

FRONT OFFICER & HOUSEKEEPER AS AGENCY IN PROMOTING CLEANLINESS OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT; AN ACTION RESEARCH FOR HOSPITALITY EDUCATION CURRICULUM

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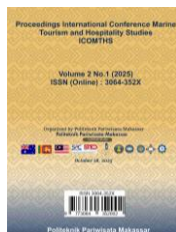
Abstract

Although the marine environment is not a human habitat, it is utilised for two purposes: economically, to fulfil food needs based on marine biota, and for tourism, where recreational activities are carried out. This means that the issue of marine environmental cleanliness is highly significant and crucial. With regard to recreational needs, we believe that front office staff and housekeepers play a major role in promoting marine environmental cleanliness, especially in meeting recreational needs, where the presence of rubbish or dirt is difficult to avoid, while cleanliness is a major factor in meeting recreational needs. Through an action research approach, we constructed a learning model that we hope can be incorporated into the hospitality education curriculum in order to promote marine environmental cleanliness. The participation of lecturers and students in the field of hospitality in conducting action research, the construction of knowledge about learning models where enculturation is related to the culture of cleanliness, and support for understanding the function of the marine environment and the impact of its damage, especially in Indonesia, are the main topics with the aim of shaping the role of front officers and housekeepers in promoting marine environmental cleanliness. The results of this study show that the formation of a culture of cleanliness occurs through an understanding of the concepts of dirt and cleanliness based on general views or understanding, which are therefore not based on personal judgement or understanding, and can thus be practised and accepted in a general context. This understanding is formed through enculturation that takes place in formal vocational education, where understanding of the function of and impact of damage to the marine environment is taught as a form of cognitive support, with the aim of realising a culture of cleanliness. The understanding that sustainability as a concept can only be realised through the active role of humans as actors in life leads us to view the significance of this study in the formation of a formal vocational education curriculum in the hospitality field. Therefore, we hope that the results of this study can be developed for the purpose of forming an action-based curriculum for front officers and housekeepers as agents in promoting marine environmental cleanliness.

Keywords: agent, cleanliness, education, environment, front office staff, housekeepers, promoting

1. INTRODUCTION

Studies on hospitality, where front office staff and housekeepers work, generally focus on their active roles as tourism professionals and within the hospitality business itself. Therefore, the focus is on issues related to cultural and emotional intelligence as professional workers (Lam, dkk., 2020) becoming interesting, including understanding eye contact as part of consumer interaction (Yick, dkk., 2020). An active role as a tourism professional and in the hospitality business, as well as conducting studies on product activities. (Tavitiyaman, dkk., 2022), creativity issue (Chien, dkk., 2021; González-González & García-Almeida, 2021), regarding satisfaction with work results (Zhang, dkk., 2024), as well as the latest issues regarding the use of robotics in the hospitality business (Tavitiyaman, dkk., 2022), including key issues in the study of hospitality, front office, and housekeeping. Examining these two roles from an agency perspective is highly significant for one simple reason: it makes these two roles part of the actors in environmental issues, particularly marine issues.



The brief review above forms the basis for this study. The purpose of this study is to examine the possibility of forming an agency identity in front office staff and housekeepers, to be included in the vocational education curriculum in the field of hospitality. On the other hand, the reason for this study is our desire to explain the active role of tourism professionals in sustainability issues, particularly in the marine environment, which is a tourist destination.

2. RESEARCH & METHODOLOGY

This study is based on the application of the action research approach, which is one of the research approaches in qualitative methodology. (Rosario & Wa-Mbaleka, 2022; White & Cooper, 2022) with the aim of identifying and understanding organisational behaviour (O'Leary, 2021; White & Cooper, 2022) especially in an educational context (Hedges, dkk., 2021; Glenn, dkk., 2023; Mertler, 2024), or about community development (O'Leary, 2021). The purpose of implementing the action research approach is the reason we chose it, with the aim that stakeholders both within and outside vocational education – particularly in the field of hospitality – can improvise in their professional practices. (Mertler, 2024). Various issues can be examined through the application of an action research approach, one of which is tourism and hospitality. (Okumus, dkk., 2022). To identify, understand, and provide solutions to real-world problems (O'Leary, 2021). In conducting this study, we applied nine stages of the action research approach. (Mertler, 2024), namely determining topics based on our experience and professionalism as educators in the vocational field, collecting data through conversations with stakeholders in the field of hospitality vocational education and through a literature review on the marine environment, agencies, and hospitality, analysing the data obtained from the data collection techniques, and discussing it with the relevant stakeholders. In collecting and analysing data, three main techniques were applied in the action research approach, namely observation, in-depth conversations or interviews, and literature review, and the data was analysed thematically. (O'Leary, 2021), is our approach to both activities.

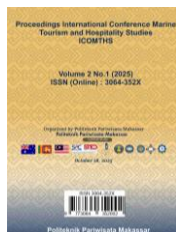
3. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

In this section, we present the results of the study and their discussion, as described in the first and second subsections. The subsection on the results of the study contains observed facts, interview excerpts, and information sourced from literature, as a result of applying the three data collection techniques we described earlier. In the sub-section on the discussion of the study results, the action model needed in forming front officers and housekeepers as agents in promoting the cleanliness of the marine environment is the knowledge gained from our study.

The Marine Environment, Front Officer, & Housekeeper

We found that the marine environment consists of three areas, namely coastal, sea surface or maritime, and sea or marine, because it is an ecosystem that cannot be separated. (Geraldini, dkk., 2020; UNESCO-IOC/European Commission, 2021; Buonocore, dkk., 2021; Salimi, dkk., 2021; Ounanian, dkk., 2021; Vázquez, 2021; Banela, dkk., 2024). This led us to understand that marine does not refer to these three areas, and we argued that coastal is the area that is more often referred to in the field of tourism, as there are many famous beaches in Indonesia that are tourist destinations. However, on the other hand, we fully understand that in the context of vocational education in the hospitality field, these three areas have high significance and cruciality because they form an ecosystem, and therefore it is not appropriate to examine only one area. After discussing this matter, we decided to continue using the word marine, but not as a term, rather referring to the meaning of the word as understood in International Conference on Marine Tourism & Hospitality (IConMTHS).

As we know, the implementation of formal education, both vocational and non-vocational models, is not only aimed at transferring knowledge but also at shaping morality with the aim of forming the personalities of students. For us and our lecturers particularly those in the Room Division Study Programme, and – more generally – in the Hospitality Department, morality is therefore considered to be of equal importance to the transfer of knowledge itself, which takes place through practical teaching and daily interaction. Morality itself,



in the understanding of the teachers we met, is understood in the form of values of integrity, responsibility, discipline, including social awareness, which can be practised in both formal and informal contexts, because it aims to shape the personality, character, or identity of vocational students in the field of hospitality. In fact, in pursuit of this goal, students are taught to cultivate a hospitable attitude before applying the emphasis of vocational character education in the hospitality field. To achieve this, the education curriculum becomes paramount, with educators playing a highly significant role.

We found that the hospitality education curriculum, particularly that offered by the Tourism Polytechnic as an educational institution under the Ministry of Tourism, is rich in the two elements we mentioned earlier. The curriculum implemented by Poltekpar Makassar is based on strengthening skills, knowledge and character. To fulfil these three elements, every vocational-oriented course must incorporate these elements in order to produce competent and competitive human resources. The room division study programme is one of the study programmes oriented towards producing hospitality human resources, particularly those related to the room division, which consists of the front office and housekeeping. This study programme has a profile that emphasises the expertise of graduates who are able to manage competitive front office and housekeeping departments in hotels and other accommodation services. The achievement of competencies in each student and graduate of the Room Division study programme must be accompanied by the ability to analyse the environment surrounding the scope of work of the front office and housekeeping. The learning process concerning a basic understanding of the operations and character of a professional in the front office and housekeeping fields must go through stages that have been arranged in a general curriculum to a more detailed learning plan. The learning process for the Room Division study programme is divided into two methods, namely 30% theoretical learning and 70% practical learning. This emphasises the in-depth study of practical material (front office and housekeeping knowledge), which is indeed the main objective in producing competitive graduates. In addition, the distribution of vocational courses is divided into several levels. In semesters 1 and 2, the focus is on understanding basic operational practices in front office and housekeeping, where each student is required to be able to perform operational tasks, including the room booking process, communicating with guests in a hospitable manner, hotel administration management such as registration and hotel management systems, and they will learn about guest property handling processes. In the housekeeping section, students are required to master manual cleaning techniques and the use of machines, how to communicate with guests, the cleaning process for public areas and guest rooms, and they must understand the subject of laundry services in hotels and independently. In the third or fourth semester, they will gain an understanding of supervisory techniques in the front office and housekeeping fields. They will serve as supervisors for the first and second semesters or craft level. They will organise all forms of practice and assign tasks to the craft level to be followed up based on the division of public area practice areas, supervising the use of cleaning tools and how to maintain equipment in both the front office and housekeeping. In addition, they will undertake real work experience in the hospitality industry to hone or deepen their basic operational knowledge of front office and housekeeping. Entering the fifth and sixth semesters, students in the room division study programme will undertake further real work experience in the hospitality industry to deepen their supervisory knowledge and perfect the competencies of each student in the room division study programme. At the same time, each student will create a final project that will become the culmination of their knowledge in the field of front office and housekeeping. The most interesting thing in the educational process undergone by each student in the Room Division study programme is the change in their understanding of the meaning of cleanliness. This change is evident in the sense of responsibility they bear as workers or actors responsible for cleanliness. They have a sense of always paying attention and ensuring that their work environment is always clean and well-maintained. This leads to the opinion that the next level after achieving competence in the lecture process is the emergence of a sense in every room division student of responsibility for the cleanliness of their surrounding environment.

In today's modern era, maritime culture is not only a historical legacy, but also continues to evolve as it adapts to various social changes and technological advances. Local governments and communities are working to preserve these maritime values through various programmes that emphasise the importance of the maritime sector as part of regional development. One form of this strengthening can be seen in the development of the

marine tourism sector, such as beach tourism, diving, and cultural activities that highlight the maritime identity of Makassar. Coastal areas such as Losari Beach and the small islands around it have been made into leading destinations that introduce the richness of the sea and the local wisdom of coastal communities to tourists. To preserve the maritime culture that has become the main asset in introducing and, in quotation marks, 'selling' our cultural wealth to others, we must certainly protect the environment that is part of that culture. One of the maritime cultural environments that must be preserved is the coastal area. The coast is an area of land that is still directly influenced by the sea, such as tidal movements, sea winds, and saltwater intrusion, as well as sea areas that are still influenced by natural processes from the land, such as river flows and sedimentation. Thus, coastal areas include land and sea areas that interact ecologically, socially, and economically. South Sulawesi generally has a fairly long coastline, so many people have established populations and communities focused on coastal areas. As a result, South Sulawesi in general, and Makassar in particular, have become regions with a maritime culture. In protecting the coastal environment, cleanliness is one of the main things that must be considered. The cleanliness of the coastal area in the city of Makassar can affect the preservation of a community's culture and environment. Two important elements in realising environmental cleanliness are social networks and power relations. As with other regions, coastal areas also need to take into account social networks and power relations. In practice, social networks involving the government and non-governmental organisations are very important in improving cleanliness standards on beaches. This is because beach cleanliness is a complex issue involving various aspects, including waste management, environmental education, regulations, and community involvement. Aspects that influence the success of involving the government and organisations include resources and capacity. In this case, the government has greater resources and capacity to manage beach cleanliness issues effectively. They can provide the funds, personnel, and equipment needed to run cleanliness programmes. In addition, the government must also be strong in terms of regulation and policy, where it has a role in designing and implementing regulations related to waste management on beaches.

Hospitality Agency for Promoting of the Marine Environment Cleanliness

An agency is one or more individuals, categorised as actors with the ability to construct life courses through choices and actions taken in opportunities, and to engage themselves temporally through relational actions in the form of habitual interactions, imagination and judgement, to reproduce and change structures as an interactive response to problems caused by changes in circumstances. (Bernardi, dkk., 2019; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Understanding the definition of agency shows that agency refers to the achievement of knowledge and skills that have certainly occurred in the past, thereby forming patterns of action in the lives of actors, which therefore give rise to identities that refer to existential, pragmatic, identity, and life-course agency. (Eteläpelto, dkk., 2013; Ecclestone, 2016; Göbel, dkk., 2020). These four identities are further understood as the potential and capacity for self-directed and self-initiated agency in every action. Pragmatism characterises every habitual response, whereby habitual patterns in social actions themselves are a key sign of agency, and continuity in habitual patterns towards problems in the life of an agency. (Eteläpelto, dkk., 2013). In other words, simply put, agency is formed within, and can only develop after going through, certain educational processes, primarily those of a formal nature. (Göbel, dkk., 2020; Tao & Gao, 2021), which we understand to refer to vocational education, on the grounds that this model of education places greater emphasis on action based on knowledge and skills (Li & Pilz, 2023; Dahalan, dkk., 2024; McGrath & Yamada, 2023).

We believe that vocational education can be a medium for shaping agency identity, or what we can term as actors and agents of change, based on the advantages we mentioned earlier. The learning pattern that takes place five days a week, with a practical learning model both through facilities on campus and those owned by cooperating corporations, as well as an independent practical model that takes place in internship activities which are part of the education programme, and theoretical learning related to social phenomena in the maritime field, are the sources of our belief. Furthermore, understanding the results of our study shows that there is one stakeholder that has significance and cruciality in playing a role in shaping agency identity, namely educators who have a vocational education background, in addition to industrial experience. These educators are the main source of knowledge and skills about hospitality, including a sense of agency as the ability of an agency

to be able to recognise and understand various situations which then have an effect on actions to provide solutions. (Silver, dkk., 2021), and network agency (Tasselli & Kilduff, 2021).

Although theoretical knowledge is very important, as it serves as the logical and rational basis that bridges actions, knowledge gained through skills is the foundation for the formation of a sense of agency. This is because, after all, a sense of agency is the ability to recognise and understand various situations. (Silver, dkk., 2021), which in this case relates to a situation where the marine environment is not clean enough for tourism, requiring individuals to take control through action and influence in response to the situation. (Haggard & Chambon, 2012; Haggard, 2017), namely through cleaning and prevention measures, both directly and indirectly communicated to tourists, sharing knowledge about the importance of marine environmental cleanliness in the field of tourism, both directly and indirectly. However, a sense of agency cannot be applied without network agency, because roles are formed through social interactions that represent analytical categories in accordance with logical knowledge and skills. (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Nadel, 2013). Understanding this, therefore, students as prospective agents are the objects in the process of forming a sense of agency carried out for the intended purpose, as well as introducing network agency, and educators are the actors in that formation and introduction.

The objective of our study is to provide input for the hospitality curriculum regarding the process of implementing vocational education in the hospitality field, in which educators play a key role. With regard to the role of educators, teaching is required on institutional environment, cognitive framework, social networks, and power relations. (Wiseman, dkk., 2012), all of which we understand as teaching materials for the formation of a sense of agency and network agency. (lihat Figure 1).

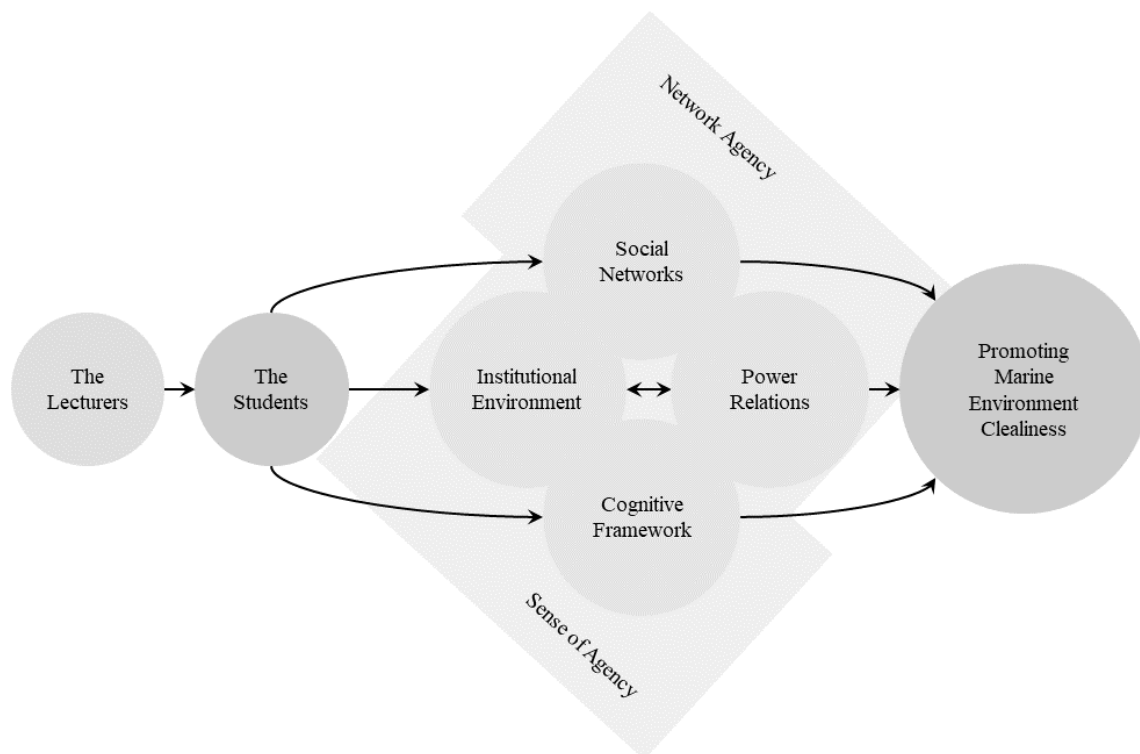
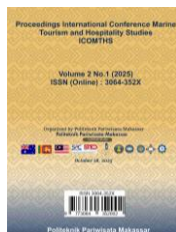


Figure 1; The process of forming the identity of front officers and housekeepers as agents

We understand the institutional environment as hotels and lodgings, or similar establishments, located in coastal areas or on small islands. This aspect is highly significant, as there are different regulations for each hospitality business, which affect the success of the business. Therefore, hospitality students must gain a sense of agency through understanding their roles in the business, where front officers and housekeepers have various



tasks related to cleanliness as understood in the world of tourism. In other words, we emphasise the provision of knowledge about the concept of cleanliness in the field of tourism, with the aim of not applying the concept of cleanliness according to personal or cultural understanding, or even general understanding. For us, the institutional environment is an aspect that can shape a sense of agency, along with a cognitive framework, which refers to knowledge about the concept of cleanliness that we emphasise, in addition to knowledge about the function of the marine environment for life and in the field of tourism. On the other hand, the aspects of social networks and power relations are also emphasised in vocational education in the hospitality field, because agency itself is a social action that has implications for social life. The networks and relations we refer to are the ability of students to understand stakeholders who can provide assistance, apart from the parties where they work, whether in the form of disseminating information or even providing a variety of equipment to clean the marine environment for tourism.

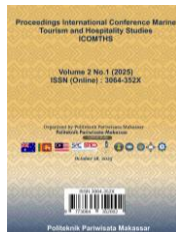
The knowledge gained through this study is directed at the development of a vocational education curriculum in the hospitality sector, where teachers have a highly significant and crucial role in shaping the agency identity of students in this field. However, for us, this study is a pilot or initial study, which is why further studies are needed regarding the vocational education curriculum in the hospitality sector, the issue of marine environmental cleanliness in Indonesia and in a global context, and knowledge about the concept of cleanliness in the tourism sector, which we believe differs from cultural and general understanding.

4. CONCLUSION

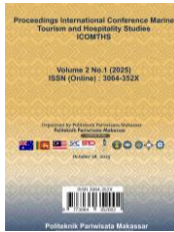
The role of teachers and students in vocational education in the hospitality sector is highly significant and crucial in the context of cleanliness, which refers not only to rooms but also to the environment on a small and large scale, such as the marine environment that is a tourist destination. One effort to ensure that front office staff and housekeepers contribute their knowledge and skills to the cleanliness of the marine environment is to foster a sense of agency and introduce network agency as an identity agency, to promoted cleanliness issues, particularly in the marine environment where tourists are located.

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