

A Review of Factors Influencing Hotel Management Students' Perceptions of Housekeeping as a Career in Uttarakhand

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Abstract

Housekeeping is a central component in hotel management, yet it is usually plagued by the assumption that it is a low prestige job. In this review, the authors discuss the issues that affect the perceptions of the hotel management students towards housekeeping as a career choice, specifically in the state of Uttarakhand, India. The socio-cultural, economic, educational, and gender-related factors are analyzed with references to the available literature and theoretical assumptions. The results show that although housekeeping plays an important role in operation of the hotels, it has challenges on perceived prestige of the career and appeal to the students. The review summarizes the major themes of the literature and elaborates on the possible avenues through which the beliefs held by people about housekeeping as a career choice in the hospitality industry can be changed.

Keywords: Housekeeping, Career Perceptions, Hotel Management, Uttarakhand, Socio- cultural Factors, Economic Influences, Gender Roles, Education

1. Introduction

Hotel business has been among the most significant and massive sector of the international economy
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and housekeeping is a vital part of it. The quality of service in the hotels also entails the element of housekeeping which covers the aspect of maintaining cleanliness, satisfaction of the guests and the general functionality of the hotel. Nevertheless, the housekeeping occupation is still viewed as a low-status or low-skill occupation. This stigma, which is especially acute among management students of hotels, has led to lack of interest in the profession of housekeeping despite the incessant growth of market in terms of professional housekeeping practitioners.

The paper is a literature review of the literature that has been published regarding the factors influencing hotel management students to perceive housekeeping as a career option, particularly in the state of Uttarakhand which is presently witnessing a massive development in its hospitality industry. The combination of socio-cultural, economic, educational, and gender-related factors will help us illuminate the causes of reluctance of students to acquire housekeeping jobs and give us an idea of the way in which these attitudes can be changed.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Housekeeping's Role in Hotel Management

Housekeeping is one of the jobs with low prestige in the hospitality industry that used to be considered low quality. Such a perception has existed even though housekeeping is a vital part of a hotel business. The role plays a central role in keeping the place clean, satisfying the guests and the general operations of the hotel. The hygiene and guest comfort directly determine the guest experience and, therefore, hotel reviews, customer loyalty, and business profitability (Anderson and Jolly, 2023). Nevertheless, housekeeping was not perceived as a good career choice since it has been long considered a low-skill or a point-of-entry job despite its significance, which is why its perception remains low (Kaur and Savita, 2023). This perception has however been redefined in the past years due to the technological advances that have been made. Robots that clean rooms, room automation, and new digital management systems have contributed greatly to the efficiency and intensity of the work of housekeeping. The technologies have also streamlined, automated, and data-driven the department, which is more or less aligned with high-tech and skilled positions. As an example, the introduction of cleaning robots and improved software applications to keeping track of cleaning schedules and guest preferences has led to more refined and appealing housekeeping to younger and more technology-oriented employees (Verma et al., 2020). However, the stigmatization of housekeeping is still strong particularly among the young

students entering the hotel sector. The perception that housekeeping is a low-status occupation also contributes to the fact that it is not a career option to which students pay much attention, although vacancies that require skilled specialists in this field are growing (Anderson & Jolly, 2023). Although the front office orientation and the managerial job remain the most suitable career choice among students, the recent realization that the back-of-house functions including housekeeping are crucial in the operations of any organization is a significant move towards undermining this long held view.

2.2. Socio-Cultural Factors Influencing Career Perceptions

The socio-cultural issues are an important influence in the perception of career in India. Traditionally oriented with value and social hierarchy in one country, hospitality professions in particular, that include housekeeping, are perceived in socio-cultural perspective, which attributes more status to house keeping or front office jobs. Such jobs are commonly linked to superior social privilege and prominence whereas operational and back-of-house tasks, such as housekeeping, are seen as less glamorous (Bhagat, 2021). It has been found that students with rural or less-developed backgrounds are even less likely to regard housekeeping jobs as anything more than a mockery as they are perceived as a sign of the low status and low payment. Hospitality career is perceived in these areas as less prestigious than any other careers, which also supports the idea of housekeeping as a less valuable career choice. It is informed by the societal attitudes toward the manual labor generally considered inappropriate in the higher social groups (Gupta and Joshi, 2018). It is also evident in the cultural perspective on manual labour in India where students tend to seek jobs in front offices or in managerial positions, which are considered to be more dignified. This further acts as a detriment to enrolling students to housekeeping careers as it gets more professionalized and technologically advanced. The socio-cultural brainwash which associates prestige with managerial positions rather than the operational position must be dealt with in order to make housekeeping a feasible and attractive career choice to the future generations.

2.3. Economic Considerations in Career Choices

One of the key factors which play a major role in the determination of careers of the students is the economic factors, including salary expectations, job security and potential career growth. Hotel management students tend to take economic advantage and seek high-status, high-paying positions, especially management or sales. These positions are usually better-paying with better job security and

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prospect of a long-term career advancement (Kumar & Sharma, 2024; Bahadur, 2024). Consequently, students tend to neglect housekeeping, due to their perception of this job as poorly paid and having limited chances of advancing. Research has demonstrated that students consider housekeeping as a low-paying, low-level job, and career growth opportunities are few in comparison with managers or front-office positions (Gupta & Joshi, 2018). According to Kumar & Sharma (2024), the hospitality business is often unable to advertise housekeeping as a profession that has high financial and professional opportunities. This image should be reversed by presenting the changing prospects in the field, such as the leadership positions and the growing number of job opportunities in the high-end hotels and resorts that require qualified housekeeping staff. Furthermore, students who are economically oriented to a significant extent might not necessarily value the operational significance of housekeeping in the hotel industry. The recent economic context alongside the growing need of sustainable hospitality practices has led to the growing significance of skilled housekeeping jobs in the achievement of the financial success of hotels (Sharma and Pani, 2018). Thus, one of the areas that should be addressed to make the housekeeping field more attractive to the students joining the hospitality workforce is the economic misconceptions about the field.

2.4. Educational Influence and Industry Exposure

Learning institutions are very important in influencing the career perceptions of the students especially in subjects like the hospitality industry. Nevertheless, most hotel management programs are still offering minimal exposure into the housekeeping department with more emphasis on front-office, marketing and management options. Such a limited scope may contribute to the lack of full operational importance of housekeeping, and consequently to the loss of value of the chosen profession as a professional direction among the students (Choudhary and Singh, 2021). As Choudhary and Singh (2021) pointed out, when students have a direct experience in housekeeping, through the internships, or training programs, they will have higher chances to consider the profession as valuable and professional. A close experience of the complexity of housekeeping, including learning about the technology and management prospects in the department, can also assist in changing the perception of the students who currently see it as a low-ranking job to one that is very essential in the overall operations of a hotel. Nonetheless, the underrepresentation of operational significance of housekeeping in a variety of academic programs may also play a role in discouraging students in the choice of majoring in this profession. Several hotel management courses continue to focus on front-office management, sales, and customer service functions as opposed to housekeeping, which can lead to students being undervalued about the

importance and potential (Gupta and Nautiyal, 2023). The restructuring of the housekeeping profession by placing it in a strategic position of ensuring that the hotel guest remains satisfied and plays a role in the hotel profitability is necessary in transforming the perception of the students towards the field.

2.5. Gender Dynamics and Housekeeping Careers

Housekeeping is a gendered profession and its impact on career choice of students is still a major factor in the career selection. Housekeeping has always been considered as a female occupation, and gender bias is still used to view the profession. Goh and Lee (2020) observed that male students are not encouraged by society to think of housekeeping as a profession as it does not fit their gender roles. Housekeeping is viewed as a female occupation which is a barrier to the male students who might experience an urge to use alternative career opportunities in the hospitality sector. On the other hand, the female students might consider the housekeeping as a more gender appropriate profession but they are also constrained in relation to the career progression in this sector. This situation is explained by the fact that the occupation of housekeeping is traditionally not prestigious and, therefore, even female professionals in the field might struggle with accessing the positions occupying high managerial posts (Goh & Lee, 2020). Women in the housekeeping sector as highlighted by Gupta and Joshi (2018) are not given leadership opportunities as they are not seen as good candidates to occupy managerial positions as compared to their male counterparts in front offices or in executive positions. In order to overcome these gender biases, educational institutions and the hospitality industry should use a complex approach. The inclusion and equity of the work environment can be achieved by gender-neutral campaigns, mentorship, and specific leadership training to be offered to women in the housekeeping field. By encouraging boys to think about working in housekeeping and giving women an equal chance to rise to a higher position in the department, one may break these stereotypes that have existed long before and improve the attitude toward the housekeeping career (Sharma and Pani, 2018). Moreover, with the development of the hospitality sector, the addition of technological advances and sustainability programs into housekeeping may hold a wider pool of students to the field, breaking the stereotyped ideas and providing new professions across sex boundaries (Anderson and Jolly, 2023; Gupta and Nautiyal, 2023).

3. Methodology: Overview of Existing Research

The research to date has predominantly utilized surveys, qualitative interviews, and case studies to

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investigate students' perceptions of housekeeping careers. A range of academic studies, such as those by Chen et al. (2022) and Dube & Milman (2023), have employed quantitative surveys to measure students' attitudes toward housekeeping roles, focusing on factors like career aspirations, economic concerns, and industry perceptions. These studies typically sample hospitality students from various regions to identify patterns in career choices. Qualitative studies, on the other hand, have employed semi-structured interviews to explore the deeper motivations and personal experiences that shape students' attitudes toward housekeeping as a profession (Choudhary & Singh, 2021). A review of existing research indicates that a multi-method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data, provides the most comprehensive understanding of the complex factors influencing career perceptions.

4. Discussion: Key Themes and Insights

4.1. Shifting Perceptions through Professionalization

One of the major changes that have happened in the hospitality industry during the past ten years is the increased appreciation of housekeeping as a professional occupation due to the technological changes and shifts in the perception of professional respectability. Specifically, the implementation of technological solutions in housekeeping, including cleaning robots and electronic management systems, have contributed to the improvement of the reputation of the latter-underestimated department (Anderson and Jolly, 2023). Such innovations have enabled housekeeping to be efficient as well as high-tech and skilled thus career advancement. Nevertheless, housekeeping stigma is still a problem facing students, with many of them considering it a less preferable career path over front-office jobs or career in management (Gupta and Nautiyal, 2023). In order to make housekeeping a good career option, the education facilities and the industrial heads have to make some effort to further professionalise the profession by emphasising career advancement, special training, and possibility to join the leadership. Because economic and cultural influences tend to restrict the career options of students, as Bhagat (2021) points out, it is critical that the hospitality industry should tackle these obstacles and rebrand housekeeping as a high-value, strategic career.

Table 1: Shifting Perceptions through Professionalization

Theme	Key Insights	Examples/References
Technological Advancements	Automation technologies such as cleaning robots and digital systems are elevating housekeeping roles	Anderson & Jolly (2023), Verma et al. (2020)
Career Progression	Housekeeping is becoming a high-tech, skilled field with career advancement opportunities	Housekeeping departments contributing to sustainability efforts (Sharma & Pani, 2018)

Status Shift	Despite advancements, the stigma around housekeeping persists, with students preferring front-office roles	Gupta & Nautiyal (2023)
Professionalization Need	Professionalization through specialized training, leadership roles, and industry rebranding is essential	Bhagat (2021), Kumar & Sharma (2024)
Sustainability Integration	Housekeeping's role in green hospitality initiatives can help improve the perception of the field	Sharma & Pani (2018), Anderson & Jolly (2023)

The growing interest in sustainability is also connected to the professionalization direction, and the housekeeping departments are the key stakeholders in the green hospitality initiatives (Sharma and Pani, 2018). Housekeeping departments can not only help the hotel in its practices of ensuring sustainability, but they also help the profession to be more aligned to the trends of a wider global range by incorporating environmental responsibility in their day-to-day activities. The curricula of educational reforms have to incorporate these points so that students are not ignorant about the changing aspect of the field. This change also highlights the essentiality of housekeeping in the development of the extraordinary guest experiences, which are not always properly reflected in the story of the industry (Anderson and Jolly, 2023; Kumar and Sharma, 2024).

4.2. The Need for Educational Reform

Although the issue of housekeeping is becoming more significant in the operation of hotels, there is still a lack of focus on this area in the hotel management programs. Most of the curricula give an imbalanced preference to front-office activities, marketing and management and ignore the importance of the back-of-

house activities such as housekeeping. This is because they have no experience with housekeeping, so students might not appreciate its importance and dismiss it as a profession (Choudhary and Singh, 2021). Students who are not provided with the sufficient exposure to the reality of housekeeping are found to lack the ability to see its role in the overall success of the hotel (Gupta and Joshi, 2018). To fill this gap, schools should change their program to provide more in-depth education on the working complexities of housekeeping. On-the-job training and internships which will imply direct exposure to the housekeeping working will assist students in learning more about the range of responsibilities and career development opportunities within the department (Choudhary and Singh, 2021; Bhagat, 2021).

Another important factors that can transform the mindsets of the students are leadership development integrated in the housekeeping jobs. Housekeeping has been considered as a non- managerial, entry level occupation. Nevertheless, as Chen et al. (2022) explain, the changing nature of the hospitality business requires competent leaders even in such an operational sector as housekeeping. Through training of the hotel management students in leadership, the universities will be able to prepare the future professionals to take on the managerial and strategic roles in the housekeeping field and make it an engaging career choice.

Table 2: The Need for Educational Reform

Theme	Key Insights	Examples/References
Curriculum Gaps	Hotel management programs often focus too much on front-office and marketing roles, neglecting housekeeping	Choudhary & Singh (2021), Gupta & Joshi (2018)
Practical Exposure	Lack of hands-on experience in housekeeping reduces students' understanding of its importance	Bhagat (2021), Choudhary & Singh (2021)

Leadership Development	Including leadership training in housekeeping can help shift students' perspectives to see it as a dynamic career	Chen et al. (2022)
Industry Alignment	Academic programs should integrate current trends such as smart rooms and eco-friendly cleaning systems	Verma et al. (2020), Gupta & Nautiyal (2023)
Internship Opportunities	Internships and on-the-job training are critical for helping students appreciate the scope of housekeeping roles	Choudhary & Singh (2021)

The other factor is the alignment of academic programs with the current trend in the industry such as the technological progress in the housekeeping. As an example, the inclusion of the topics of smart rooms, environmentally friendly cleaning products, and automation in the curriculum will allow positioning housekeeping not only as a maintenance job but as a technologically innovative and progressive one (Verma et al., 2020; Gupta and Nautiyal, 2023). This wider recognition can be used to rebrand housekeeping in educational institutions as an important and dynamic area of knowledge that is appealing to students with different backgrounds.

4.3. Addressing Gender Biases

Gender bias against housekeeping jobs is one of the most extreme issues that do not allow students to think about this profession, especially men. Traditionally, the female gender has had their way when it comes to housekeeping, and this stereotype remains unchanged, even though there is an attempt to break the gender norms in the labor market (Goh & Lee, 2020). Male students especially, tend to think that housekeeping is not fit in them and thus they avoid it as a career path. Likewise, even female students intending to do housekeeping could also experience the force of social gender role marketing themselves into a profession

traditionally dominated by women that does not receive high value and possibly does not offer a significant career progression (Gupta and Joshi, 2018; Chen et al., 2022).

Table 3: Addressing Gender Biases

Theme	Key Insights	Examples/References
Gender Stereotypes	Housekeeping has traditionally been seen as a “female profession,” deterring male students from considering it	Goh & Lee (2020), Gupta & Joshi (2018)
Gender Bias in Career Advancement	Women in housekeeping face challenges in leadership roles compared to their male counterparts in front-office jobs	Gupta & Joshi (2018), Goh & Lee (2020)
Encouraging Male Students	Gender-neutral campaigns are needed to attract male students to housekeeping roles	Goh & Lee (2020)
Leadership Training for Women	Incorporating leadership training and mentorship programs can help women advance in housekeeping	Kumar & Sharma (2024), Goh & Lee (2020)

Reframing Housekeeping	Promoting housekeeping as a career with leadership opportunities and technological integration can attract diverse students	Anderson & Jolly (2023), Gupta & Nautiyal (2023)
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The problem of such gender biases needs a complex response that implies both the change in culture and the intervention approach to education. To begin with, the gender-neutral campaigns will be useful in fighting the old fashioned views, which tie certain jobs to a specific gender. The initiatives that seek to influence male students to think about a career in housekeeping, such as the ones, can be an effective instrument of promoting equality and decreasing stigma (Goh & Lee, 2020). The introduction of different role models of both sexes in their housekeeping training programs is also a critical factor that educational institutions can use to shatter these gender stereotypes, emphasizing the successful people who have excelled in the career of housekeeping (Sharma & Pani, 2018). Moreover, gender discrimination is not a matter of professional preference alone but regarding career advancement in the industry as well. Another issue that emerged in housekeeping is the problem of career progression, as female staff members are viewed as less capable of holding a leading position compared to male staff in the front-office roles (Gupta & Joshi, 2018). To counter the challenges, the hotels and educational institutions are advised to integrate leadership training and mentorship programs that help the women in the housekeeping department so that they can have the desire of becoming managers in the department. The hospitality industry can draw and keep a larger number of talents by promoting a more inclusive, gender-neutral environment, both in educational institutions and workplaces (Kumar & Sharma, 2024; Goh and Lee, 2020). In addition, the transformation of the housekeeping image is linked with the understanding of the future professional development of the profession irrespective of gender. Provided that housekeeping is promoted as a profession with real chances of leadership, integration of technologies, and impact on the industry, it can appeal to more students, especially men, to consider it as an opportunity and a worthwhile career (Anderson and Jolley, 2023; Gupta and Nautiyal, 2023).

5. Conclusion

This review demonstrates that a complicated combination of socio-cultural, economical, educational and gender-specific issues influences the perceptions of housekeeping as a career among hotel management students. Nevertheless, although the housekeeping profession is becoming more professional, and the need in skilled labor force in this field is rising, the profession is still underestimated by students. The solution to these perceptions will be a multi faceted intervention which will involve modifying the educational curricula, increased exposure to the utility of housekeeping as a profession and the need to reduce gender biases. The industry is able to draw more competent individuals into a necessary area by changing the discourse on housekeeping and its importance in the hospitality industry.

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