# Building a Gender Inclusive workspace in India for the Future
*Decoding the Status of Women and Trans employees among Indian Organisations*

## Aashriti Gautam
*(School of International Studies , Jawaharlal Nehru University - New Delhi , India )*

**Abstract:**
The inclusion of gender diversity in workplace is a pretty well-accepted fact now . Having a diverse workforce is increasingly being recognised as instrumental in improving the firm's performance - as it adds both tangible and intangible value in terms of successful working of the organisation.While most Indian organisations on one hand are acknowledging the crucial role a diverse workforce plays in a thriving, growth-oriented business, its stakeholders, and the community it operates in . On the other hand, the statistics are still dismal when it comes to critical parameters such as the gender ratio in important roles where inclusion initiatives are lost in events and other showcasing activities, with little reaching the final and most critical stage of execution.
This paper aims to present the concept of gender inclusivity at workplace while reflecting on issues associated with it . It aims to present the non economic dilemmas that are holding women and trans back in creating gender inclusive work place among Indian Organisations. Finally the paper presents the various policies adopted by the Indian organisations over the years to bridge this inclusivity gap.
**Key Word:**Gender diversity ; Gender inclusivity ; Gender equality ; Women and Trans friendly work environment .

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## I.   INTRODUCTION
         The work world is becoming increasingly interconnected through globalisation and technology. In order to remain competitive, organisations must fully utilise the knowledge and talent of their increasingly diverse employees (Wentling , 1998).  Inclusivity in workspace accelerates innovation. The more inclusive your workplace is, the more debates you can have, the less hierarchy you have and the faster it is to recover from failure and downturns. As per Morgan Stanley's report titled- " An Investors Guide to Gender Diversity , 2017 " - more gender diversity, particularly in organisations, can translate to increased productivity, greater innovation, better decision-making, and higher employee retention and satisfaction. In this context , the present study aims to bring to light the contemporary status of women and trans people in Indian organisations and how corporate India can take action to boost inclusivity. The paper dwells on the need for transformation by questing the societal taboos behind the lack of active women and transgender participation in workforce.
         In defining a gender inclusive workspace , the author notes that it is concerned not just with economic factors like access to income , assets, financial services etc -  but  also with several non-economic factors - like household responsibilities which includes unpaid care and work burdens , workplace safety, gender norms and discriminatory social norms, health and education etc. Therefore apart from the rosy economic narratives that are over-emphasised in achieving an inclusive and equitable workplace atmosphere , a closer look at non-economic narratives is equally significant and need of the hour. Therefore, the study is concentrating its efforts on three central questions - First , what are the persistent non-economic challenges that are holding women and trans back to achieve the distant but realisable goal of gender inclusive workspace ? How do people and society feel about the association of women and transgender with work ? What are the remedies needed to bridge this inclusivity gap ?
         These questions are analysed with the help of following four non-economic parameters , that help explain low women and trans participation in workplace - First, the pervasiveness of entrenched patriarchal social and gender norms that hinder trans and women's agency, mobility and freedom to work; Second , discrimination by the family ; Third, safe and secure work atmosphere ; Fourth , the poor literacy rate among the women and trans population. The final section of the paper details the simple strategies of organisations already doing great work in India for women and trans inclusion in workspace.

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## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of gender inclusive workplace and its impact on social, political, and economic aspects is a constant theme in the literature. As per World Employment and Social Outlook 2018 , globally women's labor force participation rate was 48.5% - a 26.5 percentage points below that of men labor force participation rate , which was about 75% . The factors that contributed to this increasing gender gap included - first , structural barriers and cultural restrictions ; second, an increase in the number of years women spend in school and third , lack of employment opportunities, particularly for young women ( World Employment and Social Outlook 2018 ).

Transgender visibility , globally is growing in workplaces and in public awareness as a whole, through mainstream media and entertainment. Increasing visibility and awareness of transgender and gender non-conforming people is fuelling the call to make workplaces inclusive and welcoming of transgender employees. The momentum for building transgender-inclusive workplaces can be documented through three distinct view-points: a trend toward transgender workplace protections as documented in the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Corporate Equality Index, the fast changing legal and legislative landscape, and the increasing cultural visibility and awareness of transgender people ( Human Rights Foundation Report , 2016 ).

Although governmental policies, international and national organisations and NGOs have played a quint-essential role in the gender sensitisation of the population, especially authorities regarding the inclusion of women in workspace , women and transgender people still trail behind men on corporate boards . Although , in case of transgenders the situation is improving as according to the 2015 Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index, which rates American workplaces on LGBT equality, 66% of Fortune 500 companies have instituted a gender identity non-discrimination policy, up from 3% in 2002, when the index was launched. One-third of Fortune 500 companies offer transgender-inclusive healthcare coverage, up from zero in 2002. But the situation of women is still miserable .Very few women are CEOs of the world's largest corporations. As of the 2019 Fortune list, only 33 women (6.6 %) were CEOs of Fortune 500 companies.

In the Indian context , to achieve an inclusive workplace, we need to focus more closely on the societal challenges to understand the unique difficulties faced by trans and women in India . India is arguably the most diverse country in the world. There is amalgamation of different thoughts, identities and stereotypes. At one level, this diversity is deeply historical and has enriched a sense of co-existence and inclusion between different groups but on the other hand this diversity has also set of contradictions from the caste system, patriarchy, rural-urban divide, and legal and social discrimination against the women and trans community. Any attempt for achieving inclusion at workplace has to grapple with these socio-cultural realities.

A report by Deloitte Insights in February 2017, reported that 69% of executives of top organisations believed that inclusion is an important workplace issue. In 2014, this number was 54%. A research report by Diversity and Inclusion in India Network (DIAN) and Community Business mentions that large Indian companies are turning their attention to the topic of gender inclusivity. Keen to compete on the global stage, and exposed to global practices, leading local organisations are being forced to up their game when it comes to embracing different perspectives and harnessing the contribution of all to drive business success.

In India women's labor force participation rate in 2019 stood at 25%, which was about 57% lower than the male labor force participation rate, which stood at daunting 82% ( World Bank 2019 ) . Report on Enablers for Women Empowerment at workplace in India - 2017 by TISS institute - states that gap between women's and men's labor force participation in India is 26%, while women spend 2.5 times more time performing unpaid care and domestic work than men. This socio-cultural discrimination is also evident in relation to the transgender community. It was only in the Census of 2011 , data of transgender were collected in the category of "Others" under Gender with details related to their employment, literacy, and caste. The census further revealed the total population of transgender to be around 4.88 lakh. The data have been primarily linked to the males section as they are usually counted as men, but on request, they may be counted as women. The 2011 census also reported 55,000 children as transgender identified by their parents ( Census 2011) .

Over the years , the government of India has passed several laws which are helping Indian organisations and society at large to implement provisions related to workplace inclusivity. The government of India is committed to end all forms of gender inequality and violence against women that negatively impacts society and constricts the socio- economic development of the country through the enactment of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013 , formation of Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) for handling complaints regarding sexual harassment at workplace , provision of 26 weeks or around 6-7 months of maternity leave under the Maternity Benefit Amendment Bill, 2017 etc. Some new ideas are also taking roots, like the concept of menstrual leave which the media company Culture Machine has incorporated and enables women to take the first day of their period as paid leave.

For the transgender community , the Honourable Supreme Court of India passed a unique judgment in the National Legal Services Authority (NLSA) versus Union of India case of 2014. The apex court stated that one's sexual orientation is an integralpart of personality, dignity, and freedom and identified transgender as a

third gender. Post the NLSA judgment; the court took several favourable orders for the transgender community like the Right to Privacy Judgment (2017) which concluded that the right to one's sexual orientation is at the core of the fundamental rights outlined in Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution , the end of Section 377 (2018) that violated the dignity and privacy of the LGBTQ community etc. Following the NALSA judgment , the government introduced several versions of Transgender Persons Protection of Rights Bill which assert the rights of transgender persons and promote their welfare . The Transgender Persons Protection of Rights Bill (2018) penalises violence against the transgender community, disallows discrimination in employment, recruitment and promotion and declares them as a backward class. The bill further clarifies the problematic definition of transgender and regards a transgender person as a person whose gender does not match with the gender assigned to that person at birth and includes trans-man or trans-woman , person with intersex variations, genderqueer and person having such socio-cultural identities as kinner, hijra, aravani and jogta .

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is inter - disciplinary in nature as the discourse is based and conceptualised in the historical context with social insights to the contemporary development of events. The study undertakes both quantitative and qualitative method of social research that requires both theoretical and empirical analysis . The theoretical part includes a thorough understanding of the societal behaviour, outlook and gender norms that have prevailed over the years and have curbed the freedom and dignity of women and trans people .The peer-reviewed articles collected for this paper were gathered through both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include various reports and surveys by different institutions and government departments viz. World Economic Form, ILO , UNDP , World Bank , Ministry of Women and Child Development etc. The available secondary sources include books, journals, periodicals, articles, seminars, lectures, newspaper coverage, internet sources, reportage, unpublished papers, media, internet, and insightful thoughts expressed by an research scholar working on this related research . The study undertakes quantitative method of social research through data analysis on all the above mentioned four non-economic parameters , that will explicitly explain the present condition of low women and trans participation in workplace.

The first and the foremost important parameter of study is societal and family discrimination . A survey titled - Explicit Prejudice : Evidence from a New Survey, clearly highlights the mindset of men and society towards women and work. Over 40 percent of surveyed men report feeling that married women whose husbands earn a decent living should not work outside the home. It is this perception that women should not leave the private sphere in the absence of monetary need reinforces the burden of unpaid work. The Gender at Work , 2013 report of World Bank clearly highlights that social norms are a key factor underlying deprivations and constraints throughout the lifecycle of a woman. Norms affect women's work by dictating the way they spend their time and undervaluing their potential. Housework, child-rearing, and elderly care are often considered primarily women's responsibility. Further, nearly four in 10 people globally (close to one-half in developing countries) agree that, when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to jobs than women. Research shows that women are frequently disadvantaged by gender biases in performance and hiring evaluations .

As per World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report , 2017 - on average, 66 percent of the work done by Indian women is unpaid, compared to 12 percent of men's. This is a global pattern, as women in other parts of the world are disproportionately burdened with unpaid work and care work. In India, according to the OECD 2019 Statistics , women spend on average 352 minutes a day on unpaid work against 52 minutes among men. This is relevant as research by International Labor Organisation titled " The unpaid care work - paid work connection " of 2009 has established an inverse relationship between the amount of time spent by women and girls on unpaid work, and their economic autonomy.

Gendered expectations from children lead to trans children being scolded, abused and even assaulted by their family members. Due to shame and disgust, parents may even disown or evict their child, fearing for their marital prospects and the continuance of their family line. (Manifesto for Trans inclusion n Indian workplace , 2018 ). A study by the National Institute of Epidemiology surveyed 60,000 transgender people across 17 states, including Tamil Nadu. It found that a large percentage of the population received no support from their biological family ( ibid. ).

Another major impediment towards gender inclusive workplace is safe and secure work atmosphere. World Bank report titled - Women in India's Economic Growth, 2018 - highlights on the need of safe transportation and zero tolerance of sexual harassment in the office as a pre-requisite for building a gender inclusive workspace. The regional rates of such violence range from 21 percent in North America to 43 percent in South Asia ( WHO Global prevalence Database, 2013). Violence and extortion is often experienced by trans people in sex work by clients and even the police due to the criminalisation of sex work in the country. Anti-beggary laws also penalize traditional livelihoods of the trans community. The Indian government publishes annual statistics about crimes against men and women, but it doesn't do the same for trans people. A survey conducted by the Swasti Health Resource Centre (a Bengaluru-based non-profit group) interviewed 2169 trans people from Maha-

rashtra, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. It revealed that 40% of trans people have experienced sexual abuse in India before turning 18. It begins as early as age 5, and continues even after childhood ( A Manifesto for Trans Inclusion in the Indian Workplace , 2018 )

Poor literacy levels both among the women and trans people is another major factor hindering the development of inclusive workplace. Formal education for the Trans people is hard to come by due to severe bullying and teasing making studying impossible in school. The 2011 census data revealed that 48% of the trans population was literate and that 58% dropped out of school before the 10th grade . As per 2011 census, literacy rate in India has been reported as 74.04% with a 14% increase to that in 2001, whereas the hike is maximum for rural women at 26% in the last decade, which may be attributed to literacy mission of Government of India. The female literacy levels according to the Literacy Rate 2011 census are 65.46% whereas the male literacy rate is over 80%. The difference in literacy among males and females is as low as less than 5% in state of Meghalaya, Kerala and Mizoram whereas states like Rajasthan, Jharkhand, D & N Haveli, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh have the difference to be the magnitude of 20% and above. The above data clearly highlights that gender equality among workplaces in India is hit by factors like - societal and family discrimination , safe and secure work atmosphere and poor literacy rates.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Despite these bleak figures highlighting the agony of women and trans people in Indian society . There are some examples of front-runner Indian organisations which either through their own individual effort or through the assistance of affirmative actions of the government have been successful in creating a a gender inclusive work culture in India. For example: In South India, Kerala has made a huge stride as the Kochi Metro has started employing members of the transgender community as motor operators for trains. This was part of Kerala state's initiative to make the workplace more transgender-friendly. Thus, by diversifying the kind of jobs that are offered and that exist for the transgender community, Kerala has set a new precedent. In 2017, Vodafone launched two significant initiatives to increase women's participation in the workforce. The first was the Vodafone Re Connect programme to bring women back into the workforce after a career break. The policy enables these women to work either full-time or on flexitime. Second, going beyond workforce engagement, Vodafone is also looking at digital inclusion for underprivileged women (low income, remote communities) from emerging markets, specifically India and Africa.

TATA Group which is known to lead several social impact issues from the front in 2017, announced that it was working on a roadmap to ensure 25 percent representation from diverse groups by 2020. While 20 percent of this number will be dedicated to women, the rest will come from the LGBT community. The company has adopted a 5-pillar approach to diversity and inclusion – commitment, sensitisation, development, infrastructure, and celebration. The names listed here are a handful from a vast industry of organisations and startups. It is important to keep the conversations around gender diversity and inclusion going until we can truly claim that people of all genders, backgrounds, and abilities are represented fairly and equally.

Rosuvastatin 20 mg on every other regimen had equal effect when compared to daily dose regimen of atorvastatin 40 mg &rosuvastatin 20mg.

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