

TRADE UNION PRACTICES AND WORKING CONDITIONS OF CHAMBERMAIDS *PRÁCTICAS SINDICALES Y CONDICIONES DE TRABAJO ENTRE LAS CAMARERAS DE PISO*

J. David
Moral-Martín
jdavidmoralm@unizar.es

Universidad de Zaragoza
[https://orcid.org/
0000-0003-4174-2855](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4174-2855)

Eleni
Ferri-Fuentevilla
elena.ferri@dstso.uhu.es

Universidad de Huelva
[https://orcid.org/
0000-0001-6820-3611](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6820-3611)

Francisco
Estepa-Maestre
festmae@upo.es

Universidad Pablo Olavide,
Sevilla
[https://orcid.org/
0000-0002-7130-041X](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7130-041X)

Abstract

Historically, women's domestic work in households has been the subject of academic study that dates back to the 18th and 19th centuries. But the specific work of chambermaids in hotels only began to be studied in the early 2000s. The aim of this study is to test the above hypothesis and to identify research that has been done on labour organization, working conditions and health of housekeepers. The methodology consists of systematically reviewing the contributions on this issue registered in indexed publications between 2000 and 2021. It is confirmed that the first publication is from 2003. Among the results, the tendency of housekeepers to self-organize, such as "Las Kellys" association in Spain, stands out. The international comparison indicates intersectionality of discriminating factors increasing their vulnerability. For example, forms of piece-rate payment are linked to higher accident rates, subcontracting increases and future automation could have a negative impact on labour negotiation. On the positive side, it is hoped that sustainable tourism labels will encourage decent working conditions for hotel housekeepers.

Key words: chambermaids, intersectionality, Las Kellys, organisation, systematised review, working conditions

Resumen

Históricamente, el trabajo doméstico de las mujeres en hogares ha sido objeto de estudio académico que se remonta a los siglos XVIII y XIX. Sin embargo el trabajo específico de las camareras de piso en hoteles se estudia solo desde los primeros años 2000. El objetivo de este estudio es comprobar la citada hipótesis e identificar lo investigado sobre organización laboral, condiciones de trabajo y salud de las camareras de piso. La metodología consiste en revisar sistemáticamente las contribuciones sobre la cuestión registradas en publicaciones indexadas entre 2000 y 2021. Se confirma que la primera publicación es de 2003. Entre los resultados destaca la tendencia de las camareras de piso a auto-organizarse, como la asociación "Las Kellys" en España. La comparativa internacional indica interseccionalidad de factores discriminantes incrementando su vulnerabilidad. Por ejemplo las formas de pago a la pieza se vinculan con mayor accidentalidad., la subcontratación aumenta y la automatización futura pudiera repercutir negativamente en la negociación laboral. En positive, se confía que los sellos de turismo sostenible incentiven condiciones de trabajo dignas para las camareras de piso.

Palabras clave: camareras de piso, interseccionalidad, Las Kellys, organización, revisión sistematizada, condiciones de trabajo.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Academic research on women's domestic work has traditionally paid attention to work in households, which, as noted below, has been interested in their working conditions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But a specific group such as hotel housekeepers began to be studied in the early 2000s. In the literature on domestic work, different terms can be found to refer to these women workers, such as: "chambermaids", "hotel housekeeper", "hotel maids", "hotel cleaners", "room attendants" and in Spain they were coined as "Las Kellys" (las que limpian / those who clean) especially since 2015 that their association was created.

On historical studies, there are several examples at the European level, including Wikander's (1998) research on the debate around female wage labor between the French Revolution and the mid-19th century, and that of her pupil, Zucca (2013), who studied Italian domestic work between the 18th and 19th centuries. For the same period it is worth mentioning, in the Spanish context, the study by Bartolomé and Díaz (2017) on the artillery female of the Royal Factories of Liérganas and La Clavada between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In Andalusia, Martínez and Martínez (2017) also replicate and extend these investigations by adding in domestic settings. These latter studies are indebted to the pioneering work of Borderías (1993) on contemporary women workers in the Spanish telecommunications company: Telefónica.

In the case of chambermaids, many best-known available references are contemporary, dating from the 21st century, showing a worldwide professional collective with apparently similar working conditions, described as "pitiful" by Patricia Mantovano, director of the Union of Tourism, Hotel, and Food Service Workers of Argentina, (Cañada, 2015:15). This is something that Esbenshade et al. (2006) have contextualized by showing the way globalization has contributed to increasing employment and profit in the tourism industry.

For example, in Spain, the 1970s were a milestone for the increase of chambermaids as it was a period of touristic boom with strong demand for labour in the hotel and catering sector resulting in emigration from inland to the coast areas. Around year 2006, more than three decades later, there came an economic boom during which earlier efforts to analyse these workplaces can be found (Castellanos and Pedreño, 2006). Barely five years later, a 2010 survey by the Comisiones Obreras trade union investigated both women's and men's perceptions of employment and working conditions in the hotel sector, with particular focus on the gender inequalities that were created and perpetuated (Cañada, 2019). By way of background, Cañada (2019:69) had undertaken a review of the scientific literature in countries of the Global North, excluding Spain, focusing exclusively on working conditions and health, as his search equations.

To some extent, academia has in the last years increased interest to research on this group to make it more visible (Fernández and Torné, 2020; López and Medina, 2020). Some research put focus on job insecurity issues (Cañada, 2019; Puech, 2007) and its repercussions, especially in terms of occupational and mental health (Rosemberg and Li, 2018) or concerning the gender-based experience of workplace accidents (Ferri et al, 2020).

The invisibility of domestic workers in the political, social, and economic sphere has also been a source of academic concern. This led many researchers at the beginning of the 21st century to take an interest in this issue, raising the dilemma of how to

study a group that is invisible to society (Hatton, 2017). The answer led to several studies, such as Hunter and Watson (2006) who investigated housekeepers' work globally, arguing that the precariousness of their working conditions was hidden from the public eye.

Media has given visibility to chambermaids. There is general agreement that this working women's group was globally acknowledged in the wake of the sombre incident involving the arrest of Strauss-Kahn, former managing director of the International Monetary Fund, on charges of sexually harassing a chambermaid in a New York hotel in May 2011. This sudden appearance in the media was picked up by Regt (2011), whose study focused on collectives working in intimate professional contexts. Further research later called for greater visibility of the group by magnifying the impact of their working conditions and their influence on occupational health (Chela-Alvarez et al., 2022).

A look at the question of occupational impact can be found in Oxenbridge and Moensted (2011), who examined how the pay structure for housekeepers in Australian hotels had a direct impact on physical injuries. It was shown that piece-rate pay, or remuneration based on the number of rooms cleaned, meant that housekeepers worked harder to earn a living wage at the expense of safe and healthy working methods.

Other perspectives have been applied to this issue of occupational impact like intersectionality: understood as the way in which different types of discrimination are connected to and affect each other (Marx, 2018), (= unfair treatment because of a person's sex, race, etc.) along with its relation with insecure work (Cañada, 2023; Albarracín and Castellanos, 2013; Bernadete, 2003; Brunet & Moral-Martín, 2020). The resulting compendium has concluded that discrimination in the form of 'intersecting inequality' - i.e. discrimination based on a person's age, country of origin, disability, level of education, or sexual orientation - is a key determinant of exposure to and experience of insecure work, with hotel maids being a clear example of this, as reported in the article by Hsieh et al. (2017).

Studies on the impact of the global 2019 COVID indicate worsening health and working conditions of chambermaids because of the need for improved hygiene and cleanliness in hotel establishments without increasing the time available per room (Rosemberg, 2020). In the case of Spain, the government designed a "protective shield" to mitigate the effects of the pandemic but it did not cover many chambermaids as the nature of their temporary contracts meant that many of them were not actually working and with a payroll when the state of emergency was declared (Moral-Martín, 2020).

1.1. The case of Spain

The case of Spain has attracted the interest of researchers especially since in 2015 the group of chambermaids, colloquially known as "Las Kellys" (las que limpian/ those who clean) organized itself under an associative form that, without assuming the formula of a trade union, became one of the best known social agents for the socio-labour defense of their working, wage and social conditions (Moreno, 2016).

"Las Kellys" organisational birth arose from a stubborn criticism of the responsibility of the most representative trade union confederations in establishing its working conditions and salaries. On their website they state that: "All, without exception, are responsible for their neglect in the collective agreements that have been signed over the years in the different communities" (kellys.es).

“Las Kellys” adopted “cyber unionism” which meant leveraging technology for collective action beyond company control. Additionally, their effective use of storytelling and social media, as highlighted by Fernández and Tomé (2020), underscores the power of personal narratives to communicate demands for better employment rights. “Las Kellys” brought chambermaids’ issues to the forefront of the Spanish digital media agenda. Their engagement with employers’ associations, government, and unions showcases their role as a social actor challenging the outsourcing of room attendants and advocating for improved working conditions.

In Spain, there have been also similar changes. For example, the so-called “Kelly Law” was enacted, establishing a register of hotels in which employment practices would be safeguarded through the creation of a quality and fair work standard. Furthermore, several work-related contingencies have been recognized as occupational illnesses by occupational accident mutual insurance societies, such as bursitis and carpal tunnel syndrome; both inflammatory conditions that can become chronic and incapacitating (Moral-Martín, 2020).

The overview of the problems of the chambermaids’ work group in the previous pages provides an indicative overview of the interest and topicality of the research question. Our objectives are to test the hypothesis that research on chambermaids’ domestic work took off at the beginning of the 20th century and to identify worldwide advances in knowledge about their work organization, working conditions and impact on health.

2. METHODOLOGY AND MATERIALS

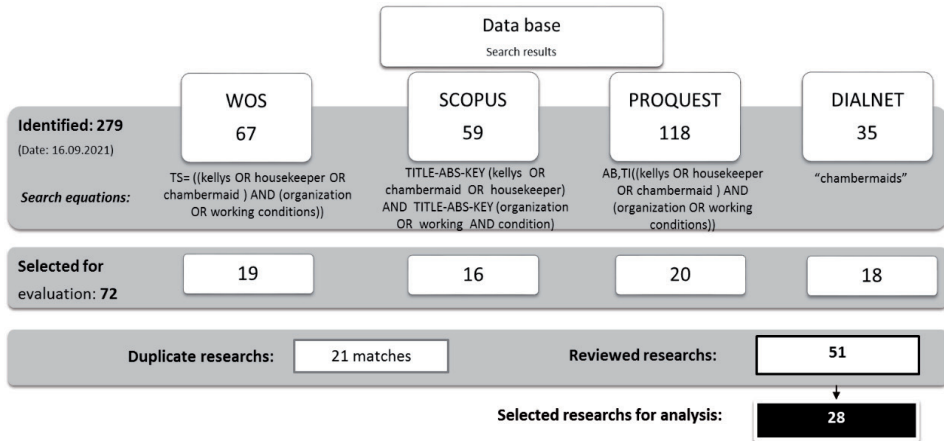
The methodology applied to achieve the objectives outlined above consists of a literature review from 2000 to 2021 in indexed journals and using systematized and qualitative criteria (Hart, 2008). The selection criteria, as outlined in table 1 are studies on organizational practices and working conditions, job insecurity and impact on health of chambermaids.

The methodology used was typical of systematised journals in the Social Sciences, using the SALSA Framework and its four stages as a reference: Search, Appraisal, Synthesis, and Analysis (Grant and Booth, 2009). For the purposes of this study, a Microsoft Excel database was designed to synthesise and systematise the information (See Annex 1).

The first and second stages, search and appraisal, provide the evidence base and include the principles of systematisation (Codina, 2018). During the third (analysis) and fourth (synthesis) stages, methodological approaches based on grounded theory (Sandelowski and Barroso, 2007) are used, with a set of inductive strategies to analyse the data. The latter stages are described in the research results section.

Stage 1 or search was conducted inside four nationally and internationally recognised academic databases, namely, WOS, Scopus, Proquest, and Dialnet, by designing search equations corresponding to the research objectives. Each database has its own way of expressing the search equations, so the keywords and Boolean operators were customised while maintaining a common base fixed according to the subject matter under investigation (see Figure 1). For the Proquest database, a Social Science research area or domain was specified to refine the search results. In Dialnet’s case, the search equation was performed without the help of Boolean operators and using only the word “camareras de piso” in Spanish, as this was the expression that yielded the best results in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

Figure 1. Data on Search and appraisal of Systematized review



Source: own elaboration.

Regarding stage 2 or Appraisal, as Figure 1 shows, work began with a document bank (Yin, 2010) of 279 publications, which was reduced to 72 after applying the first inclusion and exclusion criteria filter agreed by the team of researchers (see Table 1). At this stage, certain studies were excluded because they were not thematically relevant to our object of study. It should be noted that some 21 studies appeared in multiple bibliographic databases but were counted only once in the selected sample (51 publications).

The process of searching for and selecting research based on the variables outlined above yielded 28 high impact publications (see Annex 1) indexed in 4 databases between 2000-2021: Web of Science (WOS), Scopus, ProQuest and Dialnet. In this regard, it should be noted that the first article cited is published in 2003.

A second filter was then applied (see table 1) based on the articles' qualitative criteria, obtaining a final selection of 28 publications for the third (analysis) and fourth (synthesis) phases of the systematised review (see table 1). The resulting articles were analysed based on their title and abstract. Where a decision could not be made using the title and abstract alone, the entire paper was read.

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria applied to selected articles

Filter	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion criteria
FIRST FILTER	Studies on the socio-labour situation of chambermaids.	No specific criteria have been defined. (Exclusion of those that do not meet the inclusion criteria)
	Studies focusing on the organisational practices and Working conditions, job insecurity, and impact on health of chambermaids.	
	Timeframe: 2000-2021.	
SE-COND FILTER	Articles indexed in impact journals (Q1-Q4).	
	Books or book chapters indexed in the Scholarly Publishers Indicators (SPI) (Q1 national and Q1-Q2 international).	

Source: own elaboration.

3. RESULTS

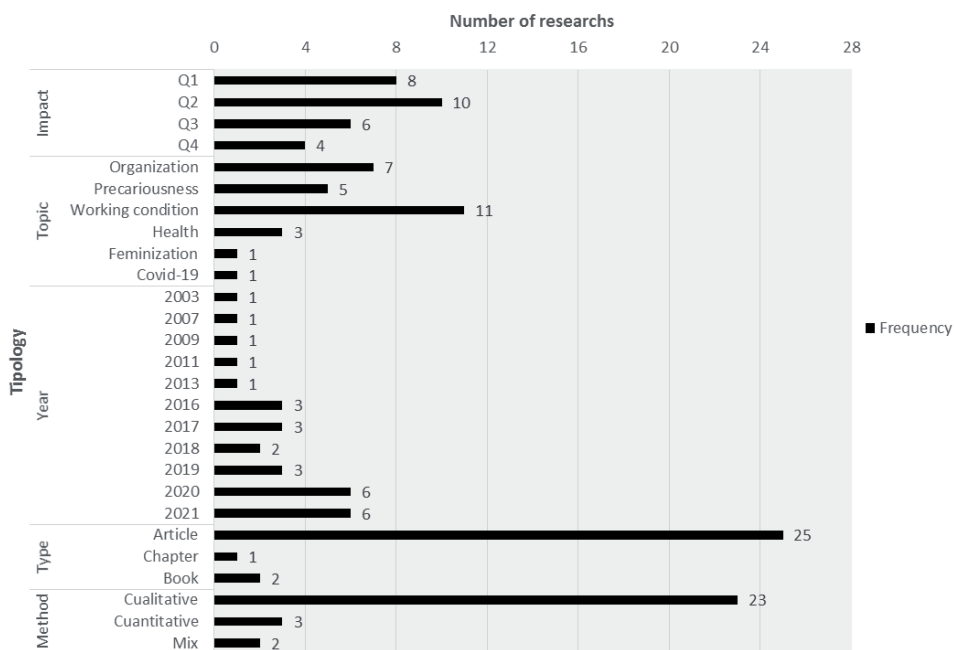
The first result of the study is the confirmation of the hypothesis that systematic studies on chambermaids located in indexed journals have been published in the 21st century. Twenty-eight articles have been selected and the first one is from 2003.

The results of the various analyses and syntheses carried out are presented below. First, the annual evolution of publications on chambermaids, the research techniques applied in the studies and the topics addressed are analyzed. Secondly, the most outstanding results of the selected research on chambermaids' labour organizations and mobilizations are synthesized. Thirdly, the most outstanding results of selected research on working conditions and their impact on job satisfaction, job insecurity or vulnerability and health are summarized.

3.1. Analysis of publications: evolution, techniques and themes

Although the search for studies on chambermaids was carried out from 2000 to 2021, the first publication found that met the selection conditions was from 2003, so the range of selected publications goes from 2003 to 2021. Graph 1 shows in absolute terms the number of publications organized by impact factor, subject matter, year of publication, type of research, and the methodology used to obtain the results.

Graph 1. Frequency typology systematised review. Absolute terms. N=28

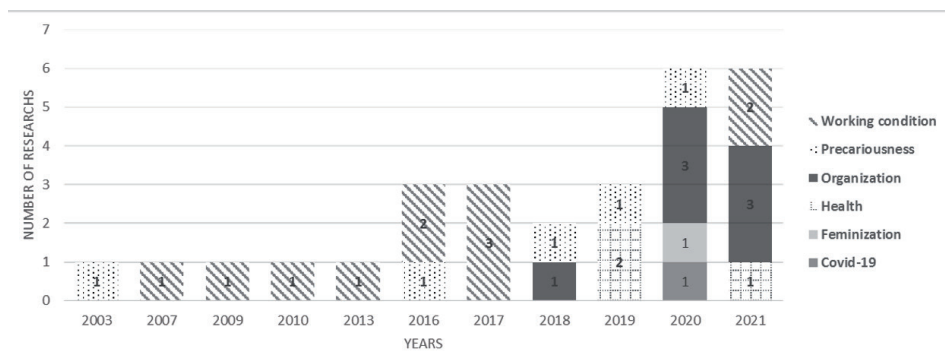


Source: own elaboration.

From the data obtained, it is possible to extract a profile of publications on chambermaids that has evolved considerably over time, with greater prevalence in recent years probably related to insecure working conditions following services outsourcing and the chambermaids' capacity to organise and channel their demands in a more structured way (Ferreira, Rivas, and Viana, 2017).

Methodologically speaking, most of the publications use qualitative research techniques in nature, mostly interview and focus group techniques. The aim is to explore and gain understanding of, or interpret the meanings, narratives, and conditions of production of the chambermaids' socio-labour situation, based on their own experiences and perceptions. However, quantitative approaches using the questionnaire technique also are used by some researchers, although these tend to be oriented towards occupational health (Daba, Dessie and Haile 2019; Rosemberg et al. 2019) and job performance (Rosemberg and Li, 2018).

Graph 2. Frequency of topics per year. Absolute terms (n=28).



Source: own elaboration

On the other hand, focusing on the themes (Graph 2), the most frequently published studies selected concern employment conditions and job insecurity (n= 16/28), and since 2018 studies covering the organisation and unionisation of the collective have taken centre stage. In fact, the most recent studies show an overlap between the two central themes of trade union organisation and working conditions (Moral-Martín y Brunet, 2021). Issues such as gender, health, and Covid-19 are also areas that, like trade union organisation, have become more prominent since 2018, especially Covid-19 which has become more pressing since 2020.

3.2. Labor organizing among chambermaids

For the academic world, the unexpected appearance of a chambermaids' organisation called "Las Kellys" (acronym for the Those who Clean), made up of female workers, typified in Spain as unorganised and low-skilled, in the middle of the second decade of the 21st century (Cañada, 2015), has been, as an object of study, one of the great contributions to and insights into the study of social organisations and, more specifically, the area of trade union self-organisation (Alcalde-González, Gálvez, and Valenzuela, 2021; Brunet and Moral-Martín, 2020) and working conditions (Otegui, 2023; Hsieh et al., 2016; Kensbock et al., 2016).

This section focuses exclusively on the aspect of organizing among hotel housekeepers worldwide with special emphasis on the quasi-union organizing among 'Las Kellys' as a relevant case of self-organization. We will delve into selected studies that address the union practices of this collective, providing a clear insight into the strategies and dynamics of self-organization within the labor context of the so named 'Las Kellys' in Spain and similar groups in other countries.

In this vein, Puech's (2007) work focused on studying the differences between part-time and full-time French hotel maids and highlighted how temporary work exacerbated and reinforced the differences between these groups because of subcontracting. At

the same time, this situation aggravated internal inequalities between workers, which triggered a series of collective conflicts and led to the call for several strikes. For her part, Trige (2021) added a feminist and historical perspective, looking at the working conditions of Filipina chambermaids in Copenhagen hotels (Holland) in the 1970s and 1990s. Her interest focused on highlighting the different trade union practices that took place in this environment, both by the Danish hotel workers' union and the aforementioned chambermaids who instigated a period of self-organization. As a result, this group of migrant women played a key role in mobilising labour disputes and (re)inventing trade union strategies at the time.

Similarly, it is worth mentioning the study by López and Medina (2020), which analyzes the role played in Spain by "Las Kellys" as an association demanding their labor rights due to the historical invisibility of this predominantly female occupation. Against the device that renders them invisible, "Las Kellys" association has built a social actor that repositions the room attendant, at least symbolically, as the structural foundation of the hotels. Based on this assertion and on visibility as a critical function of hotels, "Las Kellys" has established dialogues with the employer's association, the government, and the unions to halt the outsourcing of room attendants and reposition them as direct employees of the hotels. Thus, the "Las Kellys" movement emerges as a social actor through which to dispute their working conditions in the political arena (López and Medina, 2020; Cañada, 2018).

In Spain, although "las Kellys" is an association, they act very much as a trade union organization. They have broadened the definition of a trade union to include emotional mutual support practices (Moral-Martín, 2020). Along similar lines there are the studies carried out by Moral-Martín (2020) and Brunet and Moral-Martín (2020), who applied the concept of new trade union movements to their research on chambermaids, the main aspects of which have been extensively studied from the perspective of trade union renewal.

The above studies highlight the difficulty of integrating "Las Kellys" into most representative trade unions, while at the same time highlighting the key reasons why they became a self-organized trade union movement. Of particular interest here is that certain historical considerations made it difficult to predict their association, such as, for example, being part of a feminized and low-skilled profession, together with a highly dispersed workforce and little support historically from the sector's most representative trade unions (Moral-Martín, 2020).

More recently, Fernández and Tomé's (2020) study on the repercussions of the last economic crisis and "Las Kellys" use of social media should also be noted. Specifically, they analyzed how storytelling was used to successfully communicate to society their demands for better employment rights. In summary, "Las Kellys" have stood out as the primary social force that has brought the issue of chambermaids to the Spanish digital media agenda, surpassing unions and other social actors.

Their communication strategy revolves around the predominant use of the first person, as "Las Kellys" consider it essential to share their personal stories in their communication. These narratives are valued by journalists and yield significant results on social media, underscoring the importance of this communicative approach. "Las Kellys" employ a close and colloquial language, utilizing a straightforward and appealing communication style filled with authentic personal stories (Fernández and Tomé, 2020). The issue has not only become visible academically but has also had a major media impact in recent years (Liladrie, 2010). We refer to the women's numerous interviews in various media and their manifestos to understand why they have emerged (Fernández and Tomé, 2020).

3.3. Research on working conditions, job insecurity, and impact on health.

The following is an analysis of the contributions identified on chambermaids' working conditions in studies conducted in different countries. Among the issues that have most interested researchers are those presented below, namely: factors affecting job satisfaction with the job, followed by factors of vulnerability and abuse in working conditions, and finally, trends in the impact on physical and psychological health.

3.3.1. Aspects: degree of satisfaction

To talk about the working conditions of hotel maids is to highlight a situation very similar to that endured by the so-called "precariat" described by Standing (2011). Although this concept is more prevalent in research about young people than on women, it is not exclusive to young people, as Eriksson (2009) shows in his study on the constraints between the market and 'flexicurity' in housekeeping in Danish hotels. It is worth noting the fact that wages of Danish hotel maids are higher than in most other countries, especially for unskilled workers who represent a considerable segment of hotel sector employment. This has led to greater job satisfaction, despite this being seen as demanding work with the same high workload as elsewhere.

From a cultural gender perspective, Balbuena and López (2021), through their research on the employment status of chambermaids in hotels in Cancun (Mexico), highlight how limited formal education, low economic standing, and immigration status mean that they endure working conditions that, despite being arduous, are positively regarded given the difficulties faced in entering the regional labor market.

Looking through the lens of collaboration, Brody's (2016) book shows how involving housekeepers in workplace design can help improve their working conditions and therefore have a positive impact on their relationship with management. A similar finding was reported by Kensbock et al. (2016), who interviewed 46 room attendants working in a five-star hotel in South East Queensland, Australia. Their study highlights the need for greater recognition for room attendants, for them to be seen as a valuable community with practical knowledge that could be used to improve day-to-day operations, enhancing guest interactions and tourism service experiences.

3.3.2. Factor: vulnerability and abuse

One of the elements connected to vulnerability and abuse in labor relation of chambermaids is intersectionality. Using qualitative methodology, Hsieh et al. (2017) studied Latina housekeepers, mainly from Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, in hotels in the southeastern United States, through 27 in-depth interviews. Their findings refer to the additional discrimination of intersecting structural aspects such as social class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and immigration status. In the United States those led to a higher degree of vulnerability and, consequently, higher levels of workplace abuse.

Similar publications present housekeepers as a vulnerable, low-skilled and undervalued group, often coming from abroad, and that, paradoxically, the more insecure the job, the higher the level of job loyalty. In fact, the publications analyzed illustrate how they are caught in a spiral of flexibility, low pay and plural and intertwined insecurity, reinforced by the dependency practices of the hotel sector (Guégnard and Mériot, 2010).

In addition to the above studies on job insecurity connected to intersectionality, there is also research that focuses exclusively on class division. In this sense, the study by Guibert, Lazuech, and Troger (2013) analyses the specific case of chambermaids in luxury hotels and compares them with other female colleagues, concluding that their supposedly better working conditions began to decline thanks to changes in

business management techniques, and eventually became standardized and downgraded across the board. Similarly, Norrild and Korstanje (2021) further explored the motivations of chambermaids and housekeepers who have been professionally trained to cater to high-net-worth tourists.

In Spain, several studies have addressed the employment situation of chambermaids, with the 2018 research standing out for highlighting the effects of outsourcing as the main cause of the pronounced deterioration in the working conditions of these workers between the last economic crisis and the end of the second decade of the 21st century. Cañada's study identifies the 2012 labor reform as a key factor in the decline of their working conditions, emphasizing the need to address the impacts of outsourcing on the employment of chambermaids (Cañada, 2018).

According to Ryzik and Sharma (2021), as we enter a coming historical period of application of new technologies, we must consider that the expansion of intelligent automation in tourism workplaces could risk exacerbating inequalities and precarisation of lower-skilled workers, exposing them to job losses and dislocation, dehumanising their role and gradually automating them out.

3.3.3. Impact on physical and emotional health

These insecure working conditions, typical of chambermaids, seemed to have a major impact on their physical and emotional health. Hsieh et al. (2016), through interviews with Latina chambermaids, report that respondents were exposed to physical, chemical, and social hazards in the workplace, as well as suffering from musculoskeletal injuries. Also, Daba, Dessie and Haile (2019) studied the impact of risk factors on the development of neck and upper limb pain among low-wage hotel housekeepers in the city of Gondar (Ethiopia).

The study by Ferri et al. (2020), which deals with chambermaids who have suffered an accident at work, concludes that there is no inflexion point before and after the accident. Changes made after an accident are minimal, given the low baseline of a system with insecure working conditions, poor training, and the high level of medication needed to be able to cope with tasks in the private and public spheres. Moreover, an accident or temporary incapacity does not relieve the maids of their work and domestic responsibilities but puts them in an even weaker and more vulnerable position.

This vulnerability spreading to the private sphere and referred to as social harm, has been studied by Moral-Martín (2020) and Ferri et al. (2020). Both authors concluded that there has been a feminization of this social harm, understood as a damage that goes beyond the strictly professional sphere, as the consequences of accidents extend to the domestic and private lives of chambermaids.

We now turn to the psychosocial aspects of this group's work, beginning with the study by Rosemberg et al. (2019) who examined the associations between work and non-work stressors (allostatic load) and health outcomes among hotel maids, finding significant relationships. In connection with the psychosocial issue, the study by Hsieh et al. (2016) should be included, which reveals the presence of certain psychological factors in the workplace environment, such as the time pressure to clean rooms quickly and occupational stress resulting from workplace abuse.

Similar results are found at the Spanish level by Chela-Álvarez et al. (2021) who analyzed the stress factors perceived by housekeepers in hotels in the Balearic Islands from a gender perspective. They point to both the pressure the women are under and work-related stress factors, including high levels of job strain (Rosemberg et al.,

2019), as causes of their physical, psychological, and emotional burnout. The work-home combination is also mentioned as it clearly relates to the gender issue. This is a situation treated as an additional relevant factor increasing the stress levels of chambermaids and exacerbating their physical exhaustion (Chela-Álvarez et al., 2021).

4. DISCUSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The aims of this research were, first, to test the hypothesis that relevant research on chambermaids starts in the 21st century and, second, to identify the main contributions on their labor organization, working conditions and impact on health.

The methodology applied consisted of a systematic review of literature on the issue, between 2020 and 2021 in publications indexed in databases such as WOS, Scopus, Proquest, and Dialnet. For this purpose, search equations corresponding to the research objectives were designed and 28 articles that met the selection criteria were selected.

The results obtained refer first to the volume of contributions, the techniques used, and the main topics addressed. The publications are from 2003 onwards, confirming the hypothesis that the issue is addressed in the 21st century. And the pace of publications is slow, only 5 between 2013 and 2016. From 2016 onwards, the number of annual contributions doubles and from 2020 onwards, it triples. As for the techniques used in the research, qualitative techniques predominate in 90% of the studies and quantitative techniques are applied in 10%. In terms of topics, studies on working conditions predominate in 39% followed by those addressing organizational aspects (25%), precariousness (18%) and health (10%). Until 2018, contributions were on working conditions or precariousness. It will be from 2019 when the topic of work organization and health will start to be addressed.

On labor organization and union practices, a strong tendency towards self-organization is established in the studies on Holland and Spain. In Holland it is the case of the Philippine immigrant chambermaids in the hotels of Copenhagen (Holland) in 1970 and 1980 who reinvent union practices and self-organization. In Spain, it is the case of the association of “Las Kellys” created in 2015 and self-organized in the absence of support from the most representative unions and because it is a feminized and geographically dispersed workforce. Their self-organization will allow them to gain visibility and to present themselves as the structural foundation of the hotels as well as to establish a dialogue with employers’ organizations to stop subcontracting and to advocate for their reinstatement as direct hotel workers. On the other hand, the case of France stands out for the strikes managed by the unions in protest the inequality between temporary subcontracted workers and full-time workers.

Regarding the media, studies reveal that they have played a relevant role in giving visibility and strength to chambermaids’ labor organizations. Their procedure of telling personal stories, relying on the colloquial language of women workers, is confirmed as a successful communication strategy to convey the demands for better labor rights to the public. Through authentic narratives and effective communication strategies, they have managed to challenge invisibility and advocate for better labor rights.

In relation to the studies on working conditions selected, the topics are mainly job satisfaction, discrimination and abuse, and impact on health. On satisfaction it is established that wage improvements increase satisfaction at equal workload, according to the experience of the Danish case. However, the piece-rate tends to lead to self-exploitation and accentuates the risk of accidents, and in the case of Australian hotels a direct impact on physical injuries was found.

In developing country contexts with precarious labor markets for women, the mere fact of getting a job in tourist hotels is already a source of social distinction (Cancun, Mexico) and satisfaction. A third satisfaction factor identified by research is the involvement of chambermaids in the design of their workplace, which means recognition by hotel management of their know-how (hotels in Australia).

In relation to vulnerability and abuse resulting from disadvantageous working conditions, studies reveal that it tends to increase among chambermaids with the intersectionality or confluence of different forms of discrimination: by class, gender, educational level, ethnicity and migratory status. This was established in the case study of Latina workers in southeastern U.S. hotels. In general, there is a trend to contracting terms being different for nationals and immigrants, for those hired on a permanent basis and those with a succession of temporary contracts, and between those hired on a full-time or a part-time basis.

Other trends observed are the increase in the outsourcing of the cleaning of rooms in hotels and the disappearance of the difference in working conditions between luxury hotels and the rest. These trends are expected to continue as we move towards a technological context of automation.

Regarding the impact of working conditions on health, studies establish a relationship between job insecurity and health risks. Exposure to chemical risk, musculoskeletal accidents, neck and upper limb pain (case of hotel housekeepers in Goldan, Ethiopia). The accident rate in the workplace is attributed in part to the fact that job training is scarce and to the tendency to take medication to withstand long hours in the public sphere in addition to those in their private life. Moreover, an accident at work does not relieve them of their domestic responsibilities.

Regarding psychological health, studies establish a connection between stressors outside and inside the workplace. Among the psychological pressure factors, the imposition of a time limit to clean rooms more quickly is noted. In general, pressure at work contributes to the emotional, physical and psychological exhaustion of the workers. And the combination of work outside and inside the home is considered a gender issue and increases their physical exhaustion.

This study has laid the groundwork for understand the interconnection between working conditions, occupational health, and social mobilization efforts in this specific sector. The review carried out positions “Las Kellys” association of Spain as outstanding catalyst for change, bringing attention to the intricacies of chambermaids’ labor realities and advocating for meaningful improvements in their working conditions and overall well-being.

For future studies, there is a need to increase international collaboration for joint research and knowledge sharing among researchers. The complexities intertwining working conditions, job insecurity, and health impacts require further exploration, with potential avenues including an in-depth examination of the global context, comparative analyses, and longitudinal studies. It would be interesting to address the quantitative research gap by conducting a survey to explore the different profiles of chambermaids internationally and to see if differences exist in the narratives on working conditions, health impacts, and involvement in trade union movements. From a different perspective, future research could also address the evolving nature of cyber unionism, exploring its effectiveness, challenges, and potential adaptation to different labor contexts.

Annex I. High impact publications indexed between 2000-2021 in Web of Science (WOS), Scopus, ProQuest and Dialnet.

	Author	Topic	Year	Journal	IF
1	Trige	Organizing against all Odds: Filipina chambermaids in Copenhagen, 1970s–1990s	2021	Women's History Review	Q2
2	Moral-Martín	Why have floor housekeepers been organized? Some keys and interpretations from the trade union revitalization	2020	Revista Española de Sociología	Q2
3	Chakraborty	Narratives of precarious work and social struggle: Women support service workers in India's information technology sector	2019	Labour, Capital and Society	Q4
4	Cañada, E.	Too precarious to be inclusive? Hotel maid employment in Spain	2018	Tourism Geographies	Q1
5	Guibert, Lazuech & Troger	Chambermaids in luxury hotels. The fall in social status of an invisible elite	2013	Formation Emploi	Q3
6	Puech	Cleaning time, protest time: employment and working conditions for hotel maids	2007	Sociologie du travail	Q3
7	Eriksson	Working at the boundary between market and flexicurity: Housekeeping in Danish hotels	2009	International Labour Review	Q2
8	Guégnard & Mériot	Housekeepers in various European countries	2010	Travail et emploi	Q4
9	Çiçek, Zencir & Kozak	Women in Turkish tourism	2017	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management	Q1
10	Rosemberg et al.	Stressors, allostatic load, and health outcomes among women hotel housekeepers: A pilot study	2019	Journal of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene	Q3
11	Chela-Álvarez et al.	Perceived factors of stress and its outcomes among hotel housekeepers in the Balearic Islands: A qualitative approach from a gender perspective	2021	International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	Q2
12	Balbuena & López	Cancun hotel Chambermaids and their perceptions of their own working conditions: A cultural perspective of gender in tourism	2021	Investigaciones turísticas	Q4
13	Moral-Martín	The Need for Trade Union Revitalisation: An Opportunity for Other Organisational Proposals	2021	CIRIEC-España Revista de Economía Pública, Social y Cooperativa	Q1
14	Norrild & Korstanje	Maids and housekeepers at luxury hotels: Life stories in hotels of Buenos Aires, Argentina.	2021	International Journal of Tourism Anthropology	Q3

	Author	Topic	Year	Journal	IF
15	Ferri, Rodríguez & Rivas	Feminization of social damage. Analysis of everyday life in chambermaid and local police after an accident at work	2020	Prisma Social	Q3
16	Fernández & Tomé	The use of storytelling and first-person narratives in communication by las Kellys as a reference for NGOs	2020	Profesional de la Información	Q1
17	López & Medina	The Kellys and tourism: from the invisibility of care to political visibility	2020	Digitium	Q3
18	Daba, Dessie & Haile.	The impact of work-related risk factors on the development of neck and upper limb pain among low wage hotel housekeepers in Gondar town, Northwest Ethiopia: institution-based cross-sectional study	2019	Environmental health and preventive medicine	Q2
19	Rosemberg & Li	Effort-Reward Imbalance and Work Productivity Among Hotel Housekeeping Employees: A Pilot Study	2018	Workplace health & Safety	Q2
20	Trige	A Philippine History of Denmark: From Pioneer Settlers to Permanently Temporary Workers	2017	Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints	Q1
21	Hsieh, et al.	Perceived workplace mistreatment: Case of Latina hotel housekeepers	2017	WORK: a journal of prevention assessment and rehabilitation	Q2
22	Hsieh et al.	Work Conditions and Health and Well-Being of Latina Hotel Housekeepers	2016	Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health	Q2
23	Kensbock et al.	Performing: Hotel room attendants' employment experiences	2016	Annals of Tourism Research	Q1
24	Esbenshade J, Mitrosky M, Morgan E et al	Profits, pain and pillows: Hotels and Housekeepers in San Diego	2006	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	Q1
25	Brody, D.	Housekeeping by Design: Hotels and Labor	2016	University of Chicago Press	Q2
26	Bernadete, M.	Cleaning ladies and night watchmen: a gendered approach to precarious work in a hotel in France	2003	Cahiers du genre	Q4
27	Brunet y Moral-Martín	New Social Organisations. Trade unionism in the face of the new model of accumulation.	2020	Anthropos	Q2
28	Moral-Martín, D.	Tourism and Covid-19. The view from the chambermaids' point of view	2020	Akal	Q1

Source: own elaboration.

Conflicts of interest:

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Authors' contributions:

David Moral-Martín: Conceptualization, Writing- review & editing, Formal analysis, Original Draft, Validation. Elena Ferri: Methodology, Writing, Software, Original Draft, Supervision. Francisco Estepa: Methodology, Software, Formal analysis, Supervision, Validation.

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