

Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Addressing Low Female Participation in the Indian Hospitality Industry – A Case Study with Specific Reference to a Four-Star Hotel in Bangalore

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ABSTRACT: Using a mixed-method data collection approach, this study analyzes the implications of low female labor force participation in the hospitality industry in India. The findings of this study reveal low participation rates, with women comprising only 20% of the total workforce in the sector. Most female employees were concentrated in front-facing, lower-paying roles and were underrepresented in executive positions. At the Royal Orchid Hotel in Bangalore, only nine of the 34 executive positions were held by female employees. Workplace biases intertwined with strict regulations (night shift laws) create significant challenges for female employees. Interviews with six employees (3 male, 3 female) in the Royal Orchid Hotel, Bangalore, revealed several societal and personal barriers that hinder long-term career retention. Employees highlighted work-life balance challenges: Significant family responsibilities are placed on women in India. Quantitative data collected revealed the presence of gender-based wage disparities: Females earned a mean salary of ₹22,940, while the average workplace wage was ₹33,147 monthly. Findings suggest that policy reforms, flexible working hours, and targeted skill development programs are essential to increase female participation in the sector.

KEYWORDS: Hospitality Management, Labor Economics, Public Policy, Gender Studies, Employment and Labor Relations.

■ Introduction

Indian households struggle to meet basic financial requirements, with some men required to work two jobs to support their families. Some Indian women are full of ambition but are often handicapped when entering the workforce, as countless Indian women lack a high-level education. Although many industries require higher-level qualifications, the hospitality industry presents a lower educational threshold. Still, female participation remains low. According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (2023), women constitute only 30% of India's hospitality workforce compared to the global average of 46%, despite lower barriers to entry in this sector.¹ This study will investigate the socio-economic factors contributing to low female labor force participation in the hospitality industry. The hospitality industry is vital to India's economy, contributing 9.4% of the nation's GDP and employing 8% of its workforce.¹ Despite the industry's economic significance, it fosters stark gender disparities, with men disproportionately occupying managerial roles while women remain in lower-paying frontline positions. Furthermore, women only constitute 30% of the Indian hospitality workforce, compared to the global average of 46%.² This disparity raises concerns about socio-economic obstacles that restrict the participation of women in the hospitality industry and the workplace as a whole in India.

To identify and observe the stark gender disparities in the rising industry, this paper answers the question: What socio-economic factors contribute to the low female labor force participation in the Indian hospitality industry? It examines

the socio-economic factors contributing to the low female employment rates evident in the Indian hospitality industry. It uncovers the socio-economic roots of disparity: employer biases, physical constraints, regulatory challenges, social taboos, and more. Moreover, it highlights the relationship between development and women's participation in the workforce. The study relies on a mixed data collection approach, collecting quantitative and qualitative data from the Royal Orchid Hotel, Bangalore. Qualitative data were collected by interviewing executive directors and staff members to understand the gender-based narratives in the hospitality industry. Quantitative data were collected by accessing the hotel's database, and key statistics regarding gender disparities, such as attrition rates, were extracted. Based on the literature review conducted, several research gaps were identified, specifically around regulatory restrictions in the industry, regional participation factors, and barriers in skilling programs. To address these gaps, the study aims to pursue the following objectives: (1) identify occupational segregation in an active Indian hotel (Royal Orchid Bangalore), (2) analyze how India-specific regulations, such as night shift restrictions, influence wage disparities between genders, and (3) provide original case-based examples of the struggles female employees face while participating in the sector.

Addressing this issue is crucial. With the demand for hospitality rising, gender inclusivity can drive economic growth while promoting the rapid expansion of the hospitality industry. Through an amalgamation of a literature review, qualitative data, and quantitative data collection, the study will contribute

to discussions on gender disparities in India. Moreover, it will explore potential solutions, such as upskilling programs, to foster meaningful methods to bridge the gender gap in Indian hospitality and diffuse the proposed solution across various industries in the nation.

■ Literature review

Past studies discuss several reasons for women's decisions to participate in the workforce: education, training, social/cultural factors, institutions, and government policies. This paper relates to two main strands of literature: Indian women's decisions to participate in the hospitality industry and the issue of gender-based occupational segregation in hospitality in India and globally. Women's participation in the hospitality industry can be simplified into two questions: under what circumstances do women decide to participate in the labor force? And, once in the labor force, why do they choose to work in hospitality or a different industry?

A strand of literature addresses the first question. It examines the economic, social, and institutional factors that influence the participation of women in the workforce. Altonji and Blank highlight the impact of higher education levels on decreasing gender wage gaps and reducing occupational segregation.³ Their work, situated in the U.S. context, demonstrates how education expands opportunities for women in advanced labor markets. Goldin emphasizes the impact of economic trends on gender-based occupational segregation: she highlights wage structures and employer biases, displaying their ability to shape women's employment decisions, particularly in the hospitality sector.⁴ Goldin's findings are rooted in Western economies, especially the U.S., and illustrate how systemic inequalities persist even in more developed labor markets.

From an Indian perspective, Anker emphasizes the role of cultural norms and stigmas in restricting the participation of women in the workforce, particularly in hospitality. These India-specific findings highlight the stronger influence of cultural taboos on career progression compared to Western contexts.⁵ Liu, Yang, and Li discuss the implications of barriers like gender wage gaps, maternity regulations, and workplace safety policies' role in unintentionally reinforcing occupational segregation.⁶ Their study, focused on China, highlights that women represent a majority of the hospitality workforce (55.4%) but are highly concentrated in junior roles, with only 1.9% progressing to general management. This positions the Chinese hospitality sector as more inclusive to female labor force participation at the entry level but still restrictive at the leadership level.⁶

However, as Rinaldi and Salerno discuss, rural incentives like the Mahila Mandals have demonstrated the potential for empowering women in the workforce by providing the necessary skills and training for employment opportunities in tourism. Mahila Mandals, organizations supporting women in Himachal Pradesh, have successfully empowered women through tourism, mainly homestay businesses, improving income and social status.⁷ Rinaldi and Salerno's Indian case emphasizes the importance of grassroots programs, like the

Mahila Mandals, as a counterbalance to the cultural expectations by fostering women's economic empowerment.

Once women enter the workforce, their decision to work in the hospitality industry rather than other industries is shaped by several factors: gender-based occupational segregation, workplace challenges, etc. Liu, Yang, and Li highlight the lower entry barriers of hospitality compared to other sectors, making it accessible across demographics.⁶ Again, this Chinese evidence suggests that even with relatively open access, workplace biases still limit long-term career retention. However, she shines a light on workplace biases limiting career progression and discouraging long-term careers in the sector. Goldin emphasizes the implications of wage structures in worker preferences, resulting in gender inequalities.⁴

The tourism industry in India is characterized by gender disparities, influenced by social and economic factors contributing to a higher proportion of men in the hospitality industry. Globally, women constitute 46% of the tourism industry, employed in unskilled, low-paying roles, while men dominate managerial roles. However, in India, women constitute only 9.1% of the workforce.¹ These disparities are exacerbated in India, as traditional cultural norms restrict the participation of women in the workforce or high-responsibility roles, particularly observed in urban areas where only 11% of firms have female managers.⁶ Furthermore, economic barriers such as wage gaps, women earning 10-15% less than men, and limited education access hinder career progression aspirations.⁶

Tourism accounts for 9.4% of India's GDP and employs 8% of the country's workforce, yet female participation in the tourism industry has fluctuated over time: it decreased from 37% in 2005 to 29% in 2010 and has since risen to 41.7% in 2023.¹ Although the participation of women in the tourism sector steadily rose in the following years, the proportion of men remained dominant, with a participation of 77.2%, as seen in the Labour Force Survey Report, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.¹

Mammen and Paxson highlight that women's labor force participation follows a U-shaped curve where female participation rates decline alongside early economic development.⁸ Several restrictions and characteristics of a developing economy prevent the participation of women in the workforce: rising male incomes, societal norms, and low education levels. However, as the economy develops and female education levels expand, opportunities for white-collar jobs increase, increasing female labor force participation. The situation at hand relates to the current situation in India, a developing nation experiencing rapid economic growth. Altonji and Blank emphasize the importance of training opportunities in increasing female labor force participation.³ They highlight the historical trend of women receiving fewer training opportunities due to the employer's expectations of a shorter job tenure. Like Goldin, they suggest that a rise in educational levels results in fewer disparities between genders.⁴

A second strand of the literature addresses occupational segregation by gender. This is a persistent issue in markets globally, with significant implications for women in the hospitality industry. Anker discusses the topic of horizontal segregation: the

concentration of women in different occupations, reinforcing gender stereotypes and narratives.⁵ Men often dominate technical and managerial positions in large corporations and industries such as hospitality. Cortes and Pan highlight how women have slowly entered male-dominated fields; men have not reciprocated by moving into female-dominated sectors, leading to continued segregation.⁹

In the hospitality sector, a male-dominated industry, this segregation is evident through horizontal and vertical dimensions (where people are prevented from opportunities that allow for career progression). Liu *et al.* emphasize the large-scale occupational segregation in the hospitality workforce by highlighting how women constitute lower-wage, front-line roles; however, they face significant barriers to advancing into managerial positions, displaying vertical segregation. Women face several challenges while working in industries such as hospitality: work-life balance challenges, societal norms, and employer bias limit career opportunities and progression. Liu *et al.* found that in China's hospitality industry, only 1.9% of the women sampled in their study advanced into general management, while 40% remained in junior positions. The study does not provide directly comparable figures for men, but given that men dominate executive roles in China's hospitality industry, the disparity highlights the severe vertical segregation faced by women.⁶

Liu, Yang, and Li found that women in managerial positions in hospitality often sacrificed their family lives, reinforcing the glass ceiling effect. Developing countries such as India are examples of the glass ceiling effect, with employer preferences restricting women's access to higher-paying positions in the industry.⁶

While the glass ceiling effect is evident across several industries, the hospitality industry in India presents unique challenges that further limit the career progression of many women. Liu, Yang, and Li highlight the unique barriers women in the hospitality industry face in India, comparing metrics through an industry-based analysis.⁶ While the hospitality industry offers a higher number of front-line, blue-collar opportunities for women compared to manufacturing, women remain underrepresented in leadership roles. This is because of societal expectations, norms, employer biases, and work-life conflicts.

Anker emphasizes how gender-based policies, such as protective legislation in India, which encompasses restrictions on night shifts, limit access to managerial roles and contribute to employer bias due to limited flexibility around working hours. Although this restriction is designed to enhance workplace safety, it reinforces occupational segregation, keeping women from higher-paying roles in executive positions. Additionally, policies such as maternity leave enhance the stereotypes of women being higher-cost employers, leading to employer bias toward male employees.⁵

Comparing the Indian hospitality sector to other nations, policy differences become evident. China, for example, has a higher proportion of women in the hospitality industry (55.4% compared to 30%), displaying how India lags behind other nations in terms of female labor participation but faces sim-

ilar issues of career advancement being hindered due to the presence of gender norms. Nations such as Singapore have implemented government regulations regarding corporate diversity, ensuring mandatory female representation in managerial positions. Additionally, Western nations such as the USA enforce pay transparency laws and leave policies that foster a work-life balance, enabling women to participate freely in the hospitality industry.⁶

Overall, the lack of gender-inclusive policies for Indian women in the hospitality sector hinders career progression and limits career opportunities for working women. Without workplace reforms, such as flexible schedules, inclusive policies, and legal guidelines that help elevate women to managerial positions, India's hospitality industry will continue to foster occupational segregation.

■ Methods

The study employs a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. This approach balances numerical trends in workforce disparities with personal perspectives on experiences, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of occupational segregation in Indian hospitality.

To obtain quantitative data, access to the Indian hospitality brand Royal Orchid was requested. Royal Orchid operates 105 hotels across the country, and this study analyzes statistical trends, including the division of labor across ranks and the male-female workplace ratio. The study primarily focused on Royal Orchid's flagship hotel in Bangalore, India.

The paper relies on several established academic studies on the hospitality industry and economic patterns to identify relevant statistics, as well as socioeconomic factors affecting workforce participation in a developing nation like India. Moreover, in partnership with Royal Orchid, qualitative research was conducted in its hotels: female and male staff were interviewed about their opinions on occupational segregation and their concerns, HR department heads were questioned about recruitment trends and gender-based observations, and upskilling program managers were examined regarding the hesitancy of women to enroll in skilling programs. A total of six employees were interviewed (3 male, 3 female), along with two HR executives. Additionally, interviews with employed and unemployed Indian women were conducted to assess the impact of social norms and taboos on the workforce. All subjects' research procedures were reviewed and approved by the Ascend International School IRB, and informed consent was obtained from all participants before interviews.

Interview responses were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify general patterns across the interviewees' responses and observations. Their responses were analyzed using thematic analysis, which identified recurring patterns. The key themes, codes, and illustrative quotes are presented in Table 1 below. Quantitative data from Royal Orchid and the literature were analyzed using descriptive statistics to compare and contrast trends concerning gender disparity in the workforce.

Thematic Analysis Summary:

Theme	Code	Quote
Workplace Bias	Underrepresentation in leadership	"Most executive roles are occupied by men." (Male employee)
Marriage & Family Pressures	Attrition due to family obligations	"After my child was born, I had to fight with my family to continue working." (Female employee)
Societal Expectations	Prioritization of domestic roles	"In India, we are expected to value our homes over our ambitions." (Female employee)

Note. Theme = overarching category identified during thematic analysis; Code = recurring pattern derived from participant responses; Quote = direct supporting evidence from interviews.

These themes highlight the most prominent socio-cultural and workplace barriers that women face in the hospitality industry. They also complement the quantitative findings, providing context to the observed disparities.

■ Results and Discussion

Qualitative data:

The qualitative data is based on interviews conducted with members of The Royal Orchid Hotel, Bangalore, including HR members, skilling department organizers, and hotel employees. The interviews helped deepen insights into gender-based disparities faced by women upon entering the hospitality sector and other recruitment trends that indicate societal patterns. Six employees (3 female and 3 male) shared their personal experiences, as well as their valuable insights on the matter of gender-based disparities. HR executives and skilling department organizers highlighted the reasons behind low female involvement in the hospitality industry, identifying solutions and grassroots initiatives.¹⁰

The interviews collected with hotel employees provided three valuable insights: workplace biases, societal taboos, and gendered job roles. Female and male employees correspondingly emphasized key societal norms affecting the attrition rate of women in the hospitality industry, with marriage being the main factor. Employees stressed the emphasis Indian families place on marriage, with significant stress on women to engage in the matter. All three female employees interviewed stressed similar perspectives, stating: "In India, we are expected to value our homes over our ambitions. One of them was a mother, sharing her experience with managing motherhood with her career: "After my child was born, I had to fight with my family to stay in this job."¹⁰ Traditionally, an Indian marriage is characterized by power dynamics, where husbands assert themselves as the primary financial providers; on the other hand, women are assigned domestic responsibilities: cooking, cleaning, and taking care of children. Thus, challenges arise in maintaining a work-life balance. Two of the three male employees working in food & beverage service commented on challenges women face in the workforce: "I have seen many women leave due to marriage.¹⁰ They must maintain their household wellbeing, working daunting shift hours."¹⁰ The employee highlighted how societal expectations and personal commitments often

restrict career aspirations for women in India, hindering participation in the sector.

Beyond societal taboos and work-life balance challenges, HR executives at Royal Orchid stressed further barriers preventing women from participating in the hospitality industry, supported by a study conducted by Alrawadieh– Women in tourism: Challenges and empowerment strategies.¹¹ They highlighted regional disparities across India and their implications for workforce participation, legal challenges, and industry practices that require reformation to improve talent retention. One executive noted: "Trends in our recruitment indicate clear regional disparities in female workforce participation. Almost all of our female employees come from northern provinces in the country, while in the south, participation is significantly lower. Women in the south of the nation are unable to participate in industries due to societal taboos, encompassing marriage."¹⁰ In the south of the nation, marriage encompasses key aspects of society: south-Indian families are expected to have married children by the age of 26. Marriage places several burdens on women, such as household management and controlling husbands, hindering their ability to hone a work-life balance. In northern sections of the country, marriage is dissociated from cultural expectations, and women often migrate from northern provinces to find higher-paying jobs in central and southern states. As a result, North Indian women engage in the workforce, participating in industries such as hospitality.

In addition to work-life balance challenges with workplace biases, skilling programs designed to increase workforce participation face significant challenges. Skilling Program Heads from Presidency College highlighted how many women fail to complete long-term skilling programs free of charge. Presidency College, one of Bangalore's leading private higher education institutions offering undergraduate and postgraduate courses in hospitality and management, partners with local hotels to run vocational skilling initiatives. Personal commitments and a lack of family support hinder their ability to participate in long-term hospitality training programs. Furthermore, due to the lack of financial accountability, females are discouraged from a serious commitment. They stressed the need for a short-skilling program, targeted towards teaching high-value skills, offering women flexibility in shift timings, consequently lowering attrition rates and increasing participation rates.¹⁰

Quantitative data:

Quantitative data plays a key role in the study, assisting our findings through a statistical lens. The data set collected from Royal Orchid Bangalore revealed key insights into workforce salary, composition, and gender gaps in roles, enabling the study to complement qualitative findings through statistical trends. The data uncovers trends indicating gender disparities in key hotels across India: Women only constitute 20% of the workforce, and men account for 80% of the workforce. Moreover, female employees occupy front-facing roles as higher-paying managerial positions remain male-dominated, confirming the employer bias present in the industry. This imbalance is visually presented in Figure 1, which illustrates the disproportionate 4:1 male-to-female ratio at the Royal Orchid Hotel, Bangalore.

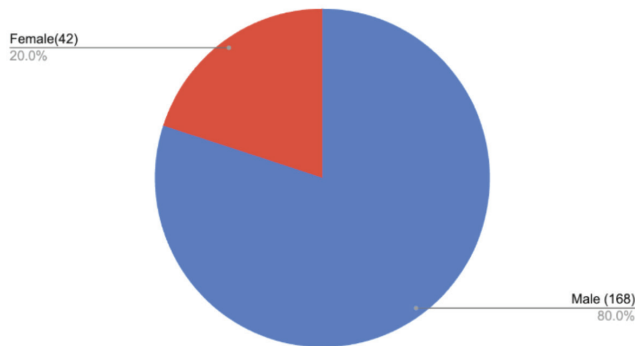


Figure 1: The employee gender ratio in HRO Bangalore shows a stark gender imbalance within the workforce of 4:1, with male employees significantly outnumbering female employees. This highlights the gender disparity that persists in the hospitality workforce in India. This confirms the underrepresentation of women in the hospitality industry and visually supports the statistical trends discussed in the results section.

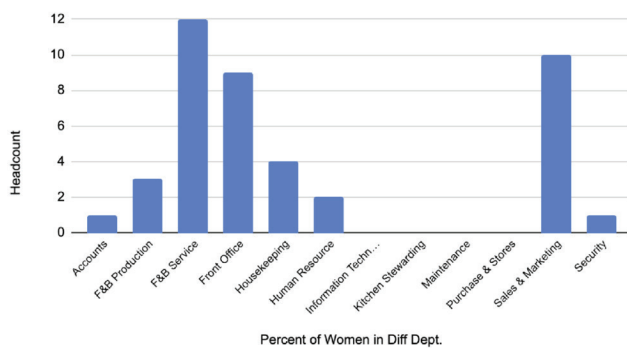


Figure 2: The arrangement of female employees across various departments at HRO Bangalore reveals their concentration in administrative and sales roles, with an absence in operational and technical sectors. This division highlights the presence of occupational segregation within the Indian hospitality industry. This pattern of segregation reinforces the observation that societal and employer biases direct women toward specific job roles.

A deeper look at the workforce division by department displays a stark gender divide. In sectors such as human resources and sales, female involvement remains stable, with 66.6% and 71.42% workforce involvement, respectively; however, their presence is significantly lower in technical and operational segments: Information technology, maintenance, and kitchen stewarding all report 0% female participation, revealing gender-related job roles within the industry. As observed in the surveys conducted, management and employees believed that women could not handle physically demanding roles like kitchen stewarding; such social restrictions and taboos on women significantly impact their career progression and direction, especially in the hospitality industry. This finding aligns with the labor management challenges discussed by Baum, who highlights that structural gender biases and occupational segregation remain persistent in the hospitality sectors of smaller and developing economies.¹² The concentration of female employees in administrative and sales roles, and their absence in operational fields, is captured in Figure 2.

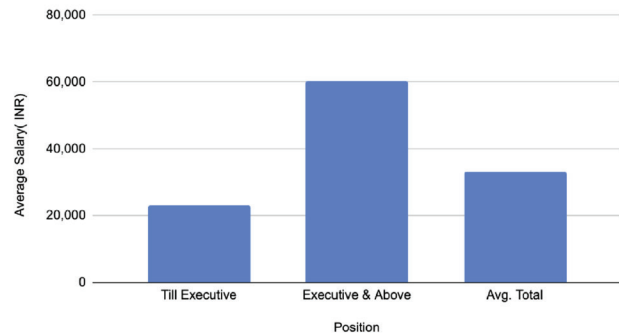


Figure 3: The average salaries across job positions at Royal Orchid Bangalore display a substantial gender wage gap, with female employees earning significantly less than their male counterparts: most executives are males; hence, male employees earn more than female employees, who are prevalent in the till executive position (lower-paying positions). This pay disparity contributes to overall workforce inequality in the hospitality sector. This highlights how wage disparities directly reflect occupational segregation and the broader gender imbalance in leadership roles.

Salary distribution trends further emphasize the gender disparities between employees in the Indian hospitality sector. Women earn a mean salary of ₹22,940—they occupy roles before executive status, resulting in a lower mean wage; in contrast, male employees dominate the executive roles, resulting in a higher average salary of ₹60,242, three times more than the average female employee's wage. The overall workforce salary average is ₹33,147, and the stark difference in average salaries across different roles is clearly shown in Figure 3, highlighting the wage gap between male and female employees. The disparity in salaries highlights that women primarily occupy lower-tier roles, earning less than their male coworkers in higher-paying positions. Out of the 34 executive positions in the hotel, only nine are occupied by female employees. The data collected relates to the findings in the literature, emphasizing the implications of wages on occupational segregation. Goldin highlights the glass ceiling effect, in which women find it challenging to advance into higher-paying roles—a similar scenario is evident in Royal Orchid, Bangalore, and the Indian hospitality industry.⁴

Comparing these results internationally further exemplifies these disparities. In China, women constitute 55.4% of the hospitality industry workforce, although upward mobility to managerial positions is yet limited. Countries such as the United States share similar results, with women constituting 52% of the hospitality workforce, representing a majority of the workforce demographic in both countries.⁶ This contrast highlights the lack of representation of women in the hospitality industry, as Indian women only constitute 20% of the workforce according to the quantitative data collected from the Royal Orchid Hotel.

■ Results

The qualitative and quantitative data collected reveal several trends addressing the low female labor force participation in Indian hospitality: wage disparities, workplace biases, and regulatory challenges.

On the demand side, employers in the hospitality industry require long working hours, including late-night shifts. However, female employees cannot meet these demands due to personal responsibilities arising from societal expectations. The limited demand for female employees is attributed to regulatory factors: night shift restrictions, maternity leave, and workplace safety regulations. The heavy restrictions and regulatory barriers disproportionately affect the employment opportunities for female employees, as confirmed by HR executives at Royal Orchid Bangalore. These mandates, originally designed to ensure safety, hinder employment opportunities for females due to the reluctance of chains to hire female employees, low flexibility around working hours, and the possibility of long periods of absence (maternity leave). HR executives noted: "Night-shift regulations and other personal commitments reduce the flexibility around working hours for female employees, raising major recruitment concerns."¹⁰ This pattern is not unique to India. Liu, Yang, and Li identified similar patterns in China, as employers in hospitality are reluctant to promote women due to concerns over shift timings.⁶ Female employees also have personal responsibilities, leaving many unable to meet the demands of the hotel."The glass ceiling effect in the literature limits female career progression, further discouraging participation.

A unique contribution of this study is the documentation of region-specific differences within India. HR executives at Royal Orchid noted that almost all of their female employees were migrants from northern provinces, while participation from southern states was significantly lower due to stronger marriage-related cultural expectations. This regional variation in women's participation in hospitality has not been extensively covered in prior studies, which often treat India as a uniform case.

On the supply side, while these regulations protect women from unsafe working conditions and offer maternity support, they contribute to employer hesitancy in recruitment processes, illustrating a trade-off between a balanced workforce and regulatory protection. The qualitative data highlighted the challenges female employees face associated with a work-life balance, with a female employee noting: "After my child was born, I had to fight with my family to continue working."¹⁰ Beyond the implications of societal pressures, workplace biases hinder female career progression. The regulations in India surrounding female participation in the workforce are similar to a double-edged sword; they aim to elevate the safety of female employees while creating employer hesitancy due to logistical constraints. Similarly, Anker highlights the implications of well-intentioned labor laws on reinforcing low female labor force participation. Moreover, sectors such as IT and maintenance roles reporting 0% female participation highlight the presence of occupational segregation in the industry.⁵

Another unique finding of this study is the low completion rate of women in long-term hospitality skilling programs, reported by program heads at the Presidency College. Although global literature notes women's underrepresentation in training, the challenge of Indian women unable to complete training, even free skilling programs, due to family commit-

ments, highlights a new factor of attrition not emphasized in prior hospitality research— cultural expectations and norms.

The findings emphasize that enhancing female labor force participation in the hospitality industry requires a multifaceted approach. Simply advocating for and encouraging women to enter the industry is insufficient; comprehensive reforms are necessary to ensure equality in the workforce and recruitment practices. From a supply-demand perspective, targeted training programs teaching high-value skills should be made available to women across the country, empowering them to pursue careers in industries like hospitality. On the demand side, regulatory bodies should implement diversity and inclusion policies to guarantee that hospitality companies provide fairer opportunities for female employees. Such measures can significantly reduce gender disparities, improve retention rates, and foster a balanced male-to-female ratio in the hospitality industry.

■ Conclusion

This study's findings highlight the connection between societal, workplace, and regulatory factors contributing to low female labor force participation in the Indian hospitality industry. The quantitative data reveal significant trends indicating occupational segregation and wage disparities: female employees are concentrated in front-facing, lower-paying roles, resulting in lower salaries than the mean. A lack of career advancement opportunities reflects the glass ceiling effect, which could hinder the growth of the hospitality industry and the Indian economy. Qualitative data displayed societal pressures, with employees revealing marriage as a key challenge. Furthermore, India's unique regulatory environment, specifically the state-level Shops and Establishments Act, restricts women from working night shifts unless safe transport and security are provided. This, in turn, creates a structural barrier to participation in the industry, as employers are encouraged to recruit male employees due to greater flexibility with shifts— fewer regulations for male employees compared to female employees. Although the Shops and Establishments Act (2020) was designed to enhance the safety of female laborers, it inadvertently established occupational segregation.

Nevertheless, further investigation will foster a deeper understanding of the cultural shifts ongoing in India's changing landscapes, examining the implications of rapid advancement on socio-economic factors that affect participation in the sector and the Indian workforce. Addressing these gaps will foster an equitable and sustainable hospitality sector and stimulate greater tourism in India. Policy reforms, therefore, should modernize these safety regulations by mandating workplace security and audits instead of enforcing blanket regulations. This approach will enable women to operate in higher-paying managerial roles and reduce occupational segregation in the industry, as employers are encouraged to hire female employees.

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Nirvaan Baljee is a 10th-grade student at Ascend International School in Mumbai, India. Coming from a family involved in hospitality, Nirvaan has always been intrigued by how the hospitality industry operates, particularly its supply and demand factors. During a visit to the Maldives in the winter of 2024, he observed that among the many Indian em-

ployees at his resort, only a few were female. This observation inspired his research into the low participation of women in the Indian hospitality industry. Nirvaan is committed to exploring solutions that empower and upskill female employees, enabling them to thrive in this vibrant sector.

■ Appendix

Interview questions:

Hotel Employees – Male

1. Observations of Gender Dynamics

o From your perspective, how are women employees treated in this hotel?– Very good night drop, guest accommodation also provided.

o Do you think male and female employees have equal opportunities and support?– yes

2. Team Environment and Collaboration

o How do you collaborate with female colleagues on day-to-day tasks?

o Have you noticed any specific barriers or issues they face that male employees typically do not?– not

3. Attitudes and Biases

o In your opinion, do male colleagues or managers hold any biases—conscious or unconscious—about women in the hospitality sector?

o How do you think these attitudes could be changed or improved?

4. Challenges and Solutions

o Have you ever witnessed a situation where a female colleague struggled with work demands or felt harassed?

o If so, how was it resolved, and do you think more could have been done?

5. Management Response and Leadership

o Do you see female employees being promoted to supervisory or managerial roles?

o How do managers typically respond to issues raised by women (e.g., schedule conflicts, complaints)?

6. Recommendations for an Inclusive Workplace

o How can male employees play a constructive role in creating a more inclusive and equitable environment?

Hotel Employees – Female

1. Work Environment

o Could you describe your day-to-day experience working in the hotel?

o Do you feel respected and safe in the workplace?

2. Access to Opportunities

o How did you learn about or secure this position?– F&B course in hometown, private, etc.

o Are there clear pathways for career advancement or promotions for women?– Enjoys interacting with me. Good salary aims to be promoted to a manager.

3. Challenges and Barriers

o What challenges, if any, do you face as a woman in your role (e.g., shift timings, travel constraints, or bias)? Long shifts, no responsibility, as she stays in the provided accommodation.

o Have you encountered any form of harassment or discrimination, and how was it addressed?- none

4. Work-Life Balance

o How do you manage personal or family responsibilities alongside work requirements (e.g., late shifts)?- none

o Does your hotel offer flexibility or policies that make this balance easier?- flexible

5. Training and Mentorship

o Have you received any specialized training or mentoring since joining?- specialized F&B

o Do you believe more targeted training programs for women could help them advance?- yes

6. Perceived Changes Over Time

o Have you noticed any shift in attitudes toward female employees, either from management or customers, during your time here?

o Are more women joining or staying in hotel jobs now compared to before?- More women have been joining

7. Suggestions for Improvement

o What changes (in facilities, policies, or workplace culture) do you think would help attract and retain more women?

o Are there specific initiatives (e.g., child care support, safe transport) that would make a significant difference?

Hotel Managers

1. Recruitment Practices

o How do you source or recruit women for various positions in your hotel?- Sales and front office (kitchen and housekeeping are less due to social taboos, and they are extremely tough jobs)

o Do you notice any patterns in which roles women typically apply for or succeed in?

2. Organizational Culture

o What steps does your hotel take to create a female-friendly workplace?- gender neutrality

o Are there formal policies on preventing harassment or ensuring equal pay?

3. Promotion and Retention

o What factors influence whether women move up into managerial or leadership positions?

o Have you found it challenging to retain female employees? If so, why?- Females prefer to work where they are from or where their friends are from. There are night drops in place due to various laws and regulations. There are also long leaves provided to female staff due to maternity leave. Female employees can bonus for staying for longer periods of time at the company.

4. Training and Development

o Do you offer specific training opportunities or mentoring programs for women?- not specifically to women

o In your experience, how does skill-building (language courses, hospitality etiquette, managerial training) impact female employees' advancement?

5. Observations of Social and Cultural Barriers

o How do societal expectations outside of work (family, cultural norms) affect your ability to recruit or retain female staff?

o What industry-wide changes might be needed to ensure more women enter and stay in hospitality?