

Does the Work Environment of F&B Service Department Change During and After the Covid-19 Pandemic? A case study at the Fairfield By Marriott Bali Legian Hotel

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Article History	Abstract
Received: 11 October 2025 Accepted: 24 November 2025 Published: 10 December 2025	<p><i>This study aims to examine the conditions and changes in the work environment at the Food and Beverage (F&B) Department of Fairfield by Marriott Bali Legian Hotel during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, with particular attention to shifts in Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). The recovery of the tourism sector has become increasingly visible following the significant decline in Covid-19 cases, rising vaccination coverage, relaxed travel policies, and the emergence of "revenge tourism," which collectively boosted tourist mobility. Using a qualitative descriptive research method, data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation, and then analysed using data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that substantial changes occurred across multiple dimensions of the work environment, including the physical environment (such as physical distancing arrangements, table spacing, and sanitation facilities), the social environment (team interactions, division of tasks, and communication flow), and the organisational environment (adjustments to SOPs, workflow modifications, and workload management). These dimensions experienced the most significant transformation during the pandemic as the department adapted to health protocols and operational constraints. Following the pandemic, however, the F&B Service Department has largely returned to its pre-pandemic norms, although some organisational adaptations particularly those related to hygiene standards continue to be maintained as part of improved operational practices</i></p> <p>Keywords: <i>work environment, f & b service department, covid 19 pandemic.</i></p>



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INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on global economic activity, with the tourism and hospitality industries among the most severely affected sectors (Sann et al., 2024; Song et al., 2025). Bali, as one of Indonesia's leading tourism destinations, recorded 6,275,210 international tourist arrivals in 2019, but this number dropped sharply to 1,069,473 in 2020. Domestic tourist arrivals also declined significantly to 4,569,157 (Bali Provincial Statistics Agency, 2020). This downturn severely affected workers in the tourism sector, with many local Balinese employees including guides, travel agents, hotel staff, and villa workers experiencing layoffs or salary reductions during the pandemic (Verena et al., 2025).

Government data reported that approximately 75,000 tourism workers in Bali were furloughed or terminated due to the collapse of tourism revenue (Thomas, 2020).

Covid-19, transmitted through respiratory droplets and contaminated indoor air, triggered not only a health crisis (Manullang, 2022; Krammer, 2024) but also a global economic disruption, with tourism-related industries being among the most severely affected. The hospitality sector experienced substantial shifts in its work environment, including physical, social, and procedural changes (Emmanuel & Das, 2025; Giousmpasoglou, 2024). The work environment encompasses various factors that influence employee performance, including lighting, noise levels, workspace hygiene, safety measures, and operational methods (Reksohadiprodjo & Gitosudarmo, 2018; Afandi, 2018; Sedarmayanti in Pamungkas & Widowati, 2020). These aspects underwent major adjustments during the pandemic as hotels were forced to adapt to strict health protocols.

Importantly, mid-scale hotels such as Fairfield by Marriott face different challenges compared to luxury hotels in implementing health protocols, particularly due to more limited operational budgets, constraints in allocating funds for additional sanitation facilities, and a greater emphasis on labour efficiency. Unlike luxury hotels that often have surplus resources to redesign spaces, procure advanced hygiene technologies, and maintain full staffing levels, mid-scale hotels must prioritise cost-effective measures and optimise existing human resources. This makes Fairfield an important and unique case study, offering insights into how mid-scale hotels balance safety requirements with financial limitations while maintaining service quality.

Following the end of the pandemic and the start of the recovery period, the tourism sector began to show signs of revitalisation driven by vaccination progress, relaxed travel policies, and the rise of “revenge tourism” (Dewi et al., 2024). Fairfield by Marriott Bali Legian Hotel—where the researcher completed a six-month internship—experienced significant financial losses during the pandemic due to the sharp decline in guest arrivals. This situation forced management to implement efficiency strategies, including staff reduction and operational restructuring.

Based on interviews and direct observations, the Covid-19 pandemic had substantial impacts on the F&B Service Department, including changes in Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), mandatory sanitation routines, increased use of personal protective equipment (PPE), physical distancing measures, space rearrangement, and reductions in staffing levels. As the pandemic subsided, the hotel gradually lifted most health-protocol-related restrictions and restored staffing levels in order to return to normal operations while maintaining selected hygiene improvements.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the specific changes experienced by the Fairfield by Marriott Bali Legian Hotel particularly within the F&B Service Department during and after Covid-19, highlighting the unique challenges faced by mid-scale hotels in adapting to crisis conditions and post-pandemic recovery.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method to examine natural working conditions in the F&B Service Department, with the researcher serving as the key instrument

(Sugiyono, 2018). Data collection was carried out through observations conducted over a six-month internship period at Fairfield by Marriott Bali Legian Hotel, allowing the researcher to directly observe daily operational practices, SOP implementation, and interactions among staff. In-depth interviews were conducted with carefully selected informants representing both management-level policy makers and operational-level policy implementers to ensure comprehensive perspectives. The informants consisted of: one Assistant Food and Beverage Manager and one Assistant Restaurant and Bar Manager, representing management who are responsible for formulating and enforcing SOPs, allocating resources, and evaluating operational performance; one F&B Supervisor/Captain, who plays a key bridging role between management decisions and daily operational execution; and three service staff, who directly interact with guests and implement health protocols and SOPs on the ground. These six informants were deliberately selected because they have worked at the hotel for more than five years and have experienced both the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic operational environment, making them capable of providing rich, comparative insights into changes in procedures, workload, and physical or social work conditions. Documentation such as audio interview recordings and photographs was collected to support and validate field data. Data analysis followed the Miles & Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. This process involved categorising data into relevant themes, identifying patterns and relationships, and interpreting deeper meanings related to work environment changes during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

In preparing this thesis, the author conducted observations and interviews during a six-month internship at Fairfield by Marriott Bali Legian. The author interviewed the Assistant Food and Beverage Manager, Assistant Restaurant and Bar Manager, and Human Resource Development Manager at Fairfield by Marriott Bali Legian. The data presented in this section is based on interviews with several members of the hotel management team. The interview process was conducted with three informants, including the Assistant F&B Manager (Ni Putu Nanda Purnamasari), the Assistant Restaurant & Bar Manager (I Made Adi Saputra), and from the HR department, the Assistant HR Manager (Ni Putu Lisna). Based on the data obtained through direct interviews, the following can be presented.

Table 1. Summary of the researcher's interviews with informants

No	Questions	Answers
1	What is the lighting condition like in the F&B Service work environment during and after the Covid-19 pandemic?	During the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a reduction in the use of lighting in areas with minimal visitor traffic, such as the bar area, meeting rooms, and several corners of the restaurant. This was done to minimize the hotel's electricity expenses. After the Covid-19 pandemic, all lighting in the F&B Service work area returned to normal, and additional lighting was installed in the stage area (outside the restaurant) to maximize outdoor events.

2	How is the air quality in the work area sufficient to provide comfort to F&B Service staff while working during and after the Covid-19 pandemic?	Air conditions in the F&B Service work environment were normal during and after the Covid-19 pandemic because the restaurant and bar areas are semi-outdoor.
3	To what extent can work facilities support work activities in the F&B Service environment during and after the Covid-19 pandemic?	During the Covid-19 pandemic, staff no longer received hotel laundry facilities, and lunch at the hotel cafeteria was served in boxes. This was done to save on hotel expenses and minimize the spread of the virus. After the Covid-19 pandemic, staff once again received hotel laundry facilities, and lunch was served buffet style in the hotel cafeteria.
4	How are staff relationships with other coworkers in the F&B Service work environment during and after the Covid-19 pandemic?	Relationships between staff members have remained the same and there have been no changes during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. Staff operations are supported by the use of HT to facilitate communication between staff within the same department and between departments.
5	What is the condition of workplace safety in F&B Service during and after the Covid-19 pandemic?	During the Covid-19 pandemic, staff were provided with safety equipment such as personal protective equipment (masks, gloves, face shields) as well as security for staff who drive vehicles. After the Covid-19 pandemic, the provision of medical equipment for staff was discontinued, but security was further enhanced.
6	Have there been any changes to the physical layout and facilities in the F&B Service work environment during and after the Covid-19 pandemic?	During the Covid-19 pandemic, all layouts and facilities within the scope of F&B Service were arranged with minimal distance to minimize virus transmission. This included the distance between tables and between sections at the buffet. After the Covid-19 pandemic, all distance arrangements related to health protocols have been removed.
7	Have there been any changes to guest services during and after the Covid-19 pandemic?	During the Covid-19 pandemic, food and beverage services for guests used food covers to deliver food to guests' tables, and the hotel did not accept cash payments from guests. Both of these measures were implemented to minimize the spread of the virus between guests and staff. After the Covid-19 pandemic, food covers are only used for room service orders, and cash payments are once again accepted from guests.
8	How many staff members were there in the F&B Service Department during Covid-19? Was it sufficient or not?	During the Covid-19 pandemic, there were only six staff members in the F&B Service Department, including the leader. According to the hotel, this number of staff was more than enough to handle operations, which were relatively quiet during the pandemic.
9	During the Covid-19 pandemic, has there been a reduction in the number of staff in the F&B Service Department?	During the pandemic, the hotel took efficiency measures by laying off several contract staff in the F&B Service Department. This was due to the low occupancy rate at Fairfield by Marriott Bali Legian Hotel, prompting the hotel to take the policy of minimizing the manning budget in the F&B Service Department during the Covid-19 pandemic.

10	After the Covid-19 pandemic, will there be new staff recruitment in the F&B Service Department? If so, how many will be recruited and what considerations will be taken into account when recruiting these staff?	Following the Covid-19 pandemic, the hotel is once again recruiting two staff members to assist with operations returning to normal. Candidates must be proficient in English, have a good attitude and character, and be interested in working in the F&B Service sector.
11	Were there any changes to the salaries of F&B Service Department staff during and after the Covid-19 pandemic?	Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, staff salaries were only paid at 25% of their normal rate. This was due to the low occupancy rate at the Fairfield by Marriott Bali Legian Hotel. Staff continued to receive food assistance from the hotel once every three months. After the COVID-19 pandemic, as the hotel gradually returned to normal operations, staff salaries were paid in stages, starting from 25%, then 65%, 85%, and finally returning to 100% of the normal salary.
12	Is there compensation for F&B Service Department staff during the Covid-19 pandemic?	Since the staff's salary was only 25% during the Covid-19 pandemic, the hotel also provided basic food assistance every three months for all hotel staff.
13	Which period saw more resignations: during the Covid-19 pandemic or after the Covid-19 pandemic in the F&B Service Department? What were the reasons for these staff members resigning?	Based on the hotel's statement, more staff members submitted their resignations after the COVID-19 pandemic compared to during the pandemic. The reason given was for promotion at other places.

Source: Researcher data, 2025

Based on observations made during my internship at the hotel, the following is an analysis summarizing changes to the SOPs governing the work environment in the F&B Service Department before, during, and after the Covid-19 pandemic:

1. Before and After the Covid-19 Pandemic.
 - a. SOPs do not have many strict rules regarding health and hygiene. The focus is more on friendliness and personal service.
 - b. Procedures for welcoming guests with friendliness, including eye contact, verbal greetings, and helping guests to sit down.
 - c. Focus on personal service and verifying billing details with guests.
 - d. Farewells to guests are conducted with friendliness and warmth, as well as expressions of gratitude.
2. During the Covid-19 Pandemic
 - a. Strict health and hygiene regulations are enforced in accordance with government standards. Changes include the use of masks and gloves, maintaining a minimum distance of 1 meter from guests, checking guests' body temperature, and hand sanitization 20 minutes before service.
 - b. More formal procedures with a focus on safety, such as checking guests' body temperature and hand sanitization.
 - c. Shorter procedures with an emphasis on cashless payments and sanitizing equipment after use.
 - d. More focus on reminding guests of health protocols before they leave the F&B area.

Through the interviews and observations conducted, several points were identified that indicate changes in the work environment during and after the Covid-19 pandemic:

1. Working Conditions in the F&B Service Department During the Covid-19 Pandemic.

During the pandemic, the working environment in the F&B Service Department was regulated based on the implementation of SOPs in accordance with physical and non-physical health protocol standards.

- a. Work equipment: staff are required to use personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks, gloves, and face shields.
- b. Lighting conditions: there has been a reduction in the use of lighting in some areas of the F&B Service that are rarely visited by guests, such as the bar and meeting rooms.
- c. Physical layout: All sitting tables and buffet section layouts are arranged with minimum distances in accordance with health protocols.
- d. Work methods: Staff are required to maintain distance and reduce physical contact with guests, check guests' body temperature and provide sanitation before they enter the restaurant area, accept payments from guests only via debit/credit card, and always remind guests to use masks and hand sanitizer before leaving the restaurant area.
- e. Air quality: During and after the Covid-19 pandemic, air quality in the F&B Service Department work environment remained normal and unchanged because the restaurant and bar areas are semi-outdoor, allowing for good air circulation.
- f. Work facilities: During the Covid-19 pandemic, staff no longer received laundry housekeeping facilities for washing uniforms or lunch facilities provided in boxes (not buffet style) at the hotel canteen. Salaries were reduced to 25% of normal staff salaries. However, staff still received compensation in the form of basic food assistance from the hotel once every three months.
- g. Working relationships: During and after the Covid-19 pandemic, working relationships between staff members and between staff and supervisors remained good. This was facilitated by the use of walkie-talkies, which made communication between staff in charge easier.
- h. Number of staffs: Due to the low occupancy rate, the hotel implemented efficiency measures by laying off contract staff in the F&B Service Department. This was done to minimize the staffing budget in the F&B Service Department. During the Covid-19 pandemic, there were 6 staff members in the F&B Service Department, including the leader.

2. Work Environment Conditions in the F&B Service Department After the Covid-19 Pandemic

After the Covid-19 pandemic, the F&B Service Department reimplemented the same SOPs as before the pandemic. With the situation returning to normal after the Covid-19 pandemic, there have been adjustments to the work environment in the F&B Service Department, both physically and non-physically, including:

- a. Tools: Staff are no longer required to use personal protective equipment (PPE) after the Covid-19 pandemic.
- b. Lighting conditions: Lighting usage has returned to normal after the Covid-19 pandemic. This is due to the return to normal occupancy levels at the Fairfield by Marriott Bali Legian Hotel, where all lighting in the F&B Service work area has been optimized and additional

lighting has been added to the stage (outside the restaurant) to help maximize outdoor events.

- c. Physical layout: the layout between the sitting tables and sections at the buffet is no longer arranged in accordance with health protocols.
- d. Work methods: Staff are no longer restricted by distance when serving guests; instead, staff have resumed maximizing service procedures in accordance with SOPs and have resumed accepting cash payments following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- e. Employment facilities: staff are once again provided with uniform washing facilities from the housekeeping laundry, and lunch is once again served buffet style in the hotel canteen. After the Covid-19 pandemic ended, staff salaries were gradually restored, starting from 65%, 85% to 100% including tax and service.
- f. Headcount: after the Covid-19 pandemic, the hotel recruited two new staff members to assist with operations returning to normal. The considerations for staff recruitment include proficiency in English, good character and attitude, and an interest in working in the F&B Service sector.

3. The Change in the Work Environment due to the Impact of SOP Changes.

The SOPs during the Covid-19 pandemic that were previously established were very different from the SOPs after the Covid-19 pandemic (Stamolampros & Dousios, 2024). Staff members followed the changes in the SOPs, which emphasized maintaining physical distance during the pandemic, and this also affected their work environment. Sedarmayanti in Pamungkas & Widowati (2020) describes that the work environment includes all tools, materials, and the surroundings where a person works, including work methods and arrangements, both individually and in groups. Therefore, based on these changes in SOPs that affect work methods and arrangements, it can be concluded that the work environment has also undergone changes.

Discussion

The changes to the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) implemented at Fairfield by Marriott Bali Legian Hotel during the Covid-19 pandemic were primarily designed to improve guest and employee safety by restructuring the physical work environment. These adjustments included increased sanitation frequency, stricter hygiene checks, mandatory use of personal protective equipment (PPE), and the rearrangement of workspaces to ensure physical distancing. While these measures were essential from a health and safety standpoint, the findings of this study show that they unintentionally created negative consequences for the social work environment, particularly in terms of staff job satisfaction and morale.

One of the core issues identified was the significant increase in workload, which was not accompanied by a corresponding increase in staffing levels. Due to financial constraints and efficiency measures adopted during the pandemic, the hotel reduced the number of employees while the remaining staff were required to carry out more complex and time-consuming safety procedures. Tasks such as repeated sanitation of guest tables, additional steps in equipment hygiene checks, and regulated guest interactions extended the duration of routine service activities. As a result, operational staff experienced work overload, feeling pressured to

maintain guest service quality while simultaneously adhering to the expanded SOP requirements.

From the management perspective, the revised SOPs were viewed as strategic actions necessary to maintain service safety and rebuild guest confidence. However, for frontline service staff who were responsible for executing these procedural changes, the new SOPs were perceived as adding layers of operational burden without any additional manpower, financial incentives, or workload redistribution. This disconnect created a sense of imbalance between managerial expectations and operational realities, ultimately contributing to a decline in motivation and morale. This phenomenon aligns with work environment theory, which suggests that excessive workload and insufficient support mechanisms can cause stress, fatigue, and lower job satisfaction.

Furthermore, the enforcement of PPE usage and physical distancing protocols affected team interaction and communication. Staff found it more difficult to coordinate efficiently, informal support among colleagues decreased, and the overall sense of camaraderie diminished. These changes weakened the social dimension of the work environment, which previously served as a buffer against the pressures of hospitality work. Thus, although the SOP revisions strengthened physical safety, they inadvertently weakened social cohesion, illustrating that improvements in the physical work environment do not automatically lead to improvements in employee well-being.

Overall, this case highlights the importance of achieving a balance between safety-focused operational changes and employee well-being. SOP modifications should not only address technical safety requirements but also consider staffing capacity, workload distribution, and the psychological needs of employees. This finding is particularly relevant for mid-scale hotels that operate with limited budgets and labour resources, emphasizing the need for realistic and sustainable strategies when adapting SOPs during crisis situations.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion of the research conducted at Fairfield by Marriott Bali Legian Hotel, the following conclusions can be drawn: During the Covid-19 pandemic, the work environment of the F&B Service Department staff was regulated by SOPs in accordance with health protocols. After the Covid-19 pandemic, the working environment of the F&B Service Department staff returned to normal (as it was before the pandemic). The old SOP (before the pandemic) was reimplemented in the F&B Service work environment, eliminating all regulations related to health protocols. The changes in the work environment that occurred in the F&B Service Department during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, both physically and non-physically, were very clear. Meanwhile, after the Covid-19 pandemic, the work environment of the F&B Service Department staff returned to normal as before the pandemic (Ishak, et. al, 2024). The recommendation that can be made is that even though the pandemic is over, management needs to continue to develop and refine SOPs related to health protocols to anticipate health warnings that can occur at any time, then conduct regular training for employees on proper health and sanitation protocols. This will help employees remain prepared to handle various situations and ensure consistent service. Enhancing employee welfare programs, including providing health facilities, mental health support, and skill

development programs. This is important for maintaining employee motivation and well-being during and after a crisis.

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