

**HOTEL MANAGEMENT IN FOCUS ON HOUSEKEEPING  
DEPARTMENT: AN ASSOCIATE OPINION SURVEY.**

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**Abstract**

The paper refers to the Housekeeping management in 5-star hotels.

Housekeeping department contributes the most to customer satisfaction since it is responsible for the cleanliness, one of the key criteria for customer satisfaction resulting in a loyal customer base.

It is attempted to approach the employees of the department in order to record their opinion on fundamental issues of housekeeping,

For this reason, a field research with 19 questions has been conducted on 110 employees.

Through the responses of the employees, operational problems within the department have been identified and the findings provided the basis for fundamental suggestions for improving the management of Housekeeping.

**Keywords:** Hotel, Housekeeping, Associates, Rooms Division Management.

**Introduction**

Management is a structured approach that focuses on Decision Making. In addition, it is based on specific scientific methods and heavily utilizes quantitative analysis. Anderson D., Sweeney D., Williams T., Martin K., (2014).

It should also be noted that the use of quantitative methods in business management and organization was based on the principles of F. Taylor (1856–1915).

*leading proponent of scientific management. Scientific management is a theory of management that analyzes and synthesizes workflows.*

However, in order to make the purpose of this paper clearer, we have focused on management science application in Hotel and, more specifically, in Housekeeping. But before we get into Housekeeping, we will refer briefly to the global Tourism industry.

Tourism is a multi-billion dollar global industry, attracting great investments while facing up-to-date challenges. It is variously defined as of a significant financial size and, consequently, of an increased financial importance. Karagiannis St. Exarchos G., (2006).

The hotel industry developed alongside the need for travellers-tourists to find accommodation along the route to - and to - the places they visited. "The hotel industry, until the 1960s, was more of a family-owned business that could not easily compete with the fast-growing hotel chains. The most famous name in the history of luxury hotel chains is that of Hilton, an empire founded by Conrad Hilton. Another first class hotel chain, which grew fast internationally, is the Marriott International.

In the historical course of the hotel industry operational criteria such as cleanliness, amenities, costing, and quality service have emerged. Service is defined as any act or conduct performed by someone for someone else that is intangible and does not imply ownership. Theocharis Nikos, (2018).

The concept of lodging includes, apart from hotels, other accommodation such as: Motels, Inns, Hostels, and Furnished Apartments etc. At the same time, the following categories can be distinguished: based on their seasonal characteristics, on the amenities provided, on the location of establishment, on the number of industries included, on their building structure, on their financial and legal form, and finally, on their classification according to the applicable law in Greece. Kardakaris Konstantinos, (2001).

Regarding the management of the various Hotel departments, there are the profitable departments and the supportive ones. It is important to note that the hotel divisions, for example, can be classified as profitable or supportive. A profitable Department sells goods and services to customers and generates revenue such as the Reception, Restaurants, Room Service. The departments that are considered to be supportive include: Accounting, Maintenance, Management and Housekeeping.

## **Literature review**

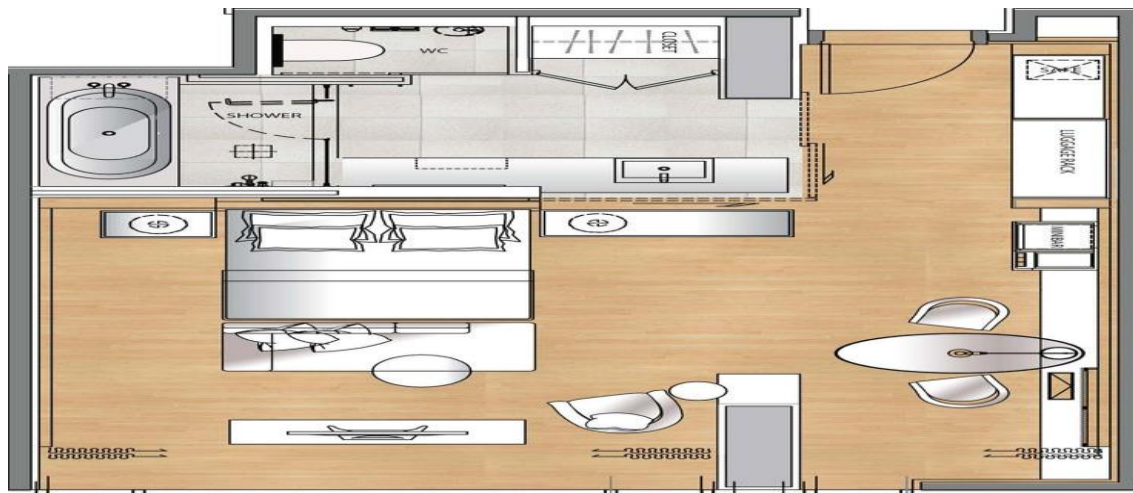
### **The management of Housekeeping**

Hotel is organized in departments so that they can be separated or grouped by its various operations. Each department consists of staff with specific tasks that, with the tools and equipment provided by the business, contribute to the achievement of its goals. According to the organization chart we can see a number of levels of management, with a relative range of control. At the same time, vertical and horizontal communication between the departments and the managers of the departments is required and practiced. What is mainly pointed out by the experts at Housekeeping is that duplications on tasks and duties must be avoided. Mitsi Iriana, (2018).

As far as the staff of the housekeeping department is concerned, it covers a large proportion of the total hotel staff. It is a department where female staff prevails but that does not mean that this role requires characteristics and skills mostly possessed by women. Nowadays, male staff in

housekeeping is a common phenomenon in hotels abroad and they even excel in it and are promoted to senior executives. The staff composition of the department varies according to the organization, capacity and category of each hotel business.

Based on the principles of Management, among the other responsibilities of Housekeeping are the inspection of the room availability and the proper functioning of the rooms. Indicatively, on customer's arrival at the hotel, the reception desk is prepared to provide the room according to the type of reservation and everything else they have requested.



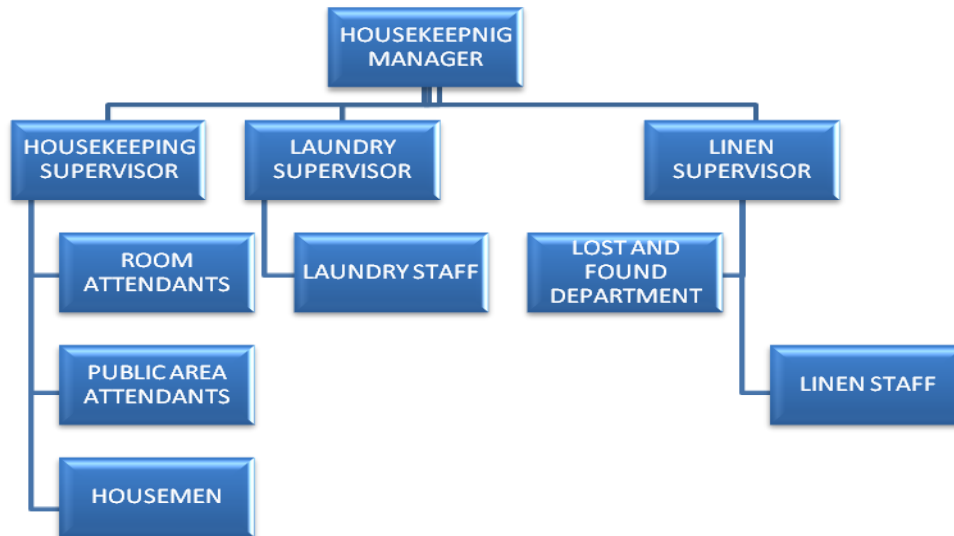
Room plan, Laloumis D. & Sergopoulos K., (2017).

This can be done after Housekeeping has been briefed and, in turn, it has acted appropriately briefing the Reception department that the room is properly cleaned and that whatever the client has requested will be available. Thus we have satisfied customers and good communication with the reception department that ensures quality and prestige in the business. Donti Anna, (2001).

### **Structure of Housekeeping Department**

Proper Management contributes to a well-organized hotel business with the following Housekeeping composition. The Housekeeping Manager supervises and directs all the staff of the department, collaborates with the other departments' managers and the Hotel Management, for the smooth operation of the Housekeeping. Housekeeping supervisor inspects the room attendants, the rooms and makes sure that the tasks set by the Hotel Schedule are completed. Room attendants are responsible for cleaning and maintaining the rooms. Public areas attendants are responsible for the cleanliness of all public areas of the hotel. Laundry and Linen Supervisor is responsible, along with his/her staff, to provide all the hotel departments with clean and descent clothing. Laundry staff is responsible for the proper washing and ironing of the hotel linens. Houseman is responsible for carrying out heavy work such as moving furniture, transferring clean and dirty clothing, etc. Finally, Florist arranges and decorates various spaces with flowers. In most cases the duties of the florist are performed by the floor manager. Kovoussi Ch., Kaklea Ch., (2005).

An indicative Organization Chart of Housekeeping follows:



An organizational chart could be defined as a schematic representation of the structure of an organization, or else a written and schematic presentation of the decisions made in organizational planning. So the organizational chart is a simple but necessary tool to present in an official, specific and evident way to people: hotel departments, jobs, power lines, position of each employee in the organizational structure, the nature of each employee's work, the levels of hierarchy. Gonalaki Vassiliki., (2010)

Then, the uniform of the Housekeeping staff is distinguishable and of course the Executive Housekeeper ensures that the staff's clothing is always clean and regularly changed. "Staff's special clothing is considered necessary for practical and psychological reasons. The uniformity of staff aims both at the aesthetics and cleanliness as well as at the psychology of those who wear it and those who deal with them. The Supervisor usually wears classic suit and low-heeled shoes. Light makeup, discreet jewellery and light fragrance are allowed. Rooms and public areas attendants usually wear robes with short sleeves with two pockets on the side, open in front with buttons and a lapel collar. They also wear a small apron in front. Shoes should be anatomical and quiet. Jewellery, except cross and wedding rings, is forbidden. Light makeup and fragrance are allowed. Houseman wears monochrome trousers with a T-shirt or work uniform". Tyraki Theodora, (2013).

It is generally accepted that housekeeping employees perform difficult and heavy tasks. The emphasis on detail and the rigorous application of work standards are a key point for the proper execution of work.

**Methodology - Findings**

The sample of the study was 110 people working in the housekeeping department in 5-star, high-capacity hotels in Athens. The most appropriate data collection technique was the anonymous

questionnaire given to Housekeeping employees in 20 hotels. The research took place in May 2019.

The essence of quantitative research is mostly general diagnostic, since there is no direct contact with the interviewee; on the other hand, the research is considered valid since the questionnaires, which were fully answered by the sample, have been processed.

Questionnaire Structure: The questionnaire consists of 19 questions which aimed initially at describing the image of the Housekeeping department. Subsequently, the questions aimed at investigating employees' perceptions of human resources management for the Housekeeping department. These questions focused on the selection, recruitment, training, motivation and acknowledgement of staff. Employees were also questioned about operational issues of the department such as the safety level, cooperation with other departments, ecological practices and more.

A brief mention of the answers received follows:

Housekeeping department is composed mainly of women, which confirms the general rule in this regard.

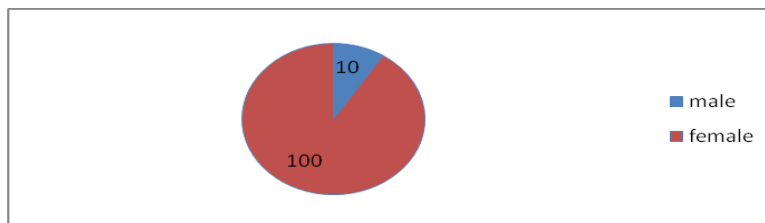


Figure 1: Demographic characteristics

Laundry department undertakes the cleaning of hotel linen and staff uniforms but provides service to hotel customers as well. Employees believe that there is a good cooperation between Housekeeping and the Front Office, Engineering and Food & Beverage department as well as between Housekeeping employees.

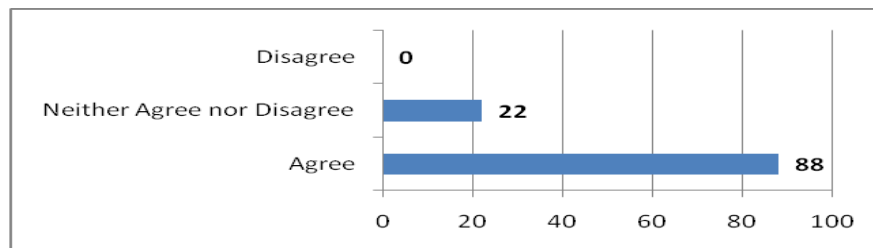


Figure2: cooperation level between housekeeping and rest hotel departments

They view professional experience as a key criterion for recruitment. Their job description is basically written but also with detailed oral information. The lack of training seminars is evident in the issue of staff training.

Regarding remuneration, this is based solely on the monthly salary and there are no bonuses. They consider the defined time for room cleaning is too pressing.

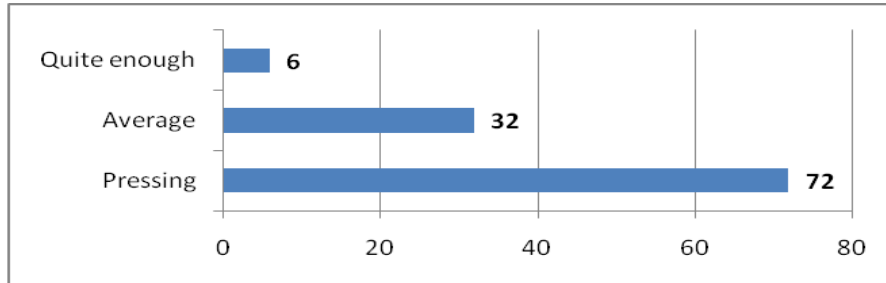


Figure3: the opinion of the employees about the defined room cleaning time.

Regarding the management staff, the employees considers that is open and honest in communication, however, suggestions from employees regarding the operation of the department are not heard and their high performance is not acknowledged.

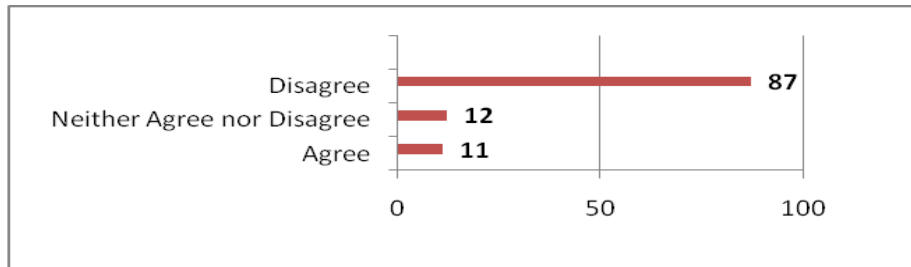


Figure4: Suggestions by the associates are heard from housekeeping management

The majority of employees believe that the hotel provides them with a high level of security. To the question of whether ecological practices and methods are applied, the overwhelming majority said that they are.

### Conclusion - Suggestions

Our suggestions are not intended to criticise hotel policies but to improve, in our view, some simple things such as: the organizational structure of the Housekeeping department, which should be tailored to the size and needs of the hotel unit and not based on policies that operate solely on reducing employee pay costs. This way, concentrating many responsibilities and tasks on a small number of people will be avoided, which in turn will empower the employee's to provide high performance.

The selection of employees should be made on the basis of the suitability for the position to be occupied. In practice, this means that there should initially be a specific job description for each job as well as the mechanisms that need to be developed in order to determine the substantive formal qualifications of each candidate. This way they will be able to select the right people for the right position, with all that it implies for the development of the property.

Thus, hotels will recruit competent and qualified employees and increase their competitiveness. Furthermore, hotels should implement effective and integrated plans for the training process with specific training goals. However, in order to implement such plans, Hotels are required to provide sufficient financial resources to meet the increased demand requirements and also secure the investment they have made in the hospitality workforce. It should also be noted that only continuous and appropriate training ensures maximum effectiveness and efficiency of staff.

In addition, evaluation systems should be tailored to the needs and specifics of each hotel business, in order to be effective and contribute both to employee efficiency and to complete customer satisfaction.

Setting performance standards is a significant procedure for hotel administrations to implement an effective rating system. Both the cleanliness of the rooms and the public areas is a prime concern of the hotel's housekeeping. The requirements are such that five-star hotels try through Housekeeping to adopt an Environmental Management System, using recyclable materials - environmentally friendly, not only gaining a competitive edge, but at the same time giving the customer the sense that as long as the hotel is taking care of the environment, it surely also takes cares on the hygiene and safety of the clients.

Housekeeping staff do an important job and face difficult conditions. We believe that employee's motivation and acknowledgment is one of the most important issues that hotel management is required to focus on, as they are absolutely linked to work performance. This is an important reason for hotel managers to realize that they need to apply incentive systems and remuneration policies if they want to have efficient and capable employees who are motivated about their work and ensure that the Hotel business is competitive and viable.

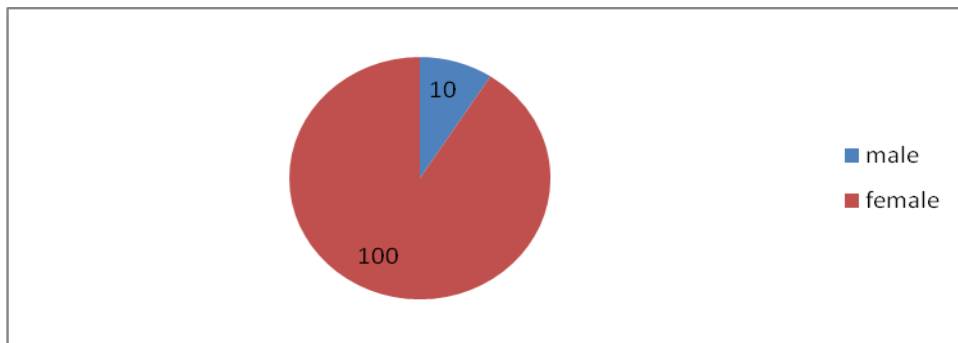
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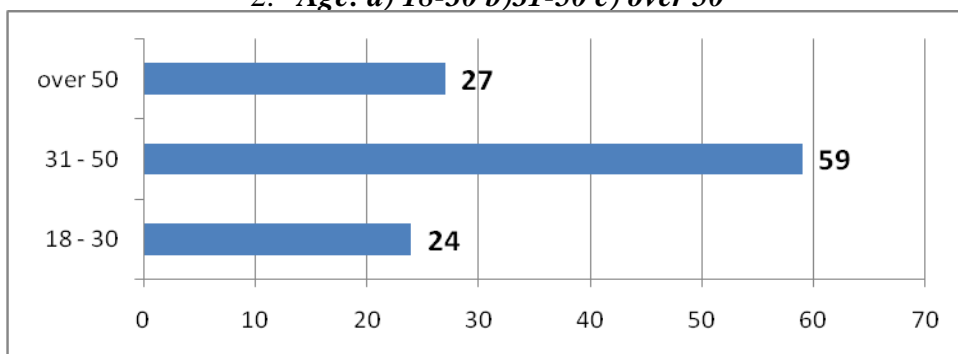
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**Survey Questions – Findings**

**1. Demographic characteristics: Male 10 -Female 100**

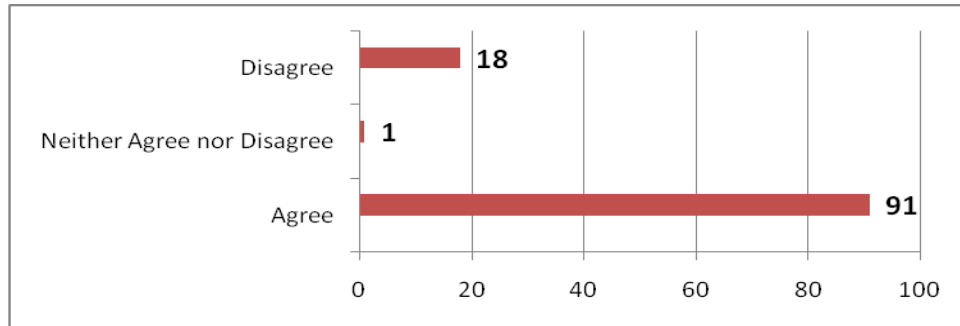


**2. Age: a) 18-30 b)31-50 c) over 50**

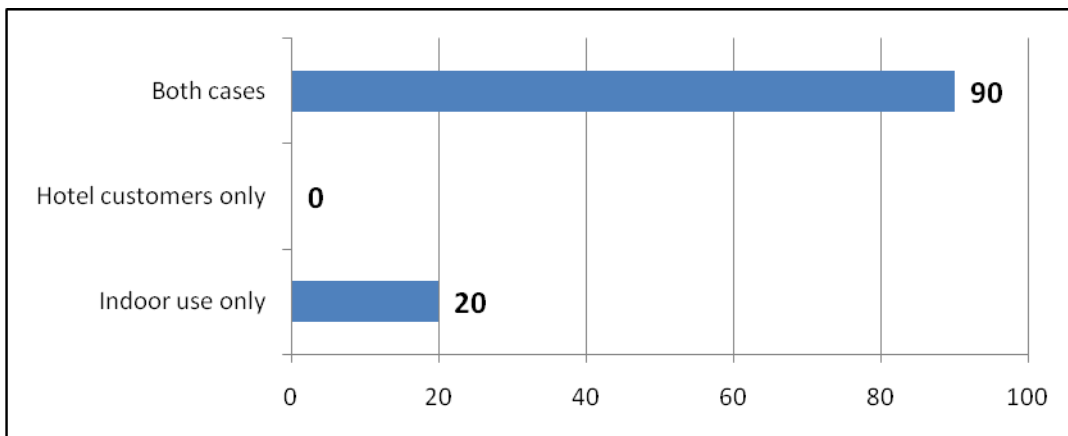


3. The hotel provides you with all the tools (supplies, equipment, technology) to make your work easy. a) Agree, b) neither Agree nor Disagree, c) Disagree

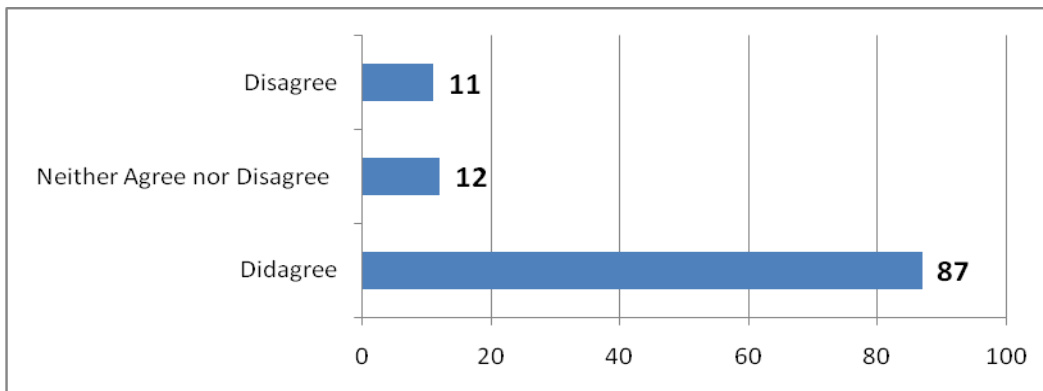




4. Laundry department is available : a) Only for hotel indoor use b) Only for hotel customers c) Both of them

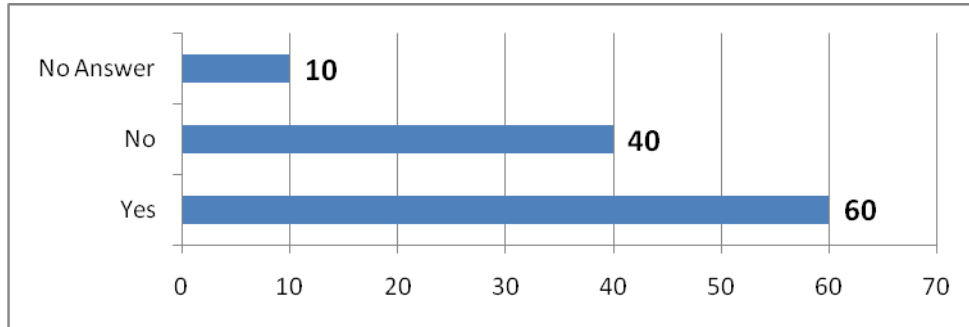


5. Housekeeping department apply eco – friendly methods and practices. a) Agree, b) neither Agree nor Disagree, c) Disagree



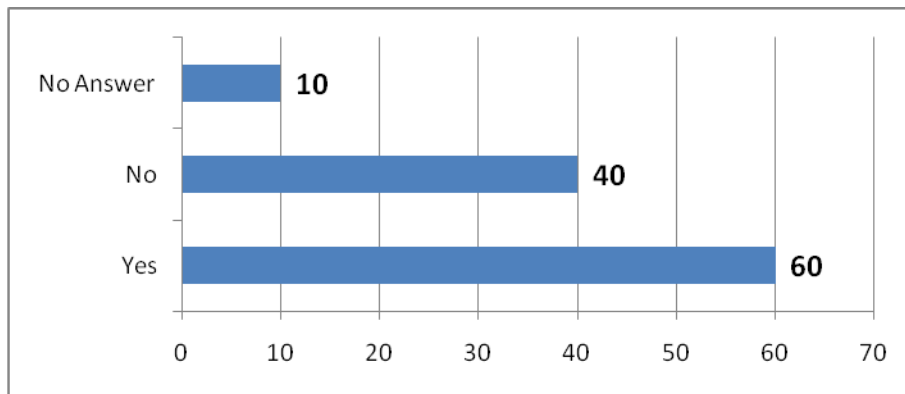
6. Does the hotel provide any kind of incentive policy for improving the productivity?

a)Yes, b) no



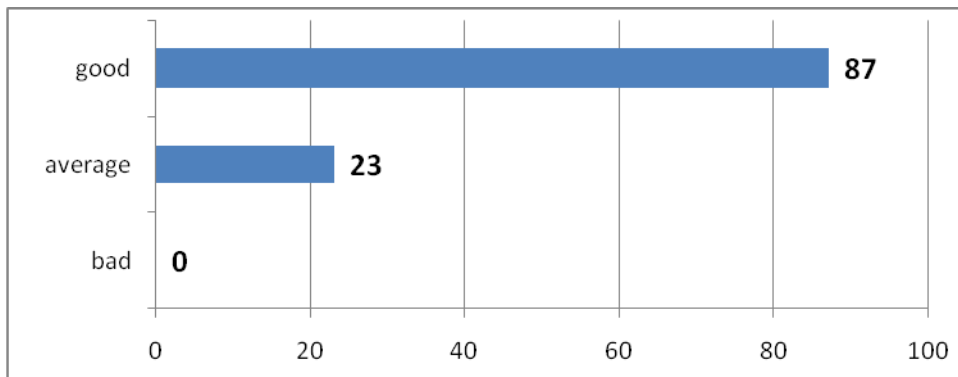
7. The cooperation between Housekeeping department and rest hotel departments (Front Office, Engineering, Food & Beverage) is on a high level.

a) Agree, b) neither Agree nor Disagree, c) Disagree



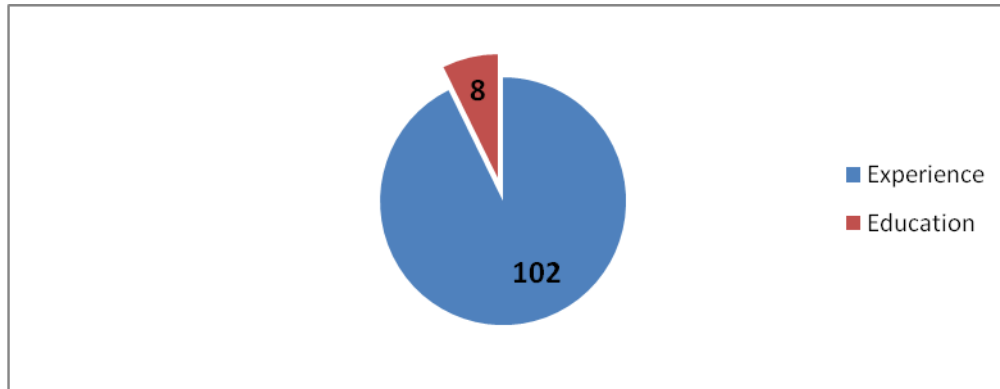
8. The teamwork between housekeeping associates is on a high level

a) Agree, b) neither Agree nor Disagree, c) Disagree

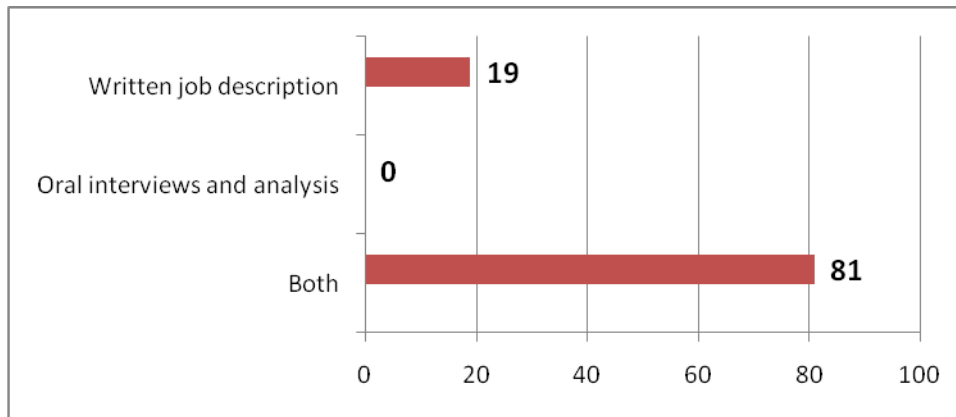


9. What in your opinion is the key criterion in selecting staff?

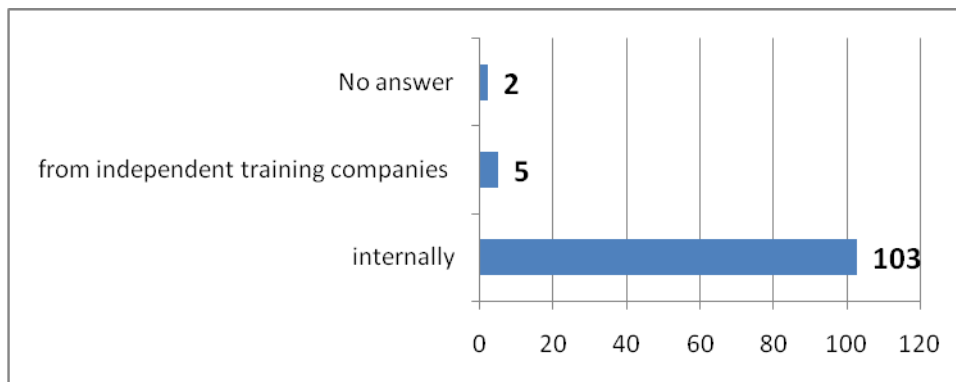
a) Experience b) Education



10. How does job description diffuse after being hired at Housekeeping? a) Through written job descriptions, b) oral interviews and analysis, c) both written job description and oral analysis of responsibilities.

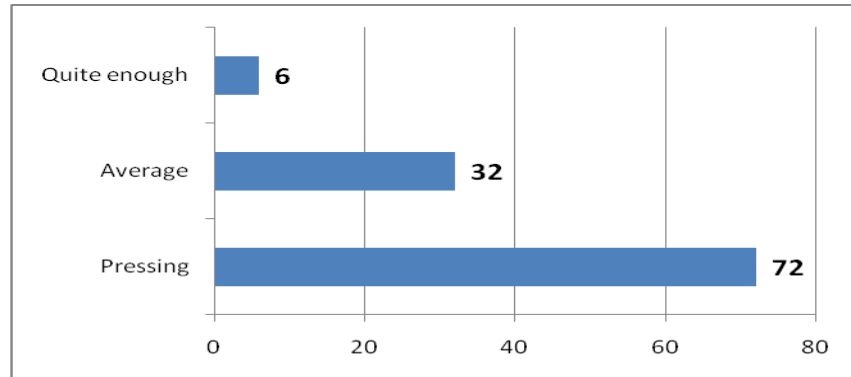


11. At the post-recruitment stage, at Housekeeping, training is provided a) internally, b) from independent training companies c) No answer

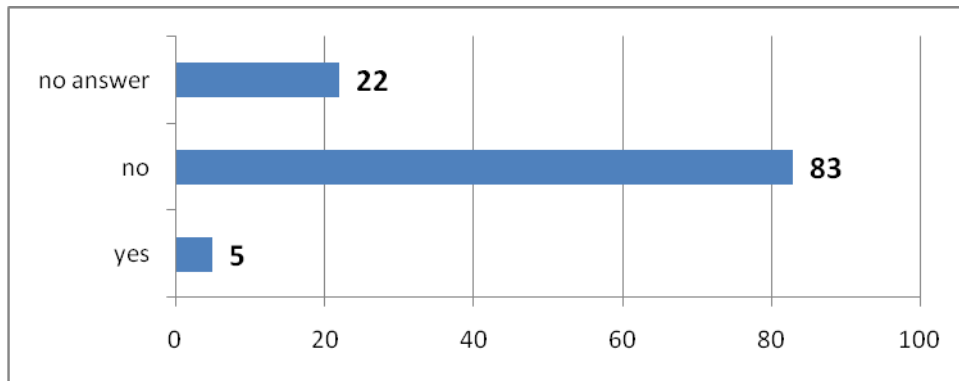


12. How do you consider the defined time given by the housekeeping management for room cleaning?

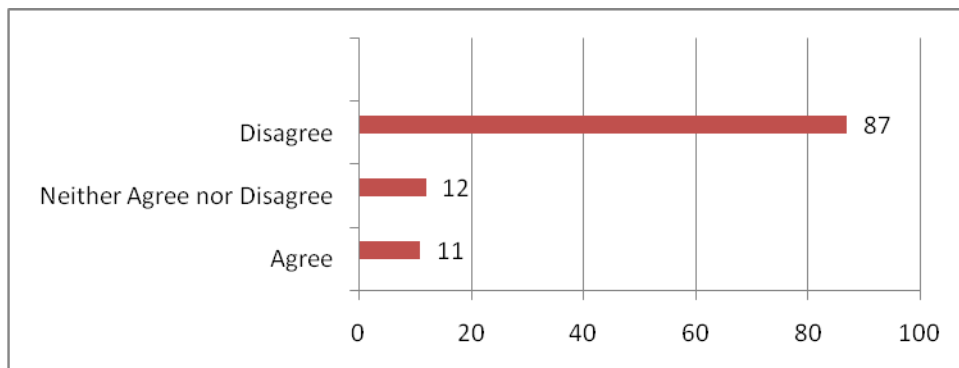
a) quite enough, b) average, c) pressing



13. Apart from the minimum wage, are there any productivity bonuses?  
a) yes, b) no

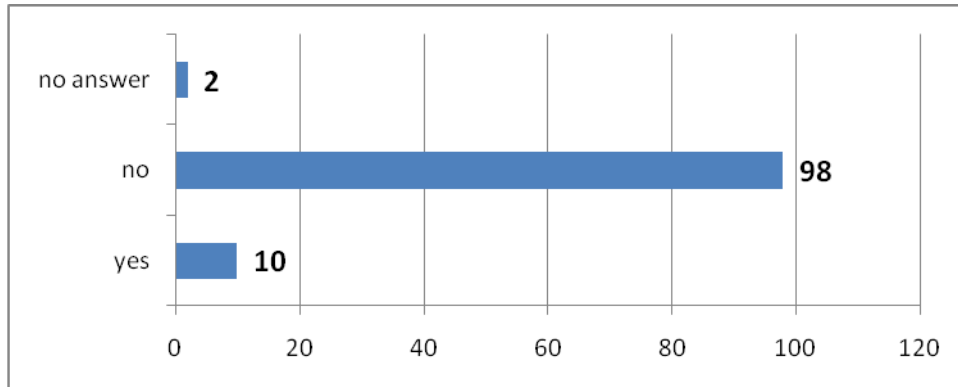


14. Suggestions made by associates (examples: suggestions for improving service, work procedures) are listened to and acted upon by senior management.  
a) Agree, b) neither Agree nor Disagree, c) Disagree

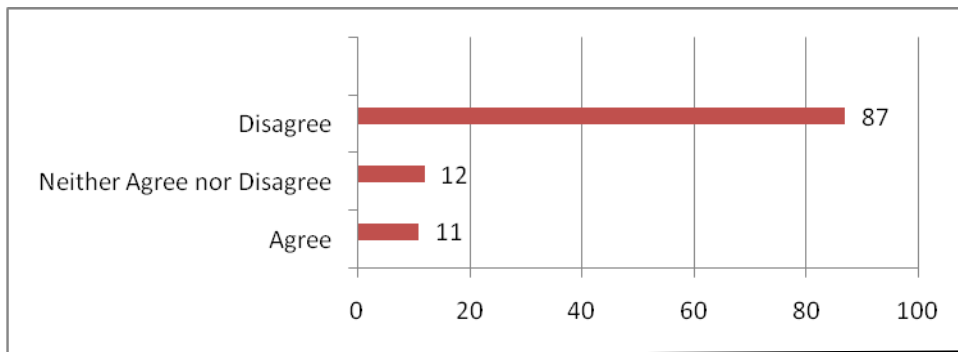


15. Are there staff training seminars?  
a) yes, b) no

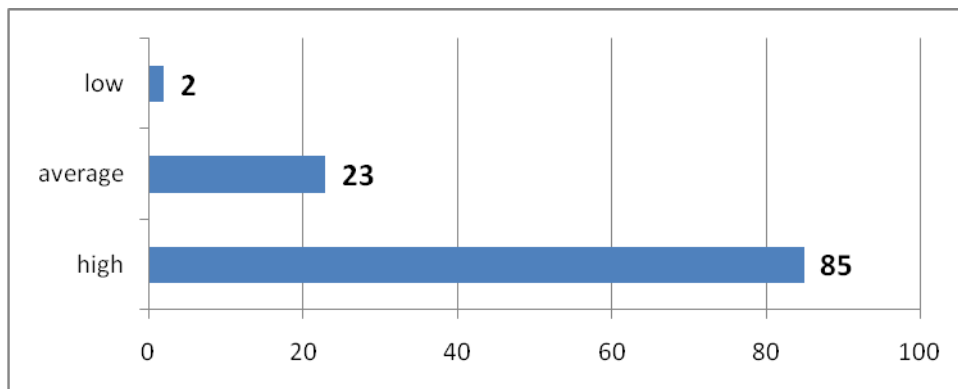
15. Are



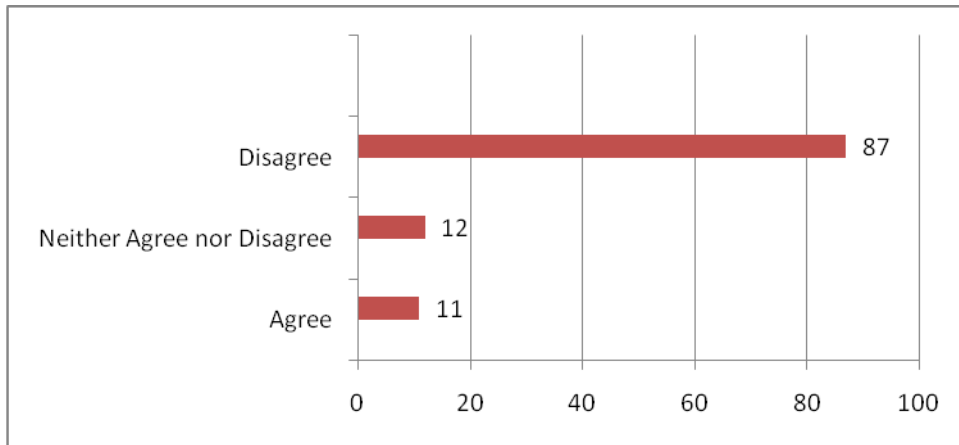
16. Housekeeping management is open and honest in communication?  
a) Agree, b) neither Agree nor Disagree, c) Disagree



17. How you evaluate the level of safety and security that the hotel provides to housekeeping employees?  
a) low, b) average, c) high



18. The amount of work spread fairly among associates.  
a) Agree, b) neither Agree nor Disagree, c) Disagree



19. Housekeeping management recognizes for a job well done?  
a) Agree, b) neither Agree nor Disagree, c) Disagree

