

ANALYSIS THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON PASSENGER SERVICES

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ABSTRACT

In 2019, the Bamboo Curtain country was shocked by the news that a 55-year-old citizen from Wuhan, Hubei Province, was infected with the virus. Presumably this is the first case that happened. The disease caused by the virus is called wuhan pneumonia which is then called by the World Health Organization (WHO) Coronavirus Disease 19 (Covid 19). The Covid-19 pandemic has also impacted many industries, especially in the air transportation sector. Many changes with increasingly stringent requirements and stricter supervision from officers and passengers to comply with health protocols to prevent the spread of Covid-19. The impact of this virus is very influential in passenger services where there are changes and differences in services during a pandemic and after a pandemic where from the terminal entrance service to the waiting room or departure terminal area and there are points where service changes are implemented. Inside the terminal, passengers will experience a significant difference in service to prevent the spread of the virus, from wearing masks at the airport terminal, providing touchless technology at the terminal and providing free hand sanitizer facilities to maintain the health and comfort of passengers. Related data and information are used to carry out a qualitative descriptive analysis in this study. This description can be used to explain in general the events that occurred related to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on changes in passenger service. The purpose of this research is to produce recommendations to add to existing and new policies regarding departure terminal facilities while still prioritizing preventing the spread of Covid-19.

Keywords: *Covid-19, Passenger service, Facility*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization and modern mobility, the air transportation sector plays a pivotal role in facilitating societal connectivity and driving economic growth. Sam Ratulangi International Airport, located in North Sulawesi, represents a fundamental component of this infrastructure. Situated approximately 13 kilometers (8.1 miles) northeast of Manado city, the airport holds a significant history and role. Its name, derived from Indonesian independence fighter Sam Ratulangi, not only reflects patriotism but also honors the early history of Sulawesi as the first governor. Beyond serving as the operational hub for Lion Air and Wings Air in the northeastern Indonesian region, the airport also serves as a key focus for Garuda Indonesia and Citilink [1].

The journey of Sam Ratulangi International Airport began with its construction by the Japanese military in 1942, featuring an initial runway measuring 700 meters in length and 23 meters in width [2]. Originally known as Mapanget Airfield due to its location in the Mapanget area, the airport underwent a series of name changes as influenced by historical dynamics, including the Permesta rebellion which led to

its renaming as Tugiman Airfield in honor of a local hero. Subsequently, after several transformations, the airport was eventually christened as Sam Ratulangi Airfield, commemorating Indonesia's national hero from Minahasa, North Sulawesi [3].

As its evolution unfolded, Sam Ratulangi Airport saw its status elevated to Class 1B International Airport in 1994 [4]. In response to rapid economic growth, the airport's facilities expanded, with the runway extended to 2,650 meters in length and 45 meters in width. This expansion enabled the acceptance of aircraft types such as Airbus A330, A320, and McDonnell Douglas DC-10.

However, the global transportation landscape underwent a profound transformation with the unforeseen emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019. Originating in Wuhan, China, the COVID-19 pandemic swiftly spread worldwide [5]. Identified as Coronavirus Disease 19 (Covid-19) by the World Health Organization (WHO), the virus had significant ramifications for the international community, including Indonesia. With symptoms ranging from respiratory issues to neurological disorders, Covid-19 claimed numerous lives and raised global concerns [6].

On the transportation front, the pandemic compelled airlines, including Garuda Indonesia, to

suspend operations on various impacted routes. These closures were accompanied by the opening of new routes as a survival and economic resilience strategy. Sam Ratulangi Airport itself experienced notable changes in travel requirements, including the use of the Peduli Lindungi application and vaccination regulations, following the issuance of Circular Letter Number 24 of 2022 by the Covid-19 Task Force [7].

Hence, this study aims to comprehend the Impact of Passenger Services during Covid and Post-Pandemic periods and to analyze the Impact of Differences in Passenger Services during Covid and Post-Pandemic periods.

2. METHODS

2.1. Research Design

In this study, a qualitative research design is employed. Qualitative research design is flexible and can evolve according to field conditions; it is general in nature and serves to guide the author's steps and describe what the author does in the field. The research will be conducted through observation, which is a part of the discussion generation process, involving the examination of a situation, event, or activity to explain and generate a conclusion [8]. Based on this explanation, the researcher aims to present the Impact of Covid-19 on Passenger Service at Sam Ratulangi International Airport, Manado. There are several stages or steps undertaken in the research implementation; the following outlines these stages.

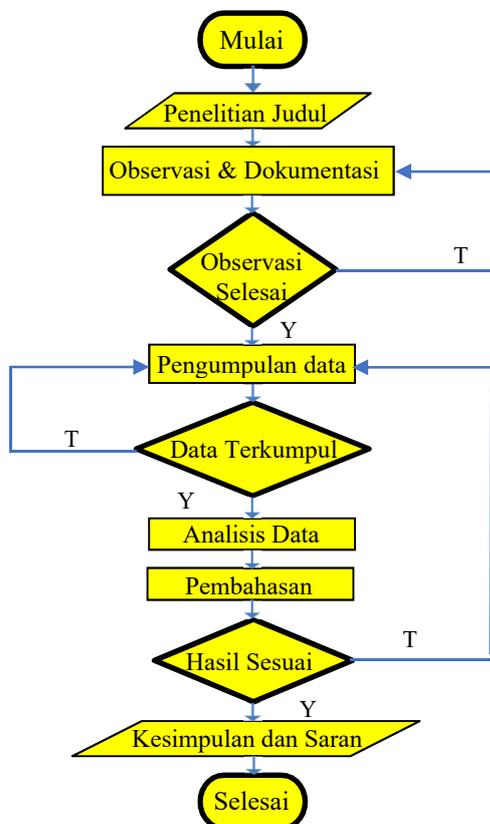


Figure 1. Research Flowchart

2.2. Research Setting

The location of this research is at PT Angkasa Pura I Branch Office and Sam Ratulangi International Airport, Manado. The selection of this location as the research object was due to its role as the OJT (On The Job Training) site, facilitating the collection of data to support the completion of the final project writing. The research was initiated during the On The Job Training in January 2023.

2.4. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques involve statements about specific attributes, conditions, activities, and the like. Data collection is carried out to obtain the necessary information in order to achieve the research objectives [9].

The data collection methods employed by the author aim to facilitate the collection of information about the Analysis of the Impact of Covid-19 on Passenger Service at Sam Ratulangi International Airport, Manado. Therefore, the author utilized observation, interviews, literature review, and documentation methods for data collection [10].

2.4.1. Observation

Observation is commonly understood as the act of observing situations and conditions in the place under study [11]. Based on this explanation, in this research, observation was conducted by directly visiting the Departure Terminal of Sam Ratulangi International Airport, Manado, and it began during the author's On The Job Training (OJT) in the months from January to March of the year 2023.

2.4.2. Interview

Interview is a data collection technique used in qualitative and quantitative descriptive research, conducted orally in face-to-face meetings either individually or remotely, through telecommunication media. Interviewing is an activity aimed at obtaining in-depth information about the researched information or issues [12]. In this case, the author will conduct interviews, engaging in intensive conversations with a specific objective towards the Terminal Service Officer of Sam Ratulangi International Airport, Manado. The purpose of these interviews is to gather as much information as possible regarding the issues at hand, thereby enhancing the author's data related to the Analysis of the Impact of Covid-19 on Passenger Service at Sam Ratulangi International Airport, Manado.

2.4.3. Literature Review

Literature Review is a crucial step where, after a researcher defines the research topic, the next step is to conduct theoretical exploration and reference examination related to the conducted research [13]. The literature review carried out by the author encompasses regulations and requirements aimed at reevaluating factors perceived to contribute to the emergence of issues, guidelines and references about the definitions present in the issue's discussion, including elaboration on the title of the raised issue along with insights from experts edited from various sources [14].

2.4.4. Documentation

Documentation is a method employed to obtain data and information in the form of books, archives, documents, numerical and graphical records, as well as reports and explanations that can support research [15]. Documentation is used to gather data, which is then examined. The documentation utilized in this study involves using photographs of the departure terminal location at Sam Ratulangi International Airport, Manado, taken by the author during a 3-month On The Job Training period.

2.5. Data Analysis Technique

The nature of analysis in qualitative research involves the deconstruction of the phenomenon as it occurs (descriptive) coupled with the interpretation of the underlying meaning beyond what is visible (interpretive). Data analysis is the process of organizing and categorizing data into patterns, categories, and basic description units, thus revealing themes and providing a foundation for formulating working hypotheses as recommended [16]. The data analysis employed in this study involves using qualitative descriptive analysis, where the purpose of this analysis is to systematically, factually, and accurately depict the facts and relationships among the investigated phenomena [17]. Analysis is conducted once the required data for this research has been collected. In analyzing the data related to the impact of Covid-19 on passenger services, it is done by describing or portraying the gathered data using words, thereby creating suitable conditions for passenger service at Sam Ratulangi International Airport, Manado.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

3.1.1. Observation

Observation data collection technique is a method of collecting data by directly going to the location designated for the research. Based on the data collection technique of Participant Observation, the author conducted direct observations during a 3-month On The Job Training (OJT) at Sam Ratulangi International

Airport, Manado, specifically in the departure terminal area, covering the entrance to the terminal and the waiting area. This was to examine the extent of changes in services that occurred.



Figure 2. Temperature gauge at the entrance to the terminal

The image above illustrates that some COVID prevention measures are still being implemented at Sam Ratulangi Airport in Manado. One of these measures is the temperature measurement device at the entrance. This device functions to measure the temperature of incoming passengers, aiming to identify passengers with temperatures higher than 37.5°C. Passengers with such temperatures will be questioned about their health condition and other factors that might explain why their temperature exceeds the healthy range for humans.

Facilities like this are still considered necessary at the airport because they assist the staff in identifying passengers who might be ill. Given that COVID-19 is still considered an ongoing epidemic, we need to remain vigilant even though the situation might not be as severe as in previous years.

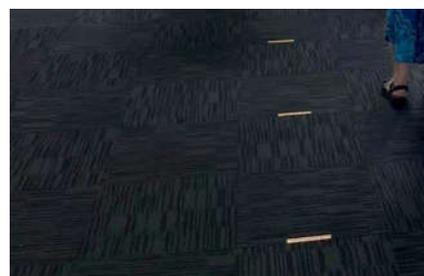


Figure 3. Sign keeping your distance before entering the gate

The practice of maintaining distance, commonly known as social distancing signs, is also a change that emerged during the pandemic era. Although the intensity might have decreased at present, these signs still remain. They serve the purpose of guiding passengers to avoid crowding while queuing to reach the departure gate. This precaution is particularly important to prevent overcrowding and rushing as passengers strive to board their flights promptly.



Figure 4. Handsanitizer

Hand sanitizer might not be as essential as some other measures, considering that many passengers carry their own from home. However, this facility is provided to ensure that passengers who forget or don't have their own sanitizer can still maintain hygiene. It's undeniable that public areas like terminals have numerous touchpoints frequently contacted by passengers' hands, potentially causing those spots to become unclean. This prompts the need for hand sanitizer, especially before eating or engaging in activities. Nevertheless, not all airports maintain this facility at present, as some might perceive the current situation to have shifted from a pandemic to an endemic state, leading to the removal of such provisions.



Figure 5. Self ticket checking machine

Changes in the check-in procedure have been implemented at Sam Ratulangi Airport, where the service has adopted self-check-in procedures that heavily incorporate contactless technology. This includes self-check-in via applications or automated check-in machines upon entering the entrance gate. This approach aids in minimizing direct contact with airport staff. While not all passengers might utilize this service, its availability helps reduce passenger congestion.



Figure 6. Sam Ratulangi Airport waiting room

Enhanced cleanliness and sterilization measures have been implemented at Sam Ratulangi Airport Manado, encompassing all areas of the airport,

including restrooms, waiting lounges, dining outlets, and other public facilities. This involves regular disinfection procedures using effective disinfectants. Additionally, there are capacity limitations and seat spacing arrangements in waiting areas to manage passenger capacity restrictions. Some seats may be closed or rearranged to ensure adequate distancing between passengers, reducing the potential for disease transmission among them.

The airport also conducts and enhances routine disinfectant spraying in public areas such as terminals, restrooms, waiting lounges, and other zones. These efforts are undertaken to minimize the risk of virus spread.



Figure 7. Place of administration of vaccines

Not all airports have this facility, but some have implemented it to facilitate passengers who have not met the vaccination requirements. They can undergo the vaccination on the spot to ease their travel. This facility is widely used and can be utilized not only by passengers but also by others.

3.1.2. Interview

In this research, the author conducted direct interviews with one of the Terminal Service Officers at Sam Ratulangi Manado Airport. These interviews were carried out to strengthen the analysis results related to the impact of COVID on passenger service changes. The interview results indicated that there are many additional facilities and services that would affect the passenger departure process. However, as personnel responsible for implementing health protocols, the officers strive to make passengers feel comfortable using air transportation during this pandemic era.

Starting from providing free hand sanitizers at specific spots, the officers also implemented measures to maintain physical distance in waiting areas to prevent passengers from being too close to each other. The personnel are also responsible for ensuring passengers wear masks; if a passenger is not wearing a mask, the officers have the authority to remind them to do so. This responsibility extends not only to the Terminal Service Officers but also to the Facility Care staff, who go the extra mile to maintain a healthy environment, including restrooms and waiting areas.

However, after the announcement that the pandemic status has transitioned to an endemic phase, which involves a transitional period where some facilities are considered to be retained or not, certain facilities may

be altered. For instance, the provision of free hand sanitizer might be replaced with soap at the restroom sinks. Additionally, the mandatory mask rule might be slightly relaxed due to the adoption of the Circular Number 1 of 2023 regarding Health Protocols during the Transition Phase of Endemic Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

3.1.3. Study Literature

The author conducted a literature review based on regulations and guidelines adopted to shape the discussions, including the elaboration of the title and formulation of the issues, as well as the opinions of experts from various sources. The discussions in this chapter are guided by the provisions of PM 178 of 2015 on Airport User Service Standards and Circular Number 1 of 2023 on Health Protocols during the Transition Phase of Endemic Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). The regulations mentioned above serve as references for the completion of this final project, as well as for understanding the changes in services during this transition phase of the endemic period.

3.2. Discussion

In the preceding years, the increasing number of positive Covid-19 cases in Indonesia, particularly in Manado, led to a decrease in the number of airport users, especially passengers. This was due to the temporary suspension of public transportation and public concern about Covid-19 transmission. While air travel operations resumed at airports like Sam Ratulangi International Airport in Manado, passengers still felt hesitant about traveling.

Passengers had high concerns regarding airport service processes, such as touching trays during security checks, escalator handrails, elevator buttons, airport restroom usage, handling baggage, and queuing for check-in and boarding. As a result, service changes were implemented, starting from online ticket bookings for those who had received their third vaccine dose, aiming to instill confidence and alleviate passenger worries when using air transportation.

Within the terminal, passengers experienced significant service changes to prevent virus spread. Visible changes included the mandatory use of masks, touchless technology implementation, the provision of free hand sanitizers at various locations, marked seating areas in waiting lounges to ensure distancing, increased cleaning and sterilization frequency in waiting areas, and floor markings at gates to maintain distance while boarding the plane.

After Indonesia was hit by the pandemic and various lockdown measures were implemented, airports were also affected. However, in 2023, the government introduced new regulations through Circular Number 1 of 2023 regarding Health Protocols during the

Transition Phase of Endemic Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). This led to a reduction in some of the previous Covid-19 regulations.

Considering the evolving situation in Covid-19 control globally and in Indonesia, improved control, widespread immunity, and policy relaxation in some countries, and cross-sector evaluations of Covid-19 control, adjustments to health protocol mechanisms during the transition phase of the endemic period were deemed necessary to prevent the spread of Covid-19. The purpose of this Circular is to implement health protocols during the transition phase of the endemic period for domestic and international travelers, large-scale events, and activities in public facilities. The aim of this Circular is to provide maximum protection to the public from Covid-19 transmission.

All transportation facility operators, public facility operators, and large-scale event organizers, in collaboration with local governments, are advised to continue protecting the public through preventive and promotive efforts to control Covid-19 transmission. They are also urged to maintain supervision, guidance, regulation, and enforcement of health protocols to control Covid-19 transmission.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond, it was announced that the situation has transitioned to an endemic threat. As a result, there have been changes and differences in airport terminal facilities to ensure passenger safety and health.

During the pandemic, cleanliness and sanitation protocols were enhanced throughout the airport terminals. Increased cleaning and disinfection frequency took place in public areas, waiting zones, check-in counters, equipment, and other common facilities. Stations for hand cleaning or hand sanitizer dispensers were more commonly found around the terminal. However, the provision of these hand cleaning stations or hand sanitizer dispensers, which were previously prevalent in waiting areas, has been reduced, and there are plans to remove them. This change is influenced by the latest regulations, which suggest passengers bring their own hand sanitizers from home, given that Covid-19 cases have subsided into an endemic state [18].

Despite the transition to an endemic status, mask usage is still mandatory at the airport to minimize virus transmission. Passengers are required to wear masks while in the terminal, on the aircraft, and throughout their journey. Body temperature checks are still conducted at the entrance of Sam Ratulangi International Airport's terminal in Manado, even though the pandemic has become endemic. The airport staff wants to ensure that such measures are not taken lightly and remain in place. This practice aims to identify individuals with elevated body temperatures, which could indicate Covid-19 symptoms.

In the waiting area of Sam Ratulangi International Airport in Manado, some spots still implement access

restrictions or capacity management to maintain social distancing among passengers. This could involve reducing the number of seats or implementing physical barriers like chair covers or floor markings for queue spacing. Such queue systems might have returned to more conventional procedures, with many having been removed due to their decreased significance compared to other facilities. This change is influenced by policy adjustments and increased passenger numbers. Sam Ratulangi International Airport in Manado continues to provide health protocol information. This can be conveyed through announcement boards, banners, or signs reminding passengers to maintain distance, wash their hands, and adhere to Covid-19-related rules. Initially, these facilities were maintained, but they have eventually been removed due to the decrease in Covid-19 cases and the availability of other health-supporting facilities. This change aims to protect both passengers and airport staff from Covid-19 transmission and ensure a safe and comfortable travel experience [19].

These changes persist as Covid-19 transitions into an endemic phase. It is crucial to always follow the instructions and information provided by airport authorities and airlines regarding the prevailing regulations and protocols.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this research, the airport has implemented health protocols in accordance with the Circular Letter from the Covid Task Force and continues to follow updates to these regulations, such as body temperature checks, mandatory mask usage, intensified cleaning and disinfection, and the provision of Thermal Scanners. However, after it was announced that the pandemic has transitioned to an endemi status, the personnel have retained only certain regulations that are deemed necessary. For the implementation of social distancing, the capacity of waiting areas and public spaces at the airport has been reduced, but markers indicating social distancing are still in place to avoid crowding. The airport has reduced physical contact and direct interactions. Examples include self-check-in and self-baggage drop using automated machines, the use of electronic boarding passes, and automatic scanning systems to minimize direct interaction with staff, which still proves beneficial for time efficiency. Changes in the travel experience, such as the check-in process, security checks, and immigration procedures, may take longer due to additional health protocols and operational adjustments. Passengers are also expected to comply with health protocols during their journey, such as mandatory mask usage and maintaining distance, which has now been facilitated.

Furthermore, effective airport management is highly needed in facing unforeseen circumstances, like the current situation with the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Although the COVID-19 status has transitioned to an endemi, not all facilities that were implemented during

the pandemic are suitable for removal, as some of these facilities are still needed as health standards. Prevention is easier than treatment, which is why some aspects of the recent regulations are retained, as the health and comfort of passengers remain the primary goal for airport personnel. The implementation of health protocols in accordance with government regulations must continue to be upheld, both in operations and concerning the existing facilities, as an effort to curb the spread of COVID-19 and to ensure that passengers feel safe and comfortable, thereby enhancing passenger confidence in air travel.

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