

Training-Up during Covid-19 in Hotel Housekeeping Operations in Selected Hotels of Kolkata

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Abstract.

After the occurrence of the Covid 19 pandemic the Tourism & Hospitality Industry is trying hard to adopt to the New Health and safety concerns. Airlines are Requesting passengers to wear mask and presently the entire cruise is kept on hold.

Before the start of the pandemic hardly any people had thought of sleeping in a bed where Hundreds of other Guests had already slept. Apart from this people also gave very less thought to touching of door handles, Faucets and Television remote. But after the occurrence of the pandemic people will give more attention to areas and surfaces in the hotel room where there are chances of the virus. Similarly, Hotels will also try their level best to maintain a healthy, hygiene and place safe to stay for the Guests.

After the pandemic situation the hotel Housekeeping department will become the frontline of the new normal hotel experience. Guests will look for Hotels that will take care of their health and safety through proper and systematic cleaning and sanitization procedures. From the part o the hotel there will be stricter regulations to maintain all the standard operating procedures keeping in mind the Hygiene and Sanitization protocols.

After the occurrence of the Covid 19 pandemic new safety work Culture emerging in the hotel Housekeeping that requires the Staff to be well trained by the Learning & development department. The primary task of the Learning & development team in this matter will be to educate and inform the Staff about the covid 19 pandemic how it can be transmitted, the symptoms associated with it and the signs of infection. The Learning & development team has to address the issues and cases that they have encountered in the Covid 19 period in the property as well as outside in order to train and develop the Housekeeping Team and at the same time create the sense oawareness among them. The Learning & development team will involve a great role in the restructuring and redevelopment the Standard operating procedures. The process will involve training of Housekeeping Team in cleaning and Guests Handling in compliance with the utmost health and safety standards. The research paper focuses on the Housekeeping operations in new normal and the role Learning & development team has to play.

Keywords: Hotel, Housekeeping Department, Covid 19, New normal, Learning & Development.

1 Introduction

The spread of Covid 19 and the restrictions in Travel and tourism on a large scale has created a huge impact on the global Hospitality industry. According to Gloria Guevera, President and CEO a world tourism and travel council, the travel and tourism industry is collapsing and is fighting for survival due to the Corona virus pandemic (Guerva,2020).Several different types of disastrous events bring distinct industry consequence and prompt the hoteliers to take measures to tackle the crisis. After the SARS outbreak, the hotel industry of Korea installed new hygiene equipment and educated the employee on health awareness (Kim et.al,2005).As the security and the health risk of Guests increases, epidemic can have a direct impact on travel behavior (Mao etc..al.,2010).It is there for necessary for the hotel industry to address the changes in consumer demand due to the unprecedented covid19 pandemic restore the confidence of the Guests.

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Based on the impact of large scale public health crisis (E.g.: SARS in 2003) and the current scenario in the hotel industry, this paper provides in site into the practice of the Housekeeping department and the role Learning and development has to play in it. Hygiene and cleanliness are very much an essential part in the hotel industry and have garnered a lot of attention after the public health crisis such as 2003 SARS outbreak (Kim et.al., 2005). A lot of studies so that customers look for hygiene and cleanliness conditions while making purchases (Choi,2019;Hecht and Martin,2006;Hofman et.al.,2003; Vilnai-yavetz and Gilboa,2010).Thus in order to revive the hotel industry hygiene has to be given prime importance in this times of the pandemic.

The pandemic has changed the entire scenario of the Hotel Housekeeping. The traditional cleaning programmes in Guests rooms fall short of the standards that I require during Covid 19. The inflow of Guests from around the world increases risk in Hotel. Hotel guest rooms contain lot of Germs from TV remote to Telephone sets, from bed to bathroom fixtures and so can turn out to be hot spots for microbial hazards.

Change is very much needed in order to advance the cleaning practices and protocols from observation based to medical grade. Change is also very much needed to assure the Guest that hotels are providing a safe, secure, and healthy environment for the stay.

Hotel Guests have always given value to cleanliness. The current spread of the disease has created a Global threat and is very much affecting the Hotel industry in a negative way. Guests have fear of contracting the virus themselves or spreading it to friends and family. Therefore the concern about the cleanliness is clearly evident and ethical hygiene is going to be the new trend in Hotel industry. Guest will look for the Hotels meeting the highest standards of safety and the races will shift from lower rates with higher service to lower rates with higher level of safety.

2 Objective of the study

- To study the various functions of the hotel housekeeping taking into account the Covid 19 issue.
- To evaluate the various roles of the housekeeping personnel regarding health hygiene and safety.
- To evaluate the role of learning and development team in prepairing the staff in the new normal.

3 Literature review

The Hospitality Industry is a service based industry where Guest satisfaction and Experience is of utmost importance and is uncompromisable. Therefore it is very much essential to maintain high level of safety, security , cleanliness and hygiene so that the industry is able to provide the highest level of customer satisfaction and taking into consideration this Covid-19 situation there is a great amount of responsibility on the hotel housekeeping Department. The housekeeping Department is vital for the overall success of the hotel as it not only enhances each and every element of the hotel 'face' but is also the highest revenue generate (Reetha Thomas). The importance of cleanliness and hygiene in hotels has become quite important as of late as the Corona virus can be spared through touching of surface contaminated by the virus (WHO, 2020 b) . Hotel surfaces a likely to be dirty and could be the potential source of disease being transmitted.(Park et.al.2019). In addition to this the aerosol transmission from the centralized air-conditioning system could also be another source of Covid 19 infection (Zhang et. al., 2020). Due to the Covid 19 pandemic guests will look for hotels that offer them reassuring lodging services and accommodation products in terms of cleanliness and hygiene. The hotel and hospitality industry is going to undergo certain changes some of which could be permanent and some temporary. The focus of the industry is going to shift entirely on hygiene, cleanliness and sanitization. The new trend of ethical hygiene is there to arise. The focus of hotels will be on reassuring the guest about their safety. Creative idea of anti-bacterial door knobs will be on the rise and sheaths (cover for high rise products) will gain importance. There would be a concise concept to reinform guest confidence and assure high hygiene standards. Hotel housekeeping software will be very critical in making sure that the housekeeping operations are effective, streamline and safe as hotel housekeeping protocols change.

The Human Resource department has a key role to play in the Housekeeping department. They should review summaries and distribute to the Housekeeping team the various advisories and updates from Government organizations like the WHO, Centers for Disease control and prevention, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and state and local authorities. The Housekeeping Team need to educate the employees about transmission, risks and protect the employees and empower and provide them a sense of urgency over the situations. The department should ensure the Housekeeping staffs are staying abreast of OSHA guidelines and industry standards and the use of disinfectants throughout Guest room and common areas. The Learning and Development department should make sure the employee remains safe. They should coach the management staff to be transparent, address each situation on a case to case basis and always seek to understand best each person situation. The department needs to ensure the staffs do not panic and there is no miss information. The department need to utilize this time to educate and trained the team on the skills needed post Covid-19. Focus is to be given on the activities to be productive rather than result oriented in the new reduced level of business value (Dr. Bagnera, S.M et. al. Boston Hospitality Review).

4 Research methodology

4.1 Approach

The approach adopted in the study is both qualitative and quantitative.

4.2 Study Sample

The study sample consisted of housekeeping employees and employees of human resource department of 4 to 5-star hotel properties in Kolkata. Random Sampling technique was used for the collection of data. The sample size chosen is based on convenient random sampling. The sample unit is the 30 respondents, 15 of which are housekeeping staff and 15 human resource employees from the hotels.

4.3 Study Instrument

The study instrument being used by me is a questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into 2 sections of housekeeping responsibilities and HRM practices.

4.4 Measurement Methods

Likert five-point scale was used in asking the questions of the questionnaire, and measuring the study variables. The items ranged from "strongly disagree" (1 point) to "strongly agree" (5 points).

5 Findings and discussion

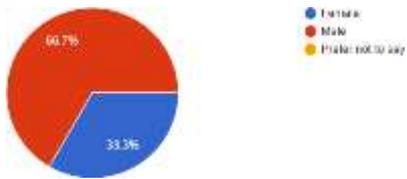
The digital survey form was sent across to housekeeping and human resource personnel of hotels across 4 to 5-star categories.

Table 1. Table 2. Details of the Responses Received

Star Category	Number of Responses	Percentage
5-star	09	30%
4-star	21	70%

As seen in the above table most of the respondents were from the 4-star category hotels which accounted for around 70% of the respondent while the rest were from 5-star category hotels (30%).

Graph-1



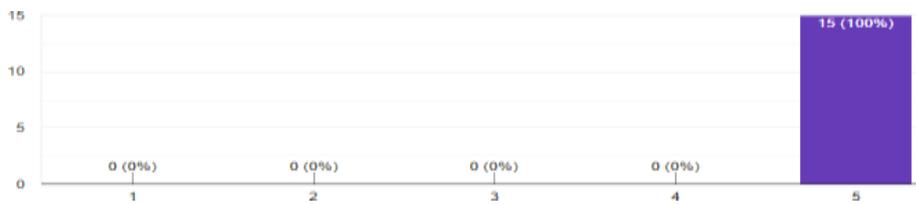
Graph-2



As evident from the graph 66.7% of the housekeeping employee respondents were males and 33.3% females. Similarly 73.3% of human resource respondents were males and 26.7% females.

Graph-3

Hotel organisation should strictly follow hygiene, cleaning and disinfection practices in common areas



To understand the importance of hygiene, the respondents were asked whether the hotel organisation should strictly follow hygiene and cleanliness practices. For the question all the respondents agreed to the fact this practice should be strictly followed.

Graph- 4

Hotel should follow special cleaning and disinfection plan if there are sick guests or employees.



If there are any sick guest in the hotel special cleaning and sanitization practice is very much an essential job. The cleaning and disinfestations is not only about where to do it but also how to perform the task. Respondents were asked whether special cleaning is necessary to which 73.3% agreed strongly to the fact whereas 6.7 % were neutral in their responses.

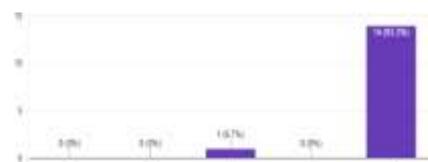
Graph- 5

Hotels department should use disposable cleaning material



Graph- 6

Hotels staff should give proper attention to linen soiled with respiratory secretion or other body fluid of ill person



Graph- 7

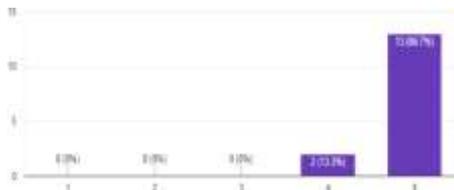
Textile, linen and cloth should be carefully handled to avoid contamination of surrounding people



The use of disposable cleaning materials and their proper disposal can help minimize risk of contamination. The use of linen in hotel is on a repeated basis. Soiled linen are discarded and sent to laundry for cleanliness and guest rooms and other areas are replaced with clean linen. The handling of the linen is a very crucial part as there are chances of contamination from soiled linen. As evident from the graph 80% of the respondents strongly agree to the use of disposable cleaning material and 93.3% strongly agree to the fact that soiled linen handling requires proper attention. It is evident from the above graph that most of the respondents (80.7%) strongly agreed that textile linen and cloth involves careful handling.

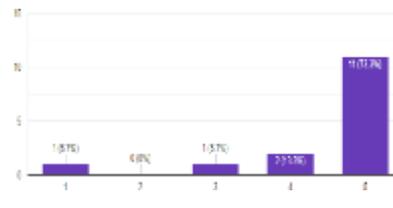
Graph- 8

Management should be informed about possible sick guests in the room



Graph- 9

Management should designate housekeeping staff to handle sick guests



The above graphs were based on the questions that management should be informed about possible sick guests in the room and whether management should designate housekeeping staff to deal with such guests. As per the responses 86.7% strongly agreed that management should be informed and 73.3% strongly agreed that there should be designated housekeeping staff to deal with the sick guests.

Graph- 10

Housekeeping practices should be suspended where guests can voluntarily forego housekeeping services



From the above graph it is clear that 80% of the respondent strongly agreed to the suspension of house-keeping practices where guest can voluntarily forego.

Graph- 11

Housekeeping team should be trained to use PPE and hand sanitizer



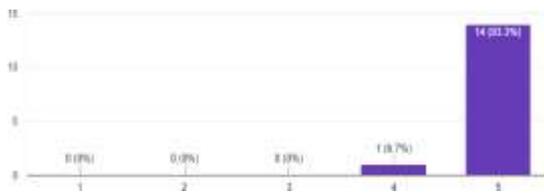
The learning and development team needs to give proper training in various areas in the housekeeping department post covid-19. This involves training to use proper PPE kit and hand sanitizers to deal with personnel health and safety while working in the hotels. As is evident from the graph 66.7% respondents from the human resource department strongly agreed on this point.

Graph- 12
Special training to housekeeping staff to deal with sick guests or employees

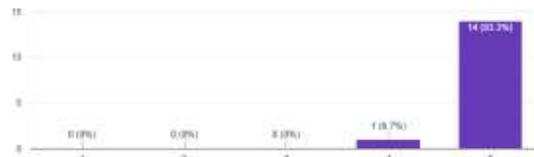


The above graph shows that 86.7% respondents from the human resource department strongly agreed on the point that special training is required for housekeeping staff to deal with any sick person in the hotel.

Graph- 13
Preparation of proper plan of action to disinfect and clean surface



Graph- 14
Adequate training in disposing waste and cleaning material



From the above graph it is evident that there is need of a proper plan of action to disinfect and clean the various surfaces and areas of the hotel on a time to time basis and disposal of waste and cleaning material involves adequate training.

6 Discussion and suggestions

Proper cleaning and disinfection of hotels is critical to prevent the spread of Covid 19. This research paper provides an insight and guidance for hotel operators to deal with the new normal. Proper and efficient housekeeping management and operations involves proper communication. Delivering the various tools to the team members to be able to quickly and easily deliver the work, the various cleaning protocols and generally keeping in touch with the staff members can make a huge difference. Hotel staffs are the vital resources for any hotel company and development of their skills can have a positive impact in the present situations. Employees when trained well help the hotel to flourish more and more. The management should not only educate the staff but also develop policies for their protection. Training should include when to use PPE kit what PPE kit is necessary how to put on and put off the kit and their proper disposal.

Housekeeping employees should be trained cleaning chemicals based on OSHA standards. Through this research study managers and researchers can further explore the various issues of hotels post Covid-19. This research study will also help the Human resource department to take considerable steps to develop the employees. Further the study also highlights the need for future researchers to study the various problems that may arise while the hotels become fully operational in the new normal.

7 Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to analyse the Housekeeping activities and the role Human resource department has to play in hotel industry post Covid 19 era. The study contribute in enriching the fact that this pandemic is a very serious issue and needs to be given due attention at the same time create a scene of awareness.

The findings clearly indicate that Housekeeping practices and activities required changes. Change is needed to advance the cleaning practices from observation based to the level of medical grade and the same time rebuilt the guest assurance on safe and secure stay. The finding also shows that change is needed to make task of guest a more immersive experience.

The Covid 19 pandemic has disrupted the functioning and even survival around the world. It is time for scholars and practioners to carefully examine the impacts of this critical situation and help to enhance industry practices. Data from various sources could assist scholars to make predictions accordingly. In summery it is our hope that is this research will illuminate the various other relevant topic of interest and inspire further study.

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