

ROLE OF PUBLIC–PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS IN PROMOTING TRANSGENDER INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES

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ABSTRACT

Workplace inclusion has emerged as a central concern within the broader discourse on inclusive growth and social justice, particularly for historically marginalized communities such as transgender persons. The present research examines the outcomes of public–private partnerships in advancing transgender-inclusive workplace practices in India. Recognizing the persistent exclusion of transgender individuals from formal employment and dignified workplaces, the study adopts a secondary data-based thematic review approach to assess how collaborative efforts between government institutions and private organizations contribute to employment access, workplace inclusion, and economic empowerment. Furthermore, a figure is proposed to indicate that public–private partnerships effectively translate inclusion-oriented policies into operational workplace practices by combining policy legitimacy, organizational capacity, and facilitative support mechanisms. Such partnerships significantly enhance employment participation, foster inclusive work environments, and support sustainable livelihoods for transgender persons. This work also explains the interaction between policy frameworks, private sector implementation, and intermediary facilitation in achieving inclusive workplace outcomes. The study contributes to the literature by offering actionable insights for policymakers, organizations, and future researchers aiming to strengthen inclusive workforce development.

KEYWORDS: Transgender-inclusive workplaces; Public–private partnerships; thematic; employment inclusion; ESG; social sustainability

1. Introduction

In India, transgender individuals continue to face persistent barriers to formal employment, including discrimination, limited access to skill development, inadequate legal recognition, and exclusionary workplace cultures. Conventional economic and labour studies have largely focused on binary gender classifications, resulting in an incomplete understanding of labour market dynamics for transgender individuals and their employment experiences (Kumar, 2022). The absence of disaggregated official data on employment, unemployment, and wage outcomes for transgender persons further reflects this systemic oversight and underscores the need for focused research to address these gaps (Yasmeen et al., 2024).

Recent legislative and policy interventions, most notably the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, have strengthened the legal framework aimed at preventing discrimination and promoting inclusion. However, the translation of legal recognition into meaningful workplace inclusion remains uneven. Structural and societal exclusion continue to restrict economic participation, indicating that legislative provisions alone are insufficient to ensure labour market integration (Mishra & Negi, 2021). Effective implementation

mechanisms that extend beyond statutory mandates are therefore required to foster practical inclusion and sustained workplace acceptance.

Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs) have gained prominence as collaborative governance arrangements designed to address complex socio-economic challenges that cannot be resolved by the state alone. Within the domain of employment and workplace inclusion, PPPs bring together government agencies, private sector organizations, civil society actors, and training institutions to promote skill development, employability, and inclusive organizational practices. For transgender persons, such partnerships have emerged as critical pathways for accessing formal employment and fostering inclusive workplace environments. By combining policy legitimacy, organizational capacity, and community engagement, PPPs have the potential to dismantle systemic barriers and create sustainable avenues for economic empowerment.

Despite the growing adoption of PPP-based initiatives in areas such as skill development, corporate social responsibility, and diversity management, systematic analysis of their outcomes in advancing transgender-inclusive workplaces remains limited. Existing literature predominantly emphasizes legal rights, social exclusion, or isolated organizational practices, with insufficient attention to partnership-based governance structures that shape inclusion outcomes. This study addresses this gap by examining the outcomes of public–private partnerships in promoting transgender-inclusive workplace practices in India through a secondary data-based approach and a conceptual PPP model (Mishra & Negi, 2021; W.M.P.M. et al., 2023). Conceptually, PPPs represent structured collaborations between public institutions and private organizations, often supported by civil society, aimed at achieving socio-economic objectives. In the employment context, these partnerships extend beyond infrastructure delivery to encompass skill formation, employment linkage, and inclusive workplace practices. The state provides policy direction and regulatory legitimacy, private organizations implement inclusive employment practices, and civil society actors facilitate sensitization and community engagement. This hybrid governance model is particularly relevant for transgender inclusion, given the intersection of legal, economic, and socio-cultural barriers faced by the community (Kumar & KG, 2025). Understanding PPP outcomes through this lens allows for a comprehensive assessment of not only employment access but also the quality, sustainability, and dignity of workplace inclusion within the Indian labour market. In this context, the present study seeks to examine public–private partnership as institutional mechanism capable of operationalizing inclusive employment policies and facilitating transgender integration into the formal workforce (Zachariah & Nandini, 2023). Resultantly, this study aims to assess PPP outcomes on transgender employment access and workplace inclusion by examining PPP contributions to economic empowerment and livelihood sustainability of transgender employees.

2. Review of Related Literature

Existing literature demonstrates that transgender persons face systematic exclusion from formal labour markets due to entrenched social stigma, institutional discrimination, and rigid binary gender norms embedded within organizational structures (Connell, 2012; Badgett et al., 2013). Multiple studies reveal that employment barriers for transgender individuals extend beyond hiring to include workplace harassment, misrecognition of gender identity, lack of inclusive organizational policies, and limited career progression, often resulting in low job

retention and precarious employment trajectories (Grant et al., 2011; Budge et al., 2010). These findings underscore workplace inclusion is a multidimensional construct encompassing not only access to employment but also dignity, safety, and sustainability within organizational environments.

In the Indian context, many studies highlight compounded vulnerabilities faced by transgender persons due to disrupted education, limited access to identity documentation, and deep-rooted social marginalization, all of which restrict participation in the formal economy (Chakrapani et al., 2018; Humsafar Trust, 2017). Although legal developments such as the *NALSA v. Union of India* (2014) judgment and the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 have strengthened formal recognition and non-discrimination mandates, scholars argue that legislative progress has not automatically translated into inclusive workplace practices (Narain, 2016; Rao, 2020). The persistent gap between policy intent and implementation is particularly evident in private sector employment, where inclusion initiatives remain uneven, voluntary, and often symbolic.

Inclusive growth and labour market participation emphasizes the central role of the state in creating enabling conditions for marginalized groups through targeted policies, affirmative measures, and institutional support (Kabeer, 2015). However, given the complexity of employment generation and workplace governance, researchers increasingly acknowledge the limitations of state-centric approaches in addressing structural exclusion. This recognition has led to growing interest in Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs) as collaborative governance mechanisms capable of pooling resources, expertise, and institutional legitimacy to address complex socio-economic challenges (Hodge & Greve, 2007; Yescombe, 2018). While traditionally associated with infrastructure development, PPPs are applied to social policy domains such as skill development, employment generation, and workforce inclusion (Bovaird, 2004; OECD, 2015).

Empirical evidence from India suggests that PPP-led skill development and employability initiatives have contributed to improved labour market outcomes by aligning training programmes with industry requirements and facilitating private sector participation in workforce development (Mehrotra et al., 2014; Tilak, 2018). However, scholars caution that PPPs often prioritize efficiency, scale, and cost-effectiveness, potentially marginalizing equity and inclusion objectives unless these are explicitly embedded within partnership frameworks (Miraftab, 2004). This concern is particularly salient in the context of transgender inclusion, where employment outcomes cannot be assessed solely through numerical participation but must also account for workplace acceptance, dignity, and long-term sustainability.

Research on workplace diversity and inclusion further emphasizes that organizational culture, peer acceptance, and managerial commitment are critical determinants of inclusion outcomes (Roberson, 2006; Shore et al., 2011). Authors suggest that inclusive policies alone are insufficient without parallel efforts to address attitudinal barriers and power relations within workplaces. In this regard, civil society organizations and community-based institutions emerge as crucial mediators in inclusion-focused PPP initiatives. For example, Edwards (2009) and Lewis (2014) highlight their role in mobilizing marginalized communities, sensitizing employers, facilitating trust-building, and providing post-placement support and grievance redressal mechanisms. In transgender employment initiatives, NGO involvement has been associated with enhanced workplace preparedness, reduced resistance, and improved retention

outcomes, reinforcing their importance in translating policy commitments into lived workplace experiences.

Researchers agree in examining collaborative governance approaches that move beyond isolated policy or organizational interventions. There is a strategic role of coordinated efforts between governmental bodies and private enterprises in addressing systemic discrimination faced by transgender individuals in the Indian workforce (Cech & Rothwell, 2019; Chaudhuri, 2023; Mishra & Negi, 2021). Large corporations and PPP arrangements are viewed as occupying a pivotal position within the Indian economy, with the capacity to influence employment practices and challenge exclusionary norms (Mishra & Negi, 2021). From this perspective, PPPs can function not merely as administrative arrangements but as instruments of social justice and economic empowerment when inclusion objectives are meaningfully embedded within partnership structures (Nair & Lakshmi, 2023; Rasal & Dole, 2024).

Though existing studies note that corporate social responsibility initiatives and governmental mandates often operate in silos and lack systematic evaluation, thereby constraining their long-term impact (Mishra & Negi, 2021). Empirical evidence on how such collaborations translate into equitable and dignified workplace outcomes for transgender persons remains limited. Moreover, the importance of examining livelihood strategies and economic resilience mechanisms adopted by transgender individuals, particularly in relation to how they are supported or constrained by prevailing public and private sector frameworks (Kumar & KG, 2025) requires further work. Existing studies suggest inclusion cannot be evaluated solely by participation rates; it must consider qualitative dimensions such as workplace dignity, peer acceptance, and long-term sustainability. This is because most of them work on policy frameworks, corporate diversity initiatives, and NGO interventions rarely analysed in an integrated manner. Due to this, the literature remains fragmented.

Although Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs) have been increasingly applied to skill development, employment generation, and diversity initiatives, there is a limited understanding of how such partnerships specifically influence transgender-inclusive workplace outcomes. As many scholars work on transgender workplace inclusion focus on legal recognition, social exclusion, or isolated organizational practices, while evidence on collaborative mechanisms involving government, private sector, and civil society is limited. Few studies systematically examine how this multi-stakeholder arrangements collectively shape employment access, workplace acceptance, retention, and economic empowerment for transgender individuals in India. By situating transgender-inclusive workplace practices within a public–private partnership model, the present study responds directly to these gaps in the literature. It seeks to contribute a structured, diagram-driven understanding of how collaborative governance arrangements influence employment access, workplace inclusion, and economic dignity for transgender persons in India.

Despite growing scholarship on transgender workplace inclusion and anti-discrimination policies in India, existing literature remains fragmented and largely descriptive. Prior studies have primarily examined governmental interventions, corporate diversity initiatives, or CSR practices in isolation, with limited attention to the role of public–private partnerships as an integrated governance mechanism for promoting transgender-inclusive workplaces. Moreover, empirical evidence assessing the outcomes of such collaborations in terms of employment access, workplace inclusion, and economic empowerment of transgender persons remains

scarce. The literature also lacks a systematic analysis of how inclusion policies are operationalized through PPPs and how these arrangements influence livelihood strategies and economic resilience among transgender communities. Addressing these gaps, the present study adopts an outcome-oriented public–private partnership illustration to examine its effectiveness in advancing transgender-inclusive workplace practices in India.

3. Method

The study is empirical in nature and is based entirely on secondary data, enabling an outcome-oriented assessment of existing policies, programs, and institutional practices related to transgender employment inclusion. So, the authors have chosen a descriptive research design to examine the outcomes of public–private partnerships (PPPs) in advancing transgender-inclusive workplace practices in India.

Secondary data was collected from authoritative and publicly available sources, including government policy documents and reports, public–private partnership project reports, corporate CSR and ESG disclosures, publications of international agencies such as the ILO and UNDP, peer-reviewed academic journals, and evaluation reports published by non-governmental organizations. These sources were selected to ensure credibility, relevance, and comprehensive coverage of inclusion initiatives. For academic journals and books, Google scholar database was used to search for relevant studies for thematic review. Selection of relevant policies, programs, and organizational reports was based on relevance to the research objectives and availability of outcome-related data.

Thematic assessment was used to identify recurring themes related to employment access, workplace inclusion, and partnership mechanisms. Comparative analysis enabled assessment of inclusion outcomes across different PPP initiatives and sectors, while content analysis of CSR and ESG disclosures helped identify reported employment practices and economic outcomes. Using secondary data from government programmes, institutional reports, and documented case studies, the analysis is organized around two themes of employment access and workplace inclusion, and economic empowerment and livelihood sustainability.

3.1 Employment Access and Workplace Inclusion through PPPs

Programmes such as the Trans Employment Mela and state welfare board placements illustrate how government policy backing provides legitimacy and safeguards, while private sector participation ensures execution through recruitment, training, and inclusive human resource practices. NGO involvement facilitates employer sensitization and community engagement, reducing workplace resistance and improving retention. The Kochi Metro employment model and public service induction initiatives further demonstrate that visibility of transgender employees in formal and public-facing roles contributes to normalization and peer acceptance within workplaces.

PPPs act as mediating structures between legislative intent and inclusive workplace outcomes. PPPs function as effective institutional mechanisms for facilitating transgender entry into formal employment and strengthening workplace inclusion. The initiatives summarized below show consistent inclusion outcomes across sectors and governance levels. Curated from review of related literature, table 1 presents selected PPP initiatives that demonstrate how collaborative arrangements translate policy commitments into observable employment outcomes.

Table 1: PPP Initiatives Supporting Employment Access and Workplace Inclusion

PPP Initiative / Case	Level of Operation	Nature of Partnership	Observed Outcomes
Trans Employment Mela	National	Government–NGO–Corporate	Formal recruitment; employer sensitization
Kochi Metro Employment Model	State	Government–Private Operator	Visible inclusion; job security
Tamil Nadu Home Guards Induction	State	Government–Employment Platforms	Dignified public employment
Corporate Inclusive Hiring Programs	Corporate	Government Framework–Corporate–NGO	Inclusive HR practices; retention
State Transgender Welfare Board Placements	State	Government–Private Employers	Policy-to-practice employment linkage

Note: Source is the authors. The table illustrates PPP initiatives; additional cases stated above, fall in these categories.

3.2 Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Sustainability of Transgender Employees

Initiatives such as the PM-DAKSH scheme, DAY-NULM urban livelihood programmes, municipal employment models with banking support, and PSU–CSR skill partnerships have directly improved employability and income security for transgender employees. These programmes enhance job readiness through targeted skill training while simultaneously facilitating access to wage employment or self-employment opportunities. For transgender employees, such convergence is particularly significant, as fragmented interventions often fail to address long-term economic vulnerability. When transgender persons are absorbed into stable wage employment with accompanying financial services—such as bank accounts, insurance, and credit access—economic outcomes improve substantially. Regular income, coupled with institutional financial inclusion, enhances livelihood sustainability and reduces dependence on precarious informal work. Similarly, entrepreneurship-oriented PPPs enable transgender employees to pursue self-employment pathways supported by training, mentoring, and credit, thereby strengthening economic resilience.

PSU-led and CSR-driven skill development partnerships further reinforce livelihood sustainability by linking training outcomes with placement or income-generation mechanisms. These initiatives contribute to economic dignity by recognizing transgender persons as skilled workers and economic contributors rather than welfare beneficiaries. The consistency of positive outcomes across national, state, and local PPP initiatives indicates that economic empowerment of transgender employees is most effective when livelihood strategies are embedded within formal institutional partnerships.

The thematic review reveals livelihood-oriented public–private partnerships reveals that economic empowerment of transgender employees extends beyond initial job placement to include income stability, career continuity, and long-term livelihood security. For transgender

persons, formal employment through PPP initiatives represents a critical shift away from historically marginalized and informal survival-based occupations toward dignified, rights-based economic participation. Livelihood-oriented PPPs significantly enhance economic empowerment and livelihood sustainability for transgender employees. By combining skill development, formal employment, financial inclusion, and enterprise support, these partnerships create durable economic pathways rather than short-term employment solutions. The convergence of evidence across multiple PPP models substantiates the argument that public–private collaboration is essential for ensuring long-term economic inclusion and workplace sustainability for transgender employees in India.

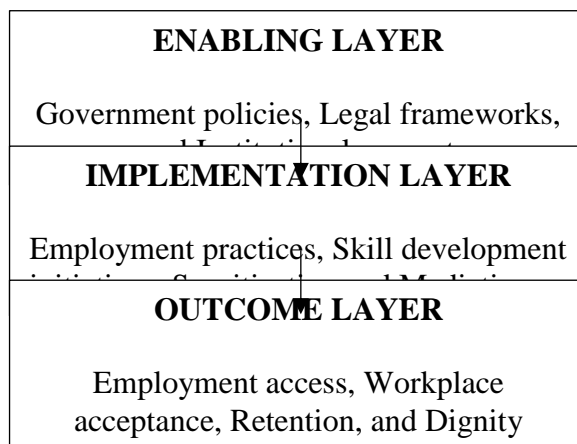
Table 2: PPP Initiatives Supporting Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Sustainability

PPP Initiative / Case	Level of Operation	Nature of Economic Support for Transgender Employees	Observed Outcomes for Transgender Employees
PM-DAKSH Scheme	National	Targeted skill training, certification, and placement support for transgender persons	Improved employability and transition into formal employment
DAY-NULM Urban Livelihoods	Urban Local Bodies	Wage employment and self-employment assistance for transgender beneficiaries	Sustainable income generation and livelihood diversification
Municipal Employment with Banking Support	Municipal	Formal wage employment combined with bank accounts and financial inclusion for transgender workers	Income stability and enhanced financial security
State Enterprise Development Schemes	State	Entrepreneurship training, subsidized credit, and enterprise support for transgender persons	Long-term livelihood sustainability and self-reliance
PSU–CSR Skill Programs	National / State	Skill development and livelihood support targeted at transgender communities	Economic resilience and reduced dependence on informal work

Note: Source is the authors. The table illustrates PPP initiatives; additional cases stated above, fall in these categories.

The convergence of positive outcomes across national, state, municipal, and corporate initiatives validates the proposed PPP–Transgender Inclusive Workplace (PPP–TIW) model. The findings establish that sustainable transgender inclusion is achieved when public, private, and civil society actors function as collaborative partners rather than isolated stakeholders. Consequently, PPPs emerge as scalable and outcome-oriented instruments for advancing transgender-inclusive workplace practices in the Indian context.

Fig. 1: Suggestive Representation for Public–Private Partnerships in Advancing Transgender-Inclusive Workplaces



Note: Source is the authors. The figure illustrates how public–private partnerships, mediated by civil society engagement, contribute to employment access and sustainable workplace inclusion of transgender persons in India.

The proposed PPP–TIW figure provides a structured lens to examine transgender-inclusive workplace practices by linking partnership inputs with operational processes and observable outcomes. Drawing on secondary evidence from government policies, private sector initiatives, and civil society interventions, the model enables a systematic assessment of how public–private partnerships facilitate not only employment access but also sustainable workplace inclusion in the Indian context. Conceptually, the figure comprises three interrelated layers. The enabling layer includes government policies, legal frameworks, and institutional support that provide legitimacy and resources for inclusion. The implementation layer captures private sector employment practices, skill development initiatives, and NGO-led sensitization and mediation that operationalize inclusion within workplaces. The outcome layer reflects improved employment access, workplace acceptance, retention, and dignity at work for transgender persons. The figure underscores that durable inclusion outcomes emerge when public, private, and civil society actors function as collaborative partners rather than isolated stakeholders, thereby aligning closely with the objectives of the study.

Since the figure emphasizes institutional roles, implementation mechanisms, and outcome-level impacts, a thematic review-based design is appropriate to capture patterns across policies, programs, and partnership initiatives. Government reports, policy documents, corporate disclosures, and program evaluations provide evidence corresponding to the figure’s input and process components. At the same time, employment outcomes, inclusion indicators, and livelihood measures reflect the outcome layer. This alignment ensures conceptual coherence between the theoretical framework and the analytical strategy.

It should be noted the figure is based on the assumption that workplace exclusion of transgender individuals is structurally embedded and cannot be addressed through isolated organizational efforts alone. It assumes that government legitimacy, private sector capacity, and intermediary facilitation are complementary and interdependent. The figure further assumes that inclusion

outcomes are influenced not only by formal policies but also by organizational culture, managerial commitment, and support mechanisms within workplaces.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study contributes conceptually by presenting links between policy frameworks, private sector practices, and intermediary facilitation to measurable inclusion outcomes. Practically, it highlights the importance of coordinated action, institutional accountability, and sustainability-focused interventions in promoting workplace inclusion. The findings underscore that inclusion is not achieved through isolated initiatives but through systemic collaboration across sectors. It can be concluded that public–private partnerships represent a viable and impactful mechanism for advancing transgender-inclusive workplace practices in India. The findings demonstrate that collaborative governance structures effectively translate inclusive policies into tangible employment opportunities, foster dignified workplace environments, and support long-term economic empowerment of transgender persons. The acceptance of both hypotheses confirms that PPPs play a decisive role in addressing structural exclusion within the labour market.

As the study relies solely on secondary data, no direct human participation was involved. Ethical standards were maintained through the use of appropriate citations and the responsible interpretation of published information. The study is limited by the availability and depth of secondary data and may not fully capture informal or undocumented workplace experiences. Future implications of this research extend to policy formulation, organizational strategy, and academic inquiry. Policymakers may utilize the proposed figure to design integrated PPP frameworks that prioritize both social justice and economic productivity. Organizations can adopt the figure and conduct quantitative assessments to strengthen inclusive human resource practices and align them with broader development goals. For researchers, this study provides a foundation for empirical testing, comparative studies, and longitudinal assessments of inclusion outcomes across regions and sectors.

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