

**An exploration of COVID-19's impact on  
woman employees' working lives in the  
hospitality industry**

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## **Abstract**

The COVID-19 crisis of 2020 has harmed the health, lives, and economies of people around the world. The hospitality industry, already vulnerable to external threats, has been severely affected by this crisis. The industry has always been a major employer, providing a significant number of jobs in the global labour market. Part-time and seasonal hospitality work can meet the needs of women, especially those who have children, as it enables them to have time to work and care for their families. Worldwide, most hospitality workers are women, and since the hospitality industry was hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis, women's employment in the hospitality industry is bound to be greatly affected. Compared with previous crises such as the Global Financial Crisis of 2008, the COVID-19 crisis has had a greater impact and was unpredictable in its nature and effects. Therefore, it is important to determine the impact of COVID-19 on the hospitality industry generally, and on women working in the hospitality industry in particular.

This study used an interpretivist paradigm to guide the research process. Using a qualitative approach, secondary data collection method was applied to collect data from mass media. A thematic analysis method was used to analyse the data to provide a holistic view of information related to COVID-19's impact on women working in the hospitality industry.

The findings of this study revealed that COVID-19's impact changed the hospitality industry. Government's reactions to the COVID-19 crisis had an impact on hospitality businesses and the hospitality workforce. Hospitality employers were affected by Government's reactions and responded to defend their businesses, but hospitality employees had to accept the effects. The COVID-19 crisis changed the characteristics of the hospitality industry. Not only did the hospitality industry lose its status as a significant employer, but hospitality work became more demanding due to COVID-19. In the COVID-19 crisis, problems such as low pay, gender pay gaps and work-family conflict in the hospitality industry were amplified. The requirements for suitable employees to work in the industry also changed, as evidenced by the reduced aesthetic labour requirements. Hospitality career paths may also change due to limited mobility caused by travel restrictions.

Furthermore, women working in the hospitality industry were more likely to have reduced job opportunities than were men, and many had to stay at home as primary caregivers

during the COVID-19 crisis. Women's confinement at home and men returning to the workforce can arise from social system problems that cannot give women an equal chance to have work, and gender-based stereotypes that force women to take the main share of family responsibilities.

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## **Attestation of Authorship**

I, Lin Chen, hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the Acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or another institution of higher learning.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Lin Chen

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# **Chapter 1 Introduction**

## **1.1 Chapter preview**

This research aimed to explore the impact of COVID-19 on women employed in the hospitality industry by comparing women's lives in the hospitality industry, before and during the COVID-19 crisis. This chapter firstly introduces the context of women working in the hospitality industry and the COVID-19 crisis, and then explains the importance of investigating COVID-19's impact on women's work in the hospitality industry. The research methodology, research method, and a glossary of common terms are also introduced. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief overview of the dissertation.

## **1.2 Research background**

COVID-19 is a coronavirus, an infectious disease, that was discovered in late 2019 and quickly developed into a pandemic in 2020. The COVID-19 crisis began as a health crisis. The World Health Organization (WHO) assessed the outbreak as a public health emergency of international concern on 31 January, 2020, and described the outbreak as a pandemic 11 March, 2020 (WHO, 2020). This was a significant crisis that forced many countries to close their borders and lock down their cities. Wide restrictions on mobility were associated with measures to contain the virus. re COVID-19 crisis. As a result, COVID-19 grew into an economic crisis that had negative impacts on people around the world. For example, 150 Hilton hotels in China were closed during the COVID-19 outbreak (Lai & Wong, 2020). Each country applied different policies in response to the crisis, but no one was able to predict how long the crisis would last, or what would happen in the future.

The hospitality industry is vulnerable to crisis, as external threats can reduce demand related to travel and tourism consumption (Baum, 2013; Smeral, 2010). Whether it is an incidental health crisis such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), a man-made crisis such as the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2008, or a terrorism crisis such as the terrorist attacks of 9/11, any major change can have a negative impact on the hospitality industry. The hospitality industry was undoubtedly hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis. Around the world, the hospitality and tourism industry was significantly impacted, due to travel restrictions, flight cancellations and the closing of tourism businesses. According

to Statista (2020), job losses related to tourism-related sectors were estimated to be 100.8 million globally, including 48.7 million in the Asia Pacific region, all due to the COVID-19 crisis. One in ten people globally are employed in the hospitality and tourism sector before COVID-19 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2020). Women are an important part of the hospitality workforce. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2019), globally, 54% of those employed in tourism are women. In some popular tourist areas such as Hong Kong, women comprise 70% of the tourism and hospitality workforce (Baum & Cheung, 2015). It is evident from these data, that the hospitality industry was a major provider of job opportunities for women.

Women make up the majority of the hospitality workforce, and COVID-19 severely impacted their employment the hospitality industry. It is therefore important to explore what impacts the COVID-19 pandemic brought to women working in the hospitality industry.

### **1.3 Research aim and questions**

This study aimed to explore what impact COVID-19 brought to women working in the hospitality industry and how these women workers were affected. As explained in the last section, women are an important part of the hospitality workforce. Since the hospitality industry was severely hit by COVID-19 crisis, changes in the hospitality industry caused by COVID-19 are bound to affect the working lives of women in the hospitality industry. Before explaining what and how women's working lives changed by COVID-19, changes in the hospitality industry should be investigated. Therefore, two research questions were proposed:

- 1: What was the impact of COVID-19 on the hospitality industry?
- 2: How did COVID-19 affect women working in the hospitality industry?

### **1.4 Significance of the research**

The COVID-19 crisis had a catastrophic impact on the hospitality industry, but there is little information on its impact on hospitality workforce at current stage. COVID-19 is a new crisis with unpredictable consequences. This study can explore the employment of women working in the hospitality industry during COVID-19 crisis to understand how COVID-19 affects the life of human beings.

The research findings of this study also make theoretical contributions to gender studies of the hospitality industry in crisis, and a practical contribution to guide managers in the hospitality industry to create a better environment for women employees. In terms of the theoretical contribution, with the increased interest in gender equality in recent years, the definitions and content of gender studies have significantly changed. This study explores women's working lives in the context of COVID-19 to provide new perspectives such as power relations in the organisations and gender-based stereotype of women, for gender studies in the hospitality industry. In terms of practical contributions, by revealing the challenges women faced in the COVID-19 environment, managers in the hospitality industry can begin to understand what women employees find important. This study may give women working in the hospitality industry useful information about their employment to help them cope with the COVID-19 crisis.

## **1.5 Research methodology and methods**

This study used an interpretivist paradigm to guide the research process, and qualitative research methods. A secondary data collection method was used to investigate the effects of COVID-19 on women hospitality workers' employment, collecting data from three mass media sources popular in New Zealand, The Guardian, the New Zealand (NZ) Herald, and Radio NZ. Thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2012) helped explore COVID-19's impact on the hospitality industry and the work and life changes of women working in the hospitality industry. The findings from the crisis period were compared with those from pre pandemic situations described in the literature review, to identify COVID-19's impact.

The study used an interpretivist approach The researcher chose this research topic out of her personal interest because she was following a career in the hospitality industry in New Zealand. Her work in the hospitality industry enabled her to provide insights, but also may prove a potential bias in this study.

## **1.6 Glossary of common terms**

Terms can be used changeably in any gender study, as there are many different meanings associated with gender and women. "Female" reflects a narrow biological view, while "woman" is more of a social construction (Mooney, 2020). In this study, the term "female" was not used, but "woman," as this expresses the interpretivist position that the

worldview is socially constructed. Although “female” was occasionally used where a previous study referred to a female, the terms “woman” and “women workers” were generally used.

This study used the term “COVID-19 crisis” instead of “COVID-19 pandemic,” as the latter refers to a threat to humans caused by COVID-19. “COVID-19 pandemic” means *epidemic*, while the *COVID-19 crisis* is like any other crisis that causes external threats to the hospitality industry.

In this study, the *workforce* in the hospitality and tourism industry does not just refer to employees working in hotels, restaurants, and tourism companies, but also to individuals and group providers of the workforce that could directly benefit hospitality and tourism organisations (Baum, 2013). *Women in the hospitality industry* refers to women workers in tourism employment in a broad sense, since much of the literature categorises the hospitality industry as part of the tourism industry.

## **1.7 Dissertation structure**

The dissertation consists of six chapters: introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, discussion, and conclusion. The contents of each chapter are as follows:

Chapter 2: Literature review. This chapter reviews previous studies of women’s employment and careers in the hospitality industry. It introduces the work and life of women employees in the hospitality industry before the COVID-19 crisis.

Chapter 3: Methodology. This chapter explains that the methodology of the study was guided by an interpretivist paradigm. The research methods were qualitative, using a secondary source approach to collect data and applying thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke (2012) to analyse the data. This chapter also explains the processes of these approaches and why they were selected.

Chapter 4: Findings. This chapter presents the findings of the research from two aspects: 1) COVID-19’s impact on the hospitality industry, and 2) women’s employment during the COVID-19 crisis. Governments’ reactions to the COVID-19 crisis, COVID-19’s impacts on hospitality businesses and workforces, and issues of women’s employment during the COVID-19 crisis are also explained in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion. This chapter compares the findings with those in the extant literature. The characteristics of the hospitality industry were changed by COVID-19, leading to changes in women's employment in this industry. The reasons why women hospitality workers were disadvantaged are also discussed.

Chapter 6: Conclusion. This chapter presents the theoretical and practical implications of COVID-19's impact on women's employment in the hospitality industry, to direct future research and help create a more friendly environment for women employees in the hospitality industry. This chapter also illustrates the limitations of the research based on the interpretivist paradigm and selected data sources.

## **Chapter 2 Literature review**

### **2.1 Chapter preview**

This chapter reviews previous studies of women working in the hospitality industry and explains the characteristics and barriers in their work and lives before the COVID-19 crisis. It briefly introduces the characteristics of the hospitality industry and women's position in the industry, then explains the features of a career path in the hospitality industry and women's careers in this industry. Next, it uses a critical perspective to analyse women's position in the hospitality industry. The COVID-19 crisis's features are also explained. The chapter concludes by explaining in detail the causes of women's weaker position in the hospitality industry, and outlining their career barriers.

### **2.2 Characteristics of the hospitality industry and its impact on women's employment**

As part of the service industry, the hospitality industry has a large number of women workers. Women's employment in the hospitality industry is affected by the characteristics of the hospitality industry. This section explains eight characteristics of the hospitality industry and each characteristic's impact on women's employment in the hospitality industry before the COVID-19 crisis. Advantages and barriers experienced by women working in the hospitality industry are also presented.

#### **2.2.1 Hospitality industry as a significant employer**

Due to the low-entry barriers and flexibility of work shifts (Baum, 2015), the hospitality industry can be an attractive employer, offering a large number of jobs to people globally. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (2020), one in ten jobs (330 million) is related to the tourism sector. These 330-million tourism related jobs can provide opportunities, particularly for low-skilled and poorly educated workers such as young people, ethnic minorities, and immigrants to work in the hospitality industry (UNWTO, 2019).

Women seeking part-time jobs are a significant part of the hospitality workforce (UNWTO, 2019). As Baum (2013) pointed out, the hospitality, catering, and tourism (HCT) industry is a large and rapidly growing service sector, with a global women's participation rate of 55.5%. Indeed, part-time and shift work in hotels is often seen as an

opportunity for women to work while also meeting their family responsibilities (WTTC, 2020).

Not surprisingly, the stereotypical view of the hospitality industry is that many hospitality jobs are feminised and most suitable for women (Baum, 2013). Obadic and Maric (2009) suggest the point that work related to tourism is consistent with the traditional gender roles and responsibilities of women, and stereotyped such work as their vocation. Yet, Gentry (2007) praised the hospitality industry for allowing women to take advantage of gender stereotypes, such as jobs running hotels and restaurants. The over-optimistic arguments fail to acknowledge that this type of work reinforces the subordination of women to traditional inequalities (Carvalho, 2017) and even reinforces the idea that women should be relegated to domesticity. Although women in tourism are more successful than they are in other industries, they are still less successful than men, such as being represented less in executive management positions (UNWTO, 2019).

Part-time jobs and shift work are flexible, allowing women to work in tourism-related industries. Since women face pressure from domestic responsibilities, they are put in a weak bargaining position and can be exploited as cheap labour (Baum et al., 2016; Carvalho, 2017). In other words, women in the hospitality industry are more likely than are men to participate in low paid informal work (Baum, 2013).

### **2.2.2 Vulnerable to crisis**

The hospitality industry is very vulnerable to a crisis, as the hospitality business is seasonal and highly reliant on tourism. These crises not only lead to a drop in the demands for hospitality services and products, but also lead to significant reductions in the average spending of guests (Smeral, 2010). Different crises before COVID-19 have different impacts on the hospitality industry. The GFC of 2008 centred on the financial industry, resulting in a global economic recession (Kubickova et al., 2019). Thereafter, people were less willing to travel and could not afford tourism consumption, which indirectly affected the tourism and hospitality industry. The SARS health crisis directly affected the tourism and hospitality industry. In Taiwan, the number of foreign visitors fell by 50% in April and May 2003, compared with the same period in 2002, and the occupancy rate of international tourist hotels fell by about 40% (Chen et al., 2007). The decline in the share prices of the tourism industry due to SARS (about 29%) was more severe than that of other industries (Chen et al., 2007). The New York terrorist attacks of 9/11 were another



significant crisis in the 2000s, and had a sudden and dramatic impact on the hospitality industry, accompanied by a sharp reduction in hotel occupancy and rates (Kosová & Enz, 2012).

Women working in the hospitality industry are also vulnerable to crisis. As discussed, women are most involved in part-time and seasonal jobs in the hospitality industry (Baum, 2013). As each crisis hits, hospitality business demand drops, and part-time employees are vulnerable to redundancy (Baum, 2013). In Marxist thinking (as cited in Baum, 2013, p. 23) women are thought to be a kind of “reserve army of labour,” dispensable when they are no longer needed. For example, the International Labour Office (2010) showed that in the global financial crisis of 2008, most industries in the United States of America (US) were affected, resulting in widespread unemployment. After the global financial crisis of 2008, women’s share of unemployment was larger than that of men in various industries, such as the hospitality industry (International Labour Office, 2010). It can be observed that women working in the hospitality industry are vulnerable in a crisis because of the risk of unemployment.

### **2.2.3 Aesthetic labour**

The hospitality industry is frequently associated with images of young and beautiful women, accompanied by increasing requirements around the presentation of employees, which is termed “aesthetic labour.” The concept of *aesthetic labour* originated from a job advertisement in a nightclub in northern England in the 1990s, and which implied that experience was not required, but being attractive was (Nickson et al., 2001). Similarly, when the American fast-food chain Hooters opened its first branch in the United Kingdom (UK), it enticed customers with sexy young waitresses wearing revealing tops, who were the “Hooters Girls” (Gelding, 1998). The company recruited the so-called Hooters Girls with a “Florida beach girl” look. According to Nickson and Baum (2017), the birth of the term “aesthetic labour” is related to the changing trend of recruitment requirements in the hospitality industry. In the 1990s, increasing requirements for the uniformity of staff and enterprise image motivated organisations to customise employees’ physical appearance. After entering an organisation, training and mentoring was often conducted to ensure employees met the visual requirements of the brand image. Hence, *aesthetic labour* refers to the fit between an employee and the brand image, not only in the most obvious physical appearance, but also encompassing elements such as class, gender, race, age, and weight (Warhurst et al., 2000).

Many young and attractive women are likely to take a job in the hospitality industry. According to People 1st (2013), nearly half practitioners in the hospitality industry were under the age of 30 at that time, and 31% were between 16 and 24 years old. Indeed, employers seek age-specific employees in order to find a fit with their brand and image. Such employees tend to be neat, stylish, young, and friendly, and fit in well with the establishment's overall ethos. Young, beautiful, and model-like women are regarded as the best representatives of the ideal brand image and so, make ideal employees (Nickson & Baum, 2017). However, while hiring younger workers may keep wages down, the temporary nature of work tenure increases the cost of human resources (Mooney, 2016).

The requirement of aesthetic labour also brings some negative influences. It can lead to unfair recruitment and selection processes, which are regarded as a kind of age discrimination (Mohamedbhai, 2013). Moreover, aesthetic labour emphasises the concept of female sex appeal for sale, and erotic labour. Hearn (2011) pointed out that in some cases, sexual attraction is 'work'. For example, bar work can be sexualised work (as opposed to sex work), leading to the idea that in some traditional female work, such as bar work, sexual harassment may be normalised and expected (Hearn, 2011).

#### **2.2.4 Demanding work**

Since the hospitality business is open every day, 24 hours a day, work in the hospitality industry is labour-intensive and demanding. Employees have long working hours and need to work unsocial hours, such as night shifts and holidays (Costa et al., 2017), and are under high pressure (Wang, 2013). As a result, high turnover rates in the hospitality industry are common (Baum, 2013; Duncan et al., 2013; Wang, 2013).

Although jobs in the hospitality industry are stereotyped as unskilled and low-skilled, on the contrary, they involve interactive services, requiring employees to have interpersonal and soft skills (Duncan et al., 2013). Globally, employees in the hospitality industry are increasingly required to undertake efficient work with multiple skills and appropriate personality characteristics (Bell, 2011). Beheshtifar (2011) considered these skills and abilities as intellectual capital that keeps organisations competitive. Employees in the hospitality industry are required to provide physical and emotional labour and premium customer experiences. *Emotional labour* was first proposed by Hochschild (1983, as cited in Nickson & Baum, 2017, p. 9), who considered it as "the management of feelings to create a public observable differentiated bi-facial and bodily display" which is "sold for

a wage and therefore has exchange value”. Shani et al.’s (2014) study on the impact of contextual factors on emotional labour showed that when the external environment is not appropriate, the demands of emotional labour may harm the well-being of employees. Besides, the lack of training in emotional labour is a common issue in the hospitality industry.

### **2.2.5 Low job quality**

The low-entry barriers to enter work form one of the most significant characteristics of the hospitality industry (Baum, 2015). The common stereotype is that people can get a hospitality job without specific skills, qualifications, or experience, and jobs in the hospitality industry are low-skilled and low-quality (Duncan et al., 2013). However, employees in the hospitality industry need specific skills obtained through training, and experiences in different areas of life that enable them to work properly and achieve senior executive positions (Mooney et al., 2016)

Women in the hospitality industry, on average, have lower-quality jobs than do men, and this quality gap tends to widen with age (Carvalho et al., 2018; Santero-Sanchez et al., 2015). Women undertake less skilled work, and are less represented in management than are men. A study by Santero-Sanchez et al. (2015) on job quality indices in Spain showed that there were fewer job quality gaps in the age group of 25 to 34 years old. This study also showed that even though women can be competitively to access jobs when they are young, they still lack guaranteed fair access to a promising career. Thus, tourism employment is segregated according to gender. In accordance with this low-quality job bias, women working in the hospitality industry are generally responsible for the lowest levels of work in the industry. According to Mooney (2018), the hospitality industry is widely considered to be female-dominated, but women tend to work at the lower levels of the labour hierarchies. Similarly, Gentry (2007), after studying women in the tourism industry in Brazil, wrote that tourism often provides female employees with low-waged, low-status, and low-skilled jobs, making development opportunities scarce.

### **2.2.6 Gender pay gap**

Work in the hospitality industry is rewarded with poor wages; hospitality employees are likely to be paid the local minimum wage. In New Zealand, most hospitality workers are paid at the legal minimum rate (Baum et al., 2016), and as early as 2005, hospitality

industries employed 18.6% of the minimum wage workers (Timmins, 2006). Although hospitality workers are generally poorly paid, women are paid even less, leading to a gender pay gap. For instance, women in New Zealand generally earn less than men, both in male-dominated and female-dominated jobs (Zhang, 2019). The *gender pay gap* is a term often used to refer to the income gap between genders. Blau et al. (2006) proposed that the *gender pay gap* describes a situation in which women do not receive the same pay and bonuses as men, even if they do the same or similar work.

The gender pay gap exists in different industries globally. Fleming (2015) pointed out that in 2012, the weekly salary of full-time American (US) women, including those in managerial and professional positions, was only 71.6% of that of men. Similarly, the monthly income of Chinese women as a whole is 22% lower than that of men (Jiang, 2018). The gender pay gap also exists in the six countries mentioned by the World Bank (2019) (Belgium, Denmark, France, Latvia, Luxembourg, and Sweden) that have legislation giving women and men equal rights to work. Esteban (2018) showed that the gender pay gap exists in most countries, that is, the incomes of men are higher than those of women, but in some countries, women earn more than do men, such as in Malaysia. The study also showed that the gender pay gap has narrowed in most countries over the past few decades. For example, in New Zealand, the proportion dropped from 16.3% in 1998 to 9.5% in 2020 (Ministry for Women, 2020).

However, the gender pay gap in the hospitality industry is still severe. According to Jennings (2018), the gender pay gap is still prevalent in the US hotel sector, as men receive much higher bonuses and starting salaries than do women. As an example, in the UK, women earn an average of 7.2% less per hour than do men, and 15.7% less in bonuses (Shangri-La Hotel, 2017).

### **2.2.7 Work-life balance**

Due to the shift work and unsocial working hours, work-life balance issues are part of the hospitality industry context. Employees in the hospitality industry are asked for high flexibility to meet the changing demands of the work, leaving them insufficient time to invest in household work, resulting in conflicts between work and family roles (Mooney, 2009). Researchers have discussed this conflict extensively, examining work-family conflicts and family-work conflicts (Mansour & Tremblay, 2018), work-family balance (Hirschi et al., 2019), and work-family/family-work spillover (Garcia-Cabrera et al.,

2018). Greenhaus & Beutell (1985, as cited in Mansour & Tremblay, 2018, p. 2401) wrote that work/family conflict is “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect.” This study adopts Greenhaus and Beutell’s (1985) definition of work-family conflict.

In the hospitality industry, workers’ work-life balance is easily disrupted, and women are stereotyped as facing more work-family conflict than do men. Women who are partnered, with children, often try to find part-time jobs to support their families (WTTC, 2020), explaining why hospitality jobs are particularly attractive to them. Baum (2013) observed that when women look for part-time jobs, they have fewer options than do men, since they have to take on more domestic responsibilities. Therefore, women choose mostly low-paid work such as housekeeping, to ensure they can still meet their childcare responsibilities after work (Zhong et al., 2011).

Work-family conflict issues affect the well-being of employees (Cho & Tay, 2016). Mansour and Tremblay (2018) explained that work-family conflict is positively correlated with negative psychological outcomes, such as job stress, burnout, and turnover intention. Because of tourism employment’s high flexibility demands and cultural pressures caused by traditional gender roles, women in the hospitality industry are more vulnerable to work-family conflicts than are men (Garcia-Cabrera et al., 2018). Mentoring from supervisors and support from organisations such as the provision of childcare facilities, can help reduce work-life conflict issues (Mansour & Tremblay, 2018). However, training and help in solving the work-family conflicts of women in the hospitality industry are far from adequate, which disadvantages women’s careers (Costa et al., 2017).

### **2.2.8 Occupational segregation**

*Occupational segregation* is widely discussed by economists and sociologists, and refers to the distribution of workers between and within occupations according to their demographic characteristics (Baum, 2013). In the hospitality industry, *occupational segregation* generally refers to the unequal distribution of men and women in different jobs (Campos-Soria et al., 2011). It has two aspects: horizontal segregation and vertical segregation.

In tourism and hospitality employment, *horizontal segregation* means that men undertake masculinised work, and women undertake feminised work (Cave & Killic 2010; Santero-Sanchez et al., 2015). In hotels, women are mainly engaged in cleaning, customer service, and less responsible work, while men are mainly engaged in the kitchen, maintenance, and administration areas with more responsibility (Campos-Soria et al., 2011). Women in all industries often work in specific areas such as quality and auditing organisations, and human resources, consistent with their traditional roles as housewives (Santero-Sanchez et al., 2015). Harris et al. (as cited in Baum, 2013, p. 20) considered that in the hospitality industry, women have traditionally “engaged in roles that are considered representative of their family roles, using the same skill base.”

Vertical segregation is evident in highly paid professional and management positions where male employment is prevalent (Hutchings et al., 2020; Santero-Sanchez et al., 2015; UNWTO, 2019). Due to the stereotypical and negative perceptions of women, they are significantly less well represented in management positions than men (Simpson & Kumra, 2016). Although significant progress has been made to restore gender balance with improved education, even though they may have higher degrees, there are still fewer women in management than there are men (Hutchings et al., 2020). Where women have a chance to progress in their careers, they mostly work in female-dominated roles, such as in human resource management (Cave & Killic, 2010). Based on a survey in 3, 4 and 5 star hotels in Spain, Segovia-Perez and Figueroa-Domecq (as cited in Santero-Sanchez et al., 2015) revealed that the management of hotels was a male-dominated, and there were significantly more male leaders than there were female ones, accounting for 10.79% and 6.8% in hotel organisations respectively. The difficulties and fewer opportunities faced by women pursuing a hospitality career are explained in detail in the women’s career section that follows (2.3.2).

### **2.2.9 Section summary**

There are eight factors related to the characteristics of the hospitality industry before the COVID-19 crisis. The hospitality industry is a significant employer of the workforce and vulnerable to external threats. Hospitality work is demanding and low quality, due to the low entry barriers to hospitality jobs. Hospitality workers are generally poorly paid and seek a better work-life balance than that offered by their unsocial working hours and shift work. Young and attractive women are favoured by hospitality recruiters for their appearance, with the hidden risks of being sexually harassed. The gender pay gap and

enduring occupational segregation indicate that gender inequality and gender discrimination continue to be common in the hospitality industry. Women dominate the lower levels of the hospitality industry hierarchies, and are paid lower salaries, while the top management is still predominantly men.

There, women working in the hospitality industry already had a weak position before the COVID-19 crisis, as their employment was broadly stereotyped by their traditional domestic roles. A positive aspect of this stereotypical view of women's traditional domestic role is that it provides them with opportunities to work in the hospitality industry, but the negative aspects of the stereotype are that it forces women to undertake demanding and feminised jobs. To meet their family responsibilities, women are also likely to take part-time and seasonal jobs in the hospitality industry, rendering them vulnerable to the industry or economic crises. Furthermore, it appears that women face more work-life conflicts due to their the conflict between stereotypical family responsibilities and and the demands of the 24/7 hospitality industry.

### **2.3 Career paths in the hospitality industry**

This section introduces the high mobility feature of career paths in the hospitality industry before the COVID-19 crisis. The features and barriers of women's careers in the hospitality industry are also explained.

#### **2.3.1 Mobility**

The frequent job-hopping of employees in the hospitality industry has gradually become the characteristic of high mobility within the sector. Thulemark et al. (2014) pointed out in their study on jobs in hospitality and migrants' employment, that *mobility* means frequent job changes and short-term employment, which are the characteristics of tourism employment. This occupational mobility is regarded as normal in tourism employment, leading to a high turnover culture (Cassel et al., 2018). Voluntary turnover in an organisation or industry is regarded as "job-hopping" (Steenackers & Guerry, 2016), and part of a boundaryless career. The "butterfly" process proposed by McCabe and Savery (2007) explains the hospitality job-hopping strategy. Employees make attitudinal "flutters" among various sectors in the tourism or hospitality industry to increase their skills and build core competencies (McCabe & Savery, 2007). High mobility makes it hard for employees in hospitality to have a stable job status (Cassel et al., 2018), but different

industries require different career strategies. To have a successful career in the hospitality industry, Cassel et al. (2018) proposed that employees need to understand the importance of high mobility.

The careers of successful employees in the hospitality industry tend to be highly mobile, so as to gain experience in different sectors (Mooney, 2016). The social norm in tourism employment is that successful employees should treat mobility as positive and necessary (Cassel et al., 2018), but it is not easy for a woman to move with a child or husband. Besides, high mobility does not guarantee that women working in the hospitality industry will receive more opportunities. According to (Rydzik et al., 2012), horizontal and vertical segregation, as explained in 2.2.8, is still widespread amongst women migrants. Therefore, inequity of employment does not disappear with the adoption of a mobile career path; women with fewer opportunities and untapped potential often have to leave the hospitality industry (Rydzik et al., 2012).

### **2.3.2 Women's careers in the hospitality industry**

As observed previously, women tend to occupy the lower levels of the hospitality industry hierarchies. The top jobs, as well as top positions, are often occupied by men (Mooney et al., 2017). Due to occupational segregation (section 2.2.8), women are concentrated in lowly jobs (Santero-Sanchez et al., 2015). Although the hospitality industry prefers women employees with presumed empathic characteristics to, women find it more difficult than men to advance their careers, due to discriminatory corporate practices, and behavioural, as well as cultural factors (Oakley, 2000). Negative corporate practices include a lack of training and career development models for women, and fewer promotion opportunities and compensation policies (Ryan & Mooney, 2019). Relevant behavioural and cultural factors include gender-based stereotypes, industry preferred (masculine) leadership styles, old-boy networks, and self-imposed barriers (Mooney & Ryan, 2009).

Although this situation has improved slightly in recent years due to gender diversity efforts such as the Me Too movement, there are still many policies based on unfavourable attitudes in the hospitality industry that make life difficult for women workers. The flexibility and low barriers to entry in the hospitality industry attract women employees, but barriers to advancing their career in the industry have led many young women to leave the industry after a period of time (Guillet et al., 2019). It is not easy for women to work



and have a career in the hospitality industry, or for this industry to retain talented and skilled women employees.

### **2.3.3 Section summary**

A hospitality career is associated with mobility for gaining experiences and skills from different areas of work. Women working in the hospitality industry accrue less benefits from the highly mobile career paths, and have fewer opportunities for promotion and career development. Women working in the hospitality industry are mainly working at the bottom of the hierarchies, while men are in the top positions. Women hospitality workers face career barriers to advancement, such as a lack of training and career model, gender-based stereotypes, preferred masculine leadership, old-boy networks, and self-imposed barriers, leaving them with few opportunities to advance. Young talented women may eventually leave the hospitality industry instead of pursuing a career.

## **2.4 A critical perspective of women's position in the hospitality industry**

The literature discussed in the previous section showed that although the hospitality industry is women-dominated, the occupational segregation shows men occupy the majority of management positions. Therefore, management of the hospitality industry can be said to be masculine dominated, as women workers occupy subordinate positions in many organisations (Mooney, et al., 2017). In many ways, women working in the hospitality industry face gender discrimination. However, it is not entirely clear how inequality happens and why it continues. Therefore, this section takes a critical perspective to explain why women are in a weaker position than men in the hospitality industry and less represented in an executive management role, discussing this across three dimensions.

### **2.4.1 Glass ceiling**

The *glass ceiling* metaphor refers to the invisible barriers that women and other groups such as minorities face, that hinder their progression to senior and executive management positions (Carvalho et al., 2019). According to Simpson and Kumra (2016), these invisible barriers can come from various factors such as norms sustaining the existing hierarchical position of men and women, family responsibilities (especially children), and

a lack of mentoring and role models for women. The glass ceiling approach is a useful way to find hidden processes in organisations, which can harm the interests of some groups. The glass ceiling related to women hospitality workers is a hidden process caused by a lack of a gender lens in hospitality organisations. Such hidden processes do not acknowledge gender disadvantage in the organisation, leading to the natural disadvantage of women workers in the hospitality industry. Hospitality organisations should have a gender equality lens to mitigate the effects of the glass ceiling. However, the glass ceiling notion has been criticised for over-emphasising the influence of external factors on women's careers and neglecting women's intrinsic motivations for career success (Simpson & Kumra, 2016).

#### **2.4.2 Power relations**

Unequal power relations explain why there are fewer women than men in management, reflecting the effects on organisations. The presence of women in management is positively viewed as a power resource to help change organisational structures and challenge gender relations in the organisation (Carvalho, 2017). Women are enabled to be effective leaders when organisations hire a critical mass of women at senior levels, while isolated women as token employees in management must adopt a number of stereotypical behaviours to obtain acceptance from the wider group (Wahl, 2010). Therefore, an organisation with a high representation of women at top levels can help organisational change and provide career opportunities for women in the hospitality industry.

#### **2.4.3 Gender stereotypes**

Gender stereotypes are prevalent in women's workplaces and hinder their career development (Heilman, 2012). The previous section, explaining the characteristics of the hospitality industry, has discussed many gender stereotypes, including that women undertake work with feminised features, such as housekeeping; women's jobs are unskilled, low-skilled, and low quality; and women work at the lower levels of the industry. Based on existing general attitudes that women should prioritise serving family and meeting household responsibilities, industry stereotypes position women as more likely to suffer life-work conflicts and, therefore, not suited to senior positions (Mooney, 2009, Costa et al., 2017). The stereotyping of women causes them to be discriminated

against in the workplace and have reduced opportunities to develop a career in the hospitality industry (Mooney et al., 2017).

The perception of the ideal worker in the hospitality industry is an excellent example to illustrate how gender stereotypes disadvantage women. The gender-neutral definition of an *ideal worker* refers to the unencumbered worker who is always flexible and able to accommodate work demands with no care-related responsibilities (Acker, 2012). This figure of the ideal worker fits well with the heteronormative male worker who can dedicate himself to a full-time job and whose wife takes care of his personal needs and children. Mooney and Ryan (2009) pointed out that a male culture in organisations with certain organising practices becomes the most prevalent obstacle to women's career advancement in the hospitality industry. Since women take most of the social reproductive tasks related to unpaid labour in the household and caring for children, they are definitely not able to become ideal workers. Therefore, the perception of the so-called "ideal worker" is stereotyped due to the lack of a gender lens. Because of the stereotyped perception of ideal workers, women's reproductive work is seen as a burden, and women are relegated to subordinate positions in the workforce (Carvalho, 2017). For instance, pregnancy is considered a liability at work.

#### **2.4.4 Section summary**

There are three reasons women are less represented in management positions. First, the *glass ceiling* refers to invisible barriers to career advancement for women working in the hospitality industry, which are caused by the lack of a gender equality lens within their organisations. Second, hospitality organisations have long been dominated by men in senior management positions, not women, which means organisations typically lack the insights to overcome this injustice. In the hospitality industry, women in senior management roles can help change the organisational processes that disadvantage women's career paths. Third, widespread stereotypes in the hospitality industry give a negative image of women hospitality workers, leading to discrimination against them. Gender-based stereotypes that women prioritise family responsibility and are not suitable for management, mean women miss opportunities for career advancement.

## 2.5 COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis in 2020 devastated the health and well-being of people around the world. Since the hospitality industry was already vulnerable to global threats, it was not surprising that the COVID-19 crisis hit the hospitality industry almost hardest (Karim et al., 2020; Sönmez et al., 2020). In some countries and regions, the hospitality and tourism industry has taken a severe hit, as it is highly dependent on international markets. For example, the number of inbound visitors to Japan in March in 2020 was 99% lower than it was last year, so the hospitality industry and tourism industry in Japan faced extreme difficulty (JTB Tourism Research & Consulting, 2020).

It is clear that the COVID-19 situation has been extraordinary, and its effects changed at different stages. There is limited literature on this issue as yet, but the literature that is available on the hospitality industry, indicates that the COVID-19 crisis had a negative impact on the hospitality workforce. The COVID-19 crisis was anticipated to cause unemployment issues both in developed and less developed countries (Jones & Comfort, 2020). Undeclared (i.e., working without the correct visas) hospitality workers in Europe were unable to work and access the financial support provided by governments (Williams & Kayaoglu, 2020). The mandated social isolation and distancing could harm the physical and psychological well-being of people required to stay home, and those who lost their jobs, such as did many hospitality employees (Chen, 2020). As observed, before COVID-19, there were already many issues for employees in the hospitality industry, such as demanding work, low job quality, low pay, and work-life conflict. The COVID-19 crisis exacerbated these disadvantages and the most vulnerable groups, especially young workers and women, suffered most (Baum et al., 2020). While the COVID-19 crisis hurt the hospitality workforce, there were also positive aspects. For instance, Baum and Hai (2020) suggested that strict restrictions on the movement of people and the closure of many national borders could reduce human trafficking and child sex tourism.

In summary, the COVID-19 crisis hit the hospitality workforce hard with several factors observed in previous studies; however, there was some evidence of positive effects. Therefore, it is important to determine the exact impact COVID-19 had on the hospitality workforce.

## 2.6 Chapter summary

The extant research is very clear about the characteristics of the hospitality industry and the weak position of women workers in the industry caused by these characteristics before the COVID-19 crisis. The characteristics of the hospitality industry fall into eight major groups. The hospitality industry is a significant employer for the general workforce, vulnerable to external crises, prefers young and attractive women workers, and provides demanding and low-quality work for low wages. Working in the hospitality industry makes it hard to achieve a work-life balance because of unsocial working hours and shift work. Occupational segregation occurs, in which women undertake feminised work at the lower levels of the industry, while men are typically in the top management positions. Women workers' low positions in the hospitality industry are reflected in their lower salaries, so they are more vulnerable to external crises than are men. Although women have the advantage of being employed to provide aesthetic labour to the hospitality industry, they face broad negative stereotypes related to their family responsibilities, and more work-family conflict, which disadvantages their potential for employment in the hospitality industry. Besides, a hospitality industry career path before COVID-19 crisis was characterised by high mobility with employees gaining experience and skills in different areas.

Women's careers in the hospitality industry were also in a weaker position before the COVID-19 crisis, as they generally lacked promotion opportunities and faced many barriers to success. From a critical perspective, the reason women are less represented in top positions, is related to three factors in hospitality organisations: 1) a lack of a gender lens, 2) a lack of power to overcome gender injustices, and 3) a general existence of gender-based stereotypes. The lack of a gender lens in hospitality organisations explains the glass ceiling of invisible barriers in women's careers in the hospitality industry. The lack of power to overcome gender injustices is caused by women's poor representation in senior management positions in hospitality organisations, leading to fewer power sources to encourage gender equality processes. Gender-based stereotypes view women as prioritising family responsibilities and not suitable for management.

COVID-19's impacts on the hospitality workforce are significant; COVID-19 has amplified issues existing in hospitality employment. As women are an essential part of the hospitality workforce, there is a gap in understanding how their employment and

careers were affected by COVID-19. It is helpful to determine whether and how women hospitality workers' positioning and career barriers changed during the COVID-19 crisis.

## **Chapter 3 Methodology**

### **3.1 Chapter preview**

This chapter introduces the research approaches and methods used in this research. An interpretivist approach guided the research design and compatible qualitative methods addressed the research objectives. Secondary data collection proceeded with popular media news sources articles, and the data were analysed using the six steps of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The application of methods in this study is explained in this chapter, which also addresses the trustworthiness dimensions of qualitative studies.

### **3.2 Research objectives and questions**

The objective of this study was to explore how COVID-19 impacted women's work and life in the hospitality industry. To better understand the status quo of women's work and life in the COVID-19 context from 23 January, 2020 to 23 September, 2020, two research questions were proposed:

- 1: What was the impact of COVID-19 on the hospitality industry?
- 2: How did COVID-19 affect women working in the hospitality industry?

### **3.3 Interpretivist research paradigm**

For this study, social sensibilities of the researcher fit well with interpretivist paradigm, which guides the design of the study. A *paradigm* is a higher-level conceptual framework that guides researchers to conduct research (Booyesen et al., 2018) and the interpretivist paradigm provided the underlying theoretical framing. Each paradigm has a corresponding ontology, epistemology and methodology to suit the researcher's approach and methods of responding to the research aims. According to Booyesen et al. (2018, p. 21), *ontology* refers to "an individual's worldview about the nature of truth," and *ontological assumptions* indicate how researchers view the construction of reality (Scotland, 2012). Curtis and Curtis (2011) considered that the *epistemology* explains how to know something and directs what methods can be used to add to the knowledge. The epistemology shows the relationship between the researcher and the knowledge, in terms of how knowledge can be created, acquired, and communicated (Booyesen et al., 2018).

Currently, the two paradigms most commonly used in research are positivist and interpretivist, corresponding to different ontologies and epistemologies (Paleček & Risjord, 2013). The nature of each guided the decision to choose interpretivism as the most suitable approach for this study. The ontology and epistemology of the positivist paradigm hold that the truth of the world is observable and measurable. Positivist research questions, therefore, usually refer to a field that has been explored to some extent, and positivist researchers seek to understand the cause-and-effect relationships of reality by proposing a verification hypothesis (Booyesen et al., 2018). The COVID-19 crisis occurred in 2020, the year of this study, so there were still few studies on it at that time, and therefore, insufficient knowledge on which to base hypotheses for verification. On the other hand, the ontology of the interpretivist paradigm holds that understandings of the world are based on individuals' own interpretations and perspectives (Scotland, 2012), so reality and truth are neither unique nor measurable. Knowledge is constructed from interactions between individuals and their views of the world, but importantly, is significantly impacted by the social context, such as the social disruption caused by COVID-19. Therefore, studies following an interpretivist epistemology use research methods capable of revealing multiple worldviews (Cunliffe, 2011) and this study's interpretations of the impact of COVID-19 on the hospitality industry are based on the researcher's perceptions of the New Zealand context. Interpretivist research questions mostly address a field of knowledge with no systematic theories or social scientific knowledge; both research questions in this study were open questions used to explore impacts of the COVID-19 crisis that had not already been systematically discussed.

This exploratory study was focused on research questions related to women's work and life in the hospitality industry in the context of COVID-19. These research questions address a newly emerging and unstudied research topic. Although Baum et al. (2020) have undertaken some research on the hospitality workforce, very little was known about the impacts of COVID-19, so the lack of investigation into this topic fitted well with the interpretivist research aim approach. The research questions in this study involved gender and change observations as part of a social science research topic. Researchers with different backgrounds may have different interpretations of this research question (see Paleček & Risjord, 2013). However, the research questions in this study were related to an emergent social science research issue, and the study adopted a research methodology that followed the principles of the interpretivist paradigm.



### **3.4 Research methodology and methods**

As an interpretive approach was used to answer the research questions, compatible methods needed to be selected. A *methodology* refers to a model or strategy, fitting a specific paradigm, and guides researchers on how to choose methods and conduct their research (Wahyuni, 2012). Fitting with the interpretive approach, this study followed qualitative research methods. The objective of using a qualitative research method is to reveal what a phenomenon means to the person concerned and what meaning they ascribe to their experience (Booyesen et al., 2018; Tolley, 2016). This objective was consistent with the researcher's intention to explore the impact of COVID-19. Furthermore, qualitative research methods tend to be inductive, revealing underlying patterns or theories of the aspects under study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Since this study was conducted shortly after COVID-19 occurred and there are not many relevant works of literature, it was considered appropriate to use a qualitative approach to designing and conducting the research. Therefore, this study adopted an interpretivist-qualitative approach to answering the research questions.

*Research methods* refer to the specific techniques and procedures used to collect and analyse data (Scotland, 2012; Wahyuni, 2012) In order to answer research questions effectively, it is necessary to consider the physical limitations of completing the study when designing the research procedures. This study utilised a secondary data collection method to collect relevant data, and thematic analysis methods to analyse the data.

#### **3.4.1 Secondary data collection method**

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018), qualitative primary data collection methods such as semi-structured interviews and focus groups are mostly used by interoperative researchers to reveal multiple worlds. At the time of writing, the world was still under the influence of COVID-19. Considering social distance restrictions and people's possible negative emotions towards their current status, conducting primary data was not feasible within the time limitations of writing a dissertation, especially given the COVID-19 restrictions. Thus, this research adopted a secondary data collection process to collect data as secondary data analysis aims at using existing data to answer new research questions (Dunn et al., 2015). Since this secondary data collection approach did not involve primary data collection, ethical approval was not required as data were publicly available and accessible.

### 3.4.2 Sampling strategy

Tolley et al. (2016) suggested that all research needs to determine where and from whom to obtain data with which to answer the research questions. According to the research questions, the target population of this study was women who work in the hospitality industry globally. Curtis and Curtis (2011) wrote that the *secondary data collection method* is a method of collecting and analysing data from works by social scientists and other authors. Published sources (e.g. mass media and cyber documents) and official records (e.g. reports and statistics) are the main two sources for secondary research (Curtis & Curtis, 2011). Since COVID-19 had affected the world for less than a year at the time of data collection, relevant official statistics were not always readily accessible. Therefore, this study collected data from mass media sources.

Due to the time limitations and the lack of systematic theories to help answer the research questions, the study used a convenience sampling plan to select data. The convenience sampling plan sets criteria for accessing the most convenient data (Turner, 2020). The sampling criteria for this study were as follows:

- Criterion 1 – accessible sources: Due to the time limitations of writing a dissertation, it was challenging to collect data on women working in the hospitality industry globally. A subset of the population was therefore selected to represent the target population of the research (Turner, 2020). This study took a New Zealand focus to understand the influence of COVID-19 on women working in the hospitality industry to narrow down the data to one location, where the researcher was based and could freely access the data. New Zealand was an ideal geographic context, as its multi-cultural population could be used to represent the global community. Therefore, three mass media resources with an international perspective and a focus on New Zealand were selected as data sources: The Guardian, Radio New Zealand, and The New Zealand Herald. These mass media could offer an international outlook on women's work and life in the hospitality industry and also pay attention to the specific experience of New Zealand.
- Criterion 2 - time period: Although COVID-19 has been reported since December 2019, the impact of COVID-19 on social and economic development began on the first lockdown at Wuhan, China, on 23 January, 2020 (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], 2020). The selected publication period covered eight months to

fit the dissertation time frame. Publication dates of mass media sources were selected from 23 January, 2020, to 23 September, 2020.

- Criterion 3 - keywords: Significant keywords such “hospitality industry in COVID-19,” “women in COVID-19,” “working from home,” and “childcare facilities closure” were used to direct data collection, as these were words directly related to the work and life-related changes of women working in the hospitality industry. These keywords emerged from examining international news reports about COVID-19 and journal articles about women working in the hospitality industry before finalising the sample. Keywords used for collecting data are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1** *Keywords used for collecting data*

<b>•Keywords used for collecting data</b>	
Hospitality industry in COVID-19	COVID-19 restaurants
Women in COVID-19	COVID-19 hotels
Working from home	COVID-19 hospitality
Childcare facilities closures	COVID-19 Government restriction
Hospitality women workers	COVID-19 women
Lockdown hospitality	COVID-19 subsidy
Support schemes	Government’s restriction

The researcher searched data following the process described, and found 63 news reports from these three media sources that satisfied the sampling criteria. The rationales for selecting these data sources are presented in Table 2. The selection shows how many news reports were chosen from each source.

**Table 2** *The Rationales for Selecting Data Sources*

<b>Data sources</b>	<b>Rationale for selecting data sources</b>	<b>Selection</b>
The Guardian	The Guardian Newspaper is an international media source used as a representative sample as it has a strong affiliation with workers' interests and women's interests. It is the only international newspaper with a strong New Zealand section.	38 news reports. See details in Appendix 1: Selections from The Guardian
Radio New Zealand (RNZ)	As the national radio of New Zealand, RNZ is regarded the most trustworthy source of information from the Government, reputed to be of good quality and credibility.	11 news reports. See details in Appendix 3: Selections from or Radio NZ
New Zealand Herald (NZH)	The NZH is the most widely read newspaper in New Zealand and mainly focuses on Auckland, although it does report on New Zealand wide issues. The Herald is not quite as credible as the first two sources, but popular for giving interesting perspectives rather than being an authoritative source.	14 news reports. See details in Appendix 2: Selections from the NZ Herald

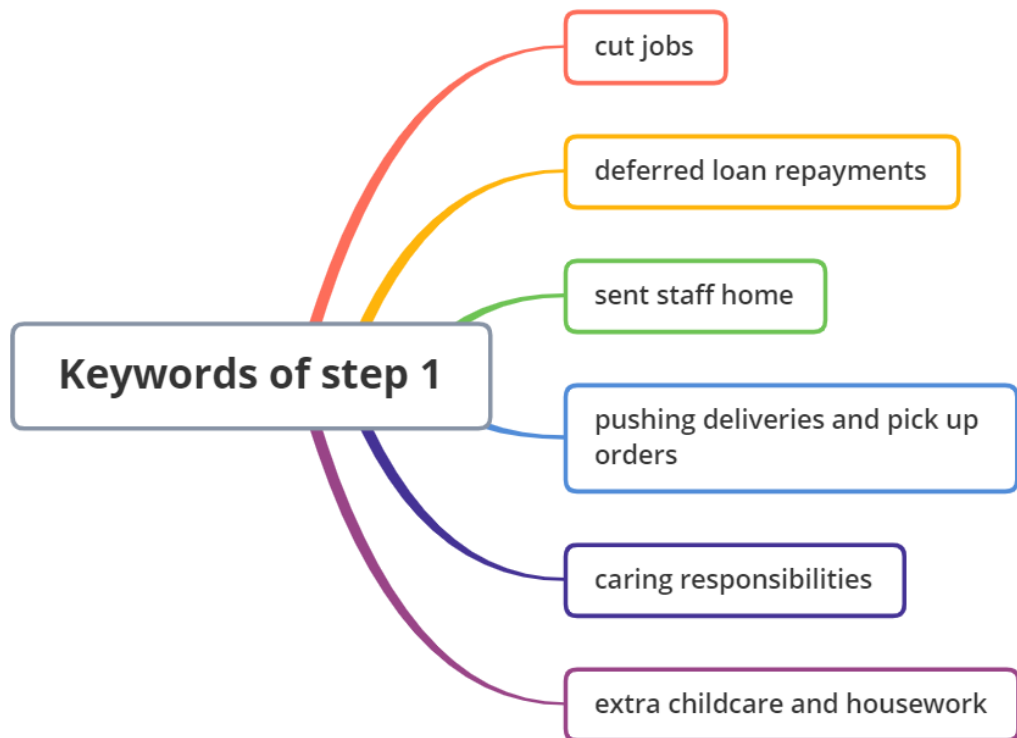
### 3.4.3 Thematic data analysis

In considering qualitative methods that are compatible with the interpretivist paradigm, several data analysis approaches may be used, such as content analysis, case study analysis and thematic analysis. As this was an exploratory study, there were very few academic resources and findings for the content analysis to show what was important in different categories. The thematic analysis method can be used for an exploratory study, since it does not need specific knowledge to guide the analysis, as themes emerge from the data to provide a picture of important information (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Therefore, the thematic analysis method was chosen for this study. The thematic analysis method is notable for its flexibility and can define the theoretical framework of the research (Clarke et al., 2015) and can identify patterns and themes within data (Given, 2008; Wahyuni, 2012). In this research, the six-step data coding method proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to analyse the data and present the results. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest:

1. Researchers should firstly familiarise themselves with the data to find ideas and identify possible patterns from the selected dates (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through reading and re-reading 63 news reports selected using the sampling

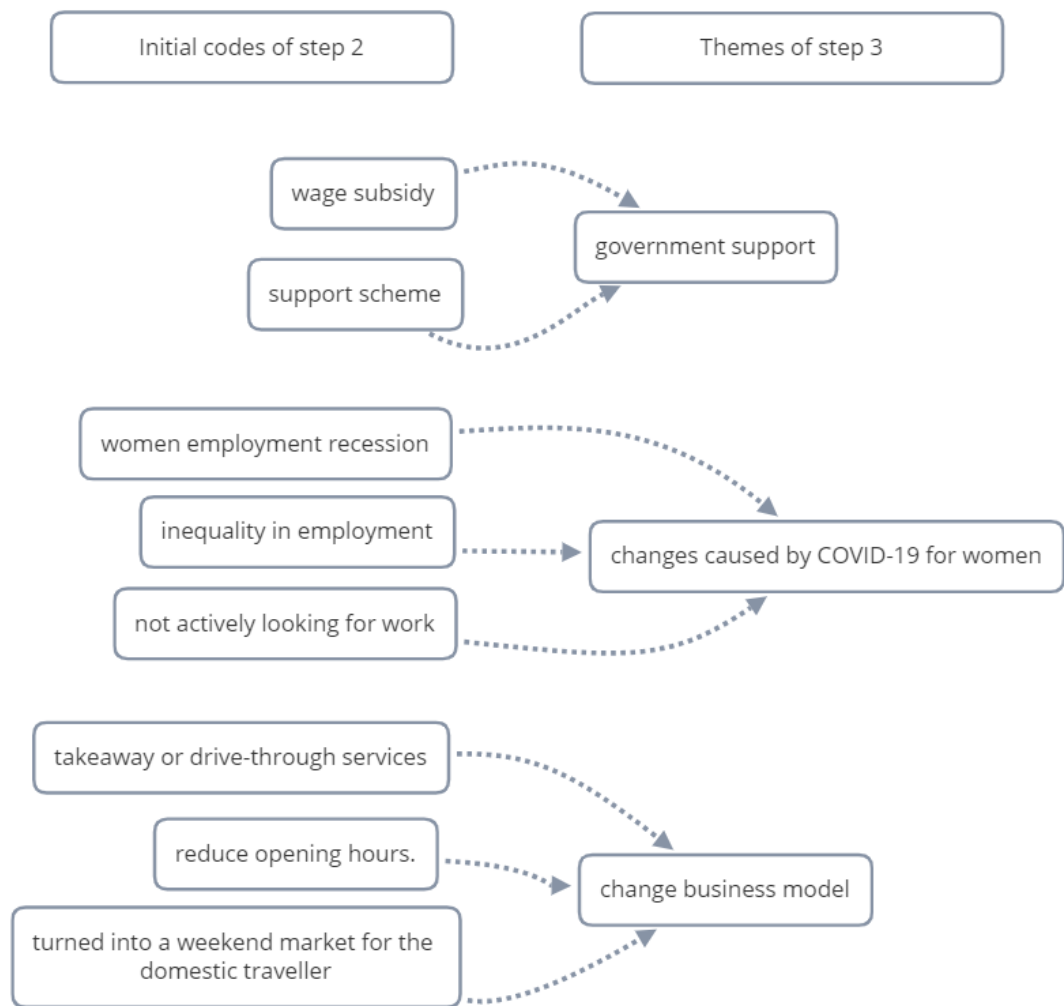
criteria explained, the researcher recorded her initial analysis and observations, helping to analyse the data comprehensively. Keywords such as “unemployment,” “domestic violence,” and “financial crisis” were found to help with a general understanding of the data. Some of the keywords of step 1 are presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1** *Parts of keywords of step 1*



2. In the second step, the researcher began coding. The characteristics of the data were systematically identified and labelled at this stage (see Braun & Clarke, 2006). About 50 initial codes relating to the research questions, such as “women are low earners” emerged. These initial codes helped identify patterns and group similar data in the next step. Parts of initial codes of step 2 can be observed in figure 2.

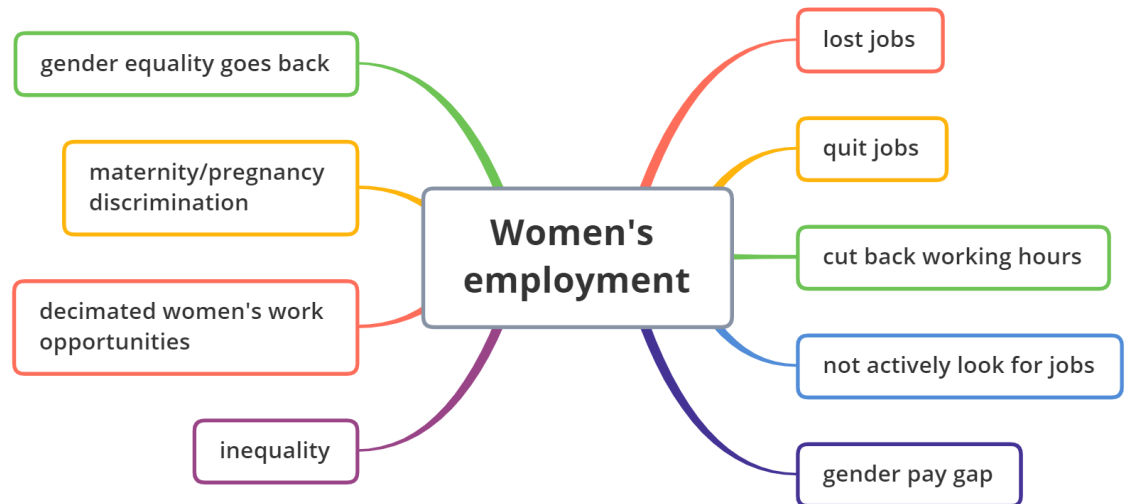
**Figure 2** *Initial codes of step 2 and themes of step 3*



3. In the third step, researchers combine the codes into themes. The themes should accurately describe the overall meaning of the data, and make a plausible map of key patterns in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For example, the initial codes, such as “provide takeaway service,” “use disposable or laminated menus,” “and “change work location,” were combined into the theme “change business model.” Some themes emerging in step 3 can be observed in figure 2.
4. In the fourth step, researchers need to review the themes to determine whether the themes support the data and fit the overall theoretical perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2006). If candidate themes are not suitable, researchers need to repeat the previous steps (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher in this study checked the themes with the research supervisor to make sure they were consistent with what the data were intended to convey. At this stage, determining whether all candidate themes accurately reflect the meanings evident in the data set as a whole is also very important. After re-reading the entire data set, the researcher added some

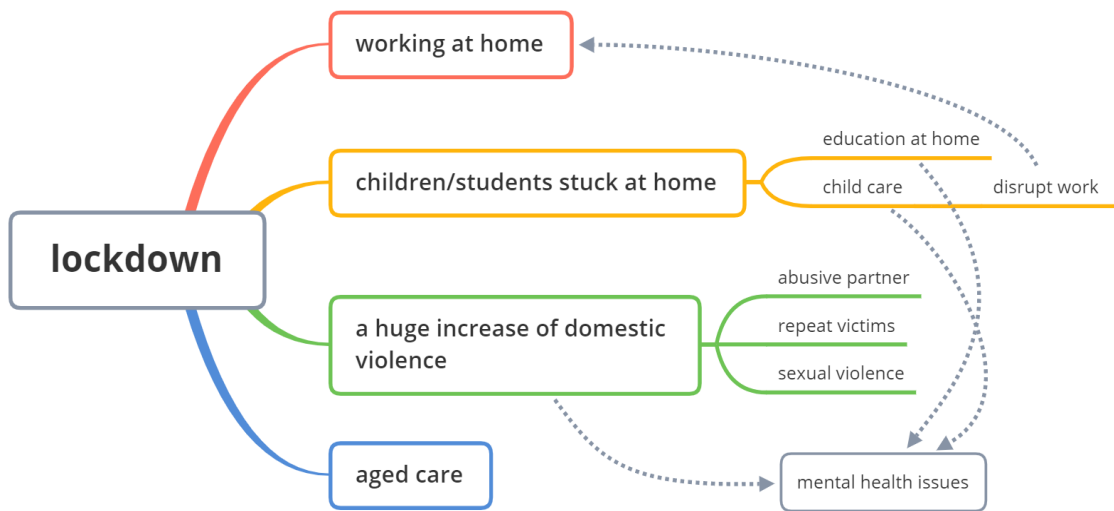
missed initial codes into the corresponding themes. For example, the initial code “migrants suffer more unemployment,” was added into the theme “unemployment.” Example of the themes generated in this step are presented in Figure 3.

**Figure 3** *Example of Themes Generated in the Fourth Step of Thematic Analysis*



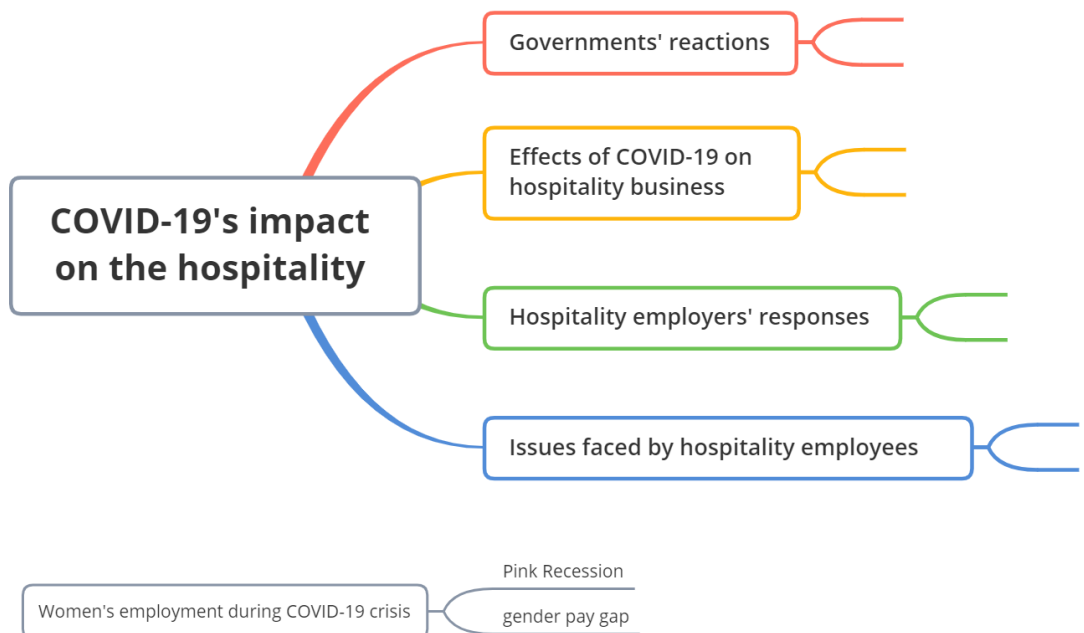
5. In the fifth step, researchers write down theme definitions and make sure that each theme concept is clear and not misinterpreted, providing a road map for the final writing (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It was very challenging to organise and logically group the themes at the beginning, as one theme could relate to different groups. For instance, the theme “travel restriction” applied by governments could have an impact on hospitality businesses, hospitality business owners, and workers in the hospitality industry. The final themes were not determined until the researcher drew mind maps of the relationships between all themes and codes. Based on the mind maps, the eventual final themes and sub-themes were decided. Part of the mind map of the relationships between themes and codes is presented in Figure 2.

**Figure 4** Part of the Mind Map of the Relationships Between Themes and Codes



- In the final step, researchers select themes that make sense for understanding the data and answering the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Instead of just listing themes, they were classified into two parts: COVID-19’s impact on the hospitality industry, and women’s employment during the COVID-19 crisis. These were then compared with findings in the literature to answer the research question. Parts of the themes presented in the findings chapter are presented in Figure 3.

**Figure 5** Some of the Themes Presented in the Findings





### 3.5 Trustworthiness

Compared with quantitative research, it is more challenging to evaluate the quality of qualitative research, as qualitative research aims to interpret or describe answers to the research questions instead of measuring predictable relationships. Trustworthiness criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) provide a standard by which to assess qualitative research, and are widely cited and used in social science research (Bryman, 2012). The framework for trustworthiness should contain four dimensions: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Tolley, 2016).

Credibility criteria in qualitative research correspond to the validity criteria in quantitative research, which refers to whether the data are effectively measured. Because of the conceptual and descriptive data of qualitative research, *credibility* in qualitative research refers to the truth value in the specific worldview (Tolley, 2016). Whether the researcher accurately interprets the findings to reflect the phenomenon studied, is key to achieving credibility. By describing the data collection and analytical process in detail, the credibility of a study can be observed. The themes of this study were coded in the context of the hospitality industry during the COVID-19 crisis, and reflect multiple perspectives. The researcher collected employers' and employees' perspectives from the data and checked them with the research supervisor to make sure the interpretation of the data was according to the studied context. Therefore, the findings of this study may help to shed some light on the multiple social realities of women in the hospitality industry during the COVID-19 crisis in New Zealand.

Dependability criteria in qualitative research can be compared to reliability criteria in quantitative research, which refer to whether repeated measurements of data are consistent. As qualitative research interprets rather than statistically measures data, different interpretations may be obtained without the consistency of applying the same research method (Johnson et al., 2020). Therefore, ensuring the research process to be consistent and carefully following the rules and conventions of a specific qualitative method can improve dependability. In this study, data were collected and analysed from three mass media: The Guardian, The NZ Herald, and Radio NZ, all according to the same qualitative procedure. For example, the same keywords, such as "women in COVID-19," were used to search for data that met the sampling criteria, in each of the three mass media sources.

The *confirmability criteria* of qualitative research refer to the need for researchers to confirm their roles in the research process. Researchers' assumptions, biases, and reactions can add their personal values into the research results. As the researcher is the same gender as the research subjects, to a certain extent, she was able to understand what women in the hospitality industry were experiencing. However, she was also following a career in the hospitality industry in New Zealand, which could present a bias when interpreting data.

The transferability criteria in qualitative research are equivalent to generalisability in quantitative research. *Generalisability* refers to the degree to which the research findings can be applied to other contexts. *Transferability* in qualitative research does not emphasise the application of a theory, but give an insight into a specific context (Connelly, 2016). For instance, the findings of this study may give insights to similar situations to other countries or other New Zealand industries in the COVID-19 context, but they cannot be generalised to other contexts.

### **3.6 Chapter summary**

This chapter introduced the use of the interpretivist paradigm in this research. The interpretivist paradigm guided the researcher to seek multiple worldviews of the research topic. A qualitative methodology was used to generate inductive knowledge about the research topic. In terms of the accessibility of data sources, this study used a secondary data collection method to collect data from mass media sources, which offer popular and different views rather than academic perspectives. Due to the lack of systematic theories on the research topic, a thematic analysis method was used to generate knowledge. To improve the quality of this study, the researcher rigorously followed the research methods outlined, to ensure high trustworthiness.

## **Chapter 4 Findings**

### **4.1 Chapter preview**

Chapter four is divided into two parts to present the key findings in the data. The first part is related to COVID-19's impact on the hospitality industry; see sections 4.2 to 4.5. This part discusses the impacts in four dimensions: Governments' reactions to the COVID-19 crisis, the effects of the reactions on hospitality businesses, hospitality business owners' responses to the COVID-19 crisis, and issues faced by hospitality employees during the crisis. The second part (section 4.6) discusses the dimensions of women's employment during the COVID-19 crisis.

### **4.2 Governments' reactions**

When COVID-19 appeared and developed into a crisis, the majority of countries and regions treated it as a health crisis, and introduced travel restrictions of various degrees to restrict its spread. However, travel restrictions, like travel bans on China, severely affected international tourism, so the businesses that depended on tourism faced an economic crisis. With public health officials' further understanding of COVID-19, lockdowns were implemented around the world, further damaging local economies, especially those related to the hospitality industry. Despite governments' and practitioners' efforts to revive the economy, the hospitality industry went into a recession after the lockdowns.

COVID-19's influence on the hospitality industry was the result of the interaction between health threats and governments' responses. Three different aspects of the Government's response to COVID-19 (namely COVID-19 prevention restrictions, hospitality industry reopening restrictions, and support schemes) that emerged from the data are presented. Because the data had a New Zealand focus, the situation in New Zealand is described at the end of each theme to provide a background and clarification. Due to the limited amount of data, some theme-related information did not cover the New Zealand perspective or other countries' perspective', so the descriptions of different themes sometimes included information from outside of New Zealand. This research has a New Zealand focus, but many sources also indicated the effects globally to have a whole picture of what impact of COVID-19 on women working in the hospitality industry.

### 4.2.1 COVID-19 prevention measures

Month by month, global leaders adjusted the intensity of their COVID-19 prevention strategies in response to changes in the numbers of confirmed cases. Governments in different regions adopted policies appropriate to local conditions. This section introduces the policies widely used as the COVID-19 crisis developed, and includes travel restrictions, public alert systems, lockdowns, gathering restrictions, social distance restrictions, and the COVID-19 contact tracing system.

Travel restrictions were firstly taken to prevent the movement of infected cases. Since the first confirmed cases of COVID-19 were in China, many countries imposed travel bans and border restrictions on China in February. According to The Guardian:

*On Tuesday the British government became the first in the world to advise all citizens to leave China if they could, although unlike the US, Australia and several other countries, it has not banned entry for travellers who have recently visited mainland China. (The Guardian, 6 February 2020).*

*Australian prime minister Scott Morrison has announced that foreign arrivals from mainland China will not be allowed entry into Australia, as part of measures to tackle the escalating coronavirus crisis. (The Guardian staff and Australian Associated Press, 1 February 2020)*

*On February 2, the government placed temporary restrictions on entry into New Zealand for all foreign nationals travelling from or transiting through, mainland China. (The Guardian, 17 February 2020)*

Travel restrictions were not limited to China, and worldwide travel restrictions between countries were then initiated due to the rapid development of the COVID-19 crisis. For example, the US President, Donald Trump, announced travel restrictions suspending all travel from Europe for 30 days, except for from the UK, on 11 March 2020 (The Guardian, 12 March 2020).

As the COVID-19 crisis developed, confirmed cases emerged in various countries around the world. Different countries adopted different systems to alert the public to different levels of restriction. The alert system varied from region to region in the UK and Australia, while New Zealand largely used the same alert system for the whole country due to its smaller size. As discussed in the Methodology chapter, the data sources of this study had a New Zealand focus, and therefore, the four stages of the New Zealand alert system have been provided. Details of the New Zealand alert system timeline are

presented in Table 3. As a significant factor influencing the hospitality industry, this timeline is referred to throughout the Findings chapter.

**Table 3** *New Zealand Alert System Timeline*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Alert Level</b>	<b>Restriction</b>
21 ~ 22 March	All New Zealand is at Alert Level 3	<b>Alert Level 1:</b> COVID-19 was present but contained. This was a phase of preparation, which included introducing border measures, contact tracing, and cancelling mass gatherings. These were all activated.
23 ~ 24 March	All New Zealand is at Alert Level 3	
25 ~ 26 March	All New Zealand is at Alert Level 4	<b>Alert Level 2:</b> the virus was contained but the risks were growing as cases increased. At this stage people needed to reduce contact with others. There were increased border measures, and events were cancelled. People were required to work differently, and from home as much as possible. All non-essential travel had to be cancelled.
27 April ~ 12 May	All New Zealand is at Alert Level 3	
13 May ~ 7 June	All New Zealand is at Alert Level 2	
8 June ~ 11 August	All New Zealand is at Alert Level 1	<b>Alert Level 3:</b> the virus was increasingly difficult to contain. Public venues and non-essential businesses closed.
12 August ~ 29 August	Auckland is at Alert Level 3	
30 August ~ 20 September	The rest of New Zealand is at Alert Level 2	<b>Alert Level 4:</b> sustained transmission. Everyone had to be isolated from others outside their “bubble.” Essential services continued, but everyone was asked to stay at home.
	Auckland is at Alert Level 2	
21 September ~	The rest of New Zealand is at Alert Level 2	
	Auckland is at Alert Level 2	
	The rest of New Zealand is at Alert Level 1	

As numbers of new COVID-19 cases continued to rise, an increasing number of countries had to close their borders and undertake lockdowns. In the UK, the Government advised British nationals not to make any non-essential travel and move into lockdown on 17 March 2020 (The Guardian, 13 April 2020). In Australia, Morrison’s Government announced a new travel ban for all non-residents and non-citizens entering Australia from 9 pm on 20 March 2020, following the lockdown restriction on 22 March 2020 (The

Guardian, 1 March 2020). In New Zealand, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced that the border would be closed to non-New Zealand residents and citizens starting at midnight on 19 March 2020 (NZ Herald, 19 September 2020). New Zealand had two lockdowns starting from midnight on 25 March 2020 and another on 12 August 2020 (NZ Herald, 12 August 2020).

Although there were some differences in the policies between countries, the overall lockdown policies affected personal movement, exercise, education, work, business, travel, and gatherings. This study used New Zealand's lockdown policies as an example. New Zealand used a COVID-19 alert system, with one to four levels of responses to the COVID-19 crisis. Altering Levels from one to four brought in correspondingly light to heavy restrictions. Lockdown policies at Alert Level 4 were:

*People instructed to stay at home in their bubble other than for essential personal movement.*

*Safe recreational activity is allowed in local area.*

*Travel is severely limited.*

*All gatherings cancelled and all public venues closed.*

*Businesses closed except for essential services. For example, supermarkets, pharmacies, clinics, petrol stations and lifeline utilities.*

*Educational facilities closed.*

*Rationing of supplies and requisitioning of facilities possible.*

*Reprioritisation of healthcare services. (Radio NZ, 21 March 2020)*

Other policies to prevent COVID-19's spread were also applied, and gathering and social distancing restrictions were widely used. In the UK, the Government applied policies designed to reduce people's social interactions such as 10 pm curfews on nightlife and tighter restrictions on socialising to prevent a second wave of a COVID-19 outbreak (The Guardian, 18 September 2020). In Australia, the social gathering restrictions for lockdowns were:

*Gatherings are restricted to groups of 10 when outdoors. That includes funerals.*

*Weddings are limited to five people – the couple, the celebrant and two witnesses.*

*Australians must stay home unless they're going out for an essential purpose, and the definition of essential is broadened. (The Guardian, 1 May 2020)*

Most governments also adopted a test-and-trace system for COVID-19. In the UK, the Government used the “National Health Service (NHS) test-and-trace” system to automatically trace patients who received a positive test (The Guardian, 27 May 2020). In New Zealand, Radio NZ reported on the Government’s policies and public responses to using the COVID-19 test-and-trace system:

*Ardern announced that within a week all businesses and services must display the QR code for the government’s COVID-19 Tracer app. She said more than 100,000 people downloaded the app in less than 24 hours since the new lockdown measures were announced. (Radio NZ, 13 August 2020)*

#### **4.2.2 Hospitality business reopening regulation**

As the COVID-19 crisis progressed, the economic impacts began to emerge. The hospitality industry was most severely affected, losing customers. As different regions moved out of lockdown, governments applied specific policies for hospitality businesses to help practitioners in the industry create a health and safety-focused business environment during the COVID-19 crisis.

In Australia, the Government applied hospitality business guidelines created by the interaction of hospitality and health organisations, which included the Australian Hotels Association, Restaurant and Catering Australia, and the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (The Guardian, 5 May 2020). These guidelines provided suggestions about social distancing restrictions, the sanitary standard of restaurants’ operations, and COVID-19 safe training for hospitality employees. Wes Lambert, the chief executive of Restaurant and Catering Australia, outlined the details of the four guidelines.

*Eateries would enforce social distancing in waiting areas, set tables 1.5 metres apart, and use disposable or laminated menus that could be wiped down.*

*All touch points including tables and chairs would be cleaned after each use, and there would be no condiments such as salt and pepper on the tables.*

*Restaurants would be advised to only use cutlery that could be washed at 80C in a commercial dishwasher, otherwise they would need to rely on recyclable disposable knives and forks.*

*The states mandate COVID-19 safe training for hospitality employees.  
(The Guardian, 5 May 2020)*

In New Zealand, at Alert Level 3 from 27 April 2020 to 10 May 2020, hospitality businesses were closed to the public other than through contactless delivery and pickup, while restaurants and cafes could open to having diners seated, separated, and served by a single server in Alert Level 2 from 11 May 2020 to 7 June 2020 (NZ Herald, 13 August 2020). Governments also applied rigorous food control plans. Hospitality businesses in New Zealand were obliged to apply the “three S” standards to be allowed to operate after lockdown (Radio NZ, 21 May 2020). These standards were:

*Seating: People must be seated to prevent the spread.*

*Separation: There must be social distancing between people and tables.*

*Single server: Each table must have just one person serving it. (Radio NZ, 21 May 2020)*

These policies were intended to help hospitality businesses create an environment where customers could spend without fear. However, customers lacked the confidence to eat out, and the industry struggled with persistently weak consumer demand due to the uncertainty of the current situation and changeable restrictions (NZ Herald, 12 August 2020). Hannah Essex, co-executive director of the British Chamber of Commerce (BCC), pointed out:

*Uncertainty and speculation around future national restrictions will sap business and consumer confidence at a delicate moment for the economy. (The Guardian, 18 September 2020)*

### **4.2.3 Governments’ support schemes for the economy**

The economic impact of COVID-19 on the hospitality industry had a significant impact on the incomes of employees and employers in the industry. Governments around the world trialled various schemes, such as wage subsidies and economy boost plans to help people put their lives back on track. Some support schemes were targeted to the public, and some were specifically for hospitality employees and employers. These support schemes can be divided into employee and employer-oriented ones, as described in the following paragraphs.



#### **4.2.2.1 Support schemes for employees**

Financial and unemployment plights significantly increased with the implementation of various COVID-19 prevention measures. Governments promptly launched financial and unemployment support schemes to help workers through the COVID-19 crisis.

Financial support packages were widely used. The UK Government provided a furloughing scheme under which people were paid 80% of their monthly earnings up to a ceiling of GBP2,500 (The Guardian, 16 May 2020). Australia applied a job keeper wage subsidy, paying AUD1500 a fortnight (NZD773 a week) and Canada paid 75% of workers' regular salaries (NZ Herald, 1 April 2020). The New Zealand Government launched the NZD585-a-week wage subsidy at the first lockdown (Radio NZ, 19 August 2020). By the second lockdown in New Zealand (12 August 2020 to 30 August 2020), the wage subsidy scheme in New Zealand had been extended three times (Radio NZ, 15 August 2020).

In terms of support plans of unemployment, the New Zealand Government applied a 12-week COVID-19 income relief payment for people who lost their jobs between March and the end of October due to COVID-19 (NZ Herald, 9 September 2020). Those out of fulltime work were able to claim NZD490 a week for 12 weeks.

#### **4.2.2.2 Support schemes for employers**

In an effort to revive the economy, governments offered different support programmes for different industries to help business owners. To help employers in the hospitality industry recover their businesses as soon as possible, governments applied support schemes for hospitality when loosening the lockdowns. These support schemes can be divided into short-term and long-term schemes.

Short-term support schemes could quickly help hospitality businesses recover, and boost sales. In the UK, the Automobile Association launched a COVID Confident accreditation scheme for the hospitality industry to stimulate public confidence in dining outside (The Guardian, 18 June 2020). The details of that scheme were:

*The free scheme is open to hotels, B&Bs, self-catering properties, campsites and other accommodation, as well as pubs, restaurants, cafes and visitor attractions. The aim is to indicate to customers that a*

*premise has the necessary health and safety measures in place to reopen to the public. (The Guardian, 18 June 2020)*

Radio NZ (Shaw, 14 August 2020) reported that the UK Government launched voucher schemes with discounts to encourage people to buy takeaways, to help hospitality businesses stay viable during the crisis. The UK Government's Eat Out to Help Out discount dining scheme was:

*The scheme aims to help get the country's hospitality industry back on its feet, with 72,000 cafes, pubs and restaurants offering diners up to £10 off their food bill. The giveaway is expected to cost the taxpayer £500m. (The Guardian, 4 August 2020)*

Because this was useful, Radio NZ (14 August 2020) suggested the New Zealand Government introduce this kind of support scheme from the UK and allow takeaway services.

The wage subsidy schemes in New Zealand not only benefited employees, but also released the financial pressure from employers in the hospitality industry and helped their businesses recover. These support measures initially helped businesses to minimise their losses and keep unemployment down. Auckland Mayor, Phil Goff, said that the wage subsidy scheme was perceived positively:

*We're really happy that there is this wage subsidy scheme that recognises the cost to businesses, particularly small businesses, and what that might mean in terms of jobs. The wage subsidy scheme was incredibly effective in keeping a surge of unemployment down and it's necessary again. (Radio NZ, 15 August 2020)*

Some governments introduced long-term support schemes to stimulate the economy. In Australia, the Government implemented a 15-month, AUD3.9bn investment incentive scheme to encourage business spending (The Guardian, 22 March 2020). Countries that were heavily dependent on tourism, allocated specific tourism budgets. For instance, the New Zealand Government invest NZD85 million in the Queenstown economy to defend it against the impact of COVID-19 (Radio NZ, 26 June 2020). In Fiji, a tourism economy stimulation plan was applied:

*Fiji's minister of economy and attorney-general Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum announced a FJ\$1bn economic stimulus budget in late March to assist businesses and workers in the current climate, which allowed some workers to access up to FJ\$1,000 from their superannuation funds, with*

*government topping up payments for ineligible applicants. (The Guardian, 15 April 2020)*

### **4.3 Effects of COVID-19 on hospitality businesses**

Governments' reactions and media reports of COVID-19 caused negative influences on hospitality businesses. This section introduces COVID-19's effects on hospitality businesses in three aspects: hospitality revenue decreases, hospitality margins severely impacted, and closures of hospitality businesses.

#### **4.3.1 Hospitality revenue decreases**

Travel restrictions, such as travel bans and border closures, hurt the international tourism market, leading to hospitality revenue decreases. In the UK, the event industry suffered profound impacts, with 30% of events cancelled in early March due to travel restrictions (The Guardian, 7 March 2020). The UK hospitality industry was also negatively affected, with a 50% decrease in hotel reservations and a 7% decline in restaurant sales.

In Australia, the disappearance of international tourists almost ruined the hospitality industry. According to Michael Johnson, the chief executive of Tourism Accommodation Australia:

*Even though Sydney was trading relatively well, the city was probably 10% down in terms of both occupancy and average room rates in February. In Cairns, the tourism industry estimates losses could total \$100m by the end of the month. The worst-case scenario is also the loss of about 1,800 local jobs. (The Guardian, 34 March 2020)*

In New Zealand, losing international tourists also made hospitality business struggle. Matt McLaughlin, Wellington president of Hospitality NZ, said:

*Even if New Zealand is in a much better position than a lot of other places around the world, still about 30 per cent of our revenue is from international tourists. [Realistically], it's going to be five years before we get all of those cruise ships back, five years before we get big groups of international tourists coming back to New Zealand as they were. (NZ Herald, 21 May 2020)*

### **4.3.2 Hospitality margins severely impacted**

The decrease in demand for hospitality caused by travel restrictions led to widespread revenue decline and lower profits. The New Zealand Restaurant Association's chief executive complained:

*Just four weeks ago, we were estimating \$6 million a week was being lost by hospitality businesses as a result of the travel restrictions. (NZ Herald, 8 April 2020)*

As employers were required to follow the COVID-19 prevention policies and operations guidance, the margins in hospitality businesses became even tighter. The “three S” restrictions imposed by the New Zealand Government limited key hospitality operations and resulted in additional staffing costs as well as potential revenue reductions (Radio NZ, 15 August 2020). Marisa Bidois, the chief executive of the Restaurant Association in New Zealand, explained:

*The removal of restrictions on our businesses will certainly make a big difference. We've had to have social distancing in place, which has limited the number of guests, there have been a lot of restrictions that we've had to manage, including the single server [per table]; all of these things cost time and money to manage. (NZ Herald, 6 June 2020)*

### **4.3.3 The closure of hospitality businesses**

Without sufficient revenue and cash flow, hospitality business owners were forced to shut their operations. The NZ Herald (13 August 2020) reported that New Zealand's NZD11 billion hospitality industry was facing business closures and job losses. About 50 hospitality businesses closed after the first lockdown in New Zealand (NZ Herald, 13 August 2020).

## **4.4 Hospitality employers' responses**

Before the COVID-19 attack, employers in hospitality businesses in New Zealand had already been under pressure from rising insurance, rent, labour, and supplier costs (NZ Herald, 24 April 2020). According to the NZ Herald (24 April 2020):

*In recent years the increase in property values nationwide has led to significant rent, rates and OPEX rises; the Christchurch and Kaikoura earthquakes have raised insurance and building compliance costs, which landlords are looking to pass on to tenants; supplier costs have*

*increased significantly; and despite many businesses urging the Government to defer the minimum wage rise, (from \$17.70 per hour to \$18.90 per hour), the increase came into effect on 1 April 2020 – another blow to business owners already facing huge financial hardship.*

The emergence of COVID-19 compounded these problems, and New Zealand was not alone in this plight. Even after the lockdown, the tourism and hospitality industry in Australia did not experience their expected “honeymoon” period of increased spending (The Guardian, 18 May 2020). Employers in the hospitality industry demonstrated different responses to defend their businesses against the impacts of COVID-19, changing their business models, supporting their workforces, redirecting their market focus, and calling for their government’s specific support for the hospitality industry.

#### **4.4.1 Changes to the business model**

Because profits had plummeted, employers in hospitality businesses were forced to change their business models to secure their places in the market. In the UK, hospitality business owners, for example, Mandy Yin, the owner of a small restaurant in London, adjusted her lease with the landlord, cut down her menu, and provided a takeaway service to survive (The Guardian, 1 August 2020).

In Australia, the hospitality industry was ‘almost destroyed’ by COVID-19, and most business owners took measures to adjust their workforces (The Guardian, 7 April 2020). According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics:

*About 78% of accommodation and food services businesses had made changes to their workforce, including 70% that temporarily reduced work hours. (The Guardian, 7 April 2020)*

To solve the low margin dilemma, employers in hospitality businesses in different regions adjusted their operating hours, negotiated lower rents with their landlords, launched delivery and takeaway services, and designed menus suitable for the lockdown to increase revenues and reduce costs. Australian hospitality organisations were shut down by the Government’s mandatory closure of non-essential services in lockdown (The Guardian, 20 March 2020). Some hotels maintained skeleton staff at only 10%-20% capacity, and some restaurants and cafes provided delivery and takeaway services.

#### **4.4.2 Employers' support for the workforce**

Hospitality business owners treated the workforce in very different ways. Some employers chose to support their workforce to go through the COVID-19 crisis, while others took no responsibility for employee welfare.

Hospitality business owners who supported the workforce did what they could to help employees through the crisis. Nicola Sturgeon, the first minister of Scotland, praised local Macdonald Hotels as an excellent example of this, as they offered accommodation to all employees affected by COVID-19 (The Guardian, 21 March 2020). In New Zealand, Auckland's Good Bar Company, with nine bars, took out a NZD5.6 million bank loan to keep paying its staff their regular salaries during the lockdown (NZ Herald, 1 April 2020).

However, the news media highlighted the significant problem of less supportive employers in the hospitality industry, who appeared to abandon their employees. In Australia, employers in hospitality businesses temporarily increased or reduced the working hours of their staff to satisfy operating restrictions (The Guardian, 7 April 2020). Some also forced workers to take paid, unpaid, or annual leave, to reduce their labour costs. (The Guardian, 7 April 2020).

Some unscrupulous hospitality business owners even took advantage of their employees to cover their financial losses. In Australia, many casual employees were dismissed immediately after the lockdown (The Guardian, 20 March 2020). In New Zealand, Restaurant chain Good Group made about 150 staff redundant and took a subsidy for 345 staff, at a total of NZD2.3 million (NZ Herald, 17 May 2020). Chloe Ann-King, who ran the Raise the Bar campaign to improve New Zealand hospitality workers' conditions, highlighted bad behaviours from hospitality business owners:

*Countless employers are also pocketing all or part of the subsidy. Some employers also try and coerce their workers into 'freely' giving up the subsidy by pleading poverty to their workers and attempting to emotionally manipulate them into allowing them to keep the subsidy. (NZ Herald, 1 April 2020)*

#### **4.4.3 Change of market focus**

With no international tourists, hospitality business owners turned their focus to the domestic market. The hospitality industry in Australia offered discounts to stimulate

domestic travel and called on local residents to support them (The Guardian, 3 March 2020). In New Zealand, Queenstown targeted the weekend market for domestic New Zealanders touring on a much smaller scale than had the previous international visitors. Many hospitality employers in New Zealand downsized their operations (Radio NZ, 26 June 2020).

#### **4.4.4 Call for governments' specific support for the hospitality industry**

As the hospitality industry was hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis, employers of hospitality businesses called for their governments to set more specific support plans and wage subsidies to help them recover. Kate Nicholls, chief executive of UK Hospitality, said:

*The government must provide urgent relief packages and allocate some funding from its \$14 billion COVID Response and Recovery Fund to the hospitality sector. Government should introduce measures such as a three- to six-month business rate holiday and cut VAT to prompt demand. (The Guardian, 7 March 2020)*

#### **4.5 Issues faced by hospitality employees**

People's work and lives were fundamentally changed by the scale of responses of governments and employers to the health threat of COVID-19. In the UK, Britain's lowest-paid earners, women and young people, faced the most significant negative health and economic effects during the coronavirus lockdown (The Guardian, 28 April 2020). Women working in the hospitality industry on minimal wages have less economic foundation to defend themselves from any crisis, so it was not surprising that employees in this industry experienced the most problems during the COVID-19 crisis. This section introduces four common issues faced by employees in the hospitality industry.

##### **4.5.1 Unemployment**

The hospitality industry, as an employment sector dominated by women, was the first and most severely affected (The Guardian, 23 May 2020). Hospitality employees faced unemployment at the onset of COVID-19 and became more severely affected as the COVID-19 crisis developed. Around March 2020, as governments globally began implementing travel restrictions and border closures (see Section 4.2.1), which led to redundancies for hospitality workers around the world.

In the US, unemployment rose at an unprecedented rate as businesses such as hotels and food services were in lockdown, causing workers to lose their jobs (The Guardian, 25 March 2020), for example, major employer Marriott dismissed employees. Many workers lost their jobs, especially in the hospitality industry. The unemployment led to a surge in claims, such as in California, US, where the number of unemployment claims increased by more than 4,000% per day.

In the UK, COVID-19 created a domino effect on the UK central city businesses, causing restaurants such as Pizza Express and other food outlets to shed 17,000 jobs by early August 2020 (The Guardian, 4 August 2020).

In New Zealand, 2300 hospitality businesses were forced to temporarily shut due to the first lockdown, causing more than 69,000 employees nationwide to have their working life paused (NZ Herald., 2020 April 8). After the first lockdown, many hospitality employers in New Zealand could not return to work, and asked the Government to provide specific support for the hospitality industry. Marisa Bidois, Restaurant Association chief executive, said:

*Among our membership alone we have had more than 50 businesses close, which is around 1000 jobs losses, and we are anticipating more closures as the end of the wage subsidy draws near, so we need the next Government to know its priorities for hospitality early. (NZ Herald, 13 August 2020)*

#### **4.5.2 Financial hardship**

The financial hardship of employees was mainly due to wage losses and unemployment caused by COVID-19. In the US, the loss of customers reduced working hours, and tipped workers to go without tips (The Guardian, 25 March 2020). During lockdown, work in the hospitality industry in the UK was typically lower paid than average, putting hospitality workers at greater risk of financial hardship as redundancies increased (The Guardian, 28 April 2020).

The positive effects of various support schemes for employees were discussed in the previous section. In the UK, a survey of more than 6,000 workers by The Resolution Foundation, an independent think-tank focused on improving living standards for those on low to middle incomes, showed that the furloughing scheme saved many low-paid



workers in the UK from losing their jobs and relieved their financial hardship during the lockdown (The Guardian, 16 May 2020).

### **4.5.3 Poorly designed government support schemes**

Although governments launched support programmes for employees, these programmes did not cover the diversity of the workforce and specifically excluded migrant workers. For instance, wage subsidies failed the migrant workers, and without savings to see them through, some migrant workers in the hospitality industry became homeless. Most homeless people had precarious jobs and living arrangements, with no ability to navigate the welfare system or waits to be paid. During the lockdown, many ex-hospitality workers slept rough in the London streets, one migrant worker who had been a waiter in London for five years slept on his workplace's doorstep for three weeks after losing his job (Gentleman, 27 April 2020),.

Without adequately designed support plans, the harder employees tried to relieve their financial hardship by themselves, the more likely they were to fall into a worse situation. Some redundant workers in the hospitality industry took a casual contract to conquer financial problems, then found they could not access the wage subsidy because of their second job (Radio NZ, 4 September 2020). The effectiveness of these support schemes varied between groups. Gerard Hehir from the Unite Union in New Zealand commented that:

*The system did not reflect the reality of people's lives. The problem is the policy itself is poorly designed for the people who are most affected. (Radio NZ, 4 September 2020)*

### **4.5.4 Mental health problems for hospitality employees**

Hospitality workers' mental health problems mainly came from the pressures caused by financial hardship, unemployment, and pressure working in the high-stress environment. Although income relief payment could ease the financial strains on the unemployed, the allowance (NZD490 a week) was below most normal pay levels (NZD500 - NZD900 a week) (NZ Herald, 9 September 2020). Those affected needed to find ways to reduce their costs until their pays returned to a normal level.

In New Zealand, because of the lockdown caused by the second wave of COVID-19 in Auckland, business confidence fell sharply, and the willingness of companies to recruit

new employees stayed very low until September (NZ Herald, 9 September 2020). From March onwards, 77,000 workers (including those from hospitality) who received job seeker benefits or COVID-19 income benefits were less likely than usual to find a new job, leading to mental stress.

Many hospitality employees believed that their employers or managers showed no respect for them. In New Zealand, employees made redundant by Good Group Hospitality, owners of several upmarket waterfront restaurants such as Botswana Butchery and White & Wongs in Queenstown, found it hard to communicate with their managers or did not receive even an "are you okay?" message from their former managers (NZ Herald, 17 May 2020). They complained:

*Most of us are sitting at home, confused. It's painful. When you work for so long for someone you expect a bit of respect but this was cold. (NZ Herald, 17 May 2020)*

Fortunately, some hospitality practitioners had observed the mental health problems of their hospitality workers and provided help. A not-for-profit organisation offering mental health support online was initiated to educate and support people in the industry (Radio NZ, 9 August 2020). The founder, Nathan Ward, hoped the high-risk sort of environment of hospitality workplaces could be talked about:

*COVID-19 hit hospitality hard and continues to have an impact. A hospitality workplace can be a stressful high-pressure environment in which to work. Even more and more people seem to be slipping through the cracks and wanting to come out and talk about it so I think it's right up there. (Radio NZ, 9 August 2020)*

#### **4.6 Women's employment during COVID-19**

Although men in England were twice as likely as women to get the virus (70% of all Intensive Care Unity [ICU] patients were men, and 30% of men in intensive care were under the age of 60, compared with 15% of women) (The Guardian, 6 April 2020), COVID-19 repercussions appeared to affect women more severely (The Guardian, 17 April 2020). McKinsey considered women's jobs were 1.8 times more vulnerable to this crisis than were men's jobs globally (NZ Herald, 4 September 2020). Women's employment had begun to experience negative effects that would return their status to that of several decades earlier, as a result of COVID-19. The following paragraphs introduce nine specific issues of women's employment related to COVID-19.

#### **4.6.1 Pink recession**

In previous recessions or economic crises, such as the GFC of 2008, blue-collar or low-income men were those most negatively affected. However, COVID-19 hurt women the hardest with job losses, so “pink-collar recession” was used to describe their situation (The Guardian, 23 May 2020). In the UK, women’s unemployment rate in July was 10.5%, while men’s unemployment rate was 9.4%, leading to a so-called “she-cession” (NZ Herald, 4 September 2020). In Australia, the number of women employed fell 5.3% early in the COVID-19 outbreak, compared to 3.9% of men (NZ Herald, 4 September 2020). This phenomenon was aptly named the “pink recession.” The Guardian (23 May 2020) reported that women’s disproportionate job losses during the COVID-19 crisis were the simple result of occupational gender segregation.

#### **4.6.2 Fewer job opportunities due to COVID-19**

COVID-19 affected women employees more severely, because more women than men lost jobs, resigned, had reduced working hours, or shifted to work at home. Women employees were less actively searching for jobs. Britain's labour force statistics for May showed:

*Rate of unemployment for women is over 10%, effectively doubling over April, and higher than around 9% adjusted for men. Meanwhile, the paid hours worked by women who are still employed have plummeted, with women cutting back their hours by 11.5% as compared with 7.5% for male employees. The shift to working from home has also been heavily weighted towards women, with 56% of women versus 38% of men moving their work into the home. (The Guardian, 23 May 2020)*

Mothers appeared in many cases to be locked out of the workforce due to the COVID-19 crisis, due to their caregiving responsibilities. In the UK, the Institute for Fiscal Studies and the University College of London Institute of Education found that working mothers were 47% more likely to permanently lose or resign from their jobs after lockdowns were applied, and 14% were more likely to be furloughed after the start of the crisis (The Guardian, 29 May 2020). In Australia, only 8% of the 325,000 women who lost their job over COVID-19 looked for new jobs; the rest left the labour force to take care of their children (NZ Herald, 4 September 2020).

### **4.6.3 Features of women's employment**

Female dominated industries were those most affected by the COVID-19 crisis, as those sectors were likely to be highly casualised workforces offering low pay rates. In Australia, the three most female-dominated industries, retail, food services, and accommodation, were almost destroyed by the lockdowns (The Guardian, 23 May 2020). Due to virus prevention restrictions and closures in the UK, the lowest-paid workers such as those in hospitality, retail, arts, and the travel and leisure industries, faced industry stagnation five times more than did the highest-paid workers (The Guardian, 28 April 2020).

### **4.6.4 Gender pay gap**

In recent decades, the gender pay gap had reduced, as an increasing number of women entered the labour market. However, COVID-19 hindered the progress of eliminating this pay gap. For example, to help companies combat the economic impacts of COVID-19, the UK Government exempted companies from having to file gender pay gap data in 2020. As a result, a Business in the Community report showed that half the companies in the UK dropped their gender pay gap disclosures (The Guardian, 29 May 2020). Therefore, COVID-19 crisis provided an opportunity for the gender pay gap to widen again. Charlotte Woodworth, a gender equality campaign director in the UK, commented:

*It is hugely disappointing to see so many opted out when the legal requirement was lifted, and a worrying sign of attitudes towards gender equality during the crisis. (The Guardian, 29 May 2020)*

### **4.6.5 Pregnancy and maternity related discrimination**

Increasing numbers of maternity discrimination cases was another widespread problem. In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, employers tended to revert to traditional working practices, and the rights of pregnant women to work were eroded (The Guardian, 29 May 2020). Consequently, women were more likely to have reduced working hours or lose their jobs entirely. As Joeli Brearley, the founder of the Pregnant Then mailer in the UK explained:

*In times of crisis, employers tend to revert to conventional ways of working. Pregnancy is considered a burden, while mothers are seen as distracted and less committed. We are seeing a blatant erosion of employment rights for pregnant women during this crisis, and it's going to get a lot worse before it gets better. (The Guardian, 29 May 2020)*

After childbirth, societal expectations about a mother's responsibility to take care of her child became an excuse to discriminate against women employees. There was a "motherhood penalty," in that employers tended to deny women raises, promotions, and important tasks, or single them out for terminations (The Guardian, 20 July 2020). This unfair treatment of mothers was consistent with the data cited in section 4.7.2, that mothers were more likely than were fathers to be rendered unemployed due to COVID-19.

#### **4.6.6 Subordinate role in workforce**

When facing unemployment caused by the COVID-19 crisis, a two-tier workplace came into existence, in that the men went back to work, and women stayed at home (The Guardian, 29 May 2020). This return of traditional work situations was consistent with the long-existing family pattern of having one single breadwinner and one part-time worker (The Guardian, 23 May 2020). Women, especially those who were married or had children, tended to be subordinated in the workforce, since they were regarded as the primary caregivers in the family. There was an expectation that women would sacrifice their economic livelihoods to provide care at home during the COVID-19 crisis (The Guardian, 7 July 2020). This kind of gendered expectation obstructed the economic participation of both women employees, and employers, worldwide. To take care of children and family, women were forced to have part-time jobs if they wished to work outside the home, and faced unequal pay. Additionally, when the schools and kindergartens closed, women lost support from their employers and had no choice but to stay home. Therefore, as COVID-19 progressed, women assumed an even more subordinate role in the workforce than previously.

#### **4.6.7 Women's primary role became as caregivers**

Lockdowns closed schools and day care centres, leaving children stranded in their homes (The Guardian, 17 April 2020). Parents not only had to look after their children, but also needed to give them home-schooling, playtime and reading activities. However, women apparently put more effort into child care than did men. According to the Office for National Statistics in the UK, women in families with children aged 18 or younger bore more of the increased child-care responsibilities during lockdown than did men, with an average of over three hours a day, compared with two hours for men (The Guardian, 22 July 2020). The lockdowns also prevented families from accessing care services for older

relatives, which and caused women to assume further responsibility for the care of their older relatives (The Guardian, 23 May 2020).

#### **4.6.8 Working from home - work and family conflict**

Due to the lockdowns, many people lost their jobs, and those who did not, mostly had to work at home. Conflicts between work and family responsibility were exposed under the lockdown conditions. As noted, the workload of women with children increased dramatically, as many had to undertake their own paid work commitments, child care, and attend to their children's education.

The closure of the children's day-care centres and schools left 1.52 billion UK students stuck at home (The Guardian, 11 April 2020). Therefore, parents had to juggle their job demand with their new responsibilities of caring for and educating their children. In the UK, parents could claim parental leave for 80% of their wages if they were unable to work because of child care issues (The Guardian, 17 April 2020). However, many employees were afraid to do so because of concerns about being made redundant. Employees with children had to compete with colleagues without children, reminiscent of the same old problems faced by working mothers. In earlier times, before organised childcare was available, it was difficult for women to work:

*This epidemic has been a giant leap back to the dark days before organised childcare; families can muddle through for a bit, but in the longer term home-working with kids underfoot is the 21st-century equivalent of Victorian urchins playing under their mothers' looms in textile mills. (The Guardian, 17 April 2020)*

As many women coped with inflated domestic work and aged-care responsibilities, it was challenging for many to find sufficient energy for paid work. Statistics reflect the gender penalty of the COVID-19 crisis, as during the crisis, women were more likely to focus on family, with 56% of women versus 38% of men shifting to work at home (The Guardian, 23 May 2020).

#### **4.6.9 Mental health issues for women**

Lockdown led to depression and negative emotions, causing some families to separate. Wage reductions and job losses significantly reduced parents' satisfaction with life (The Guardian, 6 July 2020).

However, women who worked from home were more likely to suffer work-family conflicts than were men, resulting in significant mental health problems. Single parents, the vast majority of them women, reported feeling increasingly “lonely and overwhelmed” (The Guardian, 17 April 2020). Also, as the great majority of victims of domestic violence were women, the harm caused by domestic violence further endangered their mental state. Young women appeared to experience more severe mental health issues, and Fiji reported a surge in young people’s suicides during the COVID-19 crisis (Radio NZ, 15 September 2020). Dr Kuruleca, the chair of the National Committee on Prevention of Suicide in Fiji, observed:

*Suicides are responsible for the majority of deaths of younger Fijians. The highest number of deaths in young people or youths between the ages of 15 to 29 is deaths by suicide, more than deaths from road accidents or drowning. (Radio NZ, 15 September 2020)*

Many governments and mental health organisations tried to offer more health care services, calling on people to work together to survive the crisis. However, workers under the age of 25 accounted for nearly 30% of employees in industries such as retail and hospitality that closed as a result of COVID-19 prevention measures, and women were approximately one third more likely than were men to lose their jobs (The Guardian, 6 April 2020). Therefore, young women in the hospitality industry could be one group that suffered severe unemployment and the stress.

## **4.7 Chapter summary**

The first section of this chapter provided a detailed picture of what happened to the hospitality industry during the COVID-19 crisis over eight months. The hospitality industry changed in six ways due to this crisis.

1. The hospitality industry still had low-entry barriers and low job quality during the COVID-19 crisis, but it no longer offered a large number of jobs.
2. Hotel employees needed to follow social-distance restrictions, such as wearing masks at work, and reduced interpersonal interactions between customers and employees.
3. Hospitality work became more demanding because businesses had to comply with governments’ hospitality reopening regulations after the lockdowns.
4. Hospitality workers suffered financial hardship due to underemployment and unemployment caused by COVID-19.

5. COVID-19 prevention measures significantly reduced people's mobility, which is an essential factor for advancing in a hospitality career.
6. In lockdowns, many hospitality employees lost jobs or had to give up work to care for children at home.

The second section explored the effects on women's employment during the COVID-19 crisis. The crisis severely damaged women's job opportunities because the industries affected by the crisis were mainly female-dominated. The hospitality industry was one of the industries most affected by the COVID-19 crisis, so many women working in the hospitality industry experienced the problems described in this chapter. Women working in the hospitality industry lost job opportunities in the COVID-19 crisis. Although the governments launched many support schemes for workers, the negative employment situation of women did not improve. These schemes seemed to have little benefit for women's job opportunities, as many women were obliged to stay at home to care for children and elderly relatives. Furthermore, women faced a resurgence of the gender pay gap and discrimination issues related to pregnancy and inadequate child care provisions. There was a significant return to the traditional social expectation that women would stay at home, and men would stay at work.



## **Chapter 5 Discussion**

### **5.1 Chapter preview**

This chapter addresses the first research question by discussing several specific changes in the characteristics of the hospitality industry caused by COVID-19. The second section addresses the second research question by explaining how a lack of gender lenses, social system problems, and social expectations of women, lead to difficulties with women's employment in the hospitality industry in a COVID-19 context.

### **5.2 Effects of COVID-19 on characteristics of the hospitality industry**

The hospitality industry is highly reliant on social exchanges between employees and customers. Hospitality business owners had to adjust their business models based on governments' requirements to prevent the transmission of COVID-19, but such adjustments frustrated interactions between customers and employees. As a result, the COVID-19 crisis significantly changed some of the characteristics of the hospitality industry.

#### **5.2.1 A less significant employer**

According to the literature, one in ten employees (330 million) worked in the tourism and hospitality-related sector before the COVID-19 crisis (WTTC, 2020). In normal conditions, the hospitality industry can offer a large number of jobs because of its low-entry barrier and flexibility work arrangements. During the COVID-19 crisis, governments' policies for preventing the spread of COVID-19 decreased demand for hospitality services and products. The majority of hospitality business owners had to reduce working hours or close their businesses. Consequently, large numbers of hospitality workers lost their jobs and were unable to return to work during the COVID-19 crisis. The hospitality industry was suddenly no longer a significant employer due to COVID-19.

#### **5.2.2 Aesthetic labour considerations**

Before 2020, the hospitality industry might hire young and attractive women and even sold their 'sexiness' to attract customers (Hearn, 2011; Nickson & Baum, 2017). After lockdowns, hospitality businesses owners changed their business models to meet the

social-distance restrictions required by governments. Contactless takeaway services and wearing masks at work reduced public health risks but also reduced interactions between employees and customers. In a short period of time, customers' focus had shifted from the appearance of their attendants' appearance to one of disease control. The requirement of aesthetic labour in the hospitality industry significantly decreased during the COVID-19 crisis.

### **5.2.3 More demanding work due to COVID-19 preventing restriction**

According to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, hospitality work was already labour-intensive and demanding before the COVID-19 crisis, with long and unsocial working hours (Costa et al., 2017). Therefore, hospitality employees were already under pressure, and the industry suffered high staff turnover (Baum, 2013; Duncan et al., 2013; Wang, 2013). During the COVID-19 crisis, hospitality businesses were required to follow governments' stringent reopening regulations after lockdowns. The reopening regulation standards, such as cleaning all touch points including tables and chairs after each use, required more labour. Therefore, many dimensions of hospitality work could become more demanding in the COVID-19 crisis due to the enhanced hygiene requirements.

### **5.2.4 Financial hardship**

Before COVID-19, hospitality employees were paid low wages (often at local minimum wage levels), and the gender pay gap was a persistent issue in the industry, with women paid less than were men (Baum et al., 2016; Mooney et al. 2017). In the COVID-19 crisis, employees in the hospitality industry faced great financial hardship caused by reduced wages and lost jobs, and some even became homeless. The gender pay inequality was concealed because disclosure requirements related to the gender pay gap were relaxed in the UK in 2020. As hospitality workers' financial hardship amplified, the gender inequalities were likely to intensify due to the COVID-19 crisis (Baum et al., 2020).

### **5.2.5 Less mobility**

Previous studies show that that hospitality careers need high mobility so workers can obtain experiences from different sectors, increase their professional skills, and build core competencies (McCabe & Savery, 2007; Mooney, 2016). However, travel restrictions and border closures applied by governments to defend against the COVID-19 crisis made

people less mobile. As a result, COVID-19 effectively limited the career progression of hospitality industry employees. Furthermore, migrants with high mobility were largely unwanted in the context of COVID-19. Many lost their jobs and were excluded from government support programmes; some as observed faced increased risks of becoming homeless. Although jobs in the hospitality industry with low-entry barriers historically favoured migrants, they were no longer as friendly to migrants in the new COVID-19 context.

### **5.2.6 Issues with work-life balance**

Before the COVID-19 crisis, the flexibility and part-time nature of hospitality employment provided opportunity opportunities for women to cover their work and family responsibilities at the same time (Costa et al., 2017). During the COVID-19 crisis, kindergarten and school closures forced children to stay at home, which increased family responsibilities for parents. Women working in the hospitality industry were not able to access childcare arrangements, and had to choose between paid work, and staying at home to take care of their children. These problems reduced the work-life balance of employed hospitality industry employees, predominately women, in the COVID-19 crisis. The mental health issues caused by work-family conflicts, affecting their well-being (see Cho & Tay, 2016).

### **5.2.7 Summary**

COVID-19 changed some of the characteristics of the hospitality industry, which began to have a new health-control focus. The hospitality industry was no longer able to provide accessible jobs for different groups as it had previously, but the nature of hospitality work became more demanding. Issues around hospitality employment such as low pay, the gender pay gap, and work-family conflict, were intensified within a very short time period. The preference for employees seen to be suited to working in the hospitality industry also changed, as evidenced by lowered aesthetic labour requirements and restrictions on mobility.

### **5.3 The effects of the pandemic on women working in the hospitality industry**

In the COVID-19 crisis, women hospitality workers faced all the issues faced by other groups of employees in the industry, as explained in the previous chapter. However, women working in hospitality accepted more family responsibilities at home and had fewer opportunities to stay in the workforce. In the COVID-19 crisis, women faced a ‘pink recession’ and were unable to return to work, thus consistent with the literature describing their greater vulnerability to crises. Women were those most likely to leave the workforce after the crisis. The International Labour Office (2010) showed that in the GFC of 2008, most industries in the US were affected, resulting in widespread unemployment. Women’s share of unemployment is larger than is men’s in various industries, such as the hospitality industry (International Labour Office, 2010). Women working in hospitality are furthermore vulnerable to crisis, since they tend to have part-time and seasonal jobs, which are the first to disappear in times of crisis (Baum, 2013). This section discusses why women working in the hospitality industry were vulnerable to the COVID-19 crisis and how they were disadvantaged in the workforce.

#### **5.3.1 Barriers for women working in the hospitality industry**

According to the literature, a lack of a gender lens in the hospitality industry led to the glass ceiling in women’s careers in the hospitality industry (Carvalho et al., 2019). Hospitality organisations do not set organisational structures and promotion schemes from a woman’s perspective (Simpson & Kumra, 2016). In the COVID-19 crisis, although governments enacted many support programmes, the effects of these programmes were different for distinct groups. As shown in the data, many were poorly designed support schemes that left migrant workers, historically dominated by low waged migrant women (Baum, 2013) without support, even though they were those most in need of such support,. Similarly, for women workers, the support schemes formulated by the governments did not effectively help them return to their workplaces.

The invisible barriers to women returning to hospitality work were largely caused by such inadequate support schemes. Support schemes for employees lacked the necessary gender lens to consider the difficult situations of women resulting from the COVID-19 crisis. The unequal job opportunities created between men and women provide evidence of how support schemes may reinforce existing inequality. As a result, women workers may be

disadvantaged. It was challenging for women working in the hospitality industry to go back to work while their children were at home, despite wage subsidies and potentially job opportunities.

### **5.3.2 Social system problems**

As mentioned in the literature review, hospitality organisational structures and certain organisational practices favour masculine norms and make some jobs inherently challenging for women workers. Women generally work at the lowest levels of hospitality hierarchies, while men hold the most senior positions (Mooney & Ryan, 2009; Mooney et al. 2017). With such masculine norms, it is challenging for women to break with subordinate status expectations and become part of senior management ranks or have a career as men do (Carvalho et al., 2019). For example, women working in the hospitality industry are disadvantaged in the promotion due to society's stereotypical image of women workers as being less capable than men workers (Heilman, 2012). Working women who are pregnant and have children suffer even more discrimination and neglect (Little et al., 2015; Woolnough & Redshaw, 2016). Society tends to attribute this injustice to women's responsibility to care for their families while ignoring the fact that the societal system does not provide women with the opportunity to be treated fairly.

In addition, frequently, social systems lack women in decision-making positions who can promote social change and give women equal opportunities in the workplace. According to the literature, women's representation in management can be a powerful resource to help change organisational structures and challenge gender relations in an organisation (Carvalho, 2017). In the COVID-19 crisis, the poorly designed support schemes seemed to be gender blind and were not helpful for women. Even though there was a great deal of news about women losing jobs opportunities during the COVID-19 crisis, there were no specific policies to help them deal with these wicked problems. Therefore, it is feasible that a lack of women in senior roles in organisations that decided the policies and schemes could be part of the New Zealand social system's problems, directly contributing to women's weakness, disadvantaged position in employment during the COVID-19 crisis.

### **5.3.3 Social expectations of women**

According to the literature, gender-based stereotypes of women are prevalent in the hospitality industry. Women are stereotyped as prioritising their family responsibilities (Mooney, 2009). The findings of this study showed there was an intense social expectation that women would sacrifice their economic viability to provide care at home during the COVID-19 crisis. This social expectation is a manifestation of the gender stereotype that women give priority to their families. Women were more likely to stay at home to take care of children due to kindergarten and school closures, and voluntarily reduced their working hours or shifted to working at home. Historically, women have tended to find part-time jobs to support their family (WTTC, 2020). During the COVID-19 crisis, The findings showed it was clear that women were more likely than were men to focus on their family as the major caregivers to support their families.

Some of the data suggested that women's increased responsibilities for childcare led to a situation in which men returned to their workplaces after the lockdowns, but women stayed at home. This situation reprises the traditional family pattern of a full-time working father and part-time working mother and is a long-standing issue in women's employment, particularly in the hospitality industry (Mooney & Ryan, 2009). The majority of women chose to focus on their families, leading to higher unemployment and fewer job opportunities for women than for men.

Mass media is an important medium for disseminating the social expectations of women. In collecting data to answer the research questions, some words had particularly high frequency, such as "caregiver," "family focus," "children," and "household." The frequency of these words in the media focussed attention on women's family responsibilities. This has the potential to lead to even stronger social expectations that women will sacrifice their job opportunities for their families. In this way, the mass media reinforces the gender-based stereotypes of women.

## **5.4 Chapter summary**

Since COVID-19 prevention measures blocked interactions between people, some of the characteristics of the hospitality industry changed, resulting in differences in the business models and employment experiences of the industry. For employees in the hospitality industry, existing issues such as demanding work, low payments, gender pay gaps, and

work-life conflicts, were amplified by the COVID-19 crisis. The preferences of employees and career paths changed in the COVID-19 crisis.

As part of the hospitality workforce, women hospitality workers were disadvantaged in employment; COVID-19 exacerbated the inequalities that already existed in women's employment. These inequalities can stem from the lack of a gender lens and absence of women's representation in designing policies, inadequate societal systems not providing women with the opportunity to be treated fairly and the social expectations that women should give priority to family. The last two factors derive from gendered assumptions about women's reproductive responsibilities. The result of these negative influences made visible in the findings, included decreased working hours, loss of jobs, and mental health issues. Women hospitality workers' lives and work were negatively changed by the COVID-19 crisis and given the profound impacts on hospitality businesses employment patterns, the effects on work patterns may be far reaching and enduring.

## **Chapter 6 Conclusion**

### **6.1 Chapter preview**

This chapter first introduces the research objectives of investigating hospitality women workers' employment in the COVID-19 crisis, and presents key findings to show the significance of the study. Then, the theoretical and practical implications are explained. Finally, this chapter presents the limitations of the study and recommendations for future study, based on the research findings and research methodology.

### **6.2 Research objectives and key findings**

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of COVID-19 on women working in the hospitality industry. To better understand the impacts, this study investigated changes in the characteristics of the hospitality industry and how the COVID-19 crisis reduced women workers' job opportunities in the hospitality industry.

It was found that COVID-19 was initially regarded as a health crisis, but later as an economic crisis, which caused governments to adopt many policies to deal with the problem. These policies prevented or reduced social interactions between people, leading to changes in the hospitality business model, the preferences of employees, and career paths. Furthermore, existing problems such as demanding work, low pay, the gender pay gap, and work-life conflict in the hospitality industry were aggravated by the COVID-19 crisis.

Women working in the hospitality industry were forced to or voluntarily stayed home and cared for their families due to their roles as caregivers and other family responsibilities, which resulted in their losing job opportunities in the COVID-19 crisis. The reasons whereby women's employment in the hospitality industry was negatively impacted, derived from the lack of a gender lens in designing policies, social system problems, and the social expectations of women staying at home. Such social expectation is another manifestation of the persistent obstacles to women's career development in the hospitality industry. The enduring gender-based stereotype that women prioritise family responsibilities became a reality in the COVID-19 crisis, when women stayed at home but men went back to work. Gender barriers women faced in their employment in the hospitality industry were significantly intensified by the public health crisis.



### **6.3 Theoretical implications**

This study set out to explore the effects of the novel COVID-19 coronavirus on women working in the hospitality industry. Since the COVID-19 crisis is a new and dynamic external threat to the hospitality industry, it was necessary to investigate the impacts it had on the workforce. This study contributes to the literature related to gender-based stereotypes' impacts on women's employment in the hospitality industry. Since there are various perspectives to explain discrimination issues in the hospitality industry, the gender-based stereotype can particularly add new knowledge to existing theories by using a critical perspective. In studies on the hospitality industry, mass media is rarely used as data sources. This study shows that mass media sources, which are less used in research, could give new and instantly available information compared to academic sources. Such sources provide a valuable "snapshot" of dynamic social events. Practical implications

The findings show that the effect of COVID-19 made it challenging for many women to return to the workforce. Governmental policies designs did not always provide comprehensive solutions. Therefore, for future policies designs, governments should consider the feasibility of implementing policies for different groups that are disadvantaged in employment, such as women and migrants. Masculine stereotypes of women are persistent and disadvantage women's employment and career paths, particularly in a public health crisis. Hospitality organisations should consider these factors when setting organisational structures, and give women the same opportunities as they give men. Since the hospitality industry is no longer helpful for meeting work and family responsibilities simultaneously, women who seek jobs might well be drawn to those in other industries. Hospitality employees might also wish to consider new work careers post COVID-19, since their mobility may be limited for some time.

### **6.4 Limitations of the study**

The limitations of the study come from several dimensions. First, this research investigated COVID-19's impact over just eight months, because of the time limitation of writing a dissertation. The COVID-19 crisis is continuing, and the new impacts it may have on the hospitality industry are unpredictable. Therefore, the findings of this study can only show the impacts of COVID-19 at the time of the study. Secondly, this study used an interpretivist paradigm, which meant the researcher's bias might have affected the findings. Thirdly, data for this study came from mass media sources, which means the

media's attitudes may have affected the findings. The media's apparent preference for linking women with family responsibilities has been discussed in the previous chapter. Fourthly, in the early stages of COVID-19 during this dissertation, few academic studies were available to enhance the discussion of the findings.

## **6.5 Recommendations for future study**

First, considering the hospitality industry is no more a significant employer, future studies can investigate what sectors can accommodate the sudden release of a large labour force from the hospitality industry. Second, the findings show that the preferences of employees in the hospitality industry have changed, so future studies can investigate what features the hospitality industry prefers in the context of COVID-19. Third, as mobility is limited in a COVID-19 crisis, career paths in the hospitality industry might change. Future studies can investigate what career paths of hospitality employees can take post COVID-19. The researcher of this study hopes that a renewed post COVID-19 hospitality industry can fairly provide new and rewarding career opportunities to hospitality workers.

## **6.6 Closing statement**

There are a lot of difficulties experienced by researchers when doing research. I t found that the most challenging part was keeping critical and putting personal bias away when writing the dissertation. additionally, in exploratory research, it is not easy to find the connection between finding and literature. I also learned that it is important and rewarding to persist in the face of such challenges. (?)

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Selections from The Guardian

Adams, R. (2020, July 2). Women took on bulk of childcare during British lockdown, study finds. *The Guardian*.

Butler, S. (2020, April 6). Coronavirus lockdown to hit low paid, young and women hardest, warns IFS. *The Guardian*.

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Chanel, S. (2020, April 15). It's catastrophic': Fiji's colossal tourism sector devastated by coronavirus. *The Guardian*.

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Farr, M. (2020, April 19). Unemployment could go as high as 16% amid coronavirus as low-income earners worst hit. *The Guardian*.

Gentleman, A. (2020, April 27). London is so strange and sad: The sacked hospitality workers sleeping rough. *The Guardian*.

Graham-Harrison, E., Giuffrida, A., Smith, H. and Ford, L. (2020, March 28). Lockdowns around the world bring rise in domestic violence. *The Guardian*.

Graham-Harrison, E. (2020, February 6). China ambassador says UK overreacting with coronavirus advice. *The Guardian*.

The Guardian. (2020, May 1). *Australia's coronavirus lockdown – the first 50 days*.

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Holpuch, A. (2020, March 25). What am I supposed to do?: COVID-19 sparks mass unemployment across US. *The Guardian*.

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Karp, P. (2020 July 6). Australian women twice as likely as men to be 'discouraged workers' after COVID-19 job loss. *The Guardian*.

Knaus, C. (2020 April 7). Coronavirus crisis has had staggering impact on Australian businesses, data reveals. *The Guardian*.

Martin, S. (2020, March 22). What Australia's \$189bn coronavirus economic rescue package means for you. *The Guardian*.

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Partington, R. (2020, April 28). UK's lowest paid most at risk during COVID-19 crisis, report finds. *The Guardian*.

Ribeiro, C. (2020, May 23). Pink-collar recession: how the COVID-19 crisis could set back a generation of women. *The Guardian*.

Roy, E. A. (2020, July 9). New Zealand police to patrol quarantine hotels after breakouts. *The Guardian*.

Roy, E. A. (2020, Feb 17). Exempt Chinese students from coronavirus travel ban, New Zealand universities urge. *The Guardian*.

Shakespeare, E. (2020, July 20). How coronavirus is widening the UK gender pay gap. *The Guardian*.

Smee, B. (2020, March 3). Australian hotels face ruin if coronavirus impact on tourism worsens, industry chiefs say. *The Guardian*.

Stewart, H. (2020, May 27). How will England's coronavirus test-and-trace system work? *The Guardian*.

Topping, A. (2020, May 29). COVID-19 crisis could set women back decades, experts fear. *The Guardian*.

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Welgemoed, D. (2020, May 18). Many restaurants won't make it through COVID-19. Those that do should reinvent the industry. *The Guardian*.

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Wood, Z. (2020, August 4) Pizza Express closures take hospitality job losses to 17,000. *The Guardian*.

## **Appendix B: Selections from the New Zealand Herald**

Bonnet, G. (2020, September 19). COVID-19 coronavirus - New Zealand's historic border closure six months on. *NZ Herald*.

Clark, P. (2020, September 4). Women are in the firing line in this 'pink recession'. *NZ Herald*.

Collins, S. (2020, April 1). COVID-19 coronavirus: Hotel workers' wages cut to \$585 a week, asked to use annual leave to top up pay. *NZ Herald*.

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Johnston, K. (2020, May 17). COVID-19 Coronavirus: Restaurant chain Good Group makes more than 150 workers redundant. *NZ Herald*.

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NZ Herald. (2020, April 8). *COVID-19 coronavirus: 'Hospitality is in crisis,' Restaurant Association says.*

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Robson, S. (2020, September 9). COVID-19 coronavirus: Hundreds lose relief payment, but no jobs in sight. *NZ Herald*.

Shaw, A. (2020, August 14). COVID-19 coronavirus: Hospitality businesses call for takeaways to be permitted at alert level 4. *NZ Herald*.

Williams, J. C., (2020, May 21). COVID-19 coronavirus: The pandemic has exposed the fallacy of the 'ideal worker'. *NZ Herald*.

Shaw, A. (2020, May 21). COVID-19 coronavirus: What the hospitality industry needs for a swift recovery. *NZ Herald*.

Shaw, A. (2020, June 6). COVID-19 coronavirus: What level1 means for NZ hospitality. *NZ Herald*.



## **Appendix C: Selections from Radio New Zealand**

Bond, J. (2020, August 19). Auckland under alert level 3: Council predicts 250 jobs lost per day. *Radio NZ*.

Cardwell, H. (2020, August 13). Alert level 2 familiar but concerning for Wellington hospitality industry. *Radio NZ*.

Cardwell, H. (2020, September 4). Woman unable to receive COVID relief due to casual work. *Radio NZ*.

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