



Safety plan during Covid-19 pandemic in restaurant industry, case study: KOKORO Sushi

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The thesis discusses the development of a safety plan during Covid-19 pandemic in restaurant industry, the case study was for KOKORO Sushi, a restaurant based in Helsinki, Finland.

The main goal of the research was to create a safety plan to protect the company's employees and customers as well as minimize losses during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The theoretical framework for this study includes the definition of Covid-19, the current situation of Finland and its consequences on the restaurant industry. The theories also covers the definition and importance of a safety plan, which include occupational safety and health, and food safety.

To achieve the objectives of the research, secondary data collection and interviews were chosen as the qualitative data collection method. Interview is conducted with restaurant owner in order to understand their needs and expectations.

The results of thesis is a brief summary of current safety situation at KOKORO restaurant and thorough explanation of recommendations and regulations of WHO (World Health Organization) and Finnish authorities. These allow the development of a safety plan taking into considerations all the risks and restrictions.

The research result can be applied to other restaurants with the same scope. In the future, with the pandemic situation getting better or worse, there should be update versions of the safety plans to comply with the new regulations.

Keywords: safety plan, restaurant, covid-19 pandemic

Contents

1	Introduction	6
1.1	Research background.....	6
1.2	Research purpose	6
1.3	Research questions and limitations	7
1.4	KOKORO Sushi restaurant.....	8
2	Theoretical background.....	9
2.1	Covid-19 pandemic worldwide and in Finland	9
2.2	The impact of Covid-19 pandemic on restaurant industry worldwide	12
2.3	Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on restaurant industry in Finland and current restrictions	12
2.4	Safety plan.....	15
2.4.1	Occupational safety and health	16
2.4.2	Food safety	17
3	Research methodology	18
3.1	Semi-structured interview.....	18
3.2	Secondary data collection	19
4	Results.....	20
4.1	Interview.....	20
4.1.1	KOKORO safety goal	20
4.1.2	Current measures to limit Covid-19 risk and the situation in the first wave period (1 March - 1 June).....	20
4.1.3	Responsible persons for safety plans and documentation	21
4.1.4	Financial limitation	21
4.2	Secondary data.....	21
4.2.1	Covid-19 risk assessment	21
4.2.2	Government restriction	22
4.2.3	Hygiene guidelines	23
4.2.4	Managing Covid-19 infection case if detected	25
5	Covid-19 pandemic safety plan for KOKORO Sushi	26
5.1	Policy statement.....	26
5.2	Responsible personnel	27
5.3	Communication	27
5.4	Opening hours and number of seats.....	28
5.5	Customer-related risks and regulations.....	28
5.6	Staff hygiene guidance.....	29

5.7	Courier driver-related risks.....	30
5.8	Dealing with confirmed Covid-19 case in KOKORO	31
6	Validity and reliability	31
7	Conclusion	31
	References	33
	Figures.....	37
	Tables.....	37
	Appendices.....	38

1 Introduction

2020 is a year of volatility with many extreme losses. The year has witnessed economic recession, worldwide lockdowns, mass cancellations and postponement of events, and many tragic deaths (The Editorial Board 2020). These are all the consequences of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and it does not seem to stop anytime soon.

Due to the complicated progression of the Covid-19 pandemic, many governments around the world including Finland have applied lockdowns and restricted the activities as well as services by cutting down the numbers of seats, events and participants gathered in one location. This is an effort to curb the transmission of the coronavirus between people which can easily happen in a crowded place (McCloskey et al. 2020). However, this heavily affects the economy, and especially the businesses rely on services and interaction with customers. The food industry in general and restaurant industry in particular are ones of the industries that must be mentioned in this difficult period. A restaurant is a place with high contagion risk since it attracts crowds of people gathered in one place and allows contact between people. Thus, many restaurants and bars were closed down, while others are struggling with their own businesses because the customers are afraid of being infected and decided not to go out, not to mention because of the restriction of the government (Klein 2020). This obviously dragged down the growth of the restaurant industry and in order to survive during this pandemic, the restaurants are in need to build a safety plan.

1.1 Research background

The author is an employee of the case company and she is doing an internship on the security aspect here as well. While working, the author noticed that there were a few shortcomings in the company's safety plan. And when the pandemic happened, the author has an idea to combine the security and safety-related knowledge gained from Laurea University of Applied Sciences together with the current data of the case company to design a new safety plan which is expected to help the company successfully deal with the difficulties during this situation.

1.2 Research purpose

There are many factors that contribute to the overall success of a restaurant, in addition to human resource, marketing strategy, food quality, financial management, and many other aspects, a comprehensive safety plan should be taken into account as well. Quite many businesses including the restaurant industry have mistaken that only big companies must consider the safety plan seriously while smaller organizations must not because the risks are slight and insignificant. They do not arrange accurate trainings or sufficient textual materials

for the plan (Silliker 2019). However, risk management, more specifically is a safety plan, is necessary for all types of businesses regardless of its size, and it becomes even more important during the worldwide pandemic. Nevertheless, depending on the government, legislations and the current disease situation in each country, the safety plan will have several changes and differences. Therefore, this thesis will be focusing on the pandemic situation in Finland - where the case company is based on, and the safety plan will follow Finnish government suggestions and laws together with World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations.

The author aimed to build a safety plan based on her knowledge and the collected information during the research to help the case company ensure the general safety for customers and employees during the pandemic, and thereby hopefully stabilize the business. Moreover, the writer expects to give the reader an overview of the situation to understand the difficulties of the restaurant industry and raise awareness when going out to shop as a customer.

1.3 Research questions and limitations

To achieve the purpose, the necessary research questions are:

Main research question:

What should be included in the Covid-19 safety plan for the restaurant of KOKORO Sushi?

Sub-questions:

1. What are the regulations and laws of Covid-19 safety in Finland?
2. What are the recommended practices to ensure safety in the restaurant workplace?
3. What are the requirements and expectations of KOKORO's owners regarding the safety plan?

While doing the research, the writer has noticed some remarkable limitations which are listed as follow:

Firstly, even though the news about Covid-19 pandemic has appeared almost everywhere, its information is mostly about deaths toll and a number of infections, and general hygiene guidelines. There is plenty of information, but some even have not been verified. There have not been many safety plans for the restaurant industry created exactly for this dangerous type of pandemic for the author to use as examples or inspirations to make the safety plan.

The case company is based in Finland, so most information is in Finnish. The author realized that information which is related to Finnish safety regulations and the coronavirus pandemic

situation in Finland is mostly in Finnish. There is some news in English but probably not enough for the research. Therefore, the author must use the google translate tool to gain information from more sources to understand the current situation. Each country has its own legislations and standards, so data and examples found from other countries can only be inspirations in this thesis.

1.4 KOKORO Sushi restaurant

KOKORO Sushi is a small Helsinki-based casual dining restaurant which was founded in September 2016 by 3 Vietnamese students. The restaurant is known for its fast and friendly service together with high-quality food. After 4 years, the restaurant is planning to open its second branch at the beginning of 2021.

The goal they are heading towards involves not only customer gratification but employee satisfaction as well. Like any other business, the case company values its customers. The restaurant made an effort to continually get to know their customers in order to quickly adapt and fulfill the customer's inconstant demands. Additionally, KOKORO Sushi also understands that employee is the vital component that directly helps the business to increase profits and productivity. The owners, thus, build trust in the workplace and employee loyalty by understanding employee's weaknesses, strengths and worries to provide appropriate supports.

KOKORO Oy is a small company with the numbers of employees generally fluctuates between 15-20 members. The client company operates under guidance and instructions from the Board of Directors (BOD), managers, and shift leaders. There are two shifts per workday in KOKORO Sushi: morning shift and evening shift. Therefore, each shift needs a shift leader who will instruct and distribute tasks for other members. Shift leaders are also responsible for reporting to the managers any problems, incidents or accidents that may occur during the shift. The operation manager arranges work shifts, manages all staff members and the whole operations. The manager is in charge of finding solutions for the reported problems from the shift leaders. In case the problems are too significant and severe, or the solutions require financial support, then BOD will make the final decisions.

The organization structure is described as below:

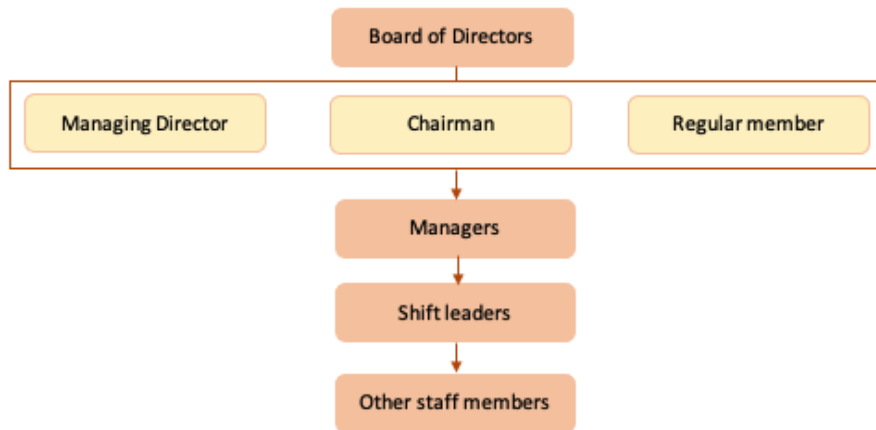


Figure 1: Organization structure of KOKORO Oy

Thus far, KOKORO Sushi's operations are pretty stable and smooth. In 2019, the company had a turnover of 761000 euros. They operate and manage the workflow with innovative guidelines, clear checklists and brief orientations. The company also carried out general safety guidelines with the aim to ensure the safety of customers and staff, along with guarantee the development of the restaurant. However, those are moderately deficient and inadequate for the pandemic period. Due to the sudden coronavirus pandemic, an updated safety plan is immensely in need.

2 Theoretical background

The previous chapter has shown the aim of this thesis is to make a safety plan for the restaurant industry during the coronavirus outbreak and its importance. In order to achieve the purpose, sufficient background information of the current COVID-19 disease and safety plan is required. Therefore, this chapter will summarize the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic around the world and in Finland, as well as its impact on the restaurant industry with some examples of current restrictions in Finland. The related knowledge in the areas of safety including food safety and occupational safety and health will also be discussed.

2.1 Covid-19 pandemic worldwide and in Finland

On 31 December 2019, WHO (World Health Organization) was informed about a number of serious pneumonia cases with unknown origin in the province of Wuhan, Hubei, China. On 9 January 2020, the cause of the disease is identified by the China Center for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC) as a type of novel coronavirus or SARS-Cov-2 (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control 2020; WHO 2020a). On February 11, 2020, WHO announced the official name for this disease as Coronavirus disease or abbreviated as COVID-19. 'CO' stands for 'corona', 'VI' for virus, 'D' for disease (WHO 2020b; Lovelace 2020). COVID-19 quickly spread from China to other neighboring countries. WHO declared the coronavirus as a

Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the time the spread rate has reached 100 to 200 times. The situation got worse and affected various aspects in many countries around the world. It also affected daily life activities such as travel, trade, tourism, food supplies and financial markets (Occupational Safety and Health Administration, 2020). The number of infected cases increased rapidly and there have not been any cures. The statistics of COVID-19 as of November 10, 2020 is 50.9 Million active cases, 33.3 million recovered and 1.26 million death.

The most common symptoms of Covid-19 include:

- Fever
- Dry cough
- Tiredness

Less common symptoms are:

- Aches and pains
- Sore throat
- Diarrhea
- Conjunctivitis
- Headache
- Loss of taste, smell
- A rash on skins or discoloration of fingers or toes

(World Health Organization 2020a)

The Coronavirus spread mainly through droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or exhales. These droplets quickly fall on floors or surfaces because they are too heavy to hang in the air. One can be infected by inhaling the virus when in close contact with someone who has Covid-19 or by touching a contaminated surface and transmit the virus to their eyes, nose or mouth (Karia et al. 2020).

Finland has reacted relatively quickly to the outbreak of Coronavirus. On 27 January, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Finland has advised against unnecessary travel to Hubei province. On the following day, Finnair (national airline company of Finland) suspended its five weekly routes to Nanjin and Beijing Daxing until the end of March. On 29 January, Finland confirmed the first case of COVID-19 in the country - a 32-year-old Chinese woman from Wuhan tested positive in Ivalo, having travelled from Wuhan and quarantined at Lapland Central Hospital, Rovaniemi (Yle News 2020a; Haveri et al. 2020). More and more cases continued to be confirmed across Finland from the period of February 2020 to March 2020. While not enough tests were able to be conducted, THL announced that the actual number of cases might be 20-30 times higher than what had been confirmed, which was at that time,

272 cases (Laurila 2020). More measures are then taken with the approval of the Parliament of Finland. The restriction then started to ease beginning on June 1, 2020. However, the number of cases and deaths continue to rise. As of October 2020, a new high in a single day was reported, which is 344 cases, indicating a second wave of outbreak might hit Finland (Länsi Suomi 2020).

Figure 2 shows the daily new infections in Helsinki and Uusimaa region in 10 days. On 10 November, there were 220 new confirmed infections throughout Finland that brought the total cases to over 18000, and the highest number of new infections (119 cases) is seen in Helsinki and Uusimaa hospital district, the next two hospital districts also have high number of new cases are Southwest Finland with 19 cases and Pirkanmaa with 17 cases. In only 10 days, the confirmed infections have reached over 1000 cases (Yle Uutiset 2020).

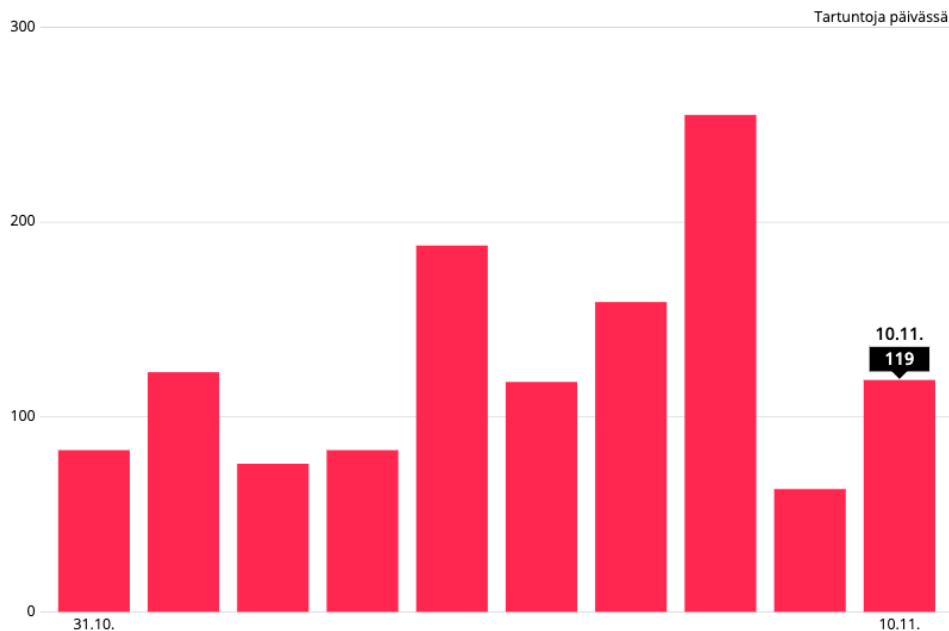


Figure 2: New infections in Helsinki and Uusimaa in 10 days from 31.10 to 10.11 (Yle Uutiset 2020)

In addition, Figure 3 illustrates the incidence of the disease by the municipality in Finland. As can be seen, the highest infection rate is also in Helsinki and Uusimaa region, which has the highest population density rate. In Helsinki and Uusimaa, the incidence rate of coronavirus infections in 14 days is 187.7 per 100000 inhabitants.

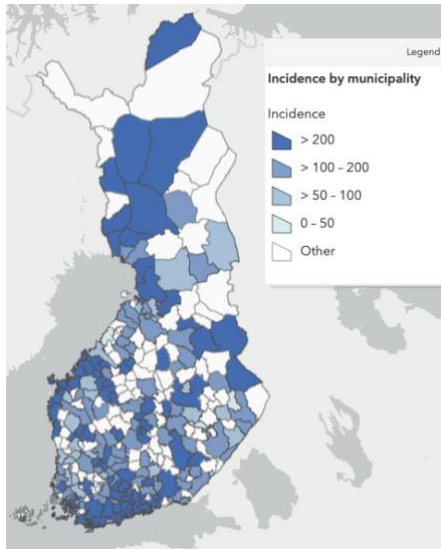


Figure 3: Confirmed cases per 100,000 inhabitants by municipality in Finland (Finnish institute for health and welfare 2020)

2.2 The impact of Covid-19 pandemic on restaurant industry worldwide

The Covid-19 pandemic is affecting real economic activity tremendously. However, as the spread, pandemic severity and mortality rate, suitable policy responses and individual behaviors in the situation are uncertain, it is impossible to know the exact extent of Covid-19 impact. Undeniably, the spread of Covid-19 has resulted in a sudden and sharp drop in revenue for businesses in many industries. Hospitality industry, in particular, witnessed the most significant shortfall in its revenue. As of June 2020, more than 100 countries have decided on partial or full lockdown, international and intercity travel has dropped by 70-90% compared to the previous year in major cities worldwide. Within the hospitality industry, the restaurant industry is regarded as having an extensive and high level of business risk, which has proven to be true during the Covid-19 pandemic. Several reports have concluded that Covid-19 has a significant impact on restaurant industry. For instance, according to National Restaurant Association of the US, restaurant sales witnessed a 47% decrease during the period from March 1 to March 22; 7 out of 10 business owners have had to lay off employees and reduced working hours. Moreover, since the end of March 2020, 3% of restaurant has to close permanently and the restaurant industry in US only has lost nearly \$ 120 billion in sales during the first 3 months of Covid-19 pandemic (Song J. H et al. 2020).

2.3 Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on restaurant industry in Finland and current restrictions

Finland is no exception when it comes to economic impact of Covid-19 to its economy, especially businesses in hospitality sector. The Finnish Hospitality Association (Mara) has announced its concern for the impact of Coronavirus on businesses in restaurant and accommodation sector. Mara reported that the pandemic has created a significant drop in the

profit of businesses in hospitality sector. The majority of business owners stated that their operating margins have decreased devastatingly by 80-100 percent. According to a survey conducted by Mara between 11 and 13 May, businesses are not expecting profitability to change in the near future. Among 700 respondents, only 9 percent have confidence in their ability to recover the revenues in the next 6 months, while 15 percent revealed that they are at risk of bankruptcy. In terms of staffing, 74% of businesses intended to adjust the business operations in order to maintain the profit, while 90% have already decided to lay off their employees temporarily to stay afloat. Mara warned that the lay-offs situation may become permanent as there are no signs that the pandemic would end soon (Teivainen 2020a).

Even though restaurant industry is one of many industries that has been suffering lots of difficulties and damages because of the coronavirus disease. However, due to the nature of the work, many businesses wish to continue operating but this probably increases the possibility of transmission. Therefore, in many different stages of the pandemic, Finland government has issued different restrictions and regulations for restaurant sector businesses to follow (Table 1).

Measures	Period enforced
<p>Restaurants, cafes and bars closed (except for take away services)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The closure is necessary to slow down the spread of corona virus • Takeaway meals are allowed. • Restaurants and cafes selling takeaway products must obliged to careful arrangements of no contact with customers that could lead to infection risk. • Canteens in hospitals, daycare centers and industrial facilities are allowed to remain open (finlandtoday.fi) 	31 March - 31 May
<p>Restaurants, cafes and bars open with restrictions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restaurants operates under restrictions and conditions of Communicable Diseases Act • Drinking time is from 9 am to 10 pm • Restaurants must be closed at 11pm • Only half of number of seats can be taken in, terraces are not halved 	1 June - 13 July

<p>Restaurants throughout Finland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restaurants must be closed no later than 1am • Drinking time stops at 12am • No limited number of seats <p>Restaurants in accelerating and spread phases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restaurants must be closed at 11pm • Drinking time stops at 10pm • Open with half number of seats 	8 October - 31 October
<p>Restaurants open with three quarters of customer seats</p> <p>Restaurants which primarily serve alcohols, pubs and bars open with half of customer seats</p>	1 November - 15 December

Table 1: Restrictions on restaurants enforced in different periods (Yle News 2020b; Yle Uutiset 2020)

At the end of May 2020, the government of Finland announced the operation instructions for restaurants to follow. These include:

- Visible announcement that customers with corona symptoms cannot enter the premises.
- Visible space for hand washing or disinfection.
- Clean furniture, dishes, cutlery, contact surfaces and furniture regularly.
- Visible instructions for hands cleaning and social distancing.
- Structures, furniture and services have to be arranged so that customers are not exposed to cross-infection.
- Ensure that restaurants are not crowded.
- Create disease infection prevention plan.
- Planned plan for customers to see.
- The plan may be combined with the self-monitoring plans already in the restaurant.
- The person responsible implementing the plan must be notified to the customer on request.

(Strömberg 2020)

2.4 Safety plan

In any types of businesses, workplace safety should be prioritized, and restaurant industry is no exception. Because employees spend most of their time at work, employer's responsibility is providing a safe work environment. As Hornby (2005) stated, safety is a state that people feel being protected from danger or harm. The concept of "safety" and "risks" are strongly related. When the level of risk is low, the feeling of safety is high and vice versa. However, this is just a general idea, in fact, the feeling of safety is actually complicated and ever-evolving through time. In the past, risks are limited to acts of nature or also known as natural disasters like a hurricane or fire. In the present, the definition of risks expands to human-made hazards (Antonsen 2009).

Safety plan is defined as a comprehensive tool that builds a framework for safety practices. Each safety plan should target a specific activity or department thus one company should have many safety plans (EHS Insight Resources 2018). BLR, on the other hand, stated that a safety plan is a written document describing process of identifying physical and health hazards that could harm employees, measures to prevent accidents and deal with accidents when they occur. The website stated that safety plans can be both comprehensive, such as illness or injury prevention and specific such as a particular hazard, equipment (BLR no date).

Safety plans can serve as clear guidelines for employees to keep workplace safe and how to react when a certain risk occurred. Moreover, safety plans help lower the risk of workplace injuries and illnesses, increase productivity and enhance workplace security (BLR no date). Safety plan is often required to be documented with some basic elements included. BLR (no date) found out that Occupational Safety and Health Administration recommends the elements as below:

- Policy or goals statement
- List of responsible persons
- Hazard identification
- Hazard controls and safe practices
- Emergency and accident response
- Employee training and communication
- Recordkeeping

In order to consider all impacting factors and build the safety plan more effectively, it is advisable to use the hierarchy of controls (Figure 4). When making a safety plan, the most effective controls should be prioritized. Elimination of hazards is the most important goal, when not possible, then engineering and administrative controls would be used.

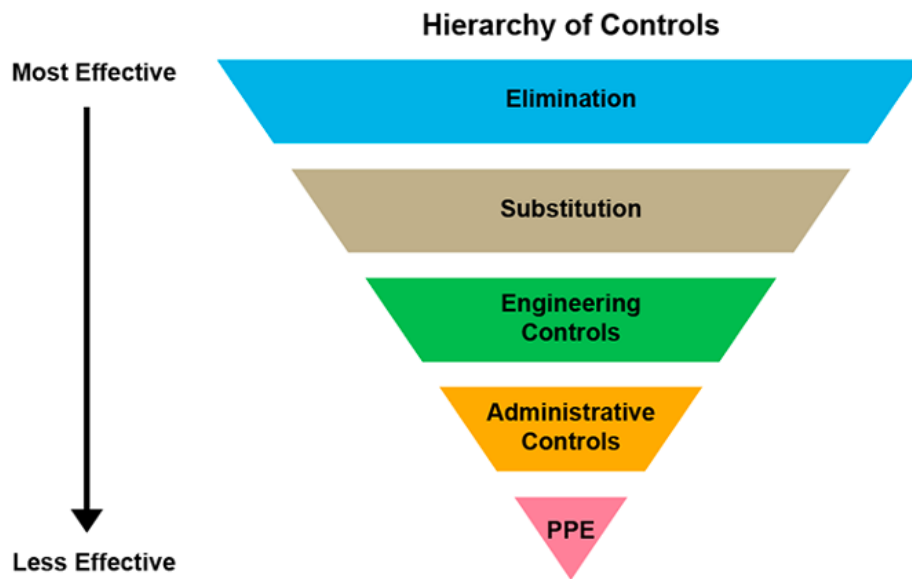


Figure 4: Hierarchy of controls (Government of Ontario 2020)

2.4.1 Occupational safety and health

Occupational safety and health (OSH) is considered as a group of multidisciplinary activities that aim at protecting and promoting the health of employees. This can be achieved by preventing and managing occupational risks such as diseases and accidents related to working environment. Besides improving healthy and safe working environment in terms of physical health, businesses need to maintain mental and social well-being of employees. OSH helps increase employee's performance productivity both socially and economically, which resulted in a positive contribution to the development of businesses (Coppée 2011). Takele & Mengesha (2006) regarded OSH as one of the most important factors in human concern that promote and maintain high level of workers' mental, physical and social well-being. Occupational safety and health include predicting, identifying, assessing and controlling hazards that appeared in or from workplace (Friend & Khon 2007). One of the principles of occupational safety and health programs is that policies should aim at both prevention and protection. However, prevention should be put as the first priority with all efforts, thus, owners need to design working environments to be healthy and safe (Alli 2008).

Occupational safety and health is not only essential but also social and legal regulations for businesses to follow. In Finland, the corresponding legislation for occupational safety and health is the occupational safety and health act 738/2002. The act covered benefits of working personnel, including students. The act stated that employers are responsible for creating a safe and healthy workplace for employees by taking into consideration all factors such as work environments and individual capabilities. The employers need to ensure that safety measures are obliged among employees. In chapter 4 sections 35 and 36, internal

traffic, cleanliness and order must be organized so that there are no risks of hazard. (Finland 2002)

Occupational safety and health generated a number of benefits for enterprises. First, it proves that businesses have a good image and brand value. It also increases the productivity of workers and their level of commitment and turnover rate thus establishing a more competent workforce. At the same time, it also decreases the business cost and disruption (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work 2007).



Figure 5: Benefits of good occupational safety and health (European Agency for safety and health at Work 2007)

2.4.2 Food safety

When it comes to safety in restaurant sector businesses, food safety is one crucial aspect that cannot be neglect. Finland, more specifically, have strict regulations regarding food hygiene and safety for businesses to follow. According to Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the hygiene of foodstuffs, Annex II, chapter 12, paragraph 1, food business operators are responsible to ensure that food handlers are supervised and instructed and/or trained in food hygiene related to their work activity. Food business owners must make sure that unpackaged, perishable food has to be handled by persons with a Hygiene Passport in accordance with the Finnish Food Authority, indicating their hygiene proficiency.

With the purpose of obliging to hygiene requirements, a worker who work in the food sector has to dress as required, take care of personal hygiene and acts in accordance with hygiene legislation. Careful and regular hand washing is considered the most important in food

handling hygienic matters in addition to proper protective clothing. Failure to keep good personal hygiene and hand hygiene can lead to the spread of infectious diseases to food.

Food hygiene is especially important in the current period of Covid-19 pandemic. On August 14 and 15, a person has been diagnosed with coronavirus after visits to two Oulu restaurants. In another example, on October 2, Taneli Puumalainen, chief physician at Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), confirmed that at least 200 of the coronavirus cases detected in the past two months are related to restaurants. In particular, one late-night restaurant located in Helsinki is believed to be the source of 40 infections after mid-September (Teivainen 2020b). Even though the consequences of infectious spread from restaurants is severe, according to World Health Organization (2020c), the transmission of the coronavirus through food can be prevented by good food hygiene and food safety practices.

3 Research methodology

Inductive, deductive and abductive reasonings are three main research approaches to develop a theory. Deductive approach verifies and falsifies a theory by building a research strategy based on the collected data from extant pieces of literature whilst inductive approach produces new theories by investigating a phenomenon with gathered facts. Abductive approach is quite less common compared to the others. It obtains data to either create new theories or modify the current theories which are examined afterward and revise if needed (Saunders et al. 2015). In short, it is likely a combination of deduction and induction that excludes the weaknesses of these two approaches. Due to the nature of this study, deduction will be used as the research approach. Since the regulations, laws and many academic sources related to risk and safety management are available, the deductive approach is said by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003) to be less protracted and risky.

There are two types of research strategies which are qualitative and quantitative methods. The main emphasis of the qualitative strategy is on understanding the informant by allowing the researcher to deepen the data in detail and hence, gain good insights. While quantitative strategy accentuates testing and verifying the theories (Ghuri & Gronhaug 2005). According to Bryman and Bell (2011), quantitative method questions the quantification and numeric figures while qualitative method asks for non-numeric and textual data. This study requires the researcher to have an in-depth knowledge about the outlook of the respondents to construct an effective and practicable plan which meets the client's demand. Therefore, qualitative research is selected to be applied to this thesis through an interview technique.

3.1 Semi-structured interview

Among many data collection methods, interview is one of the most popular ones which is used to collect valid and reliable information in order to answer the research questions and

objectives. Interviews can be defined into these types: structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews (or in-depth interviews) but the type of selection should be consistent with the purpose and nature of the research (Saunders et al. 2003). For this thesis, the semi-structured interview will be applied so the interviewee can discuss and share their opinions freely with a few lead questions.

The interview for the owners is going to be utilized to gain insights into their thoughts about safety, and how the restaurant wants to develop its risk and safety plan. Knowing these probably helps the author to answer the research questions and generate a thorough version of the safety plan. The data which is collected from the interviews with the owners of the restaurant aims to provide their perspectives about the importance of safety during this crisis stage, the financial limitations, etc. The author then, based on the gathered information, can build a plan including safety aspects that fits the Covid-19 pandemic situation.

3.2 Secondary data collection

While the primary data is directly collected from its original source to provide the insights that are relevant to a particular research problem in order to answer the research questions precisely, it is said to probably take a longer time and cost a lot more. On the other hand, the benefits of secondary data are saving time and money, as well as being rapid and easy to access since it is available in many resources such as books, journal articles and online data. Moreover, it is also known for its high quality, reliability and comparability because it is previously gathered by the researchers who are the experts in the field. There is a suggestion that the research should begin with collecting secondary data to form a general understanding of the research field before proceeding to primary data for an in-depth exploration. However, secondary data is originally collected for some other purposes which may not be consistent with the conducted research objectives. Therefore, when identifying the terms and concepts that need further information for the conducted research, the researcher must take into consideration its relevance and ensure the information fits the required reliability of the research's context (Ghauri 2005, 91-105).

The author has visited many webpages to gain information about safety plan and its examples, as well as safety legislations in Finland for restaurants. These data are suitable for the author to roughly plan what needs to be done and prepare for the safety plan development of the client company, then take the information as a foundation to interpret the primary data. Furthermore, even though Covid-19 pandemic is one of the most popular content on the news and online articles recently, the author found that many facts are irrelevant, and the author must be cautious when evaluating which resources to use.

4 Results

This chapter presents the main findings, which the author found relevant to the research questions, from the interview and secondary research. Through the interview, requirements and expectations regarding the safety plan matters from KOKORO's owner are collected. Safety goals, current measures which the restaurant has applied as well as financial limitations will be discussed in sub-chapter 4.1. Meanwhile, sub-chapter 4.2 focuses on the information from secondary data collection about recommended practices and regulations from Finnish authorities as well as international organizations for restaurant industry.

4.1 Interview

After a semi-structured interview with the owner of KOKORO, some components of the safety plan are defined. Overall, KOKORO's owner is well aware of the risk and consequences of Covid-19 pandemic on their business. Therefore, they are welcome to the idea of a safety plan to help prevent and manage the risk when it occurs.

4.1.1 KOKORO safety goal

As KOKORO is a small business with an employee scope of around 15 to 20 people, it is crucial to limit the risk to employee health. Work at KOKORO requires high level of skills and experience, thus it is difficult to replace someone if he or she falls ill. One of KOKORO's mission statement is to build a cooperative and trustful working environment. The owner prioritizes occupational health and safety to decrease employee turnover rate.

From the owner point of view, the consequences of having a Covid-19 confirmed case in the restaurant may lead to temporary closing the restaurant for at least two weeks. The results will lead to severe loss in revenue and it would be difficult to retain customer's confidence to come to the restaurant after the closing. The owner thinks having a safety plan is important because it will also show customers that the restaurant is trying their best to limit the risk of spreading Covid-19 while dining out.

4.1.2 Current measures to limit Covid-19 risk and the situation in the first wave period (1 March - 1 June)

In the lockdown phase, KOKORO was only allowed to sell takeaway food. The orders came from different channels such as Wolt, Foodora, ResQ and KOKORO's own website, phone line. Even though there are no dine-in customers, staffs were prone to the risks of getting Covid-19 from customers who came to pick up their orders and courier drivers from Wolt and Foodora. Fortunately, the revenue during this period did not drop for KOKORO as loyal customers were still ordering through takeaway channels and they gain more customers from having quick and quality takeaway food compared to other restaurants. This, however, increased the frequency of contact between staffs and other people.

During this first wave period, there are some measures have been taken into effect in order to limit Covid-19 risks. These are:

- Require employees to wear face masks or protective masks during shifts
- Place hand sanitizers in the restaurant
- Regularly clean surfaces which come in contact with customers or courier drivers
- Put up announcement of social distancing in the restaurant when waiting to pick up orders

4.1.3 Responsible persons for safety plans and documentation

The Board of Directors in KOKORO consists of three people. As there is quite an amount of work when it comes to manage and continuously develop the business, they currently cannot be a responsible person for the new safety plan. Thus, the thesis author will act as the responsible person for the new safety plan.

In the past, KOKORO made a simple safety plan for protection of the employees but without any official documentation. With specific hazards such as chemicals and knives handle in the kitchen, there are a list of regulations that pass to employees through group chat and the list is updated frequently. As the Covid-19 pandemic consequences are more severe and extensive, KOKORO's owner supports the idea of having a more official documentation of the safety plan.

4.1.4 Financial limitation

KOKORO is aware of the serious impact of the coronavirus outbreak. The owner strongly believes that the consequences of having a confirmed Covid-19 case originated from the restaurant is much more severe than any initial cost paid to ensure the safety of the restaurant. Therefore, as long as the budget plan of the safety plan is reasonable, there is no limit in terms of cost.

4.2 Secondary data

4.2.1 Covid-19 risk assessment

According to "Develop your Covid-19 workplace safety plan" of Government of Ontario (2020), the first step to take in controlling risks is to identify them. For Covid-19 case, the risks originated from how the virus spreads in workplace. There are mainly two ways that the corona virus can spread at workplace:

- Through direct contact, person to person which are in close contact
- Through surfaces or objects, when people move on to touch their face with contaminated hands

The level of risks of getting infected by Covid-19 is higher depends on:

- The time duration when in contact with potentially infected case
 - Close proximity in workplace
 - Interaction frequency with other people
 - Enclosed level of workplace (indoors workplace is more prone to risk than outdoors workplace)
- (Government of Ontario 2020)

4.2.2 Government restriction

The section 58(a) in the Communicable Diseases Act (1227/2016) stated the regulations that restrict restaurant operation on preventing the spread of infectious diseases. In addition, the section 58 (b) stated the supervision of restaurants on implementing the required restrictions. The objective of this act is to allow restaurants to continue operating while preventing the spread of coronavirus.

Opening hours

On 30 September 2020, there is an additional fixed-term decree that is introduced. The Decree in force from 1 October to 31 October 2020 restricts the number of seating and opening and serving hours of restaurants. A restaurant may open until midnight in which serving alcohol is limited from 9 am to an hour before closing time. Loud music results in higher volume of conversation: speaking loudly, yelling, which can increase the spread of coronavirus. Thus, restaurants must take volume of music played into account (Virranniemi 2020).

Seating

Restaurant that has an alcohol serving license has limited customer seats specified by section in the permit. Terrace seats are not limited. There must be sufficient distance between customers in the restaurant. The recommended distance according to the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) is at least 1 to 2 meters. All restaurant customer must have their own seat at the table. Bar counter seats are permitted. However, restaurants must consider maintaining sufficient distance between customers and staff all the time while the restaurants are open. This is obligatory by law.

Structures and furniture of restaurants must be organized to limit the spread of the disease. Restaurant also needs to decide on their customer service practices avoiding crowding and frequency of contacts between people. For furniture, screens or plexiglass can be placed

between tables. For serving practices, restaurants can limit queuing by table service or assign queue numbers for picking up food and drinks at the counter.

Unnecessary crowding must be avoided at all costs. This applies also to the number who comes to the restaurant at the same time. For example, restaurant needs to consider how to limit crowding when it is raining, and terrace seats became unavailable (Regional State Administrative Agencies 2020a).

Plan

Following the section 58 (a) of the Communicable Diseases Act, the Regional State Administrative Agencies created a guideline which indicated that Covid-19 safety plan must include:

- A description of new policies from the restaurant to oblige to the general regulations
- A description of indoors and outdoors measures & instructions given to the staff for implementing new practices of the obligations
- Information on the responsible personnel

Legally, the plan should be visible to customers upon request (Regional State Administrative Agencies 2020b).

4.2.3 Hygiene guidelines

Staff distancing and hygiene

According to interim guidance on Covid-19 and Food Safety: Guidance for Food Businesses of WHO (2020c), there is a low likelihood that Covid-19 can be spread through food or food packaging. Coronaviruses are unable to multiply in food, they need an animal or human host to survive. However, the droplets containing Covid-19 can stay on surfaces such as boxes and containers. WHO refers to recent research that shows the virus can stay up to 72 hours on plastic and stainless steel, four hours on copper and 24 hours on cardboard. WHO strongly recommends food industry implement social distancing and strict hygiene and sanitation policies in all stages of food processing, manufacturing and marketing. According to the guidelines, staff who are in poor condition of health or having symptoms of Covid-19 should not be at work as they can spread the virus to the food which they are working on by coughing or sneezing.

Between the staff of the restaurant, physical distancing should also be practiced as it is an important step to help slow the spread of Covid-19 viruses. WHO suggested that all food businesses should maintain staffs distancing at least 1 meter. When not possible, employers need to consider other measures to be taken. Some of them are:

- Arrange workstations on either side of processing line so that workers are not facing each other.
- Provide PPE such as face masks, hair nets, disposable gloves, etc.
- Space out workstations, which might lower the speed of production
- Limit the number of staff in a food preparation area at one time
- Organize staff into working groups or teams to minimize interaction between groups.

Moreover, all staffs working in restaurant industries should perform good personal hygiene which include:

- Hand hygiene-washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Frequent use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers
- Respiratory hygiene (cover mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, proper dispose of tissues)
- Frequent disinfection/cleaning of surfaces in working stations and touch points such as doorknobs
- Avoid contacts with anyone with Covid-19 symptoms

Food hygiene

The Finnish Food Authority (2020) has issued an instruction on a number of food temperatures exception taking into consideration the ongoing pandemic. However, thorough care still needs to be taken so that food safety is ensured. Some examples are listed below.

When handling food, cooking utensils and serving dishes, restaurant staff needs to make sure that their hands are clean and healthy. If protective gloves are used, their cleanliness must be ensured. In the current pandemic, the usual type of disposable glove may be out of stock, in which case, employers need to make sure the new gloves are suitable for handling food, especially handling greasy and/or hot foods (Finnish Food Authority 2020). Regarding the use of disposable gloves, WHO stated that gloves can be used but must be changed frequently. Between glove changes, hands must be washed. After carrying out non-food activities such as touching door handles, emptying bins, staffs need to change their glove. The main purpose of protective gloves is to protect the food from dirt and microbes. Therefore, WHO warned that it should not be used in the food industry workplace as a replacement for handwashing. Covid-19 can be viable on gloves as much as it can on other surfaces. According to WHO Food safety guidelines, wearing gloves can give restaurant staff a false sense of safety. It is crucial to remember that wearing gloves allow bacteria to build upon the surface of the hands, which makes hand washing even more important when gloves are removed (WHO 2020c).

Hand sanitizers

Sanitizers with an alcohol level of at least 70% is recommended. If other active substances are used to replace alcohol, it must be approved by the chemical authority. There should be a hand washing/hand sanitizing station in the restaurant and the traffic to the hand station must be limited (Regional State Administrative Agencies 2020a).

Cutlery and dishes and other surfaces of premises

Even though contact through surfaces, such as utensils and door handles, has a lower risk of transmitting coronavirus, it should be taken into consideration. According to the general cleaning program on the website of Finnish Food Authority, maintaining the hygienic level of the premise such as surfaces, and different equipment is one of the most important factors in preventing the spread of infectious diseases. All customer touchpoints such as door handles, chairs, tables surface, payment terminals and washrooms should be clean regularly and thoroughly. Dishes and cutlery are easily prone to carry and spread diseases so they must be carefully washed as well. The use of disposable utensils is encouraged whenever possible. Any food packaging surfaces that are touched by customers need to be regularly cleaned, for example, condiment bottles (Finnish Food Authority 2020).

Transport and delivery

WHO guidelines emphasize the focus of hygiene measures is to keep the coronavirus out of the premises. This includes when an infected person or contaminated products or items are brought into the premises. Drivers should be supplied with hand sanitizer before passing delivery to food premises staff. Containers of goods should be disposable to avoid the need for cleaning. Drivers need to be aware of social distancing and physical hygiene when picking up deliveries and passing deliveries to customers (WHO 2020c).

4.2.4 Managing Covid-19 infection case if detected

WHO recommendations

According to WHO, staff must be trained to use and comply with the guidelines to report sickness and policies to return to work after recovering. The most important rule is that if an employee shows mild symptoms of respiratory diseases, he or she should stay home and not come to work. Additionally, informing the management team about their illness only by phone.

With proper prevention, there are low chances that food workers can show symptoms of Covid-19 in workplace. However, it is inevitable that an action plan needs to be developed to cope with such event. When food worker shows symptoms of Covid-19 during work hours, they should be isolated from other people. If possible, make sure there is ventilation on the

premises by opening a window. While waiting to be taken home or to medical facilities, report or suspect cases of Covid-19 should avoid contact with other employees, cough or sneezes into tissues and dispose of them with covered-bin. If available, they should also use a separate bathroom. All surfaces that came in contact with the infected person should be cleaned and sanitized with alcohol-based disinfectants.

Any employee who has come in close contact with the confirmed case i.e. face-to-face contact, distance within 1 meter, in the same working team or group or live in the same household should be notified and quarantined for 14 days. If they are confirmed after 14 days, they should be treated as a confirmed case and the procedure should be repeated. Staff who had not to have close contact with the infected person can continue work as usual with precautions (WHO 2020c).

Finnish regulations

Whenever they are a confirmed case in a restaurant, the owners are advised to contact the Communicable Disease Control physician of its region or Occupational Health Care services. After being contacted by the owners, they can decide to place the patients with confirmed Covid-19 cases and people who have been in close contact to be quarantined. The decision is local and case-specific.

If only one of the staff on a shift is exposed, the operations can continue as normal after facilities are clean and sanitized. If all workers have been exposed and new workers cannot adapt timely to restaurant operation, the business will be required to be suspended for the duration of the quarantine. After a confirmed infection, food hygiene must be followed to ensure food safety. The Finnish Food Authority allowed food packages and packing material of the company not to be disposed after a confirmed coronavirus infection (Finnish Food Authority 2020).

5 Covid-19 pandemic safety plan for KOKORO Sushi

In this chapter, the author will deliver the safety plan made for KOKORO Sushi during the coronavirus disease based on the solid foundation from the research results. The plan includes a policy statement, a list of responsible personnel and explains the actions to take during the COVID-10 pandemic.

5.1 Policy statement

The policy statement is basically a commitment of KOKORO on how to react to this pandemic. The purpose of this safety plan is to assess and minimize the risk of Covid-19 on KOKORO restaurant and how to manage the risk when it occurs. With proper implementation and practices complying with the rules stating here in the plan, KOKORO will minimize

consequences of Covid-19 on the revenue and also keep all employees safe and motivated during the pandemic and after it is over.

5.2 Responsible personnel

Name	Title	Duties	Contact
Employer A Employer B Employer C	Members of Board Director	-Decision maker -Provide financial support for the implementation of the plan	Phone number Email Group chat
Leader A Leader B	Shift Leaders	-Provide guidance to the other team members -Representative for employees -Liaison between organization and their employees	Phone number Email Group chat Face-to-face during shifts
Manager A Manager B	Safety manager Operation manager	-Announce any new development given in the pandemic -Deal with customers and supervision authorities upon request	Phone number Email Group chat Face-to-face during shifts

Table 2: Responsible personnel in KOKORO Oy

5.3 Communication

Safety plan will be stored on company drive where every employee can access and learn more about safety procedures during the pandemic. Any new updates regarding regulations or new practices of the safety plan will be announced through emails. Moreover, frequent reminders regarding the safety matters will also be sent through the company's group chat.

5.4 Opening hours and number of seats

As of 30 October 2020, KOKORO opening hours complying with Communicable Diseases Act is:

- Mon-Thu: 10:45 am - 8:30 pm (alcohol serving time ends at 8:00 pm)
- Fri: 10:45 am - 9:00 pm (alcohol serving time ends at 8:30 pm)
- Sat: 12:00 am - 9:00 pm (alcohol serving time ends at 8:30 pm)
- Sun: 12:00 am - 8:00 pm (alcohol serving time ends at 7:30 pm)

The number of seats indoor and outdoor as of 30 October 2020 (75% of customer seats according to the building plan):

- Indoor areas: 14 seats
- Terrace areas: 8 seats

5.5 Customer-related risks and regulations

Customer traffic

Upon entering the restaurant, notifications of handwashing, social distancing and hand sanitizing will be put on the main door and the wall facing the door. Hand sanitizers are placed between the main and the in-between doors so that customer can sanitize their hands before walking in. Sanitizers are also placed along the tables and next to condiment stations (water, miso soup).

During lunch hour, when the traffic is the highest, one staff needs to make sure to give instructions that customers should not come inside to look for a free table and the estimated time for the free table wait. As delivery services are main channels of revenue for KOKORO, make sure the customer queue line maintains safety distance with courier drivers' pick-up point. Spaces need to be maintained between each table. After a big group left, one staff needs to ensure tables and chairs are back to safety distance positions.

Customers must follow staff instructions. Any protest from customers is violating the basis Act on Accommodation and Catering Activities. According to the Act, staff are allowed to ask customers to leave the restaurant in such circumstances.

Food service

All dine-in utensils and dishes are from now on switch to disposable. This reduces the cost and time of cleaning and the risk of transmitting the virus from one customer to another.

However, trash bins cannot be placed in the dining area for aesthetic and health reasons so

staff should still be cautious when cleaning tables. Staff should always wear gloves when cleaning tables and dispose it when handling other food-related items.

Staff should avoid speaking when bringing out the food for customers to avoid transmission of droplets. If unnecessary, avoid close or direct contact with customers. Menus are printed and shown upon visiting the cashier. Staff can also instruct customers to check the big blackboard menu to speed up ordering process and limit crowding at the cashier station. Clean and disinfect printed menus regularly. Other customer touchpoints such as soup spoons, condiment spoons, water dispenser should be cleaned or replaced regularly.

Payment

Cash is not acceptable at KOKORO's restaurant. Customers are recommended to pay by card or order payment app such as Epassi, EazyBreak, Mobilepay, etc. One payment type that needs to be handled carefully is lunch ticket. Upon receiving tickets from customers, cashier should instruct customers to place them in the assigned trays. After a shift, cashier must wear gloves when counting the number of lunch tickets received. As KOKORO is an open kitchen restaurant, plexiglass will be installed on the whole length of the counter, not only to cashier station, to prevent transmissions of Covid-19 viruses.

Customer toilets

Staffs should always ensure there are enough soaps and hand towel in the bathroom. The waste bin must be emptied more regularly, 3 times a week. Clean the toilets more frequently and always use masks and gloves when cleaning.

Cleaning plan

There are a number of surfaces in the customer area that needs to be clean as frequently as possible during the Covid-19 pandemic:

- Tables
- Chairs
- Bathroom light switches
- All door handles including bathroom
- Toilet flush button
- Payment terminal

5.6 Staff hygiene guidance

Personal and food-related hygiene

Upon entering the restaurants, staff should immediately wash or sanitize their hands before continuing to change into uniforms and enter shifts. When handling food, staff should always wear disposable gloves, remember to change them regularly and wash hands between glove changes. While wearing gloves, staff should not touch external surfaces except food or else the gloves need to be changed.

Staff should wash hands frequently and thoroughly especially after coming in contact with customers such as instructing queue or cleaning tables. When coughing or sneezing, mouths and noses should always be covered. Knives and chopping boards need to be clean more regularly.

Cleaning plan

There are a number of surfaces in kitchen and storage area that needs to be paid attention in cleaning:

- Fridges and cold displays handles
- Button of equipment such as electric stove, rice cooker, cutting machine, etc.
- Light switches
- Ordering tablets
- Cashier computers, keyboards and mouse
- Storage door handle
- Spice bottles and containers

Waste bins must be emptied more frequently, at least twice per day. Waste bag must be sealed. When carrying the waste bins, staffs must also wear gloves to ensure the hygiene level.

5.7 Courier driver-related risks

When entering the restaurants, courier drivers will face a pick-up point as the closest proximity possible. However, there will be hand sanitizers placed on pick-up stations for drivers to sanitize their hands. Staff should avoid talking or come close to contact with drivers.

All takeaway orders should have names written on the bag to limit the communication effort between staff and drivers, thus, speeds up the pick-up process. Staff should avoid letting drivers use the restaurant bathrooms to reduce the risks of transmitting coronavirus. Pick-up station surfaces should be cleaned regularly.

5.8 Dealing with confirmed Covid-19 case in KOKORO

Any employees who suspect themselves to have symptoms of Covid-19 should inform the shift leaders or managers of KOKORO immediately. Contacting the management team only through phone and messages in this case. That person is required to be quarantined at home for 14 days or show negative test of Covid-19 virus before coming back to work.

The personnel arrangements of KOKORO are designed so that employees are roughly divided into two groups: morning and afternoon shifts. This will limit the risk of transmitting the virus to larger numbers of people. If there is a confirmed case within the restaurant's employees, all of the employees who have been working in the same shift with that person will be required to be quarantined for 14 days, regardless of the regional Communicable Disease Control decision. The strict regulations will help protect all employees and maintain enough personnel for the restaurant to run normally.

The restaurant will close at least one day after a confirmed case to clean and disinfect the whole premises to make sure the restaurant can open without posing risks to its employees or customers. All other employees who do not have close contact with the confirmed case can work as normal but must be aware to protect themselves and more careful when working. When dealing with a confirmed case, restaurant owners will be responsible for noticing Communicable Disease Control physician of its region or Occupational Health Care services.

6 Validity and reliability

Validity addresses whether the research findings have integrity. By applying methodology to answer the research questions correctly, the research will ensure its validity. In this thesis, the theoretical framework of this thesis is based heavily on laws and regulations. Therefore, the safety plan can be generalized for other restaurants in Finland. As the interview is only with KOKORO's owner, whose restaurant sizes are still small, some findings may be case-specific.

Reliability concerns the consistency and stability of the research findings. For secondary data collection, the findings are completely reliable and repeatable. For the semi-structured interview, it may not be able to repeat the results. However, due to the context of this study, semi-structured interview is justified based on its flexibility.

7 Conclusion

This thesis has resulted in a suggestion of safety plan for Covid-19 pandemic for KOKORO Sushi. The safety plan is based mostly on Finnish authorities' regulations and suggestions and modified to fit the small scale of KOKORO restaurant. With personal experience working at

KOKORO and thorough interviews with the business owner, the author has identified and limited the risks posed by Covid-19 diseases as much as possible. Because there has been no prior official documentation of the safety plan in KOKORO, this safety plan will also serve as a template for other safety plans that the business will have in the future.

The next important step of the safety plan is its implementation. With approval from KOKORO's owner , the safety plan details will be present to all KOKORO's staff with proper training and help from the thesis author. As the pandemic still continues and there is no certainty whether the situation will be better or worse, more new regulations may be introduced by Finnish authorities in the future. Thus, the content of this safety plan needs to be continuously updated.

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Figures

Figure 1: Organization structure of KOKORO Oy	9
Figure 2: New infections in Helsinki and Uusimaa in 10 days from 31.10 to 10.11.....	11
Figure 3: Confirmed cases per 100,000 inhabitants by municipality in Finland	12
Figure 4: Hierarchy of controls.....	16
Figure 5: Benefits of good occupational safety and health.....	17

Tables

Table 1: Restrictions on restaurants enforced in different periods	14
Table 2: Responsible personnel in KOKORO Oy	27

Appendices

Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview questions for KOKORO's owner..... 39

Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview questions for KOKORO's owner

1. Can you shortly describe the business idea of your company?
2. How has the business been going so far?
3. How many employees are there in your company and how have you managed your staffs?
4. How do you communicate with your employees in terms of important issues?
5. What do you know about safety in the restaurant industry?
6. What do you think about the importance of safety in your company?
7. Are you aware of your responsibility to protect the health and safety of your employees according to the laws?
8. What do you think about the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic?
9. How has the coronavirus disease affected your business?
10. Have you familiarized your company with the restrictions and recommendations from the Finnish authorities or international organizations?
11. What have you done to ensure the safety and well-being of your employees?
12. How would you evaluate the level of safety in your restaurant?
13. Who is responsible for the safety matters in your company?
14. Does your company consider improving the safety matters especially during this pandemic?
15. What do you expect from a safety plan for the COVID-19 pandemic?
16. What would be the limitations when doing the safety plan (regarding finance, etc.)