrity.

The first one of the three would be professionalism. To be a professional is to apply competencies with whatever work the person is in. Professionalism comes with many things such as being trustworthy, self-reliant, being honest and hardworking. In a profession on the offshore, those competencies mentioned are crucial because according to Edwards (2019), since oil rigs are brimming with combustible materials and weighty hardware, as offshore workers, plenty of training is beneficial to ensure good practice.

Some of these workers landed on an unexpected job on the rigs and with a hazardous environment, adaptability is a must. As human beings, mistakes are inevitable, but those mistakes give way to learning. With the time span of working on rigs, these offshore workers are also often away from families and utilizing the time wisely when given a chance to communicate with the people back home is important. To elaborate, below are the responses of the workers:

When I make mistakes, I learn from them. As a professional, I don't have the time to discuss the struggles of my job with my superiors. I apply the things that I learned from my previous job for me not to screw things up. (R4)

Once I start my shift, I have to put my family behind and focus on the job so I can execute it safely. During breaks, I reserve four to five minutes of my time to call my family asking them, how are they? What happened in school? I would ask my wife how's her job? I only get to talk to them for a maximum ten minutes during breaks. In an oil and gas field, there's a twenty-four hours prediction time, 12 hours shifting. Whenever I have the opportunity to talk to my family, I don't waste it, because I'm not certain when I can get that opportunity again. (R4)

Attentiveness and compliance to safety protocols are a must and when safety procedures aren't followed, minor to major accidents can occur. Minor incidents such as a pinched finger and a pinched toe were experienced since some were not wearing the distributed personal protective equipment. Besides, non-compliance, unwanted occurrences and lack of equipment also happen. Problems such as the excess release of toxic gas occur.

With a situation such as this, safety protocols, the use of self-contained breathing apparatuses, and standby vessels. Since the breathing apparatuses only last 15 minutes, the leak should be handled within that time frame. As what the respondents mentioned:

The most challenging task I have to do as an offshore worker is pressure testing bulbs. It's one of the most difficult tasks I do because it is very critical. Failure of these tests may lead to accidents that put not only your life in danger but also your colleagues' life offshore is very dangerous and your life depends always. (R1)

Everything offshore is systematic. We follow certain protocols for procedures and equipment. It's impossible to have inadequate materials because there is this thing called look ahead and be prepared for the system that we follow. There are no such thing as inadequate materials but more than sufficient equipment. (R1)

Lastly, a profession offshore comes with different varieties of risks. This is the reason why an offshore worker is not allowed in doing a task alone especially in the rig. They would be working in pairs or in groups of 4. The respondents said that teamwork is a need in working offshore.

Operation wise, offshore workers should follow protocols about operations. Workers help each other to complete a task so that the relationship and bonds between them will improve. Interacting with other people offshore is easy for me because it's always a give and take situation, the way you treat them is the same the way they will treat you. (R1)

In the offshore environment, safety engineers won't allow a one-person team. There would always be someone to help you in operations such as lifting. This environment made me more proficient in my job because I know that other workers got my back. (R1)

With these capabilities in the work, offshore workers are able to handle different situations in their field.

Life Extremities

Life is a giant curveball. It throws us in different situations with corresponding different trials that tests our individual limits. It drags us in every direction may it be desired or undesired. Life extremities, in this context, means to talk about the reoccurring struggles that offshore workers face on a day-to-day basis, gauging their limits on each. *The three main components that are in line with life battles are occupational strain, familial challenges, and adjusting difficulties.*

In the oil and gas operations, it is always a risk. These offshore workers are exposed to the dangerous environment that the rigs are constantly in a state of. These offshore workers are ceaselessly vulnerable to the unsafe working conditions that their surroundings pose. These workers also take shifts that lasts more than 8 hours that could cause fatigue and are exposed to harsh sunlight. As the respondents articulated:

WORKING IN THE OIL INDUSTRY... WE ALWAYS ENCOUNTER GAS LEAKS. THIS H₂S (HYDROGEN SULFIDE) IS A TOXIC GAS, IT MAY KILL YOU... (R2)

One of the challenging tasks that we experience is when we work under the sun during summer. It's really exhausting for all of us in the field. Working under the heat of the sun while doing physical work is really challenging. I remember having sleepless nights because instead of sleeping, I'm spending my time finishing the job safely. (R4)

Working offshore means working away from one's family. Family love has become a double-edged sword for them. While they do amass their motivation solely from their family, the distance that comes with working offshore brings upon anxiousness, limited schedule, and multiple missed opportunities. The time spent away from their family outweighs the time spent with them. As two respondents said:

... I know sometimes when I talk to them, Naima's in front of me right now, I don't even know how to explain because I wasn't there when they needed me. I was not there when there as a family day at school. I wasn't there when she wanted me to come with her to corniche, to the mall or wherever. I wasn't even there for her when she's having difficulties and needing a father by her side. So, it's really sad. So, I mean what can I do? (R4)

It's difficult. Especially there are times that there are special occasions like birthday, Christmas, New year. But then again, I have to work and leave. Because if I don't work, what will happen to my family? (R2)

According to two of the researchers' respondents, their previous job was not at all correlated with being an offshore worker. *I'm working in the bank back in the Philippines. This is very different. (R2)*

While one respondent said:

In my previous job, I also had to deal with a lot of people, but the difference is they're also Filipino. Here in Qatar, I have to deal with different nationalities, different moods, everything is different... and the climate here in Qatar is really hot. (R4)

Their respective responses introduced the hardship of adjusting to a whole new different way of life. Having to consider migration, culture shock, climate differences, and the brink of job mismatching.

With these responses and gathered data, it is observed that the respondents were limit-tested in terms of Occupational Strain, Familial Challenges, and Adjusting Difficulties.

Adjusting Strategies

Offshore workers have different adjusting methods in overcoming their battles in life. Offshore workers have been adjusting to the state of their work whether it is technical struggles, personal struggles, and struggles in socializing and communicating with different people. The first and foremost problem you will face is overcoming the social challenges that comes with going to a new environment with different people and live a different lifestyle. There are multiple ways to approach this problem and this is shown through the responses of the respondents:

"I interact with them by talking to them. talking about what else is needed in the rig so that we can be safe or by asking them what else do we need to prepare for the job, how can we prepare those things, how do Familial Support Overcoming Social Challenges we connect a specific tool, how to deal with clients. We also talk about our lives and cultures. We try to understand and respect each other's Culture and beliefs. As time passes by, I eventually get to know them because we live in the same room for a month. We'll know how to handle and understand each other because of the span that we've been working together." (R4)

"Operation wise, offshore workers should follow protocols about operations. Workers help each other to complete a task so that the relationship and bonds between them will improve. Interacting with other people offshore is easy for me because it's always a give and take situation, the way you treat them is the same the way they will treat you." (R1)

Being away with their family is really hard for them but because of their family they are able to overcome the struggles they are facing. Their family is their source of strength and their reason for undertaking this massive responsibility. As such they see their familial support while working offshore far away from them and see it important to communicate with them when they can. This is evident according to the responses of the respondents:

"I make sure that every day I call my wife and my children. I send them messages every day and whenever I get the chance." (R2)
"Once I started my shift, I have to put my family behind and focus on the job so I can execute it safely. During breaks, I reserve four to five minutes of my time to call my family asking them, how are they? What happened in school? I would ask my wife how's her job? I only get to talk to them for a maximum ten minutes during breaks. In an oil and gas field, there's a twenty-four hours prediction time, 12 hours shifting. Whenever I have the opportunity to talk to my family, I don't waste it, because I'm not certain when I can get that opportunity again." (R4)

One main struggle of offshore workers is working together and providing each other assistance while in an environment where they are people who are different from them culturally and ethnically. As such, they have to assist each other and seek professional aid from one another despite this problem. This is evident according to the responses of the respondents:

"In the offshore environment, safety engineers won't allow a one-person team. There would always be someone to help you in operations such as lifting. This environment made me more proficient in my job because I know that other workers got my back." (R1)

"It does happen especially if they don't understand that much English, that is why we to repeat it. Sometimes we work in buddy systems, that way, our co-workers can know or monitor what the other is doing." (R2)

Based on the data gathered from the responses of the respondents, it can be seen that there are many ways to adjust to the obscurity of going into an environment you know little about.

DISCUSSION

Familial Necessities

Familial Drive

As a human being we perform various actions every day. With each of the actions we make there is a driving force that pushes us to carry out those actions; called motivation. "Motivation is the process that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behaviors" (Cherry, 2020, para.1). Motivation has many faces and as for the interviewees said family is what greatly motivates them to work. Menges et al. (2017) defined family drive as the need of a worker to expend effort to benefit one's family. Working offshore has many difficulties like being away from their family or working for long hours. However, their desire to provide for their family helps them to overcome these difficulties. According to Confronting Poverty (2020) with hard work and effort, one can avoid poverty. Working offshore was the way for the interviewees to satisfy their family's basic needs.

Giving their family a proper lifestyle is what pushes them to wake up and work each day. A Filipino mother named Marlyn Henning left her family and moved to the US to work. She faced difficult times however she knew that she couldn't leave her job for she has a family that is depending on her. Enduring the pain of being separated from her family and only seeing her daughter one a year, she was able to get her family to leave a life of poverty and gain a better lifestyle (Gabriel, 2019). Reading from Living the offshore Lifestyle (2015), offshore workers with on-call position can be summoned any time without any earlier notice. Just like Marlyn Henning, offshore workers are separated from their family however they do not know how long they will be gone and what risks they would be facing. Knowing that they are being paid highly and that this would help their family to have a better life, they would still go. To conclude, family drive greatly helps workers and it is the reason why people work hard. This also enhances work performance and energy of workers.

Improved Lifestyle

True to human nature, especially as the breadwinner of the family, it is an ultimate goal to make living more comfortable for those you love and care for. It is no secret that oil rig workers stand to make an impressive paycheck, even in entry-level positions (Arnold & Itkin, 2014). Workers will often earn three to four times as much as their peers in 'normal' jobs (Lavis, 2017). Edwards (2019) placed emphasis on the effect, offshore workers are able to provide and go beyond for a life made easier, though intermittent absence is the price to pay. Not only does it improve their economic standing, it also increases their work productivity as incentives and benefits are most usually given. Most companies in the oil and gas sector provide their workers with medical insurance, life insurance, health/dental/vision insurance, vacation programs, housing allowance, home leaves/flights, educational assistance (worker/spouse/children) to name a few which in turn, serves as a motivational force for the offshore workers and to urge them to do well in their job. The offshore lifestyle can be very rewarding, with salaries compensating for the combination of specialized skills, safety risks taken, and time spent away from home (Edwards, 2019).

Offshore jobs have given a new meaning to 'life in comfort'. A Transport Officer working at Oil and Natural Gas Corporation LTD says that before having this particular job, his father had to work hard at a distillery factory while supporting his children's studies. After taking the job, his father retired and he bought his dad his dream motorcycle and he got to give each of his siblings their own mode of transportation too. He also says that they used to live in a 'leaking rented apartment' with a single bedroom, now they live in a house which they own. Not only did it provide material things to their family, it also improved the health of the worker who was once very thin and undernourished yet now healthy and fit. 5-star hotels used to be a dream for him he says, now that dream has been fulfilled one too many times. He is able to provide gifts to her girlfriend and they are scheduled to be wedded in the year. To quote him, "Back then parents were fulfilling our dreams, Now I am fulfilling theirs." This job gave him a sense of fulfillment through the benefits that it entails. Evidently, there is a drastic shift in lifestyle for a worker in the oil and gas industry.

Career Proclivities

Career is defined as an occupation that requires training in order to function in the work industry (Dictionary.com, 2020). While the word proclivity pertains to the tendency of doing something (Yourdictionary.com). The researchers defined Career Proclivity as something at work that a worker is required and will eventually become a habit of doing. Being professional means having to relate to a job or a work field (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). It means excluding personal matters when it comes to a work-related matter. The respondents were clear that they set aside all of their personal matters including family related. They have to set their mind in their occupation because of the occupation's hazardous environment. In relation the dangerous environment of the offshore workers, safety is absolutely their most priority in working and operating in the rig. Safety is an important value in the oil and gas industry. These safety protocols are necessities in all operations in the oil platform. They serve as a guide when it comes to emergency events. The respondents stated that they would have to undergo medical tests and specific safety trainings if they were to go to the rig. With the idea of safety being the most important value in working offshore, Teamwork would serve as a support in safety in the field. The respondents said that they would be in pairs or in groups in order for them to secure the safety of one another. There would always be someone assigned to an offshore worker so that in any case of injuries, there would be someone to help.

Professionalism

As stated by McKay (2019), professionalism defined as an individual's conduct at work. To be a professional is to apply competencies with whatever work the person is in. Professionalism comes with many things such as trustworthiness, self-reliance, honesty and perseverance. However, as a human being, one can inevitably manifest a bad behavior in a workplace, but as Gillett, Cain, De Luce (2019) have reiterated, these bad habits can be controlled with self-reflection and proper discipline. Not only can unprofessionalism be present in the rigs, but also in any other jobs. Some of the examples would be the absence of trust of a doctor in a nurse, the constant idleness of a call center agent which could cause the team to decrease sales, the failure to address a patient's problem of a nurse to a colleague could affect the patient's life, and the pessimism of a structural iron and steel worker could influence a colleague's mindset and even result to anxieties which could lead to fatality. With these unprofessional behaviors, big consequences await not only to one employee, but to the co-worker around them. As Brooks (2019) have written, professionalism is a big factor in reaching success in a workplace. One can be granted promotion and can put you first in the line. Not only can these things be earned, but also compliments of loyalty, dependability, and responsibility from the employer and colleagues. Professionalism is also important for one to prove competence, to be valued for advancements, to give a good reputation to the company, to earn respect, to establish boundaries for conflicts to be minimized, and to encourage improvement as Pantry (2019) has indicated.

Safety Priority

Safety is defined as the protection of people from physical. Secondly, safety is crucial with an occupation where workers are surrounded by burnable materials. "Drilling operations offshore are extremely dangerous. Hazardous and dangerous conditions are just part of the job. These conditions include inclement weather, hazardous materials, flammable products, and heavy equipment" (Schlosman Law Firm, 2017). Attentiveness and compliance to safety protocols are a must and when safety procedures aren't followed, minor to major accidents can occur. Minor incidents such as a pinched finger and a pinched toe were experienced since some were not wearing the distributed personal protective equipment. Besides, non-compliance, unwanted occurrences and lack of equipment also happen. Problems such as the excess release of toxic gas occur. With a situation such as this, safety protocols, the use of self-contained breathing apparatuses, and standby vessels. Since the breathing apparatuses only last 15 minutes, the leak should be handled within that time frame.

Teamwork

Teamwork defined by Oxford Languages is the combined action of a group, especially effective and efficient. A profession offshore comes with different varieties of risks so good cooperation among the team is crucial to deliver the tasks more effectively and safely. Teamwork is a must in the offshore industry because it serves a support especially in terms of the safety protocols. As supported by the Bahamas Maritime Authority (2012) guidance on drills and exercises stating that routine drills are a means of practicing emergency response, building teamwork, and providing training in basic safety and other elements of emergency response. Also, teamwork is deemed necessary even during the recruitment process as written in the website OffshoreTechnology (2021), Ponco is constantly recruiting staff for both the office and the rig. We seek dedicated professionals who are committed to excellence, teamwork, professionalism and safety.

Life Extremities

Life is defined as the sequence of physical and mental experiences that make up the existence of an individual (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Extremity by definition is the furthest point or limit of something (Oxford Languages, 2020). The researchers defined Life Extremities as ones' tolerance when it comes to the struggles and challenges that they face every day. The researchers used the term as one of their themes as it fits with the sub-themes thought by the researchers. Being humans, we all have our individual experiences, ranging from the simplest to the extreme. As said, life is a giant curveball. It throws us in different situations with corresponding different trials that test our limits. It drags us in every direction may it be desired or undesired. The respondents, despite these trials and struggles, chose to persevere and work in these dangerous environments. The workers also face the challenge of being away from their families. Being away from their families, most especially these workers, causes anxiousness and worry for the people at home. The workers are also exposed to constant adjusting as they have to be prepared for the ever-changing environments and colleagues.

Adjusting Difficulties

Merriam-Webster defined adjusting as to bring to a more satisfactory state (2020). Difficulties are defined as the fact or condition of being difficult (Dictionary.com, 2020). The researchers defined Adjusting Difficulties as the ability to adjust despite a difficult situation. The respondents did face major difficulties in adjusting to the workplace, along with their workmates and schedules respectively. Lives of offshore workers are almost identical with overseas workers. Expatriate employees go through a psychological transition cycle as they prepare to leave their home country, arrive, adapt, and work in the host country, depart, return and re-adjust to their home country (Sussman, 2011). Offshore workers undergo the same adjustments as they also face culture shock. Culture shock may not only occur with the new employees on the rig, but also to those returning from their homes. Sleeping and waking up on a bed that's on constant motion and not on the comfort of your home, a colleague of different culture celebrating an event, language barriers, and daily routines. Offshore workers facing culture shock have to readjust every time, their mind set on being aware and observant at all times to keep safe from accidents, injuries, and emergencies.

Familial Challenges

Familial is defined as of, relating to, or suggestive of a family (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Challenge is defined as something that by its nature or character serves as a call to battle, contest, special effort, etc. (Dictionary.com, 2020). The researchers defined Familial Challenges as challenges that are faced familial wise. The respondents made it clear that all of them were burdened by familial challenges for many reasons in their ways and experiences. **Homesickness** is a strong longing for home or a person associated with home (Goodtherapy.org, 2015). The primary cause of homesickness is a sudden transition or separation from home. Homesickness can occur anytime, when alone or when with others, or in a certain situation. Experiences done with family leaves a big mark on a person so when the same thing happens but with different company, homesickness is expected to occur. Homesickness can have lasting effects on offshore workers, "... associated with increased psychological and physical health problems, along with decreased overall well-being" (Stroebe et al., 2015) as one can feel uncomfortable and anxious, some tend to space out or are lost in thought which could cause problems for the people in the offshore industry. Along with leaving their families and feeling homesick, being away sacrifices precious time that workers could have spent with their families. As time passes, being away can cause children to be distant from their parents, the workers, being parents themselves, may miss out on important activities and events that both them and the children are looking forward to. In addition, being away from one another and barely having time to connect and communicate can be a reason for the family to not be updated. Offshore workers can cause worry to their families who are onshore, and at the same time, the family can cause worry to the offshore worker.

Occupational Strain

Occupation is defined as an activity in which one engages (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Strain is defined as excessive or difficult exertion or labor (Dictionary.com, 2020). Occupational Strain or Occupational Stress refers to the ongoing or progressing stress an employee experiences due to the responsibilities, conditions, environment, or other pressures of the workplace (bamboohr.com, 2020). The researchers defined Occupational Strain as struggles and challenges that are faced when it comes to ones' profession. Strain or fatigue in the workplace may be experienced in different ways. Thermal fatigue for example, in many parts of the world, large numbers of workers in the construction, agriculture, and resources industries work long hours in thermally stressful environments, a situation which will be exacerbated by predicted climate change (Miller and Bates, 2007). Life on the rig is "...a gamble with one's own life in trade for the dreaded death" (marineinsight.com, 2019). Having access to basic commodities plus the internet, one would expect that life on the rig is not bad at all. For two weeks or more, workers are exposed to dangerous machinery operated at heights despite the stormy or windy weather, flammable fluids that are being extracted from the earth, and the burning of the said fluids to separate the poisonous sulfide gas. Workers receive regular safety training before and during their employment, working for almost eight to twelve hours, with food breaks for morning, noon, and night, while some are obliged to do night shifts in addition to their regular work hours. Fresh food and ingredients are also shipped to the rig. As life on an oil rig is expected to be very hostile, accidents such as explosions and leaks are no rare occurrences. Recently, a natural oil leak occurred at a rig located in Corpus Christi, Texas, the leak started on September 1 and was monitored, and by September 3, a vessel was headed to do repairs. Life on the rig is no easy task, a small mistake could mean big problems, offshore workers constantly face the stress

of their occupation which could lead to strain and fatigue, which is why workers are granted up to three weeks off to restore themselves.

Adjusting Strategies

Going to a new environment, you will inevitably face the challenge of adapting to your new surroundings inhabited by different people. As such, there are different adjusting strategies that can be done to fulfil this. According to Cambridge Dictionary, adjusting is to change something slightly, especially to make it more correct, effective, or suitable (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). Strategies on the other hand means a method worked out in advance for achieving some objective (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Adjusting Strategies, defined according to the researchers, is the approach a particular individual will do in order to adjust according to a specific situation. Working in a professional environment, you will eventually run into a situation where your pair of hands are not enough. As a result, you will have to seek professional aid from your co-workers. Professional can be defined as relating to work that needs special training or education (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020) while aid is to help or support (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). According to the respondents, they are usually not alone in their work place and always have someone to back them up or support them when they need it. Professional aid is defined by the researchers as seeking for a solution from professional colleagues in order to solve a problem that has occurred in the work place. Going to a new environment for any reason at all poses many challenges. One of the first challenges you will face is the social disparity between you and the people you will be surrounded by. Automatically, you must find ways to overcome this social challenge so that you may be able to live and work in this new environment without much problem. According to the respondents, they overcome this challenge by talking and interacting with the people around them. They discuss with each other about different topics or through working together they are able to bond and build a stronger relationship with one another.

Overcoming Social Challenges

According to Leibowitz (2018), expat life also has its challenges, one of the biggest of which is centered around your partner, and their ability to adjust to a radically new life in a foreign country. Working in a foreign environment poses an automatic challenge to as you now have to overcome that social barrier. Being able to communicate and interact properly with your foreign co-workers is important when in a professional workplace especially in offshore environments as it is riskier. Adjusting to your new life in a foreign workplace involves you talking with these new people around you and getting to know them. It requires you to know their culture and their way of life. Further, Scoopempire (2019) argued that the number one thing you need to do is make sure you are at least remotely familiar with the culture of the country you plan to move to. As a foreigner entering their environment, it is important that you overcome these social challenges and work more efficiently with your foreign co-workers.

Familial Support

“The most important thing in the world is family and love” – John Wooden.

Family is one of the most important things in this world. They provide love and support, which is essential to a person to live a happy life. Its members serve one another, they share their joys and sorrows. Family is the single most important influence in a person's life - no less an offshore worker. Support, as defined by Cambridge dictionary (2020), to agree with and give encouragement to someone or something because you want him, her, or it to succeed. As an offshore worker one has to be emotionally and mentally strong when working in the rig. It is imperative for offshore workers to maintain a strong familial support system to become mentally and emotionally strong. Their work may be compromised should familial structure be unbalanced or otherwise impeded. The familial support structure is the base of their work values and ethics.

Zitsman, B. (2020) affirmed that people need a solid support system. They help facilitate the person's mental and emotional health through social interactions. The support system of a person is made up of family and friends, with family making up the largest influence. A healthy and strong familial support reduces anxiety and stress within a person which is why it is very important for an offshore worker to have their family supporting their backs (Zitsman, 2020). Thus, reduction of anxiety and stress can boost the efficiency and productivity of an employee and lessen job-related accidents.

Moreover, Arnold & Itkin LLP. (n.d.) made mention that with the nature of their occupation, rig workers often handle flammable and toxic materials with dangerous machines. In 2015, alone there were three oil rig accidents. Major stressors such as these affect the workers mental and emotional health both positively and negatively. Which is why it is very important for the worker to have a strong support system. That support system revolves around family. Families play an important role in the well-being and function of a person - much less an offshore worker. Good family relationships make us feel safe and loved which lessen the risk of any mental or emotional damage. “The work life of an offshore worker is extremely dangerous while accidents are not frequent - they are not unheard off” (Arnold & Itkin LLP., n.d.). Mentally and emotionally healthy individual is capable of paying more attention to his work and lowering the chances of an accident - which shows the importance of a strong family support system.

A large percentage of OFWs travel abroad to find work and support their families. With their families often worrying about their health and safety in the rig. It is safe to say that the majority of offshore workers drive is their need to support their families. This is their necessity and mission to work in the rig far away from their family. Which is why, with sufficient proof we can claim that the familial structure of an offshore worker is what makes them who they are. Without them and their support Offshore workers would not be here working in the best condition possible.

Professional Aid

According to Kufakunesu (2019), success is a journey and it largely depends on the people you make part of it. Being able to successfully execute your part will not always be because you were able to do it alone. Working in professional environment, especially a risky one like the offshore industry, you will inevitably need assistance or provide one in order to finish it successfully.

Kufakunesu (2019) continued, the offshore industry is risky to work in and professional aid is a must if you want to do your work safely as possible. Having someone to look over you or have your back is crucial so as to make sure you don't put your life and the lives of your co-workers in peril. Providing professional aid also requires you to know what to do in that particular situation as it would be a disaster if you were to provide assistance in a situation you don't know much about.

CONCLUSION

Taking into account the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn;

- a. Familial necessities are brought by the aspiration of familial drive and improved lifestyle as the determinants of deciding to work in the rigs,
- b. Consequently, career proclivities are strengthened with professionalism, safety priority and teamwork which identifies how an off-shore worker keep safe; however, it is interesting to note that in the middle of teamwork every man will always have to look for themselves,
- c. While there are advantages in working offshore, the participants are cognizant of possible burn out accompanied by life extremities – adjusting difficulties, familial challenges, and occupational strain, and
- d. Subsequently, the workers develop efficient adjusting strategies i.e., overcoming social challenges, familial support, and professional aid.

Moreover, the study significantly provided a deeper understanding of the life of offshore workers. The findings show that offshore workers experience different kinds of difficulties in their fields. These challenges pertain to familial related, occupation struggles, and social challenges. To explain further, in overcoming these challenges, there are factors to be considered that helps offshore workers in coping up with these matters. There are different adjusting methods in terms of dealing with these challenges. Family is the number one factor that helps the workers in dealing with the familial challenges. With the support from family in terms of mental and emotional stability, the workers are able to function their role in their field. One factor that serves as a support for a worker to overcome the occupation struggles would be the people in the field. Colleagues support each other when in working in offshore. The significant limits of the study would be the scheduling of the interviews that was held with the respondents. Majority of the offshore workers have limited time in the land. There are struggles in terms of the scheduling of the interviews because the time they spend on the land are only a short period. Another struggle that comes with the study would be the gathering of the review of related literatures. There are only few references related to our study. The researchers recommend to boost the professional aid received by offshore workers by providing and normalizing counseling sessions as an addition to spending quality time with their family especially during their day offs in order to cope up with the times that they are away from them.

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