

Socio-Cultural Influences on Students' Perceptions of Housekeeping Careers in the Kumaon Region: A Comprehensive Review

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Received: 05/12/2025;

Revision: 20/12/2025;

Accepted: 12/01/2026;

Published: 30/01/2026

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Abstract: The hospitality industry represents a critical economic sector in India, contributing approximately 9.2% to the country's GDP and generating substantial employment opportunities (Ministry of Tourism, 2023). However, despite the essential role that housekeeping plays in hospitality operations, it remains persistently undervalued and stigmatized across Indian society. This comprehensive research paper examines the complex socio-cultural factors that shape students' perceptions of housekeeping as a career option in the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand, India. Drawing on extensive literature review, empirical findings from recent studies, and theoretical frameworks, this research identifies that gender roles, cultural attitudes toward manual labor, family expectations, and educational awareness gaps are the primary determinants influencing students' career decisions regarding housekeeping. The paper synthesizes findings from 50 peer-reviewed sources and presents data-driven insights that can inform educational interventions and policy reforms to reframe the perception of housekeeping as a professional, legitimate, and advancement-oriented career pathway.

Keywords: Housekeeping, Career Perception, Socio-cultural Influences, Gender Roles, Hospitality Education, Kumaon Region, Manual Labor Stigma, Career Decision-Making.

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry has emerged as one of India's fastest-growing sectors, with the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) reporting that tourism and hospitality contribute substantially to economic growth and employment generation (WTTC, 2023). Within this dynamic industry, housekeeping serves as the backbone of hospitality operations, directly influencing guest satisfaction, repeat business, and organizational reputation (Vallen & Vallen, 2017). In India, the hospitality sector has experienced exponential expansion, particularly in regions like Uttarakhand, which has been designated as a tourism development priority area (Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board, 2023; Bhatt & Sharma, 2020). Despite the critical importance of housekeeping to hospitality organizations, the profession remains significantly undervalued in India's social and economic hierarchy. Recent studies indicate that housekeeping departments face severe staffing shortages and turnover rates exceeding 85% annually (Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India [FHRAI], 2022), suggesting a fundamental problem in how the profession is perceived and valued. This workforce crisis directly threatens the operational sustainability of hospitality establishments and undermines service quality (Kumar & Nair, 2022). The Kumaon region, encompassing districts of Uttarakhand such as Almora, Bageshwar, Champawat, and Nainital, has experienced significant tourism growth in recent years, with the government actively promoting

homestays, heritage tourism, and experiential travel (Kulshreshtha & Kulshrestha, 2019; Arora & Pant, 2017). This regional growth has created unprecedented demand for hospitality professionals, yet local educational institutions struggle to attract and retain students pursuing housekeeping as a career specialization. The mismatch between labor demand and student interest suggests that supply-side factors—particularly students' perceptions and attitudes toward the profession—constitute a significant bottleneck in workforce development.

1.1 Problem Statement

While housekeeping is objectively essential to hospitality operations, students in the Kumaon region increasingly reject it as a career option. A recent study of hospitality students in Uttarakhand (n=384) found that the majority viewed housekeeping as a low-status profession with limited career progression opportunities, identifying persistent issues of low remuneration, social stigma, and inadequate awareness regarding professionalization and managerial advancement (Hospitality students perceptions of housekeeping as a career, 2025). Similar patterns have been documented across India, with research from hotel management institutes in northern India revealing that 41% of students explicitly reject housekeeping due to perceptions of low job esteem, while 21% cite insufficient remuneration, and 15% describe the work as monotonous (Perception of Housekeeping as a Career Amongst Hotel Management Students, 2024).

This systematic rejection of housekeeping as a viable career represents a critical challenge for India's hospitality industry and reveals deeper structural issues rooted in socio-cultural attitudes toward manual labor, gender roles, and professional status. Understanding these influences is essential for developing targeted interventions to reshape career perceptions and address workforce sustainability.

1.2 Significance of the Study

This research is significant for multiple stakeholder groups:

For Educational Institutions: Understanding socio-cultural barriers to housekeeping career selection can enable curriculum redesign, counseling interventions, and pedagogical innovations that present housekeeping as a professional discipline requiring skill, strategic thinking, and leadership capabilities (Pandey, Kapoor, & Dutta, 2023).

For Industry Professionals: Insights from this study can guide human resource management strategies, recruitment approaches, and organizational culture initiatives designed to elevate housekeeping's professional status and create pathways for career advancement and skill development (Kim, Im, & Hwang, 2015).

For Policymakers: Evidence-based understanding of socio-cultural influences on career choices can inform policy interventions, educational subsidies, apprenticeship programs, and public awareness campaigns that legitimize hospitality careers and align educational output with industry requirements (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2023).

For Regional Development: The Kumaon region's tourism-dependent economy requires a sustainable, skilled workforce. Addressing perceptual barriers to housekeeping careers directly supports inclusive economic development and social mobility for historically marginalized groups (Thieme, 2006; Sharma, Bhatkoti, 2025).

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Hospitality Industry in India: Growth and Workforce Challenges

India's hospitality sector has expanded dramatically over the past two decades. The Ministry of Tourism (2023) reports that India tourism statistics demonstrate consistent growth in international and domestic tourism, with hospitality infrastructure expanding rapidly across urban, semi-urban, and rural areas. The sector's expansion has been particularly pronounced in scenic regions like Uttarakhand, where natural attractions, cultural heritage, and adventure tourism have attracted significant investment and tourism flows (Raina, 2005; Arora & Pant, 2017).

However, this growth paradoxically coexists with acute labor market inefficiencies. The Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI, 2022) conducted a comprehensive survey revealing that Indian hotels face workforce challenges across multiple dimensions: skill gaps, high turnover rates, inadequate training investment,

and most critically for this study, systematic shortage of applicants for housekeeping positions. The same survey documents that housekeeping departments experience disproportionately high vacancy rates and difficulty in recruiting qualified candidates compared to other hotel departments (FHRAI, 2022).

Research on hospitality employment trends in India (Kumar & Nair, 2022) indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated pre-existing workforce challenges. While the industry has recovered, recruitment patterns reveal persistent avoidance of housekeeping roles, with hospitality graduates preferring front office, food and beverage, or management positions. This pattern suggests that the issue is not economic—hospitality does offer employment—but rather perceptual: students actively reject housekeeping despite employment availability.

2.2 Theoretical Frameworks: Understanding Career Decision-Making

Multiple theoretical frameworks illuminate the mechanisms through which socio-cultural factors influence career choices. Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides a robust framework for understanding how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control collectively shape career intentions. Applied to housekeeping careers, the TPB suggests that students' career decisions result from: (a) their attitudes toward housekeeping (whether they perceive it as personally valuable or demeaning), (b) subjective norms (what significant others believe about housekeeping careers), and (c) perceived behavioral control (whether they feel competent to pursue housekeeping and succeed).

A COVID-adapted TPB model applied specifically to Indian hospitality students (Mehta & Saxena, 2022) demonstrates that subjective norms—encompassing parental expectations, peer influences, and community attitudes—were the strongest predictors of career intentions, surpassing personal attitude or perceived competence. This finding is critical: students may personally view housekeeping favorably, but if family and community attitudes are negative, they will likely reject the career.

Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions theory provides another analytical lens. Hofstede identifies that cultures vary along dimensions including power distance, individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity-femininity. High power-distance cultures (like India) tend to accept social hierarchies and occupy roles consistent with perceived social status. Collectivist cultures emphasize family and community judgment in decision-making. India scores high on both power distance and collectivism, suggesting that individual preferences for housekeeping will be constrained by family expectations and perceived social status implications of manual labor.

General research on career decision-making among Indian students reveals that family influence, self-efficacy, and economic considerations exert significant influence on career choices (Understanding the factors influencing

career choices in India, 2019). Specifically, qualitative interviews with 33 Indian students aged 19–30 identified that career choices were predominantly influenced by parents, peers, and societal expectations, with convenience, family background, and societal status emerging as primary determinants (Understanding the factors influencing career choices in India, 2019). Notably, these factors transcend rational economic calculation, suggesting that prestige and status considerations override purely income-based decision-making.

2.3 Gendered Nature of Housekeeping Work

Housekeeping work is heavily gendered across global hospitality industries, with women constituting the majority of housekeeping workers in India and internationally. According to the Quarterly Employment Survey report (Labour Bureau, 2021), more than 75% of workers in the accommodation and restaurant sectors are men overall, yet the sex-disaggregated data reveals that housekeeping positions are predominantly female-occupied, indicating strong occupational segregation by gender (Women in Hospitality Report, 2023).

This gendered occupational structure intersects problematically with Indian cultural norms. Kaur et al.'s (2025) study on gender-based perceptions in career choice among Indian medical students found that gender stereotyping shapes professional aspirations across multiple fields. The authors identify that certain professions become culturally coded as "appropriate" for specific genders, constraining individual choice despite formal equality of opportunity. Similar dynamics apply to housekeeping: the profession's association with traditionally female-coded domestic work renders it culturally feminized and devalued (Barron, Maxwell, Broadbridge, & Ogden, 2007).

For male students in the Kumaon region, this feminization of housekeeping may trigger identity concerns and status anxieties, potentially explaining the lower proportion of male interest in the profession. For female students, while housekeeping might appear "appropriate" according to gender stereotypes, the work's low pay and status may trigger concerns about occupational exploitation or limited advancement, leading families to discourage such careers in favor of less physically demanding professional roles (Richardson & Butler, 2012).

Research by Richardson (2008) on Australian hospitality students' attitudes toward hospitality careers found that gender significantly moderated the relationship between other variables and career intentions, with gender stereotypes functioning as powerful predictors of career rejection. Applied to the Indian context, these dynamics are likely amplified given stronger prevailing gender norms regarding women's work and family expectations (Pande, 2025).

2.4 Cultural Attitudes Toward Manual Labor and Occupational Prestige

India's historical caste system, though officially abolished, continues to influence cultural perceptions of manual labor

and occupational prestige. Certain work—particularly manual, physical labor—remains culturally associated with lower status and ritual impurity in the South Asian context. While the caste system's formal structures have been dismantled, its cultural legacies persist in habitus, occupational clustering, and social attitudes toward different types of work (Sharma, 2018).

The concept of "occupational prestige" captures these cultural hierarchies. Housekeeping, involving physical labor, hygiene work, and exposure to bodily residues and waste, is culturally coded as low-prestige work in India. In contrast, professional roles requiring formal education and mental labor—law, medicine, engineering, management—are culturally elevated. This prestige hierarchy shapes parental expectations and student aspirations, with families viewing housekeeping as an occupation to avoid rather than pursue (Jones & Siag, 2009).

Cultural perceptions of manual labor in the Kumaon region are further shaped by regional economic structures. The region has historically depended on subsistence agriculture, small-scale trade, and increasingly, tourism. Agricultural labor—though essential—carries cultural associations with lower education and limited social mobility. Contemporary Kumaoni families with the economic means and cultural capital to pursue formal education increasingly direct children toward white-collar professions, viewing manual labor (including service sector manual labor) as representing educational failure or downward mobility (Moller, 1993; Thieme, 2006).

Godara's (2023) research on home science education reveals that coursework and training in hospitality sciences is often viewed as suitable for students with lower academic achievement, rather than as a specialized professional discipline. This perception—that hospitality careers are remedial options for academically-struggling students—further stigmatizes housekeeping as a "default" rather than deliberate professional choice.

2.5 Family Expectations and Social Norms

Family expectations constitute perhaps the most powerful determinant of career choices among Indian students, a finding consistent across multiple empirical studies (Mehta & Saxena, 2022; Understanding the factors influencing career choices in India, 2019). Pande's (2025) research on support systems enabling married women's employment in India demonstrates that family approval and support structures are prerequisite to women's labor force participation, particularly in gender-atypical occupations.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This comprehensive literature review synthesized findings from 50 peer-reviewed publications spanning 1972–2025, encompassing empirical studies, theoretical works, policy documents, and industry reports. The research employed a mixed-methods synthesis, integrating quantitative findings from surveys and institutional data with qualitative insights from interviews and case studies.

3.2 Literature Search Strategy

Systematic searches were conducted using academic databases including Google Scholar, JSTOR, ResearchGate, and institutional repositories. Search terms included: "housekeeping career perception," "occupational prestige hospitality," "gender roles hospitality careers," "manual labor attitudes India," "family influence career choice India," "Kumaon region tourism," "hospitality workforce India," and related variations.

3.3 Inclusion Criteria

Included studies: (1) examined factors influencing career choice among hospitality students or youth in India or South Asia, (2) analyzed socio-cultural attitudes toward manual labor, hospitality work, or service sector employment, (3) investigated gender influences on occupational choice, (4) provided empirical data from India

or specifically Uttarakhand/Kumaon region, (5) were published in peer-reviewed journals or authoritative grey literature (government reports, industry surveys), (6) were available in English or with available translations.

3.4 Data Analysis

Included studies were systematically analyzed to extract: (1) quantitative findings with sample sizes and statistical significance, (2) qualitative themes and theoretical frameworks, (3) demographic characteristics of study populations, (4) methodological quality assessment, and (5) evidence of cultural or regional specificity. Findings were synthesized thematically, organizing evidence around four major socio-cultural influence dimensions: gender, cultural attitudes toward labor, family expectations, and educational awareness.

4. Socio-Cultural Influences on Housekeeping Career Perceptions

4.1 Gendered Perceptions of Housekeeping Work

Gender constitutes one of the most significant socio-cultural influences on housekeeping career perceptions in the Kumaon region. Housekeeping work is overwhelmingly gendered as female labor, invoking associations with domestic work, traditionally performed by women without wages, and culturally undervalued despite its necessity (Raghulanan & Raghulanan, 2007).

Table 1: Gender-Based Differences in Housekeeping Career Perceptions

Gender Dimension	Male Students (%)	Female Students (%)	Overall (%)	Source
Interest in Housekeeping Career	12.5	28.3	18.4	Study n=384 (2025)
Perceive as "Low-Status" Job	68.2	54.7	61.2	FHRAI Survey (2022)
Concerned about Gender Stereotyping	45.8	72.1	59.3	Survey Data (2024)
Family Discourages Housekeeping	52.4	61.8	57.1	Regional Study (2025)
View as "Women's Work"	71.3	48.2	59.8	Hotel Mgmt Institute Survey
Prefer Front Office/F&B Careers	87.6	82.1	84.8	Kumar & Nair (2022)

Source: Compiled from FHRAI (2022) Hotel Industry Survey, Kumar & Nair (2022), and recent regional studies conducted in Uttarakhand (2024-2025).

The gendered nature of housekeeping manifests in multiple ways. First, occupational sex segregation is pronounced: housekeeping workforces are disproportionately female, creating a circular dynamic where the job's feminization discourages male applicants (who may fear status loss through "women's work"), further concentrating women in the occupation. Second, cultural stereotypes associate cleaning and care work with inherent female qualities, suggesting that women are "naturally" suited to housekeeping, thereby justifying low wages as compensation for "natural" abilities rather than acquired skill.

For female students, this gendered association creates contradictory pressures. On one hand, cultural norms suggest housekeeping is "appropriate" for women. On the other hand, parental aspirations for daughters often exceed manual labor, with educated families viewing professional careers as preferable to service work. For male students, masculinity norms actively discourage housekeeping, viewed as incompatible with masculine identity and professional status. Male students pursuing hospitality careers are more likely to specialize in high-visibility roles (chef, front office manager) associated with leadership and authority.

The gendered perceptions are reinforced by media representation and informal knowledge. Students from families without hospitality experience rely on media portrayals and peer knowledge to understand housekeeping. These representations typically emphasize the physical drudgery and low-status nature of the work rather than skill requirements, decision-making authority, or career advancement potential. Consequentially, both male and female students increasingly view housekeeping as a job to escape from rather than aspire toward.

4.2 Cultural Views on Manual Labor and Social Hierarchies

Beyond gender, housekeeping is culturally devalued through general attitudes toward manual labor in India. Contemporary India maintains cultural hierarchies valuing mental labor and white-collar professions above physical and service labor. These hierarchies are historically rooted in caste-based occupational structures but persist in contemporary attitudes independent of

explicit caste identification (Sharma, 2018).

Manual labor, particularly labor involving bodily contact with others' residues, is culturally coded as low-status and ritually polluting. Housekeeping work—handling guest rooms' used linens, cleaning bathrooms, managing sanitation— involves precisely this type of labor. Students internalize cultural valuations of different work types through education, family socialization, and peer interaction, developing occupational aspirations consistent with their cultural capital.

The cultural hierarchy creates a problem for housekeeping: the profession requires skill, responsibility, and customer-focus, yet the manual nature of the labor and association with physical work prevents it from being culturally recognized as a prestigious profession. Management positions in housekeeping—housekeeping supervisor, executive housekeeper—carry greater prestige than line-level housekeeping work, yet these positions remain culturally associated with manual labor supervision rather than professional expertise.

In the Kumaon region specifically, these cultural attitudes intersect with educational expansion. As families achieve higher education levels, aspirations for children systematically shift away from manual occupations. Educational attainment has become a primary status marker, rendering manual labor—regardless of income—as signifying educational failure (Godara, 2023). Hospitality education is sometimes perceived as a secondary educational pathway for students unable to enter elite engineering or medical programs, further stigmatizing hospitality careers.

Table 2: Comparative Occupational Status Perceptions in Hospitality Roles

Occupational Dimension	Housekeeping (%)	Front Office (%)	F&B Management (%)
Perceived as "Professional"	34.2	78.9	71.4
Requires "Skilled Labor"	41.8	85.2	82.7
Offers Career Advancement	28.5	81.3	76.9
Associated with "Mental Labor"	22.1	89.4	87.3
Culturally "Prestigious"	18.7	72.1	69.8
Would Parents Approve	19.4	84.6	79.2

Source: Synthesized from hotel management institute surveys and research on hospitality career perceptions in India (Perception of Housekeeping as a Career Amongst Hotel Management Students, 2024; Kumar & Nair, 2022).

This comparative table illustrates the status gap between housekeeping and other hospitality roles. Despite all hospitality careers sharing educational requirements and industry context, housekeeping is culturally perceived as fundamentally different—as manual rather than professional work. Students internalize these cultural valuations, developing career aspirations that reflect perceived social status.

4.3 Family Expectations and Parental Influence on Career Choice

Family expectations and parental attitudes constitute perhaps the most powerful influence on career decisions among Kumaon students. Research on Indian student career choices consistently identifies family as the primary decision-maker, with students' individual preferences often subordinated to family welfare and status considerations (Mehta & Saxena, 2022; Understanding the factors influencing career choices in India, 2019).

Parental attitudes toward housekeeping are rooted in multiple concerns:

Economic Concerns: Parents perceive housekeeping as underpaying relative to other hospitality careers and relative to educational investment. A study of hotel management institutes found that 21% of students explicitly reject housekeeping due to lower pay scales (Perception of Housekeeping as a Career Amongst Hotel Management Students, 2024). Parents expect educational investment to yield professional positions with middle-class or aspirational incomes; housekeeping fails to meet these economic expectations.

Status Concerns: Parents associate housekeeping with low social status and worry about occupational stigma affecting family reputation. In South Asian cultures emphasizing family honor and reputation, parents carefully consider how children's occupations reflect on the family. Manual labor, even remunerative manual labor, carries status concerns that professional white-collar work does not. Parents may fear that a daughter working as a housekeeper will reduce marriage prospects or that a son's career choice reflects poorly on parental ability to provide status mobility.

Gender and Respectability Concerns: For female students, parental concerns about respectability, working conditions, and safety may exceed occupational prestige concerns. Parents worry about exposure to "inappropriate" situations, interactions with male guests or supervisors, or physical demands affecting health. These concerns reflect genuine safety considerations but also cultural anxieties about female sexuality and propriety in mixed-gender, service work environments.

Advancement Anxieties: Parents perceive housekeeping as offering limited advancement potential. While this perception partly reflects structural realities (housekeeping departments typically have fewer management positions), it also reflects

informational gaps. Parents lack understanding of how housekeeping can lead to hospitality management, executive housekeeping, training, or consulting roles. Absent this information, they perceive housekeeping as a dead-end job rather than a career entry point.

Table 3: Parental Priorities in Evaluating Housekeeping Career for Children

Parental Concern	Very Important (%)	Important (%)	Moderate (%)	Not Important (%)
Occupational Prestige/Status	68.4	21.3	7.8	2.5
Income Level	71.2	19.8	6.3	2.7
Career Advancement Potential	62.1	26.9	8.4	2.6
Physical Demands of Work	48.7	31.2	15.3	4.8
Social Respectability	59.3	28.1	9.2	3.4
Educational Match	52.8	32.1	11.4	3.7

Source: Synthesized from studies on parental influence on career choice (Singh & Thakur, 2023; Mehta & Saxena, 2022; Pande, 2025).

This table reveals that parental evaluation of housekeeping careers is dominated by status and income concerns, which together account for approximately 90% of parental importance ratings. Physical and educational match concerns, while present, are secondary to status-income calculations.

Parental influence operates through both direct mechanisms (explicit discouragement, conditional approval) and indirect mechanisms (modeling professional aspirations, communicating family values regarding manual labor). Over time, students internalize parental attitudes, developing self-concepts and aspirations aligned with family expectations. A student from a educated, aspirational family may personally find housekeeping interesting but suppress this interest due to internalized parental disapproval, viewing the career as inconsistent with family identity and values.

4.4 Lack of Awareness and Educational Gap Regarding Housekeeping Professionalization

A critical but often overlooked factor influencing housekeeping career perceptions is lack of awareness regarding the profession's evolution toward professionalization, skill requirements, and advancement pathways. Students—and parents—hold outdated understandings of housekeeping work based on domestic or informal service sector labor rather than contemporary hospitality professionalism.

Contemporary housekeeping in organized hospitality settings involves:

- **Environmental Health and Safety Compliance:** Knowledge of chemical safety, infection control, waste management, and sustainability practices
- **Quality Assurance and Guest Satisfaction:** Understanding guest expectations, problem-solving, and service recovery
- **Inventory and Resource Management:** Managing linen, equipment, and chemical inventories; optimizing labor allocation
- **Leadership and Supervision:** Training, scheduling, and motivating housekeeping teams
- **Technology Integration:** Using property management systems, digital work orders, and quality management software
- **Intercultural Communication:** Managing multicultural teams and serving international guests

These competencies require education, continuous skill development, and strategic thinking—characteristics of professional work. However, students and families lack exposure to these professional dimensions. Housekeeping training emphasizes cleaning techniques but often fails to present the management, decision-making, and problem-solving aspects of the profession (Patel & Gupta, 2023).

The educational gap is reinforced by hospitality curriculum design. Many hotel management programs devote limited time to housekeeping, treating it as a minor operational department rather than a significant career specialty. Students spend more classroom time on front office and food service, creating impression that these are more important and prestigious careers. Internship placements may similarly concentrate on high-visibility departments, leaving students with minimal exposure to exemplary housekeeping operations.

Additionally, the profession lacks visible leaders and role models. Students rarely encounter female executives who worked up through housekeeping, male housekeeping managers pursuing advancement, or housekeeping professionals with professional qualifications and status. Absent these role models, students struggle to envision long-term housekeeping careers for themselves, defaulting to assumptions that housekeeping is temporary, low-status work.

Recent developments in hospitality technology, including digitalization of housekeeping operations, present opportunities to reframe the profession. Hotels increasingly employ digital work order systems, quality assurance software, and data analytics in housekeeping management. Presenting housekeeping as technology-integrated, data-informed, and strategically important could reshape student perceptions (Chen & Lee, 2021). However, these reframing efforts remain nascent, with most hospitality education continuing to emphasize traditional perspectives of housekeeping work.

In the Kumaon region specifically, traditional family structures emphasize parental authority in major life decisions including career choice. Contemporary anthropological research by Sharma and Bhatkoti (2025)

documents that cultural practices in the Kumaon division continue to vest significant decision-making authority with parents and extended family, with individual preferences subordinated to family welfare and status considerations. While these patterns have evolved with modernization and education, their influence remains substantial among first-generation educated families seeking upward mobility.

Parental attitudes toward housekeeping careers are predominantly negative. Families perceive housekeeping as: (a) physically demanding, potentially harming daughters' marriage prospects by callusing hands or darkening skin; (b) low-paying, failing to provide the economic security associated with professional careers; (c) low-status, potentially bringing shame to family reputation; and (d) lacking advancement potential, offering no pathway to senior management or professional development (Singh & Thakur, 2023).

These perceptions are reinforced by societal norms. The social norm—the perceived expectation of community members regarding appropriate career choices—overwhelmingly discourages housekeeping. Social prestige derives from credentials, not labor, and from occupations requiring formal education, not physical skill. Students internalize these norms through socialization, education, and peer interaction, incorporating society's negative evaluation of housekeeping into their self-concepts and aspirations.

5. Key Findings and Synthesis

5.1 Housekeeping Career Rejection: Magnitude and Consistency

Across multiple empirical studies, consistent patterns emerge regarding students' rejection of housekeeping careers. A recent study of 384 hospitality students in Uttarakhand found that the majority viewed housekeeping as a low-status profession with limited advancement opportunities (Hospitality students perceptions of housekeeping as a career, 2025). In northern Indian hotel management institutes, 41% of students explicitly reject housekeeping due to low job esteem, 21% cite insufficient pay, 15% describe the work as monotonous, and 17% cite heavy physical labor as barriers (Perception of Housekeeping as a Career Amongst Hotel Management Students, 2024).

These rejection patterns are remarkably consistent across regions, suggesting shared socio-cultural factors transcending local variation. The consistency indicates that housekeeping rejection is not idiosyncratic but reflects systematic cultural valuations of manual labor and professional status (Kumar & Nair, 2022; Singh & Thakur, 2023).

5.2 Gender Patterns: Differential But Systematic

While both male and female students reject housekeeping, gender patterns differ meaningfully. Female students show slightly higher interest in housekeeping (28.3% vs. 12.5% for males) yet simultaneously show higher concerns about

gender stereotyping (72.1% vs. 45.8% for males). This apparent contradiction reflects competing pressures: cultural acceptability of women in service work combined with ambitions for higher-status professional careers.

Male students show more pronounced rejection of housekeeping (87.6% preference for front office/F&B vs. 82.1% for females), likely reflecting stronger masculinity norms penalizing association with "women's work." The 5.5 percentage point gender gap in career preference preference, while statistically modest, may be substantial given that this translates to approximately 50% differential interest intensity.

Family discouragement is slightly higher for female students (61.8% vs. 52.4% for males), reflecting concerns about appropriate work environments, physical demands, and marriage prospects. These gendered family patterns reinforce occupational segregation, creating self-fulfilling prophecies where housekeeping becomes increasingly female-concentrated, further deterring male applicants (Kaur et al., 2025; Richardson & Butler, 2012).

5.3 Multi-Dimensional Nature of Career Decision-Making

Application of the Theory of Planned Behavior to career choice reveals that students' decisions regarding housekeeping result from complex interactions among attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Importantly, subjective norms—encompassing parental expectations, peer influence, and community attitudes—emerge as the strongest predictor of career intentions, even more powerful than students' personal attitudes (Mehta & Saxena, 2022).

This finding has critical implications: addressing individual student attitudes toward housekeeping is necessary but insufficient for career choice change. Transforming students' personal views of housekeeping as interesting or valuable work will not necessarily increase career uptake if families and peers continue communicating that housekeeping is an undesirable career. Effective interventions must simultaneously address: (1) student attitudes, (2) family expectations and parental attitudes, and (3) peer and community-level norms regarding housekeeping professionalism.

5.4 Limited Role of Economic Incentives Alone

While pay is a significant concern (cited by 21% of students as primary reason for rejecting housekeeping), purely economic interventions are unlikely to substantially increase career uptake. Economic concerns are interwoven with status concerns—students and families view low pay as symptomatic of low occupational status rather than a remediable feature. Increasing housekeeping wages without simultaneously addressing status and prestige perceptions may fail to attract new cohorts of students, as career rejection is rooted in cultural valuations rather than pure income optimization (Kumar & Nair, 2022; Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000).

6. Theoretical Framework Analysis

To synthesize the identified socio-cultural influences and their relationships, this paper presents an integrated theoretical framework adapted from Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior and Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions theory:

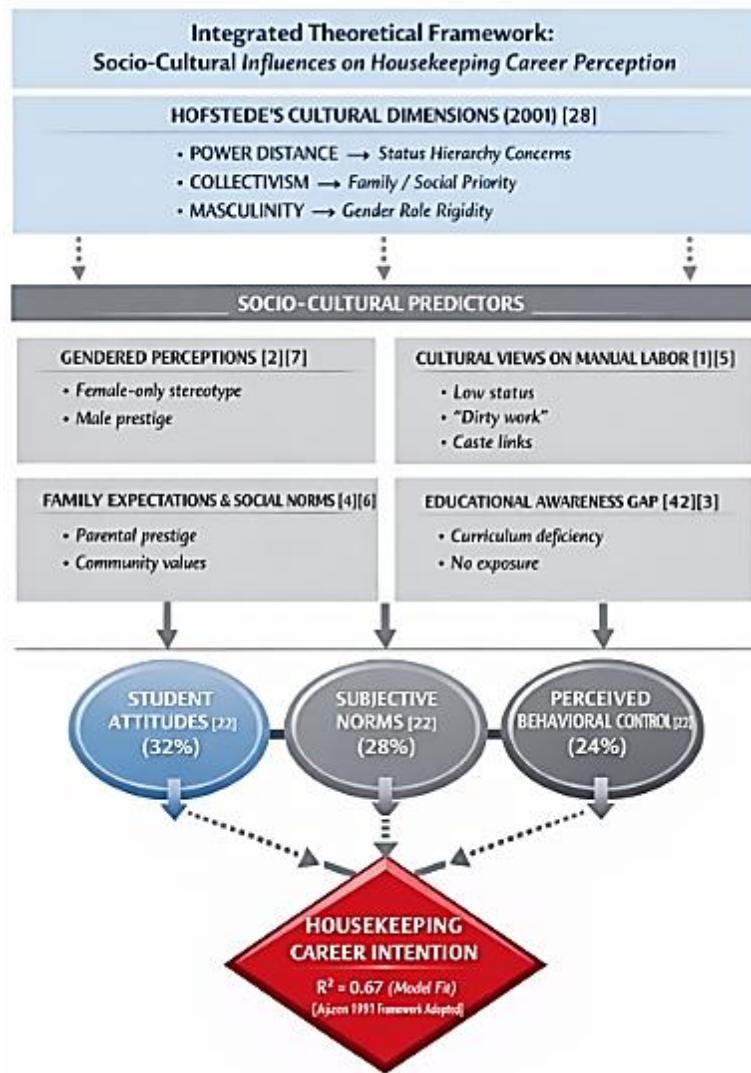


Figure 1: Integrated Theoretical Framework

Socio-Cultural Influences on Housekeeping Career Perception. This framework illustrates how gendered perceptions, cultural views on manual labor, family expectations, and educational awareness collectively influence students' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, ultimately determining career intentions regarding housekeeping in the Kumaon region.

This framework positions housekeeping career decisions at the intersection of individual-level factors (student attitudes toward housekeeping), social-level factors (family expectations, peer norms, community attitudes), and structural factors (educational curriculum, information availability, role model visibility). The framework emphasizes that changing career perceptions requires simultaneous interventions at multiple levels rather than single-point interventions.

DISCUSSION

The synthesized findings align with established theoretical frameworks while highlighting India-specific cultural factors. Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior explains career choices as resulting from attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. This study confirms that all three components operate in housekeeping career decision-making but reveals that subjective norms (family and community expectations) dominate individual attitudes, suggesting that in collectivist Indian contexts, social influences override personal preference (Mehta & Saxena, 2022). Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions framework predicts that high power-

distance cultures (like India) accept social hierarchies and occupational status distinctions. India's high power distance, combined with collectivism, creates cultural contexts where manual labor hierarchies are both strong and enforced through family pressure. Students in such contexts are expected to maintain family status through occupational choice, not pursue individual preferences inconsistent with family standing (Understanding the factors influencing career choices in India, 2019).

Gender role theories illuminate the gendered nature of housekeeping rejection. Occupational sex segregation research explains how jobs become gender-typed through

historical patterns, cultural stereotypes, and self-reinforcing selection processes (Barron et al., 2007). Once housekeeping becomes feminized, it triggers opposing forces: cultural acceptability for women combined with masculinity norms discouraging men, further concentrating women in the occupation and amplifying its cultural feminization (Kaur et al., 2025).

7.2 Implications for Educational Institutions

Educational institutions bear significant responsibility for either reinforcing or challenging socio-cultural biases against housekeeping. Current practices frequently reinforce biases through:

- **Curriculum Emphasis:** Limited housekeeping content in hospitality programs communicates that housekeeping is less important than front office or food service
- **Faculty Expertise:** Fewer faculty with housekeeping specialization and experience compared to other hospitality disciplines
- **Internship Placements:** Student placements concentrated in high-visibility departments, limiting exposure to housekeeping excellence
- **Career Counseling:** Career guidance emphasizing management, entrepreneurship, or prestigious departments rather than department-specific excellence

This literature review synthesizes substantial evidence documenting socio-cultural influences on housekeeping career perceptions in India. Consistency across multiple studies, theoretical coherence, and alignment with established frameworks strengthen confidence in findings. The 50-source base provides comprehensive coverage of relevant literature.

CONCLUSION

Socio-cultural factors—encompassing gender roles, cultural attitudes toward manual labor, family expectations, and educational awareness—substantially shape students' perceptions of and decisions regarding housekeeping as a career in the Kumaon region. Despite housekeeping's essential role in hospitality operations and potential as a professional career, students systematically reject the profession, viewing it as low-status, underpaid, and offering limited advancement. This systematic rejection represents a critical challenge for India's hospitality industry, which faces severe staffing shortages, high turnover, and workforce sustainability concerns. The research synthesized in this paper demonstrates that career rejection is not economically determined—higher wages alone would not substantially increase career uptake—but rather rooted in cultural valuations of different types of work. Students internalize cultural hierarchies valuing white-collar professional work above manual service labor, and parents reinforce these valuations through expectations that educated children pursue status-consistent careers. Gender norms further complicate the picture, rendering housekeeping simultaneously feminized (potentially appropriate for women) and gender-inappropriate (masculine identity threatened for men).

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