# ANALYZING THE APPLICATION OF CLEANLINESS, HEALTH, SAFETY, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY (CHSE) CERTIFICATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: PERSPECTIVES OF HOTEL MANAGERS

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**Abstract**

*Purpose* – This research aims to analyze the application of cleanliness, health, safety, and environmental sustainability (CHSE) certification in the hotel business sector during the COVID-19 pandemic from the managers' perspective.

*Methodology/Design/Approach* – A qualitative research method was adopted and data were collected through in-depth interviews with 35 hotel managers. Six main themes were identified in the thematic analysis, including hotel business conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic, health conditions, cleanliness, safety measures and procedures, environmental sustainability practices, and perceptions of managers about CHSE certification.

*Findings* – Results indicated that health protocol standards were the top priority of current management, followed by cleanliness and procedures to maintain guest and hotel employee safety.

*Originality of the research* – This research provided theoretical implications regarding hotel business certification and standards during a pandemic, with cleanliness, health, safety, and environment being the top priorities. Operational implications showed that CHSE certification provided operational standards for the hotel industry during the pandemic and ensured guest safety and comfort. Based on these results, further research is recommended to obtain data from regulatory agencies that set certification policies, including the government, hotel guests, and hotel staff.

**Keywords:** Hotel certification, CHSE, hotel quality assurance, standard operating procedures, recovery strategies, performance evaluation

## INTRODUCTION

The Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) outbreak in the last two years has tremendously affected the tourism service business sector due to its inability to avoid the high intensity of travel and meetings between individuals. This sector is undeniably affected by the implementation of massive social restrictions, quarantine processes, and stay-at-home policies (Abbas et al., 2021). However, the tourism industry has adopted various measures to provide safety and security guarantees to tourists and customers during the pandemic. These include enhanced cleaning and sanitization, social distancing measures, face mask requirements, health screenings, contactless services, training and education, as well as collaboration with health authorities (Shin & Kang, 2020; Abbas et al., 2021; Awan et al., 2021). One significant aspect of this collaboration is between the tourism industry and local health authorities, focusing on implementing the latest health guidelines. To achieve this, an audit process with a certification program mechanism has been adopted (Anichiti et al., 2021; Çetin & Coşkuner, 2021; Dale et al., 2021; Syahrin, 2021). The certification program is defined as a voluntary procedure that assesses audits and gives written assurance regarding the compliance of a facility, product, process, or service with specific standards. It also awards a marketable logo to those that meet or exceed the baseline (Graci & Dodds, 2015, 201).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia is one of the countries that have implemented the certification program. As one of the tourism destinations in Asia-pacific that have been severely affected by the pandemic, the Indonesian government took the initiative to collaborate with academics, business associations, and tourism professionals to compile standard guidelines for health protocols, known as Cleanliness, Health, Safety, and Environmental Sustainability (CHSE) guideline (Illiyyina et al., 2021; Sanjaya & Sari, 2021). The CHSE guideline is based on the directives outlined by the World Health Organization (WHO) and World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), as stated in the Decree of the Minister of Health of Indonesia. In the initial stage, the Indonesian government has provided standard guidelines for hotel and restaurant business sector health protocols (Kemenparekraf, 2020; Aprilia et al., 2021). Subsequently, an audit is provided and the CHSE certification is issued for tourism service businesses that guaranteed cleanliness, health, safety, and environmental sustainability for tourists (Aprilia et al., 2021). The CHSE certification process is carried out through an audit process by an independent business certification body for registered hotels. It is issued to tourism business actors who meet the minimum standard of 85% by the business

certification agency with the "I do care" label from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Mutiarin et al., 2021). The Indonesian government is expected to continue implementing the CHSE protocol post-COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, hotels will be required to adhere to strict health protocols such as temperature checks for guests upon arrival, providing hand sanitizer throughout the hotel premises, and ensuring that all staff wear masks at all times. Hotels must also ensure that their rooms are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected between guests.

The hotel sector has resumed operations after announcing the strict measures and health protocol rules (Çetin & Coşkuner, 2021). However, reopening the business still poses a new challenge for the hospitality sector. This makes it necessary for hotel management to consider the legal developments in handling the virus globally and locally. The managers also need to provide quality assurance regarding the safety of products and services for guests through continuous re-evaluation (Gössling et al., 2021). Currently, there is limited information regarding the implementation of CHSE certification in the hotel business sector amid the COVID-19 pandemic in the past year, specifically from the perspective of hotel managers. Therefore, this research aims to determine the response of hotel managers to implementing cleanliness, health, safety, and environmental sustainability certification standards during the pandemic. This threefold research is carried out to evaluate the functions and duties of hotel managers in dealing with the pandemic. Secondly, examine the application of CHSE certification in the hotel business sector from each of its components, namely cleanliness, health, safety, and environmental sustainability. Thirdly, determine responses and input from hotel managers regarding CHSE certification.


## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the post-pandemic era, sanitation and cleanliness have become central issue for the tourism industry. Several research have assessed the efficacy of sanitation and cleanliness towards the positive perceptions of customers and the continuity of the hotel businesses (Jiang & Wen, 2020; Awan et al., 2021; Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2021). The level of exposure has been found to directly affect the actual cleanliness provided by the hotel staff and the perceived cleanliness received by their guest. Actual cleanliness in a hotel is the tangible level of hygiene and sanitation maintained by the staff. This includes regular cleaning and disinfection of surfaces, as well as providing adequate hand sanitizer throughout the premises. The actual cleanliness can be influenced by several factors such as the visibility of staff members engaging in cleaning activities and the absence of visible signs of dirt or grime in public areas (Magnini & Zehrer, 2021).

Perceived cleanliness is how guests perceive the level of cleanliness in a hotel. Some key elements that influence the perception of guests include visual appearance, which is often assessed based on visual cues (Gupta et al., 2022). The guests search for clean and well-maintained surfaces, spotless linens, tidy rooms, and organized public areas. Any visible signs of dirt, stains, or clutter can create a negative impression and suggest a lack of cleanliness. Secondly, sanitary facilities, where guests pay attention to the cleanliness of the bathroom, including the toilet, sink, bathtub/shower, and amenities such as towels and toiletries. These areas are expected to be thoroughly cleaned, free of mold or mildew, and equipped with fresh supplies. Thirdly, the cleanliness of public areas, such as lobbies, hallways, elevators, and dining areas (Noor et al., 2022). Guests notice whether these spaces are regularly cleaned and free of debris (Neog, 2021). Previous study also observe the presence of hand sanitizing stations, which can enhance the perception of cleanliness during the pandemic (Bagnera et al,. 2022). Yu et al., (2021) stated that the criteria for cleaning in hotel operations include special air cleaners, washing linens with an antibacterial system such as disinfectants, and alcohol-based sanitizers. All service areas, including guest rooms, restaurants, and food and beverage production are frequently cleaned by hotel staff or partially assisted by outsourced professional hygiene companies (Atadil & Lu, 2021; Çetin & Coşkuner, 2021). Moreover, hotel management should strive to meet and exceed cleanliness standards to ensure guest satisfaction and maintain a positive reputation (Paulose & Shakeel, 2022).

In the post-COVID-19 era, hotels have placed a significant emphasis on health aspects to ensure the safety and well-being of guests. Health has become a major concern during the pandemic for travelers and hotel businesses. Some hotels still carry out their operational health-related activities through the initiatives and policies implemented by the management. International hotel chains, including Accor Group, Hilton, Marriott, and Hyatt have introduced programs such as the "All safe", "Clean stay", "Council Cleanliness", and "Safety first, welfare always" programs (Baltescu, 2020). To prioritize health and safety, hotel management needs to implement various health procedures in the form of personal protective equipment, such as masks, face shields, hand gloves, and sneeze guards. These measures are necessary, specifically for workers on the front line because they are the spearhead of hotel operations (Sönmez et al., 2020). A detailed communication process related to health aspects is also needed in health information and preventive measures, both with guests and hotel employees, such as marking and warning signs as well as health posters. Furthermore, the screening process is carried out by collecting administrative data at room reservation, check-in, and requesting medical history documents related to COVID-19 tests, vaccinations, guest travel history, and sick leave for the employee (Atadil & Lu, 2021). These data can be supported by proof of hygiene care or certification, indicating its readiness for the virus (Estevão et al., 2022).

Safety and security are crucial considerations for hotel management. These two indicators are essential in tourist travel decisions and are key factors in restoring client confidence in the hotel (Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2012). Hotel management can implement various procedures in designing a safe customer experience, which consists of reorganizing internal work, reducing customer waiting time, as well as protecting and ensuring hygiene. Others include adequate staff training, social distancing, and

servicescape, such as reducing the number of guests on one floor, reduction in the seating capacity, and maintaining distance (Çetin & Coşkuner, 2021; Rueda López et al., 2021). According to preliminary researches, hotels invest in digital technology and innovation such as contactless facial check-in, AI temperature check services, and keyless room access, a touchless digital food menu, robotic housekeeping technology, and room service delivery. These advancements aim to enhance safety and security aspects, specifically in creating unforgettable experiences without physical interaction between service providers and customers during the pandemic (Lau, 2020; Lee & Lee, 2020; Shin & Kang, 2020; Awan et al., 2021).

The uncertainty caused by the pandemic has increased awareness and support for environmental conservation from the perspective of customers and hotel employees (Jian et al., 2020). Currently, sustainable tourism is a significant concern as the global community recognizes the need to address the environmental, social, and economic impacts of tourism. Sustainable tourism products encompass "everything a tourism company offers to meet the requirements of visitors, considering the needs of the company and meeting the specific values of sustainable development" (Baltescu, 2020, 39).

According to dos Santos et al. (2017), sustainability criteria in the hotel sector are related to collaboration with networks, such as humans, nature, and social relations with support from various parties. These include the environment, economy, socio-political culture, and responsibility supported by the ability of organizations to adopt environmentally friendly and socially responsible strategies and operations. This is to minimize the negative impact of the hotel industry on the environment and local communities as well as consistent implementation. According to previous research, hotels that apply the principles of environmental sustainability focus on three significant aspects. The first is their environmental management system, followed by implementing friendly operational activities, such as waste management and energy consumption. The third is the green initiatives of the company through various forms of initiatives such as policies in purchasing environmentally friendly products, conducting training for employees, informing ecological arguments in marketing campaigns and reports, as well as energy and water-saving (Claver-Cortés et al., 2007; Buffa et al., 2018). Several initiatives have been carried out to protect the environment of hotels through green management practices such as renewable energy, water and waste treatment plans, including reuse and recycling (Kularatne et al., 2019). Additionally, hotels are expected to use environmentally-friendly equipment as well as materials and apply the principles of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Replace concepts for sustainability and financial benefit (Singh et al., 2014).

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This research employed a qualitative approach using semi-structured in-depth interviews with 35 hotel managers from 30 CHSE-certified independent, local, and international chain hotels. Thematic analyses were used, such as "an accessible and systematic procedure for generating codes and common themes within qualitative data. This method enabled the identification of patterns within and across data concerning the experience, views, perspectives, behaviour, and practices of respondents. Additionally, this research encompassed an eexperiential aspect to understand the thought, feelings, and actions of respondents (Clarke & Braun, 2017).
The purposive sampling method provided respondents with an in-depth picture of the data regarding the actual conditions (Brown, 2005; Creswell & Poth, 2016). The purposive criteria used to determine managers to be interviewed included the selection of those who are experienced in handling the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Secondly, opinions from those with certified CHSE and thirdly, managers who can represent each department in the hotel according to their competence related to the standards and guidelines.

Table 1: **Interview Protocols**

| Parts | Questions |
|---|---|
| **I. Introduction** | This research aims to analyze the implementation of hygiene, health, safety, and environmental sustainability (CHSE) certification in the hotel business sector from the perspective of hotel managers |
|  |  |
| **II. Demographic characteristics of respondents** | **Q1**. Could you share your background and job experiences? <br> **Q2**. Could you explain your roles and job responsibilities, how long you have been in this position? <br> **Q3**. Could you tell us about the nature of your assignment in hotel operations during the COVID-19 Pandemic? |

| III. COVID-19 and the implementation of CHSE certification in the hotel business | **Q4.** Could you describe the condition of your hotel business before COVID-19, and how about now?<br>**Q5.** What do you know about the CHSE certification program for hotels?<br>**Q6.** Can you explain more about the hygiene implementation procedures that are currently being carried out at your hotel property?<br>**Q7.** Can you explain more about the health implementation procedures that are currently being carried out at your hotel property?<br>**Q8.** Can you explain more about the security implementation procedures that are currently being carried out at your hotel property?<br>**Q9.** Can you explain more about the procedures for implementing environmental preservation and sustainability carried out at your current hotel property?<br>**Q10.** What is the operational condition of your hotel property after participating in the CHSE certification program? |
|---|---|
| **IV. Closing** | **Q11.** Is there any comment you would like to convey at the end of this interview session? |

Source: Authors' own work

The respondents were selected through invitations distributed within the network owned by the certified hotels. Invitations were sent via e-mail as well as text messages and confirmed through a telephone call to schedule an interview session with respondents. Out of 65 managers contacted, only 35 (54%) responded. The literature suggested data saturation can be achieved with 5–25 interviews (Guest et al., 2006; Creswell and Poth, 2016). In this research, the data saturation occurred at the 30th stage when all heads of departments, ranging from back of the house and front of the house executive-level managers, were interviewed. The interviews were conducted based on a protocol consisting of 4 parts and 11 questions, as shown in Table 1. The interview process was carried out by telephone and online ZOOM meetings from June to September 2021, at approximately 41 minutes.

Table 2: **Respondent Demographics**

| ID | **Managerial Position** | **Years in Industry** | **Type of hotel** |
|---|---|---|---|
| M1 | General Manager | 21 Years | Local Chain |
| M2 | Director of Human Resources | 20 Years | International Chain |
| M3 | Financial Controller | 15 Years | International Chain |
| M4 | Purchasing Manager | 30 Years | International Chain |
| M5 | Public Relation Manager | 10 Years | International Chain |
| M6 | Food and Beverage Manager | 15 Years | Independent |
| M7 | General Manager | 28 Years | International Chain |
| M8 | Operation Manager | 18 Years | International Chain |
| M9 | Director of Sales and Marketing | 21 Years | International Chain |
| M10 | Asst. Food and Beverage Manager | 9 Years | Local Chain |
| M11 | Front Office Manager | 18 Years | Local Chain |
| M12 | Human Resources Manager | 18 Years | International Chain |
| M13 | General Manager | 25 Years | International Chain |
| M14 | Front Office Manager | 8 Years | International Chain |
| M15 | General Manager | 15 Years | Local Chain |
| M16 | Training and Development Manager | 23 Years | Local Chain |
| M17 | General Manager | 19 Years | Local Chain |
| M18 | Restaurant Manager | 15 years | Local Chain |
| M19 | Financial Controller | 21 Years | International Chain |
| M20 | General Manager | 30 Years | Independent |
| M21 | Learning and Development Manager | 11 Years | International Chain |
| M22 | General Manager | 29 Years | Local Chain |
| M23 | Executive Chef | 28 Years | Local Chain |
| M24 | Executive Chef | 26 Years | Local Chain |
| M25 | General Manager | 29 Years | Local Chain |
| M26 | Executive Assistant Manager | 20 Years | Independent |

| ID | Managerial Position | Years in Industry | Type of hotel |
|---|---|---|---|
| M27 | Chief Security | 18 Years | Independent |
| M28 | Vice President | 17 years | Independent |
| M29 | Chief Engineer | 20 Years | Independent |
| M30 | Executive Assistant Manager | 15 years | International Chain |
| M31 | Chief Security | 25 Years | International Chain |
| M32 | Chief Engineer | 19 Years | International Chain |
| M33 | General Manager | 17 Years | International Chain |
| M34 | Chief Security | 16 Years | International Chain |
| M35 | Chief Engineer | 32 years | International Chain |

Source: Authors' own work

The demographic characteristics in Table 2 categorized respondents into three groups, namely: 1) managers who work in the back of the house, such as accounting, human resources, sales and marketing, security, executive chef, and engineering, comprising 16 people (45%), 2) executive managers, such as general manager (GM), executive assistant manager (EAM), and vice president, comprising 12 people (35%), and 3) those who work in the front of the house, such as front office manager, executive chef, food and beverage manager, operation manager (OM), and public relations manager, which comprises 7 people (20%). The respondents represented three hotel categories, namely five-star (26%), four-star (57%), and three-star (17%). Based on the type, 77% of the hotels are located in urban areas and 23% in resorts. Meanwhile, 52% of the hotels are part of the international chain, followed by 31% local, and 17% are independently managed.

The interviews were conducted with the consent of each respondent for further analysis. The transcript was translated into English through a professional translator to maintain the sentence structure and meaning of the respondents. The interview transcripts were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis (QDAS) software Atlas.ti version 8. Subsequently, the coding process was carried out by two researchers who have experience in the hospitality industry. Based on the results of the data analysis, five main themes were found, and each was explained in the discussion as well as the findings section.

## 3. FINDINGS

Based on interviews with all hotel managers about their operational conditions during the pandemic, it can be concluded that the occupancy rate had not returned to the ideal level due to the tightening of international and domestic travel. According to the government recommendations, the capacity of the hotel had been reduced to below 50%, including guests, restaurants, and meeting rooms. The respondents further revealed that the closure of hotel operations during the lockdown, the absence of activities, and the unavailability of management to cover operational costs contributed to the decrease. The following is an excerpt from one of the hotel managers:

*"With the implementation of strict health protocols, we have to make several investments, such as routine costs on employee vaccinations and periodic swab tests to ensure they stay in good health to serve guests. Therefore, the financial impact is quite large." (M33)*

Business conditions and hotel operations changed during the pandemic, which was related to the expectations of guests and the ability to manage operations during a crisis as follows:

*"There is a change in guests' mind set who used to consider only budget, time, and comfort. However, they now emphasize more on health and safety, which is one of our turning points to provide a healthy and comfortable accommodation." (M25)*

*"Now we should be open to learning something new, to support every other department rapidly. The agility leader needs to work together in dealing with this crisis by understanding every employee and changing their work schedule." (M16)*

The majority of respondents also mentioned that the staff was very concerned with the sustainability and future of the company. Some have failed to extend their contracts and the number of laid-off employees affected by staffing shortages, leading to the maximization of existing resources by hotel management. Teamwork between staff was getting more solid because they have a better understanding of the challenges associated with each job and are required to adjust to current job rotation and multitasking conditions.

In the main part of the interview, five themes related to hotel operational conditions during the pandemic were identified. The aspects most mentioned by 35 respondents included: 1) health, 2) cleanliness, 3) safety, 4) environmental sustainability, and 5) their perceptions regarding the application of CHSE certification for hotels.

### 3.1. Theme one: Health compliance standard

The theme that was frequently mentioned by respondents was related to the aspect of health conditions in the hotel, as presented in Table 3. The theme was divided into four aspects, namely the health protocol, attitude of staff, medical preparedness, and communication of importance to guests as well as staff. Some managers considered the importance of mental health and psychological factors of the staff.

*"Change focuses on three aspects of employee training, namely skill, knowledge, and attitude. The portion that needs my skills is reduced because many employees are on leave and some are working from home, in line with government recommendations. Therefore, the training material is more on soft skills and psychological aspects, specifically how to deal with COVID-19." (M21)*

Table 3: **Health compliance standard**

| Themes and Codes (*f*) | N | Examples (Quotes) |
|---|---|---|
| Health Protocol (f=73) | 31 | *"From a management perspective, we strictly enforce health protocols with the mandatory conduction of a swab test every seven days." (M9)* |
| Health attitude of hotel staff (f=41) | 24 | *"Hotel staff needs to follow procedures in temperature checking, vaccinations, correct use of masks, and hand washing procedures." (M2)* |
| Health communication (f=34) | 24 | *"We inform guests on the registration form by asking for the guest's medical and travel histories." (M25)* |
| Health medical preparedness (f=35) | 19 | *"We cooperate with a special laboratory to test for COVID-19. We also have in-house clinics with nurses who are on standby to perform antigen tests. The clinic is open from nine in the morning to twelve at night." (M2)* |

Source: Authors' own work

The respondents also considered emphasized the importance of conducting an educational and communication process related to health issues for both employees and guests. The managers also explained that information and communication regarding this health aspect had been uploaded on the website and social media platforms of the hotel.

*"The awareness steps start from the employees and ensure better implementation of the standards. We provided information in the form of banners in public areas and lobbies that hotel properties have been officially certified by the government. This program acts as a guide." (M11)*

Regarding medical preparedness at the hotel, the respondents stated that in dealing with emergency cases for both employees and guests who indicated symptoms of the virus, they cooperated with the nearest hospital or clinic.

*"We have an agreement with various nearby hospitals because when something goes wrong with a guest, we have to move fast." (M16)*

### 3.2. Theme two: Perceived cleanliness

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the change in handling cleanliness in hotels was conducted using several detailed guidelines on customer use spaces. These included guest rooms, restaurants, lobby areas, and other public areas, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**. Perceived Cleanliness

| Themes and Codes (*f*) | N | Examples (Quotes) |
|---|---|---|
| Cleanliness of customer use space (f=35) | 25 | *"Previously, stripping for the cleanliness of hotel areas is only carried out two to three times but is currently conducted twice. In terms of volume, it is conducted as often as possible, thereby making the employers more protective." (M30)* |
| Cleanliness of workspaces (f=16) | 10 | *"In the working environment, a disinfectant treatment for the convenience of the employees is carried out once a week or every three days. Subsequently, as one enters the employee entry area, there is a sink, liquid soap, and hand sanitizer." (M35)* |
| Cleanliness perceived by the guest (f=11) | 8 | *"Changes in food and beverage service by providing take away and excluding buffet service for food presentation. For example, portioning food in bento boxes delivered to the tables or each room." (M8)* |
| Cleanliness of individual (f=8) | 7 | *"The change is more to employee discipline, specifically in terms of cleanliness and health." (M8)* |

Source: Authors' own work

According to the hotel management, the cleaning process for the guest area was more detailed. Additionally, special attention was given to minimizing bacteria in rooms with limited air circulation. For example, the regular cleaning procedures before the pandemic which only took 20 to 30 minutes, now required more time. This was because the hotel needed to make sure the room was disinfected using new cleaning procedures such as ultraviolet (UV) lamps. After the cleaning process, the room was sealed and only opened by the guest upon their arrival. This was stated by managers in the interviews as follows:

*"In this aspect of cleanliness, we are becoming stricter by always disinfecting guest rooms using UV lights. Furthermore, we put cutlery in plastic for the restaurant area to avoid direct contact, and guests are recommended to use disposable hand gloves to take food." (M6)*

*"For cleanliness, the processing time and chemical use make the difference. For example, in the past, making up one room could be carried out in half an hour, now it can take up to forty-five minutes. There is more time to replace the air circulation and carry out the disinfection process, ensuring no spot is missed." (M8)*

### 3.3. Theme three: safety measure procedures

During the pandemic era, the hotel management implemented safety measures and procedures that keep guests safe and comfortable, as shown in Table 5. The respondents explained several aspects, including the provision of a daily report by the hotel management every morning. This report included a checklist protocol that regulated the implementation of safety compliance by the operational staff.

Table 5. **Safety measures and procedures**

| Themes and Codes (*f*) | *N* | Examples (Quotes) |
|---|---|---|
| Safety compliance (f=64) | 29 | *"Our hotel has an emergency response team formed under the HR's coordination. The procedure is appropriate to CHSE guidelines and our corporate management program. Moreover, this team functions to respond to emergency cases of COVID-19, on both guests and hotel employees." (M6)* |
| Safety requirement indicator (SRI) (f=33) | 19 | *"There are restrictions and reductions in capacity both in restaurants, public areas such as toilets, and meeting rooms by almost fifty percent." (M35)* |
| Safety and technology innovation (f=28) | 18 | *"We have our innovation that functions to kill germs and odor at an effective level of 60-80%, which is known as Portable Odour Buster (POB)." (M28)* |
| Safety cautionary signage (f=10) | 9 | *"Several markers in the form of stickers are used as indicators to remind guests to keep the distance applied in the front office area." (M11)* |

Source: Authors' own work

Several hotel managers explained that the COVID-19 task force team at their hotel carried out the daily monitoring process regarding health protocols and the latest developments in COVID-19 cases. The following is an interview excerpt of a manager:
*"Hotel emergency response team is formed in compliance with the CHSE program from the corporate office. This team will form a small group to be directed when responding to an emergency related to COVID-19 or sick guests/teams." (M5)*

The task force diligently adhered to government policies in maintaining the health and cleanliness of their business premises. The team cooperated and coordinated with the COVID-19 task force in the local area, the police, and hotel security officers. During the pandemic, the hotel implemented an administrative system when receiving reservations to record the travel and health history of guests which required the results of an antigen or PCR swab test. The supervision of the health department ensured the enforcement of the swab test results both from antigen and PCR. In conclusion, hotels were entrusted with opening a business using a protocol regulated by the government.

*"Every day, the department head discusses health protocols during meetings, ensuring that the management team can make wise decisions related to the pandemic. Subsequently, once a week, we report to the head office regarding operational conditions at the hotel. Internally, we always update developments by providing a special information board for the team members." (M30)*
Several hotel managers revealed that there were numerous investments and the use of new equipment as well as technology applications in preventing the virus as follows:
*"We develop QR codes for room directory or menu information to communicate with our guests." (M4)*
*"The divider using glass, fiberglass, and acrylic materials installed in the cashier, front office desk, and restaurant table area." (M29)*

### 3.4. Theme four: environmental sustainability practices

Hotel operational activities face a dilemma, specifically those related to using materials and handling waste that impacts the environment due to the pandemic. The increase in single-used masks, plastic, and rubber hand gloves is contrary to the concept of environmental conservation, as presented in Table 6.

Table 6. **Environmental Sustainability Practices**

| Themes and Codes (f) | N | Examples (Quotes) |
|---|---|---|
| Environmental operational practices (f=21) | 18 | *"We also use environmentally friendly chemicals to maintain and ensure the provision of healthier air." (M35)* |
| Environmental organization practices (f=21) | 16 | *"We have supported CSR activities several times, such as during the pandemic by providing a place for the mass vaccination program three times with a total of one thousand nine hundred participants." (M8)* |
| Environmental solutions and energy efficiency (f=18) | 15 | *"The hotels implemented several environmental initiatives programs, such as carbon, energy reduction, waste, and hazardous processes. We also used recycled water for watering plants and ponds. Due to the decreasing hotel occupancy, we closed several floors of the rooms and left floors open for guests to reduce the consumption of electrical energy." (M2)* |

Source: Authors' own work

Some respondents concerned about waste problems were as stated below:
*"Before the pandemic, we were encouraged to reduce the use of plastic. However, the situation is reversed and there has been a significant increase in its usage." (M17)*

Several operational initiatives have been carried out by the hotel management to solve problems related to the environment and energy efficiency during the pandemic. The following excerpt provides insights into these efforts:
*"We let the wet waste sit and process it into fertilizer and Eco-enzyme, which functions as a cleaning agent for chinaware in restaurants." (M10)*

*"Currently, each department has three types of waste containers, which are for recycled, food, and medical waste." (M21)*

*"We collaborate with vendors to handle organic waste by converting it into organic fertilizer for plants and fish in environmental ponds." (M28)*

Some organizational environmental policies described by several managers are as follows:
*"Currently, we are conducting socialization with the community around the hotel regarding the health protocol such as distributing health masks. We also educate the public on how to manage recycled waste according to standards." (M20)*

*"We visited one of the locations for an angklung music performance that preserves the culture of the Sundanese people. In addition to paying the entrance ticket to watch the musical performance, the hotel staff also donated tree seeds. These initiatives are significantly important for the local communities during these challenging times." (M21)*

*"We are collaborating with several local small entrepreneurs by buying some products as well as raw materials for local food and beverages, thereby empowering the agricultural sector." (M25)*

### 3.5. Theme five: Perceptions of CHSE certification among hotel managers

In the last part of the interview, the managers provided input regarding the implementation of the CHSE certification policy, as shown in Table 7.

According to managers, CHSE certification provides a standard for business and a guarantee for guests who come to the hotel. The following excerpt elaborates on this perspective:
*"After the certification, the staff pay more attention to cleanliness, health, and care about the environment. Changes in the cleanliness aspect are one of the absolute obligations that need to be considered by hotel management" (M1)*
*"CHSE certification is part of our protection to ensure the smooth running of the business, make guests comfortable and safe, and provide a positive campaign." (M7)*

*"In my opinion, this certification program has a good impact because it enables guests to be more concerned about asking whether our hotel already has a certificate from CHSE. A respectable number of government agencies or corporates ask about this certificate when making reservations or holding activities at the hotel." (M9)*

Table 7. **Perception of CHSE certification among hotel managers**

| Themes and Codes (*f*) | *N* | Examples (Quotes) |
|---|---|---|
| Standard operating procedures (f=28) | 21 | *"After being CHSE certified, we can show the public that our hotel is of high quality and has standard operating procedures." (M22)* |
| Socialisation and information (f=23) | 14 | *"The reputation of the hotel has increased because CHSE has a national scope published in the media, making it more familiar to people. We put the certificate in the lobby, special posters, and stickers that indicate proper certification of our property to make guests feel safer." (M8)* |
| Quality assurance (f=17) | 12 | *"The CHSE certification is in compliance with industry standards and some are more detailed. Therefore, it is very useful to ensure employees as well as guests are in a safe and healthy condition." (M33)* |
| Branding and promotion (f=15) | 8 | *"In terms of branding and marketing, having a CHSE certificate makes our hotel a selling point for both domestic and foreign guests. Therefore, they do not feel afraid and become more confident." (M1)* |

Source: Authors' own work

Several hotel managers provided input related to the added value of having CHSE certification and numerous inputs to improve the process in the future, as conveyed in the following excerpts:

*"Hotels that already have CHSE certification and adhere to standard rules should be given an advantage and prioritized over others." (M7)*

*"It is better for the monitoring and feedback mechanism for the CHSE certification auditor team to re-check whether the procedure is being re-implemented." (M9)*

*"We highlight the safety and hygiene of the hotel, informing guests of our CHSE certificate and ensuring that the environment is clean. Furthermore, we inform guests by publishing the CHSE in the hotel and also give the details through social media, IG lives, and talk shows." (M5)*

# 4. DISCUSSION

## 4.1. Health Compliance Standard

The majority of respondents stated the importance of implementing health protocols based on company and government guidelines through the authorities, the health department, and the government. The guidelines included wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), such as face shields, masks, and gloves, diligently washing hands, and maintaining social distancing. The health protocol was also based on predetermined criteria for detecting early COVID-19 symptoms and management guidelines (Rosemberg, 2020; Sönmez et al., 2020).

The hotel management was concerned about the health condition and staff behavior by considering widespread vaccination as a crucial measure to ensure safety. Managers also stated the importance of preparing health aspects for employees, as it directly affected services and products for guests. Furthermore, Yu et al. (2021), emphasized the importance of attitude and behavior of hotel employees in maintaining health in the work environment. Employees were expected to always maintain their health condition by constantly checking body temperature when going to work, avoiding crowds, maintaining physical distancing, applying health principles during work, and routinely conducting health checks.

The managers also ensured the health of hotel staff who were suspended due to infection was evaluated to meet daily food and medicine. In the event of an emergency, the hotel helped by calling an ambulance and handling other logistics at the hospital. To facilitate the understanding of staff and guests, the hotel posted information about CHSE health protocol on posters or information signage in public areas.

Preliminary research by Atadil and Lu, (2021) discussed the importance of hotel medical preparedness. The results showed that the hotel needed a competent team to provide first aid in emergencies and accident situations. To comply with regulations issued by the government regarding someone being exposed to COVID-19 in a hotel, management cooperated with the relevant task force, such as the local health office for effective evacuation. Moreover, the hotel cooperated with health authorities who can be contacted when an emergency occurs, such as an on-call doctor, the nearest hospital, a health clinic, and emergency contact of the guest upon check-in.

## 4.2. Perceived Cleanliness

Hotel cleanliness has become a top priority for many guests during the COVID-19 pandemic. Cleanliness and comfort are part of the tangible aspect of the hotel business, with the cleaning process becoming more important (Awan et al., 2021). Hotels have also implemented enhanced cleaning protocols to ensure the safety of their guests. These include an increased frequency of cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces, such as door handles, light switches, and remote controls. Additionally, hotels are providing hand sanitizer in public areas and encouraging social distancing measures in common spaces.

The perceived cleanliness felt by the guests is also influenced by several indicators such as the use of good lighting, clean surface areas, white materials, greenery/plants, personal hygiene staff, and the presence of cleaning staff in each hotel area. Furthermore, proper circulation of natural air and refreshing aroma increase the overall sense of cleanliness and experience in the hotel area (Atadil and Lu, 2021; Magnini & Zehrer, 2021). Innovation in using the latest media technology such as ozone, ultraviolet (UV) xenon disinfection technology systems, and robot cleaning can be used as a strategy to reduce risk during a pandemic (Shin & Kang, 2020).

## 4.3. Safety Measures Procedures

The safety standards at the hotel are carried out properly by creating a team, namely the internal COVID-19 task force. The structure of this team consists of hotel operational management, each of which has a person in charge. Similarly, Zhang et al., (2020) emphasized the role of hotel safety leadership on employee behaviour during the pandemic. To foster employee confidence and ensure safety, hotels should implement strategies based on four safety aspects, including coaching, care, motivation, and control. Moreover, safety aspects closely related to the health of guests and employees are carried out with the help of innovation and technology. This includes the use of a checkpoint process at the hotel entrance, followed by the screening.

Hotel management ensures that safety procedures on their property are prioritized using ultramodern technology equipment. Previous research has explained the need for full support from hotel managers and staff in safety adaptation, compliance, and participation in the COVID-19 pandemic crisis (Bonfanti et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021).

## 4.4. Environmental Sustainability

This result strengthens previous research related to corporate social responsibility on financial assistance and basic needs for the affected areas. The interviews with participants also reinforce the findings of previous research that advocate for implementing green hotel management through waste reduction. These practices can save hotels financially by reducing purchase and waste disposal costs, energy consumption, as well as environmental pollution (Singh et al., 2014). The second benefit is conserving natural resources by reusing, reducing, recycling, and replacing waste with friendly products (Kularatne et al., 2019).

The hospitality industry can use several initiatives, such as the environmental awareness certification scheme to accurately inform and involve customers in addressing social and environmental issues associated with sustainable operations (Geerts, 2014; Mzembe et al., 2020). Additionally, companies can provide facilities for the isolation and testing of suspected COVID-19 patients (Zhang et al., 2021). The certification process provides certainty to customers searching for sustainable businesses (Spenceley, 2019). Several businesses have implemented activities related to company policies in the form of organizational practices, such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs during the pandemic. By integrating CSR initiatives, hotels can form a positive brand image and reputation (Zhang et al., 2021). The adoption of sustainable practices into operations can also reduce environmental impact, enhance reputation, and contribute positively to the communities as well as ecosystems of the hotel.
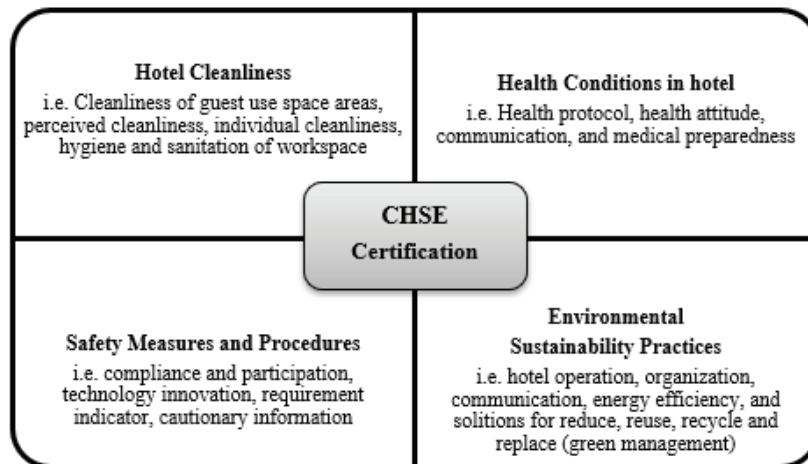
## 4.5. Managers Perception of CHSE Certification

The CHSE certification process is expected to be a benchmark for quality assurance set by the government to support tourism industry players, such as hotels and restaurants. Companies that followed the standard must maintain consistency and the government also need to recognize those who have adhered to the CHSE certification standard. Several preliminary research reviewed the effectiveness of CHSE certification from the perspective of the human resources department in resort areas (Sanjaya and Sari, 2021). Others emphasized the importance of crisis management and CHSE certification from the perspective of NGOs, government, and management (Kemenparekraf, 2020; Aprilia et al., 2021), the audit procedures (Syahrin, 2021), as well as the critical assessment and analysis performance based on ratings from hotel guests (Superwiratni et al., 2021).

## 5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research showed that the hotel sector must follow the standards set by the government and adapt to new routine operations procedures through an audit and certification process for aspects of cleanliness, health, safety, and environmental sustainability (CHSE), as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. **CHSE Certification for Hotel Framework**



Source: Authors' own work

The theoretical contribution of this research shed new light on hotel certification standards during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results showed that hotels benefited from CHSE certification including the differences in a more positive direction by considering the aspects of cleanliness, health, safety, and concern for the environment. Moreover, adjustments were made to standard operating procedures to ensure the comfort and safety of guests during their stay. Managers also stated that having a CHSE-certified hotel property helped the promotion process. This process served as a marketing tool used in branding, which included evidence of being certified through proper management of cleanliness, health, safety, and environmental aspects.

The managerial implication showed that the hotel sector needed to continue opening businesses following the health protocols regulated by the government. This ensured that hotel management and guests had the same perception as well as expectations about the products and services delivered. The CHSE certification process was one of the programs for hotel branding during the COVID-19 pandemic. This informed guests about the implementation of strict health protocols in audited and declared fit-to-operate hotels. The changes in standard operating procedures from CHSE certification were significant. The certification process assisted hotel management in making necessary corrections and addressing several aspects of the post-pandemic era. The existence of an audit and certification process showed the harmony between the program from the government and the hotel management, ensuring uniform standards throughout Indonesia. The results indicated that the certification was implemented for every hotel business to have service standards for guests during the pandemic in terms of cleanliness, health, security, and the environment. After the implementation of all standards, hotels were able to automatically support the health and safety of both guests and employees during the pandemic.

The hotel managers interviewed provided several inputs regarding the certification process, audit, and monitoring control. Respondents suggested adjusting the implementation of this certification to the classification of two, three, four, or five-star hotels. More appreciation was needed for hotels that had followed the provisions of the CHSE standard, as recommended for domestic and foreign tourists. Entrepreneurs in the tourism industry and the government needed to continue strengthening the coordination mechanisms to survive in current conditions. Moreover, special attention should also be paid to the most sensitive destinations in the recovery phase.

Standardization is essential in reopening the tourism economy and ensuring the uninterrupted operation of businesses and receiving customers. In the future, it is necessary to coordinate and ensure quality based on standard operating procedures in both CHSE and company standards. The government can also award hotels that have followed the rules with CHSE standardization and health protocols. The results also found that the certification needs to be used as an aspect of the selling point for hotel properties and continuously monitored. This makes it necessary for hotel management to pass through the audit process and maintain compliance with the established standards.

This research is limited by the perception of hotel managers and the use of certification standards in Indonesia. Therefore, further research needs to be conducted to compare the consistency of hotel certification standards on a global scale. This will examine the standards for implementing CHSE at the operational level and assess customer satisfaction. The perspective of employees at the operational level is also crucial. Moreover, obtaining feedback on guest satisfaction from those staying at certified hotels will provide a bigger picture of the implementation of cleanliness, health, safety, and environmental sustainability standard.

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