

WOMEN HOTELIERS IN THE COVID-19 CRISIS: A CONCEPTUAL PAPER

Andi Tamsang Andi Kele*, Yuko Kyogoku, Arif Kamisan, Jennifer Kim Lian Chan , Sharija Che Shaari , and Wirawati Yi Xe Ngui

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH



BACKGROUND

- The COVID-19 crisis has negatively affected people's health and economies worldwide.
- In the global labour market, the hotel industry has long been a key employer, supplying a substantial number of employees.
- The majority of hotel employees worldwide are women and given how hard the COVID-19 pandemic struck the hotel business, women's employment in the hotel industry has suffered significantly, which is no exception in the case of Sabah.
- Sabah is Malaysia's second-biggest state, which relies on minimally processed primary industry exports and other commodities such as agriculture and tourism for its economy [1]. Tourism contributes to Malaysia's income and economic growth, especially in Sabah [2].
- Thus, it is critical to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Sabah hotel industry in general and on women hotel employees in particular.



BACKGROUND

- Given the magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the Sabah hotel industry, changes brought about by COVID-19 are certain to influence women's livelihood. Therefore, this research attempts to assess the impact COVID-19 had on women hotel employees and the extent to which they were impacted in the Sabah context and their well-being. Thus, four research questions are proposed:
 1. How does the COVID-19 crisis affect women employees of Sabah's hotel industry?
 2. What are the coping strategies used by the women employees?
 3. What are the key issues and challenges faced by women employees to remain in the hotel industry?
 4. What is the future of work for women in the hotel industry during post COVID-19 crisis?



LITERATURE REVIEW

Women and the hotel industry

- Due to low entry barriers, flexible work schedules and job availability [3], the hotel industry may be desirable to a potential employee, especially for women.
- The hotel, catering, and tourist sector is a rapidly expanding service industry with a global employment rate for women of 55.5% [3].
- Furthermore, the hotel nature of shift employment and part-time is frequently viewed as a way for women to work while simultaneously fulfilling their household obligations; however, women need to face a new challenge on how to balance between work and family [4].
- Even though women are more successful in hotels than in other sectors, they still have lower success rates than men, as women have a lower representation in executive management roles compared to men



LITERATURE REVIEW

Women and the hotel industry

- Women, who constitute the majority of the hospitality workforce (54%), have been more severely and rapidly impacted by the tourism industry's economic blow due to the COVID-19 pandemic than their male counterparts.
- Moreover, domestic violence, unpaid caregiving, and women's economic and social insecurity have all increased as a result of the pandemic.
- Women have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic's severe impacts on the tourism industry for several reasons, including the fact that females are frequently left out of social and institutional support [5].



LITERATURE REVIEW

Women's role and employment

- According to social role theory, gendered traits and stereotypes emerge from the distinct function of men and women taking part in society. Behavioural differences between the sexes arise from the differential social roles that women and men inhabit, particularly those related to the division of labour [6].
- Before the onset of any health crisis, women encounter difficulties in managing multiple roles, which is further compounded by the perception that certain roles are exclusively reserved for women, such as domestic work and childcare.
- Despite the increased participation of women in full-time paid employment, women continue to bear the brunt of household chores and childcare responsibilities [7].
- This is largely attributed to societal gender expectations, which dictate that domestic responsibilities are primarily the domain of women, thereby placing significant strain on working women to effectively balance their work and home commitments [8].



LITERATURE REVIEW

Women's role and employment

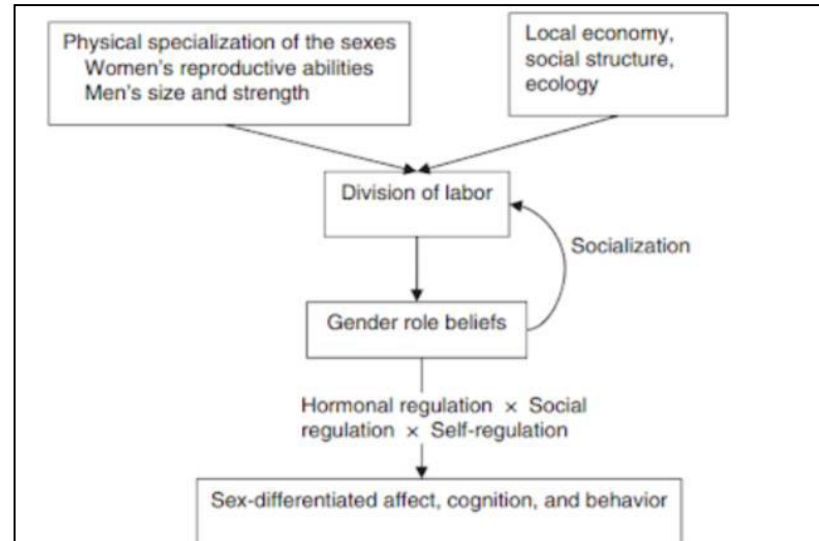


Figure 1: Gender roles guided sex differences and similarities through the biosocial pro



LITERATURE REVIEW

Women's role and employment

- The expectation placed on women to fulfil multiple roles, not only as mothers but also as employees and leaders in organizations, has presented additional challenges.
- This research aims to highlight the difficulties that women face in managing these various roles, as outlined in the Social Role Theory.
- The study seeks to understand how women can cope with these challenges and hopes to shift cultural acceptance and mindset regarding the role of women. Rather than solely focusing on what women can do to manage their responsibilities, this research presents an opportunity to examine how policymakers and others can support women during times of crisis, particularly in terms of childcare.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted many businesses to adopt work-from-home and telecommuting options, which may lead to increased workplace flexibility in the future.
- Considering that mothers now shoulder a disproportionate amount of the responsibility of juggling work and childcare responsibilities, they will benefit from these improvements more than males. Additionally, husbands and fathers will now have to shoulder additional childcare and home-schooling responsibilities. This crisis presents an opportunity to challenge gender stereotypes, particularly the persistent notion of men as the breadwinners. [9].



METHODOLOGY

- The interpretive paradigm of the descriptive phenomenological approach will guide the research process.
- Semi-structured and in-depth interviews with women employed in the Sabah hotel industry will be conducted using a qualitative method.
- Respondent's criteria – woman, with at least five (5) years experience in the hotel industry.
- The data will be analysed using a thematic approach to generate a holistic perspective of the impact of COVID-19 on women working in the Sabah hotel industry



CONCLUSION

- There are several studies conducted on the implication of the pandemic towards the tourism and hotel industry in Malaysia and Sabah such as [10]. To create a comprehensive understanding of how women perceive gender roles during the pandemic, more studies on various female experiences should be conducted. Having a comprehensive grasp of what it was like to be a woman during the pandemic can help future efforts to lessen gender inequality [11].
- The outcomes of this research contribute theoretically to the crisis in the hotel industry's gender studies and provide functional guidance to hotel management on how to establish a more favourable work environment for women employees in Sabah.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This project is financially supported by the Universiti Malaysia Sabah Research Grant Scheme SDK0332-2022.



REFERENCES

1. Idris, R., Mansur, K.: Sabah Economic Model: an Overview. *International Journal of Academic Research in Accounting, Finance and Management Sciences*. 10, (2020). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarafms/v10-i3/8156>.
2. Sabah Economic Development and Investment Authority: SEDIA annual report 2018., <https://sedia.com.my/annualreport/index.html>.
3. Baum, T., Mooney, S., Robinson, R., Solnet, D.: COVID-19's impact on the hospitality work-force – new crisis or amplification of the norm? *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*. 32, 2813–2829 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijchm-04-2020-0314>.
4. World Travel & Tourism Council: news-article. wtcc.org. (2023).
5. Global Report on Women in Tourism – Second edition. (2019). <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284420384>.
6. Eagly, A.H., Wood, W., Diekmann, A.B.: Social role theory of sex differences and similarities: A current appraisal. *The Developmental Social Psychology of Gender*. 123–174 (2000).
7. Lyonette, C., Crompton, R.: Sharing the load? Partners' relative earnings and the division of domestic labour. *Work, Employment & Society*. 29, 23–40 (2014). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017014523661>.
8. Craig, L., Sawrikar, P.: Work and family: How does the (Gender) balance change as children grow? *Gender, Work and Organization*. 16, 684–709 (2009). <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0432.2009.00481.x>.
9. Alon, T., Doepke, M., Olmstead-Rumsey, J., Tertilt, M.: The impact of COVID-19 on gender equality. (2020). <https://doi.org/10.3386/w26947>.
10. Chan, J.K.L., Lily, J., Idris, S., Kele, A.T.A.: Impacts and measures covid-19 pandemic and tourism industry in Sabah. *Journal of Sustainability Science and Management*. 17, 1–21 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.46754/jssm.2022.08.001>.
11. Parlak, S., Çakıroğlu, O.Ç., Gül, F.Ö.: Gender roles during COVID-19 pandemic: The experiences of Turkish female academics. *Gender, Work and Organization*. 28, 461–483 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12655>.

THANKS

Do you have any questions?

andi@ums.edu.my

+60 13 853 1882

CREDITS: This presentation template was created by **Slidesgo**, including icons by **Flaticon**, and infographics & images by **Freepik**.

