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# Social Sustainability in Hospitality: Transgender Inclusion as a Pathway to Sustainable Development

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## Abstract

The article discussed the Social Sustainability in Hospitality: Transgender Inclusion as a Pathway to Sustainable Development, and as the author remarks, inclusive institutional practices can lead to long-term social equity in the hospitality sector. Based on the analysis of interdisciplinary literature, policy framework, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the paper examines the historical marginalization of transgender communities, the changing status of legal recognition, diversity management practices, and HRM strategies. The results show that the concept of social sustainability reaches past the environmental and economic aspects to privacy, equity and institutional responsibility. In spite of progressive laws and organizational efforts, systemic barriers, stigmatization, and implementation do not allow being successfully included meaningfully. Considering the service nature and people-oriented nature of the hospitality industry, it has a transformative potential in terms of promoting gender justice by formulating inclusive policies, sensitizing, and by facilitating enabling workplace cultures. By aligning diversity management with SDGs, and especially Goals 5, 10 and 16, social cohesion will be enhanced and equitable participation ensured. The review highlights the importance of institutionalizing gender-heterogeneous identities on the governance frameworks of hospitality system as a means of sustainable development.

**Keywords;** Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Diversity Management, Transgender Community, LGBT, Policies and Laws.

## INTRODUCTION

The transgender community is a group of people who do not identify themselves with the gender assigned at birth. Throughout cultures and civilizations, transgender people have existed as a constituent part of society, and very likely through their own social identities and roles. The transgender population, known as the Hijra, the Kinnar, or the third gender, has a rich history in the Indian context, having been mentioned in the ancient texts and traditions of the country [1]. Regardless of this historical appreciation, marginalization and social exclusion has continued to affect the community through the years. Transgender people still face numerous social, economic, and institutional problems in modern society [2]. To a great extent, these difficulties can be explained by the strict gender norms, awareness deficiency, and stigma within the society. Transgender individuals are often discriminated against in terms of education, employment, healthcare, housing and other social services. Social exclusion such as family desertion usually contributes to poor access to opportunities and compels most to informal or marginalized jobs. Consequently, this limits their access to stable livelihoods, social security and dignified living conditions [3].

Even though legal and policy frameworks in a number of countries such as India have increasingly appreciated transgender rights and identities, loose loopholes and ingrained biases have continued to frustrate significant inclusion. Social justice and equality efforts are still taking place, and they are based on legal status, anti-discrimination, and the right to welfare programs [4]. The civil society groups and advocacy organizations have been important in the creation of awareness and promotion of the rights of transgender.

The changing discussion on gender diversity underscores the necessity to cease tolerance and embark on actual inclusion and respect [5]. It is crucial to acknowledge transgender persons as subjects and not just as the beneficiaries of welfare. Their lived experiences are essential to a comprehensive understanding of the policies to develop to ensure social cohesion. Systemic barriers and stereotypical challenges can be approached to provide a more equitable society in which transgender individuals are fully integrated, contributing to the community [6], [7].

### ***The Historical Evolution of the Transgender Community in India***

Throughout history, transgender people have played a significant role in Indian society. There is historical evidence that ancient Indian literature acknowledged the existence of a 'third sex' or people who did not fit neatly into the male or female gender binary. The idea of 'tritiyaprakriti' or 'napumsaka' was a fundamental part of early Vedic and Puranic literature, Hindu mythology, and folklore. 'Napumsaka' was a term that specifically designated the absence of procreative abilities, which distinguished these individuals from conventional female and male characteristics. Within these narratives, the concept of a third gender was established and sexuality topics were extensively explored in early texts. The first mention of transgender people in Hindu mythology is found in the Mahabharata's depiction of Mohini, the female form of Vishnu. Mohini's appearance in a number of ancient writings, including the Lingapurana and the Vishnu Purana, demonstrates a variety of viewpoints on gender identity, including the union of Shiva and Mohini (Vishnu), which gave rise to Shankara-Narayanan (Hariharan). Unlike 'men and women,' transgender people in the Ramayana waited for Lord Rama to return to the forests following his pronouncement of exile. Important turning points in transgender tales are highlighted by the Mahabharata's introduction of figures like Shikhandi and Aravan (the snake's son).

In royal courts throughout the Mughal Empire, transgender people had important positions as harem guardians, administrators, and political advisers. In Akbar's court, eunuch officers such as Itimad Khan were tasked with managing state finances and accumulated significant wealth and influence. European visitors to Mughal India marvelled at the riches and rank of transgender people while acknowledging their privileges. However, cultural perceptions about transgender people changed as a result of colonial impact during British control. The public's

tolerance for the transgender community declined as a result of the enforcement of rigid moral rules, which included making non-heteronormative sexual activities illegal.

### ***Role of Transgender Community in Social Sustainability***

Social sustainability focuses on all the members of the society, equity, human rights and the well-being of all members of the society. The transgender community is an important contributor to the development of these principles because it breaks the strict gender norms and diversity. Their visibility and advocacy help to have more general discussions on the equality, justice, and human dignity [8]. The fact that transgender people claim their identities and rights assists in altering the social perception of gender which promotes social arrangements that are more inclusive. Their involvement in education, work, arts, politics and community leadership enhances democratic principles and pluralism [9]. Gender inclusion of transgender individuals into mainstream institutions promotes social solidarity, inequality, and strengthen of communal resilience. Additionally, the development of transgender communities via equal rights to opportunities enhances social stability and economic output. With the inclusion of marginalized groups, there are varied views and abilities in the society. This acceptance and assimilation of the transgenders therefore helps in establishing the basis of a sustainable society founded on respect, justice, and collective responsibility [10].

### ***The emerging HRM research base on transgender workers***

HRM literature has advanced significantly in recent years in understanding LGBT employees' experiences along a few key themes of activity. For example, there is evidence that the implementation of HR policies that are specific to LGBT individuals can enhance firm performance. However, it is also crucial to investigate the subjective perceptions of these policies held by LGBT individuals and the broader climate of support within the organization [11]. While a more specialised strand has begun to investigate work-life balance policies for LGBT employees, other related research have emphasised the many institutional and organisational elements that may impact the implementation of LGBT-friendly policies. Some emerging threads focus on how employee resource groups (ERGs) give LGBT employees, especially those who are expatriates, a voice and representation [12]. Other strands examine the larger context of employee voice mechanisms. Nevertheless, the potential significance of HRM in the establishment of supportive environments that facilitate trans inclusion is underscored by the current state of HRM research on trans workers. The

training, development, and promotion of trans-inclusive allyship within the organization are one method by which HRM practitioners can establish these conditions [13].

### ***HRM Strategies for Transgender Inclusion in Hospitality***

Human Resource Management (HRM) is essential in ensuring the inclusion of transgender in the hospitality industry that is service oriented, labor intensive and relies on human interaction. Inclusiveness HRM practices are also necessary to promote equity, dignity, and equal opportunity to transgender employees as hospitality organizations struggle to be socially sustainable.

- **Inclusive Recruitment and Selection Practices:** Gender identity and expression ought to be included in the non-discriminatory hiring policy adopted by hospitality firms. The job descriptions should be written in gender-neutral terms and recruitment sites should be motivated to take up applications by transgender candidates. Partnership with local organizations and skill-development facilities will increase the reach and accessibility to the employed opportunities. Discrimination at the entry level is avoided with the help of structured and bias-free interview processes.
- **Policy Frameworks and Legal Compliance:** Companies should formulate holistic anti-discriminatory and anti-harassment laws that explicitly safeguard transgender workers. Self-identifying gender, preferred names, and pronouns should be acknowledged in the official documentation by HR manuals. By instituting proper grievance redressal policies, there will be no discrimination at work as there will be proper redressal in a transparent manner.
- **Sensitization and Diversity Training:** Employee and management training is very essential in creating awareness regarding gender diversity. The programs of sensitization minimize the number of stereotypes, create empathy, and encourage respectful interaction in the workplace. Allyship training will help empower the staff members to be active in helping the transgender colleagues, enhancing the organizational culture of inclusion.
- **Safe and Supportive Work Environment:** The use of gender-neutral restrooms, dress code that matches gender identity, and facilities that are inclusive of gender increases psychological safety. HR departments must also formulate Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) or support networks to

represent and peer counsel the transgender employees.

- **Career Development and Equal Opportunities:** Inclusion should not be limited to the hiring process but should equally be applied in training, promotion, and leadership. This is achieved by having transparent performance evaluation systems that encourage fairness in career advancement. Professional growth and retention is also possible through mentorship programs.
- **Health and Well-being Support:** Inclusive healthcare benefits especially gender-affirming care where applicable needs to be available in hospitality organizations. The support services of mental health are especially significant to consider since these people can also be subjected to stress and even discrimination.

Through the incorporation of the mentioned HRM strategies into the organizational practices, the hospitality firms will be able to increase diversity in the workforce, engage employees, and develop corporate image. More to the point, transgender-inclusive HRM is directly related to social sustainability because it brings about equality, lessens workplace discrimination, and coordinates business activities to extended sustainable development goals.

### ***Sustainable Development Goals and Transgender Community***

Abolition of all forms of poverty is the primary objective of SDG 1, which continues to be one of the most pressing concerns of humanity. Transgender persons are more likely than cisgender people to be impoverished because to stigma, discrimination, and exclusion. Frequently, they are prohibited by law from receiving social security payments, money, or property. They were not permitted to attend schools or colleges due to societal discrimination, which compelled them to engage in manual labour [14]. India's public healthcare system has long had trouble keeping up with the demands of the populace. According to a research, however, the transgender population had greater challenges than others in accessing healthcare services because of prejudice in healthcare facilities, a lack of treatment standards, and inadequate health education. Receiving high-quality medical care, whether for general health issues or gender-specific needs, is challenging for transgender persons. Discrimination at healthcare institutions, inadequate health literacy, poor healthcare-seeking behaviours, and a lack of treatment protocols among transgender individuals were identified as significant

barriers to accessing health treatments [15]. Restrictions on the health care system, absence of health insurance, and exclusion from social assistance programs are further challenges. Because transgender persons lack a decent or higher education, they are unable to attain well-paying employment. They commonly face negative school climates and exclusion from the educational system.

Goal 5 acknowledges the importance of resolving these issues and attaining gender equality for all, as transgender individuals are subjected to discrimination, violence, and marginalisation as a consequence of their gender identity [16]. It sets goals for eradicating prejudice, promoting political, social, and economic inclusion, and guaranteeing that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed. Due to discrimination and restricted access to resources like healthcare, job opportunities, and other services, transgender people commonly face social and economic disadvantages. Addressing these disparities and fostering a more inclusive society are the goals of Goal 10. The objective is Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, which emphasises the development of inclusive, accountable, and effective institutions, the promotion of open and peaceful communities, and equitable access to justice. Transgender persons frequently face obstacles to justice and abuses of their human rights. Goal 16 highlights how crucial it is to assist different organisations in defending and upholding the rights of all people, including transgender individuals [17].

### **Challenges Faced by Transgender Individuals**

In every society and civilisation, transgender people have existed for a very long time. However, almost no state either gathers data on the population impacted by sexual orientation, sex characteristics, gender identity, and gender expression, or incorporates these concerns into their development agenda. Indeed, every country has its own priorities. Nonetheless, the state must adhere to the inclusion policy and meet the requirements of every community. The state must incorporate transgender people into its planning policies and development initiatives, and it must periodically assess its progress to ensure consistent development [18]. They are also a critical resource of the state, and if provided with the appropriate opportunities, they can significantly contribute to the country's economic development. One of the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups is transgender people. Since birth, they have lived vile lives, subjected to persecution, shame, humiliation, and acceptance from both their families and society. They lack access to political and civic engagement, education, and work possibilities, which leads to low income, poor

nutrition, subpar health care, sexual abuse, physical assault, and exploitation. They are isolated from society, live in impoverished slums, have psychosomatic illnesses, and even misuse drugs [19].

### **Importance of Inclusive Policies and Laws**

Addressing the issues transgender people experience and encouraging their involvement in sustainable development require inclusive laws and policies. An important piece of legislation in India is the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, which forbids discrimination against transgender people in a number of fields, such as healthcare, work, and education (Government of India, "Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019") [20]. However, due to bureaucratic obstacles and officials' ignorance, many transgender people still have difficulties in accessing their rights, making the implementation of such legislation difficult (NHRC, "Report on the Rights of Transgender Persons"). Effective monitoring systems and public and official sensitisation campaigns are necessary for the effective implementation of inclusive policies. The participation of transgender individuals in sustainable development can be improved by the establishment of independent bodies to supervise the implementation of these laws, which can establish accountability and address grievances (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, "National Council for Transgender Persons") [20].

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

(Dimithrove & Keshlata, 2024) [20] In recent years, the government has taken several actions to improve the lives and living conditions of transgender people. Such government initiatives in India need to be assessed in light of the Transgender Community Sustainable Development Goals. Discrimination and social stigma, access to healthcare, education and work, legal recognition, advocacy, and assistance are the main topics being examined. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which asserts that every person is born free and with equal rights. Although transgender issues are not specifically addressed by the SDGs, certain of its goals and targets are relevant to promoting human rights, equality, and inclusiveness for transgender people. The NALSA Judgement and the repeal of Section 377 are examples of legal interventions. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, the National Council for Transgender Persons, the Web Portal, and other programs and services for transgender people are examples of government interventions. Understanding the importance of transgender acceptance in all spheres of life is

crucial. In the framework of long-term development, a large number of governmental and non-governmental organisations strive to promote inclusion and transgender rights.

(Pradhan et al., 2024) [21] Integrating transgender inclusiveness into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework is a crucial factor in the effort to build a more just and sustainable society. Studies showing the negative effects of gender-based violence on both individual well-being and the advancement of society as a whole have led to a growing recognition of the link between gender-based violence and sustainable development. A key starting point for tackling the issues encountered by transgender people is the SDG-16, which focuses on reducing violence and associated fatalities among women, especially those caused by dowries and domestic abuse. Transgender people are disproportionately impacted by gender-based violence, which also poses a serious obstacle to sustainable development by diminishing their potential, capacities, and general well-being, making it more difficult for them to significantly contribute to the SDGs' accomplishment. To make sure that no one is left behind, it is crucial to address the connections between gender, health, and the larger 2030 agenda. The transgender community is affected by the gendered response of health systems, the differences in access to resources and services, and the influence of social norms on health behaviours.

(Jena et al., 2023) [22] The present millennium calls for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth. For this, the society needs inclusive policies. Social inclusion is critical to address the needs of disadvantaged social groups. An inclusive society is a society that over-rides differences of race, gender, class, generation, and geography, and ensures inclusion, equality of opportunity as well as capability of all members of the society to determine an agreed set of social institutions that govern social interaction (Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Promoting Social Integration 2008). The World Summit for Social Development (1995) defines an inclusive society as a —society for all in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play. Such an inclusive society must be based on respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, cultural and religious diversity, social justice and the special needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, democratic participation and the rule of law. It is promoted by social policies that seek to cut down inequality and create flexible and tolerant societies that embrace all people.

(Poquiz et al., 2023) [23] Examine the gender diversity management practices (DMPs) used in the Philippine hotel sector and the significant impact that gender inclusion or exclusion has on hotel staff opinions of these policies. The results showed that the majority of hotel employees were young women. Many hotels successfully implemented DMPs, and employees were aware of the efforts their employers were making to provide equal opportunities for hiring, decision-making, training and development, promotions, and compensation for both sexes. However, the study also found that hotel companies' efforts to help their employees balance work and family obligations may actually hinder rather than promote gender parity. In particular, the survey discovered that although hotel firms frequently provided flexible work schedules and childcare advantages, not all employees could always take use of these perks. According to the research's conclusions, hotel companies must do more to ensure that their DMPs are effective and do not impede gender parity.

(Fontana, 2020) [1] examines the primary causes of discrimination and the methods for reducing it in organisations in Bangladesh, a developing country, while utilising a collaborative corporate social responsibility initiative to manage diversity. Transgender individuals in Bangladesh, who are frequently identified as members of the "Hijra" community, were recognised by the government in 2013 as third-gender individuals. However, they continue to face significant challenges in securing employment and remain the most marginalised of the excluded. In addition to direct and indirect job harassment from coworkers, this study reveals that transgender Bangladeshis experience internal intimidation due to community leaders or gurus. Consequently, it provides a typology of collaborative practices that are designed to promote inclusion through dialogue and persuasion with gurus, the police, imams, and workers. In conclusion, this article makes a valuable contribution to the emerging literature on diversity management through transgender inclusion, as well as the literature on transgenders and the Hijra community in Bangladesh.

(Faralan, 2019) [24] Determine opportunities for improvement by comparing management's and transgender workers' experiences with the adoption and enforcement of workplace rules that are inclusive of all genders. The research investigates whether the service/hospitality industry is effectively enforcing and implementing transgender inclusivity. The Clark and Braun Thematic Analysis in Psychology was employed as a guide for cross-

referencing responses provided by transgender individuals and individuals operating in management positions within the industry in this qualitative study. Through the coding approach, the principal investigator discovered five themes: comradery, exposure dictating concern, employer support, belonging, and inclusion indicators. The expectation is that this understanding will facilitate the transition of transgender individuals into the service/hospitality sector and enhance the industry's transgender inclusivity.

(Baggio, 2017) [25] Transgender persons are persons whose identity and/or gender expression differs from what is socially attributed to their bodies, breaking with the heteronormative logic. In Brazil, where only the bodies within this discourse are legitimate, this group is systematically excluded from a myriad of spaces including the formal job market. Therefore, the experiences of these people at and with work are invisible to organizational diversity's theory and practice. To explore this issue, this study analyses the perceptions that the transgender person maintains about their relations (1) with their professional history, (2) with other people in their work environment, and (3) with organizational policies and practices. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were made with six transgender persons that work in organizations. From these narratives, it was found that the person's level of passing usually influences their relations and that the ignorance regarding transgenerity permeates all three domains of relations. The conclusions are: (1) the relations with work are marked by opportunity restrictions; (2) the relations in the job hold the person responsible for their on intelligibility and safety; and (3) the relations with the organization vary according to the way it faces transgenerity and its own voice systems.

(Ozturk & Tatli, 2016) [26] identifies gender identity diversity as a key blind spot in HRM and diversity management research and practice. The findings reveal the range of workplace challenges experienced by transgender employees. Major findings are that discriminatory effects are often occupation- and industry-specific; transition is a period where many transgender workers suffer due to lack of proper organisational support; and expertise deficits exist in supporting and accommodating transgender employees' needs. In unpacking these experiences, the paper demonstrates the distinctive dimensions of challenges faced by transgender employees, revealing the need for conceptually expanding how we frame diversity and diversity management. Our findings identify the necessity for an emic approach not only to researching diversity but also to devising organisational diversity strategies. The

paper provides recommendations for HRM policy and practice in order to develop a more sophisticated approach to achieving inclusion.

### RESEARCH GAP

Previous research identifies the topics of transgender inclusion, HRM practices, gender diversity management, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) individually, but few studies unite these aspects of the hospitality industry into a social sustainability perspective. Majority of the research is general on LGBT inclusion, and lacks direct research on the lived experiences of transgender employees, structural obstacles, and disparities in inclusion in hospitality workplaces. Also, although SDGs focus on equality and less inequality, its practical connection to the inclusion of transgender workforce in hospitality is understudied. Theoretical integration between the policies of HRM, the climate of a workplace, sustainability strategies, and transgender empowerment is also inadequate. Therefore, there is a need to carry out a more extensive survey that would cure the transgender inclusion and social sustainability of hospitality.

### OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the historical and socio-cultural context of transgender communities in India.
2. To analyze the concept of social sustainability in relation to transgender inclusion.
3. To review emerging HRM research on transgender workers in hospitality.
4. To explore the alignment between Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and transgender inclusion.
5. To identify challenges faced by transgender individuals in hospitality employment.
6. To propose inclusive strategies and policy recommendations for sustainable hospitality development.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method of literature review is qualitative, narrative in this review paper. Peer-reviewed journal articles, policy documents, government reports, and international frameworks on transgender inclusion, HRM practices, hospitality management, and Sustainable Development Goals were the sources of secondary data. The research integrates the work of various disciplines to create the conceptual meaning of transgender inclusion as the mechanism towards the social sustainability in hospitality. Recurring themes were determined through the thematic

analysis including discrimination, inclusion in the workplace, diversity management practices, policy frameworks, and links to sustainability. The review forms a holistic framework of transgender empowerment to sustainable hospitality development by merging sociological, organizational, and sustainability views.

## DISCUSSION

According to the review, social sustainability in hospitality cannot be detached and isolated to include inclusive governance, human rights recognition, institutional reform. Traditionally, transgender communities in India were serving the culturally recognized roles, but colonial legacies and strict gender rules led to the system of marginalization. Modern legal intervention and policy-making are indicative of progress, but the implementation difficulties and stigma against such behavior still exist in society. In the hospitality industry area, the practice of diversity management is becoming more identified as strategic resources of ethical governance and sustainability. According to literature, belonging, psychological safety, and commitment to organizations can be achieved through inclusive HRM policies, sensitization efforts, development of alliances, and employee resource groups. Nevertheless, there are numerous diversity frameworks that are binary in nature, which restrict their transformative abilities. Inclusion needs to be structural and not symbolic.

Gender justice, less inequalities, and powerful institutions are connected through a normative framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. The SDG 5 is based on gender equality, SDG 10 is focused on structural inequalities, and SDG 16 is inclusive and accountable institutions. By gearing internal diversity strategies and strategy plans to these global objectives by the hospitality organizations, they help in enhancing resilience and equity in society at large. Theoretical fragmentation of the current scholarship can also be noticed in the review. The literature on HRM, gender diversity, and SDGs usually works in separate spheres with little interconnecting to a social sustainability system. The connection between these fields is the key to re-branding hospitality not only as a sector of the economy but as a social institution that can promote justice, dignity and inclusive growth. The policy coherence, commitment by the leadership and accountability measures are therefore required in social sustainability.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- To study the role of transgender community in the social sustainability.

- To study the historical evolution of the transgender community in India.
- To study the role of transgender community in social sustainability.
- To study the emerging HRM research base on transgender workers.
- To study the sustainable development goals and transgender community.
- To study the Challenges Faced by Transgender Individuals and importance of inclusive policies and laws.
- To study the approaches to empowering transgender communities in India.

## CONCLUSION

This review confirms that the inclusion of transgender is a pathway that is critical towards social sustainability in hospitality. Sustainable development is neither exclusive to the environmental stewardship nor economic performance, it demands just systems of institutions that embrace the dignity, human rights, and social justice. Although the legislation is currently being discussed and there is historical acknowledgment, the issue of ongoing discrimination, structural marginalization, and gaps in the implementation remain to obstruct the inclusion transformation. The hospitality industry has the potential of exemplifying inclusive governance owing to the diversity of workforce and the visibility of the industry in society. Hospitality institutions can enhance social cohesion and institutional trust by ensuring that the concepts of inclusive HRM structures, accountability structures, sensitization structures, and policy implementation are enforced into organizational strategies. By aligning these practices towards Sustainable Development Goals, especially those that concern gender equality, fewer inequalities, and good institutions will be developed in a coherent roadmap towards inclusive development. Finally, social sustainability requires the move towards structural inclusion rather than tolerance. Transgender communities need to be identified as stakeholders of the institutions and society. Hospitality organizations that consider inclusion concepts in their governance, leadership, and operational processes are making their contribution towards sustainable development. This kind of integration makes the social system more resilient, ethically responsible and enhances long-term societal well-being, which confirms the idea that inclusive social systems are the key to equitable and sustainable futures.

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