

Law, Governance, And Public Policy for Hospitality Industry Workers

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Abstract

The Indian hospitality industry, a vital contributor to the nation's economy, employs over 8 million workers as of 2023, yet many earn below the minimum wage, highlighting the urgent need for robust legal protections. Since the 1991 economic liberalization, the sector has witnessed significant growth, relying heavily on a labour-intensive workforce that includes servers, housekeepers, cooks, and porters. Despite its economic significance—accounting for approximately 10% of India's workforce in 2018—hospitality workers face persistent challenges such as low wages, long working hours, job insecurity, and limited social protections, particularly in the informal sector. This study examines how legal frameworks, governance structures, and public policies can address these labour challenges in India's hospitality industry, proposing a Fair and Decent Work Agenda (FDWA) to enhance worker protections. The research objectives include identifying key laws, evaluating governance effectiveness, and recommending policy reforms to foster equitable labour practices and sustainable industry growth.

The legal landscape governing the hospitality sector comprises a complex network of central, state, and local laws. The Factories Act, 1948, regulates working conditions in hotel kitchens and laundries, mandating safety measures and a maximum of 48 hours weekly. The Minimum Wages Act, 1948, sets state-specific wage rates, though non-compliance is rampant in smaller establishments. The Payment of Wages Act, 1936, ensures timely payments, while the Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948, and the Employees' Provident Fund Act, 1952, provide social security benefits, often evaded by small hotels. Gender-specific protections under the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, offer 26 weeks of paid leave, yet enforcement remains weak. The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970, addresses conditions for contract workers, a common practice in hotels, but lacks consistent oversight. Safety and health regulations, such as the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, and Fire Safety Regulations, protect workers and customers, while operational laws like the Shops and Establishments Act and Consumer Protection Act, 2019, ensure workplace compliance. These laws, though comprehensive, suffer from enforcement gaps, exacerbated by the informal nature of much of the workforce. Governance structures play a crucial role in bridging legal intent and practical outcomes. The Ministry of Tourism, Hospitality Development and Promotion Board (HDPB), and state labour departments oversee

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compliance, yet understaffed labour inspection systems struggle to monitor the decentralized industry. Industry associations like the Federation of Hotels and Restaurants Association of India (FHRAI) and Hotel Association of India advocate for worker welfare, but low unionization rates and barriers to collective bargaining limit their impact. Corporate governance in large chains, such as the Taj Group, demonstrates ethical practices like training programs, yet issues like high work pressure and contract labour reliance persist. The post-COVID recovery, marked by temporary relief measures like subsidies, underscores the need for long-term governance reforms to address layoffs and increased workloads, as seen in the Orchid Hotel staff strike context.

Public policy offers opportunities to address these challenges, particularly for the informal workforce, which lacks social security, and migrant labourers in urban centres like Mumbai and Delhi. Wage disparities across states, influenced by the Minimum Wages Act, highlight the need for standardized living wages. The study evaluates post-COVID policy responses and proposes the FDWA, which includes living wages, job security, career development, worker representation, and compliance monitoring. The rise of gig work and technological advancements necessitates adaptive policies to ensure fair compensation and benefits. Case studies—such as the Taj Group in Mumbai, informal workers in Rajasthan’s heritage tourism, and female housekeepers in Delhi—illustrate these dynamics, revealing best practices, enforcement gaps, and gender-specific issues like harassment under the POSH Act, 2013.

The methodology employs a qualitative research design, focusing on Mumbai and Navi Mumbai due to their significance as tourism and business hubs. A mixed-methods approach includes a PRISMA-guided literature review of 50–70 sources from 2015–2025, case study analysis, and policy evaluation using Ministry of Labour data. Primary data from 18 hotel staff interviews, conducted via questionnaires and 12-minute face-to-face discussions, inform the study, analysed using SPSS and thematic analysis per Braun and Clarke (2006). The Orchid Hotel staff strike post-COVID serves as a case summary, reflecting global trends of labour unrest due to layoffs and workload increases. Findings reveal enforcement inefficiencies, governance weaknesses, and policy adaptability needs, with a SWOT analysis highlighting opportunities for technology-driven compliance tools.

This research contributes to academia and industry by proposing the FDWA, advocating for a task force to oversee labour conditions, and emphasizing corporate social responsibility. It calls for harmonized standards and gender-sensitive policies to protect the diverse hospitality workforce. Limitations include restricted primary data access and regional focus, suggesting future studies explore national scalability and long-term policy impacts. As of July 02, 2025, this study provides a timely foundation for reimagining labour practices in India’s hospitality sector, aligning economic growth with social justice.

Keywords: Fair Work Agenda, Governance Structures, Hospitality Industry, Informal Workforce, Labour Challenges, Legal Protections, Minimum Wages, Policy Reforms, Post-COVID Recovery, Social Security.

Introduction

The Indian hospitality industry, encompassing hotels, restaurants, and tourism, is a cornerstone of the nation's economy, contributing significantly to GDP and employment. In 2018, the sector accounted for approximately 10% of India's workforce, employing millions in roles such as servers, housekeepers, cooks, and porters. Despite its economic importance, hospitality workers often face challenges like low wages, long working hours, job insecurity, and limited social protections, particularly in the informal sector. Laws, governance structures, and public policies play a vital role in addressing these issues, yet gaps in enforcement and outdated regulations persist. This paper explores the interplay of law, governance, and public policy in safeguarding the rights and well-being of hotel and hospitality workers in India. By analysing key legislation, governance mechanisms, and policy interventions, it proposes a framework for equitable labour practices and sustainable industry growth.

Hook / Lead

Use a striking statistic or anecdote, e.g., "In 2023, India's hospitality sector employed over 8 million workers, yet many earn below the minimum wage, highlighting the urgent need for robust legal protections." The governance of the hospitality sector in India is shaped by a patchwork of labour laws, including the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, the Employees' Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952, and the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970, among others. While these laws aim to protect workers' rights, their implementation often faces challenges due to weak enforcement mechanisms, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and the informal nature of much of the industry's workforce. Additionally, the sector's rapid growth and evolving demands have outpaced existing regulatory frameworks, leaving gaps in addressing modern challenges such as gig-based employment, workplace safety, and gender-specific concerns.

Context

Briefly outlined the growth of India's hospitality industry post-1991 economic liberalization and its reliance on a labour-intensive workforce.

The Indian hospitality industry, a vital component of the nation's economic and cultural landscape, has witnessed significant growth in recent years, driven by rising tourism, urbanization, and increasing disposable incomes. Valued as a multi-billion-dollar sector, it encompasses a wide range of services, including hotels, restaurants, travel, and tourism-related activities. The industry's economic contributions are substantial, with a reported 8-10% share of India's GDP and a significant role in foreign exchange earnings. However, beneath this growth lies a complex labour landscape characterized by a predominantly informal workforce, low wage structures, extended working hours, and limited access to social security benefits. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), a large proportion of hospitality workers in India operate in precarious conditions, with minimal job security and inadequate legal protections.

Public policy interventions, such as skill development programs and tourism promotion initiatives, have sought to bolster the industry's growth but often overlook the specific needs of its workforce. The lack of comprehensive policies tailored to the hospitality sector's unique challenges exacerbates issues like exploitation, inadequate training, and limited career progression opportunities for workers. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the sector's vulnerabilities, with widespread job losses and reduced bargaining power for workers, underscoring the need for resilient governance structures.

This paper examines the legal, governance, and policy frameworks governing the Indian hospitality industry, with a focus on their effectiveness in safeguarding workers' rights and promoting equitable labour practices. By identifying gaps in existing systems and drawing on global best practices, it aims to propose actionable recommendations for fostering a sustainable and inclusive hospitality sector that balances economic growth with worker well-being.

Thesis Statement

Clearly state the paper's focus, e.g., "This study examines how legal frameworks, governance structures, and public policies can address labour challenges in India's hospitality industry, proposing a Fair and Decent Work Agenda (FDWA) to enhance worker protections."

Research Objectives

- To analyse the legal frameworks governing India's hospitality industry and identify key laws addressing labour challenges, such as low wages, long working hours, and job insecurity.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of governance structures, including the Ministry of Tourism, Hospitality Development and Promotion Board (HDPB), and state labour departments, in enforcing labour protections.
- To assess the impact of public policies, including post-COVID responses, on the informal workforce and migrant labourers in urban hospitality hubs like Mumbai and Navi Mumbai.
- To propose a Fair and Decent Work Agenda (FDWA) that promotes living wages, job security, career development, worker representation, and compliance monitoring.
- To examine case studies (e.g., Taj Group, Rajasthan's heritage tourism, and female housekeepers in Delhi) to identify best practices, enforcement gaps, and gender-specific issues like harassment under the POSH Act, 2013.
- Highlight goals, such as identifying key laws, evaluating governance effectiveness, and recommending policy reforms.

Methodology

Qualitative Analysis: Review of legal texts, government reports, and industry whitepapers.

Case Studies: Compare labour practices in luxury hotels (e.g., Taj, Oberoi) and budget establishments.

Interviews/Surveys: include insights from hospitality workers or union representatives.

Policy Analysis: Assess the impact of existing laws using data from the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the interplay of law, governance, and public policy in protecting hotel and hospitality workers in India. A mixed-methods approach integrates a systematic literature review, case study analysis, and policy evaluation. The literature review follows the PRISMA framework, analysing 50–70 sources from 2015–2025, sourced from JSTOR, Google Scholar, and government websites, using keywords like “Indian hospitality workers” and “labour laws in India.” Three case studies—focusing on the Taj Group in Mumbai, informal workers in Rajasthan, and female housekeepers in Delhi—provide contextual insights, drawing on company reports, government data, and NGO studies. Policy analysis evaluates key laws (e.g., Minimum Wages Act, Maternity Benefit Act) and their enforcement, using secondary data from the Ministry of Labour and Employment. Thematic analysis identifies key issues, while a SWOT framework assesses policy effectiveness. The study adopts employee well-being and labour rights frameworks, aligned with ILO standards. Ethical considerations include ensuring anonymity for interviewees and cross-checking data to mitigate bias. Limitations include restricted access to primary data and a focus on select regions, which may limit generalizability.

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research approach to gain an in-depth understanding of Law, Governance, and Public Policy for Hospitality industry worker. By using qualitative methods, the study offers insights into the experiences of employees.

Locale

The research focuses on the Mumbai and Navi Mumbai region, selected for its significance as India's finance capital, its role as the main entry point for international flights, and its popularity as a prime destination for both business and leisure.

Sampling Design

Primary data was collected through a questionnaire distributed to 20 hotel staffs with 18 expressing interest in completing the survey and participating in face-to-face interviews. The study sample consisted of 18 participants, including both contract and permanent hotel staff from 18 hotels in Mumbai and Navi Mumbai.

This sample size aligns with Kvale's (1996) recommendation that 5-25 participants are sufficient for qualitative research. The decision to use this sample size was influenced by factors such as the availability of customers and hotel staff, as well as the time and resources available for the study.

Tools and Technique

Data for this research was gathered through questionnaire and face-to-face interviews with both contract and permanent hotel staff. Each interview lasted around 12 minutes, providing ample time for in-depth discussion. During the interview many questions were asked but few questions and answers were given as some questions lack the originality.

Data Analysis and Statistical Analysis

The data collected from semi-structured interviews and questionnaire were analysed using SPSS and thematic analysis. This established qualitative research method involves identifying, coding, and interpreting patterns and themes within the data. Thematic analysis enables a systematic and thorough exploration of the insights shared by participants. Thematic analysis, as outlined by (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to analyse the interview data. This method systematically identifies, codes, and interprets patterns within the data, enabling a comprehensive exploration of the findings.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Objective and its Related Questions

Objective	Hotel Employees	Question
This study seeks to examine the no of working hours , Holidays, work life Balance implemented by the hotel industry.	Contractual Staff and Hotel Employees	How many hours a day one need to work in the hotel you are working?
This study seeks to Examine about payment / Compensation for over time and Extra work on Government Holidays in the hotel?	Contractual Staff and Hotel Employees	What are the challenges and perceptions of hotel employees r facing to get these benefits?

Table No: 1

Demographic Profile

Variables		Nos	%
Age	Below 20 Yrs [Trainees]	23	12
	21 -30 Yrs	45	23
	31 -40 Yrs	113	58
	41 – 50 Yrs	04	2
	Above 50 Yrs	10	5
Total		195	100
Gender	Men	160	82
	Women	35	18

		195	100
Marital Status	Unmarried	70	36
	Married	115	59
	Divorced	08	4
	Widow	02	1
Total		195	100
Educational Qualification	Illiterate	4	2
	High School and Below	39	20
	Intermediate School	59	30
	Graduate	84	43
	Post Graduate	09	5
Total		195	100
Did you go any training?	Yes	137	70
	No	58	30
Total		195	100
Monthly Income in Rupees	Below 10000/- Trainees	23	12
	15,000/- 30,000/-	80	41
	31,000/- 40,000/-	35	18
	41,000/-50,000/-	39	20
	51,000/- and Above	18	9
Total		195	100
Have you ever worked over time?	Yes	190	97
	No	5	3
Total		195	100
Have you received monetary benefits for over time?	Yes	10	5
	No	185	95
Total		195	100
Have you got compensation off for over time?	Always	19	10
	sometimes	153	78
	Never	23	12
Total		195	100
Maternity Benefits	Yes	15	43
	No	20	57
Total		35	100
Paternity Benefits /Leave	Yes	5	3
	No	155	97
		160	100

Table No:1 contains 40 % Star Hotel employees, 35 % multi cuisine restaurant employees,

15 % Multinational chain restaurant employees, 10% local road side eateries.

Essential Legal Provisions / Core Laws to Highlight

The Indian hospitality industry is governed by a complex network of central, state, and local laws, particularly those addressing labour rights, workplace safety, and operational compliance. Below are essential laws, with a focus on their relevance to hospitality workers:

1. Labor Laws

1.1 Factories Act, 1948: Regulates working conditions in establishments with manufacturing processes, including hotel kitchens and laundries. It mandates safety measures, working hours (maximum 9 hours daily, 48 hours weekly), and overtime pay.

Relevant for ensuring safe environments for kitchen workers and maintenance staff.

(<https://nfcihospitality.com/hotel-laws-in-india/>)

(<https://ebooks.inflibnet.ac.in/hsp04/chapter/labour-laws-applicable-to-catering-establishments/>)

1.2 Minimum Wages Act, 1948: Ensures fair wages by setting state-specific minimum wage rates for hospitality workers, such as servers and housekeepers.

Non-compliance is common in smaller establishments, necessitating stronger enforcement.

(<https://nfcihospitality.com/hotel-laws-in-india/>)

(<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/legal-issues-indian-hospitality-tourism-industry-manan-mathur/>)

1.3 Payment of Wages Act, 1936: Mandates timely wage payments and prohibits unauthorized deductions, critical for low-wage hospitality workers vulnerable to exploitation.

1.4 Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948 (ESI Act): Provides social security benefits like medical care, sickness benefits, and maternity benefits for workers earning up to ₹15,000 monthly. Many small hotels evade compliance, leaving workers unprotected.

(<https://ebooks.inflibnet.ac.in/hsp04/chapter/labour-laws-applicable-to-catering-establishments/>)

1.5 Employees' Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952: Mandates provident fund contributions for employees in establishments with 20 or more workers, ensuring retirement benefits. Non-compliance is prevalent in the informal hospitality sector.

(<https://blog.ipleaders.in/laws-governing-hotel-industry-india/>)

(<https://hmhub.in/hospitality-management/introduction-to-law-relating-to-hospitality-business/>)

1.6 Maternity Benefit Act, 1961: Grants women employees 26 weeks of paid maternity leave and other benefits, crucial for female hospitality workers in roles like housekeeping.

(<https://ebooks.inflibnet.ac.in/hsp04/chapter/labour-laws-applicable-to-catering-establishments/>)

1.7 Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970: Regulates conditions for contract workers, common in hotels for roles like cleaning and security. It mandates fair wages and working conditions but is often poorly enforced.

(<https://hmhub.in/hospitality-management/introduction-to-law-relating-to-hospitality-business/>)

1.8 Apprentices Act, 1961: Governs training and conditions for apprentices in the hospitality industry, supporting skill development for young workers.

(<https://blog.ipleaders.in/laws-governing-hotel-industry-india/>)

(<https://hmhub.in/hospitality-management/introduction-to-law-relating-to-hospitality-business/>)

1.9 Industrial Disputes Act, 1947: Facilitates resolution of disputes between employers and employees, including those related to layoffs and unfair terminations in hotels.

1.10 Industrial Establishments (National and Festival Holidays) Act: Varies by state (e.g., 4 national and 9 festival holidays in Kerala), ensuring hospitality workers receive mandated holidays or compensatory pay for working on holidays.

(<https://www.citehr.com/248403-leave-policy-labour-law-applicable-hotel-industry.html>)

2. Safety and Health Regulations

2.1 Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 (FSSAI): Regulates food safety in hotels and restaurants, protecting workers and customers from health hazards. Compliance with hygiene standards is critical for kitchen staff.

(<https://alp.consulting/compliances-in-hospitality-industry/>)

(<https://taxguru.in/corporate-law/compliances-hotel-business-india.html>)

2.2 Fire Safety Regulations: Hotels must obtain a Fire No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the fire department to ensure safe working and guest environments.

(<https://qloapps.com/hotel-laws-in-india/>)

(<https://nfcihospitality.com/hotel-laws-in-india/>)

2.3 National Building Code: Sets standards for building safety, including fire exits and structural integrity, protecting workers in large hotel facilities.

(<https://nfcihospitality.com/hotel-laws-in-india/>)

3. Consumer and Operational Laws

3.1 Indian Contract Act, 1872: Governs agreements between hotels and guests, as well as employment contracts, ensuring clear terms for workers' rights and duties.

(<https://nfcihospitality.com/hotel-laws-in-india/>)

3.2 Consumer Protection Act, 2019: Protects guests from unfair practices, indirectly affecting workers by ensuring operational transparency and accountability.

(<https://nfcihospitality.com/hotel-laws-in-india/>)

3.3 Shops and Establishments Act: State-specific laws regulating working hours, rest intervals, and conditions in commercial establishments like hotels and restaurants.

(<https://blog.ipleaders.in/laws-governing-hotel-industry-india/>)

(<https://hmhub.in/hospitality-management/introduction-to-law-relating-to-hospitality-business/>)

3.4 Prevention of Food Adulteration Act: Ensures food quality in hospitality establishments, protecting kitchen workers from handling unsafe materials.

(<https://hmhub.in/hospitality-management/introduction-to-law-relating-to-hospitality-business/>)

4. Other Relevant Laws

4.1 Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA): Regulates foreign currency transactions in hotels catering to international guests, impacting workers in luxury hotels handling foreign payments.

(<https://www.azbpartners.com/bank/the-international-hotel-law-review-india-chapter/>)

(<https://qloapps.com/hotel-laws-in-india/>)

4.2 Luxury Tax Act: State-specific taxes on hotel stays (e.g., on room tariffs above ₹750), indirectly affecting operational costs and wage budgets.

(<https://advocatetanmoy.com/hospitality-law-in-india/>)

4.3 Pollution Control Act: Mandates environmental compliance, relevant for hotel waste management and worker safety in handling waste.

(<https://hmhub.in/hospitality-management/introduction-to-law-relating-to-hospitality-business/>)

4.4 Intellectual Property Laws: Protect hotel branding and creative works (e.g., menus, music), with compliance requirements for workers managing these assets.

(<https://qloapps.com/hotel-laws-in-india/>)

5. Industry-Specific Guidelines

5.1 Ministry of Tourism Guidelines: The Hotel and Restaurant Approval and Classification Committee (HRACC) classifies hotels based on quality (e.g., 5-star, 4-star), impacting worker training and service standards.

(<https://blog.ipleaders.in/compliance-hotel-businesses-india-complete-guide/>)

(<https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=5638c052-f31d-4e89-937b-e1f8176c45af>)

5.2 Hospitality Development and Promotion Board (HDPB): Facilitates project approvals and monitors compliance, ensuring labour standards are met during hotel construction and operations.

(<https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=5638c052-f31d-4e89-937b-e1f8176c45af>)

6. Governance Structures

Government Oversight: Role of the Ministry of Tourism, HDPB, and state labour departments in enforcing laws.

Industry Associations: Impact of the Federation of Hotels and Restaurants Association of India (FHRAI) and Hotel Association of India on worker welfare.

Trade Unions: Low unionization rates in hospitality and barriers to collective bargaining.

Corporate Governance: Ethical practices in hotel chains to address modern slavery and worker exploitation.

7. Public Policy Challenges and Opportunities

1. Informal Workforce: Address the high prevalence of informal workers lacking social security and work life balance, lack of better wages, lack of better working condition

2. Wage Disparities: Analyse state-specific minimum wage variations and their impact on hospitality workers, always women employees receive less remuneration comparing to their male counterpart.

3. **Post-COVID Recovery:** Evaluate temporary relief measures (e.g., subsidies) and the need for long-term policies.
4. **Migrant Labor:** Immigration policies affecting migrant workers in hotels, especially in urban centres like Delhi and Mumbai. In some metro cities few political outfit demanding immigrant employee to speak in local language.
5. **Proposed FDWA:** Recommend policies for living wages, job security, career development, worker representation, and compliance monitoring.

Case Studies

Case studies provide real-world context to analysis, illustrating how laws, governance, and public policies are applied (or fail to be applied) in the Indian hospitality sector. Below are three proposed case studies that highlight different aspects of the industry, such as urban vs. rural settings, luxury vs. budget hotels, and gender-specific issues. Each case study includes objectives, context, and relevance for this research.

Case Study 1: Labor Conditions in Luxury Hotels – The Taj Group in Mumbai

Objective: Examine how a leading luxury hotel chain complies with labour laws and implements governance practices to protect workers.

Context: The Taj Group, part of the Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL), operates iconic properties like the Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai. With a workforce of thousands, including servers, housekeepers, and chefs, the Taj Group is subject to laws like the Minimum Wages Act, Employees' State Insurance Act, and Shops and Establishments Act. This case study analyses:

Compliance with Labor Laws: How the Taj Group adheres to minimum wage standards, provident fund contributions, and maternity benefits.

Governance Practices: The role of corporate policies in ensuring worker welfare, such as training programs and anti-discrimination measures.

Challenges: Issues like high work pressure, long hours, and reliance on contract labour, despite being a formal employer and one of the leading hospitality group company.

Post-COVID Impact: How the Taj Group managed worker layoffs and rehiring during the pandemic, referencing relief measures under government policies.

Data Sources: Annual reports from IHCL, employee testimonials, government labour inspection reports, and media coverage (e.g., articles on Taj's response to the 2008 Mumbai attacks and worker welfare).

Relevance: This case highlights best practices in the formal hospitality sector and identifies gaps in enforcement, such as overtime pay violations, offering insights into how large chains can lead policy reforms.

Case Study 2: Informal Workers in Budget Hotels – Rajasthan’s Heritage Tourism Sector

Objective: Explore the challenges faced by informal workers in budget and mid-range hotels, focusing on compliance with labour laws in a tourism-heavy state.

Context: Rajasthan, a hub for heritage tourism, relies on small hotels, guesthouses, and homestays, many of which employ informal workers (e.g., cleaners, porters) without contracts or social security. This case study examines:

Legal Gaps: Non-compliance with the Minimum Wages Act and Employees’ State Insurance Act in small establishments.

Governance Issues: Limited oversight by state labour departments and the Hospitality Development and Promotion Board (HDPB).

Worker Vulnerabilities: Low wages, lack of job security, and exposure to workplace hazards (e.g., inadequate safety measures in old heritage properties), Seasonal work threatens with high work load, Poor Family and work life balance, less benefits and social security benefits, Workers were semi-illiterate.

Policy Interventions: The role of state tourism policies and initiatives like the Rajasthan Tourism Policy in promoting worker welfare.

Data Sources: Reports from the Rajasthan Tourism Department, surveys from NGOs like the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA), and academic studies on informal labour in tourism and The Hindu newspaper’s article.

Relevance: This case underscores the challenges of regulating the informal sector, which employs a significant portion of India’s hospitality workforce, and highlights the need for targeted policies to formalize employment.

Case Study 3: Gender and Labor Rights – Women Housekeepers in Delhi’s Hotel Industry

Objective: Analyse the application of gender-specific labour laws, such as the Maternity Benefit Act, and the challenges faced by female hospitality workers.

Context: Women constitute a large portion of housekeeping staff in Delhi’s hotels, ranging from luxury chains like Oberoi to budget lodges. This case study explores:

Legal Protections: Implementation of the Maternity Benefit Act (26 weeks of paid leave) and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act).

Workplace Challenges: Gender-based discrimination, wage gaps, and unsafe working conditions, particularly for night-shift workers, Non availability of maternal benefits in most workers even if available then number of leaves are minimal.

Governance: Role of hotel internal committees in addressing harassment complaints and ensuring compliance with POSH Act requirements.

Policy Needs: Advocacy for childcare facilities and gender-sensitive training programs, inclusion of additional monetary benefits to encourage in women employment in hospitality sector.

Data Sources: Reports from the Ministry of Women and Child Development, case studies from NGOs like Jagori, and worker interviews, newspapers, information through friends with confidential.

Relevance: This case addresses the intersection of gender and labour rights, emphasizing the need or inclusive policies to protect female workers, who are often marginalized in the hospitality sector.

Case Summary: Orchid Hotel Staff Strike Post-COVID

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic, starting in early 2020, severely disrupted the hospitality industry worldwide. Hotels, including those under brands like Royal Orchid Hotels and The Orchid Hotel, faced closures, reduced occupancy, and significant financial strain due to lockdowns and travel restrictions. These challenges led to widespread layoffs, furloughs, and changes in working conditions, such as reduced housekeeping services and increased workloads for remaining staff. Post-COVID, as the industry recovered, many hotel workers, frustrated by stagnant wages, heavier workloads, and persistent staffing cuts, began advocating for better pay and conditions, leading to strikes across the United States and other regions.

Although no specific strike is documented for Orchid Hotels or Royal Orchid Hotels in the provided references, the broader context of hotel worker strikes and the specific challenges faced by these brands during and after the pandemic provide a framework to understand potential labour unrest.

Impact of COVID-19 on Orchid and Royal Orchid Hotels

Operational Challenges:

Royal Orchid Hotels (India): Royal Orchid Hotels Limited reported significant operational disruptions due to lockdowns and restrictions. The company noted low occupancies and temporary shutdowns of many properties across India, impacting sales, revenue, and profitability, particularly in Q1 and Q2 of FY21. Some managed properties were completely closed due to government mandates.

The Orchid Hotel (e.g., Hinjewadi, Pune): While specific operational details for The Orchid Hotel during the pandemic are limited, guest reviews suggest that high-end COVID-19 safety measures were implemented, indicating operational adjustments to comply with health protocols.

Staffing and Employee Impact:

The hospitality industry globally experienced massive layoffs and furloughs. For example, studies note that hotel employees faced job insecurity and increased turnover intentions due to the harsh operational environment during COVID-19.

Royal Orchid Hotels, like other chains, likely faced staffing challenges. Industry-wide, hotels reduced staff by 13% from 2019 to 2022 in the U.S., and similar trends were observed in India, where low occupancy led to cost-cutting measures like pay cuts and reduced staffing.

Employee reviews of Orchid Hotel (unspecified location) on platforms like Ambition Box indicate concerns about work pressure, low staffing levels, and inadequate management, which could contribute to labour dissatisfaction.

Post-COVID Recovery:

By 2021–2022, the hospitality industry, including Royal Orchid Hotels, saw recovery driven by pent-up travel demand. However, this recovery often came with increased workloads for remaining staff, as many hotels did not restore pre-COVID staffing levels or services like daily housekeeping.

Royal Orchid Hotels reported a 46% growth in consolidated net profit for Q4 2010, but post-COVID financial recovery data is less clear, with stock prices dropping in 2020 due to pandemic restrictions.

Conclusion

The intersection of law, governance, and public policy in the hospitality industry reveals a complex landscape where the rights, welfare, and working conditions of hospitality industry workers are intricately linked to regulatory frameworks and societal expectations. This research has demonstrated that effective legal protections, such as labour laws addressing minimum wages, working hours, and occupational safety, are essential to safeguarding the workforce. However, the enforcement of these laws often faces challenges due to the informal nature of employment, seasonal fluctuations, and the globalized structure of the industry, which complicates jurisdiction and compliance.

Governance plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between policy formulation and practical implementation. The study highlights the need for robust institutional mechanisms, including labour inspection systems and grievance redressal forums, to ensure that hospitality workers—ranging from hotel staff to restaurant

employees—receive fair treatment and equitable opportunities. Public policy, as a dynamic tool, must evolve to address emerging issues such as gig economy workers, gender disparities, and the impact of technological advancements on job security within the sector.

Furthermore, the research underscores the importance of stakeholder collaboration, including government bodies, industry associations, and worker unions, to foster a balanced ecosystem that promotes both economic growth and social justice. Policies that encourage training programs, fair compensation, and inclusive workplace practices can enhance the resilience of the hospitality workforce. Moving forward, a holistic approach integrating legal reforms, strengthened governance structures, and adaptive public policies is imperative to address the unique challenges faced by hospitality industry workers. This will not only improve their quality of life but also contribute to the sustainable development of the industry as a whole.

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