

Inclusive Organizational Practices and Employee Engagement: A Conceptual Model Based on Social Exchange Theory

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ABSTRACT

Engaging employees has become an important determinant of organizational performance and most organizations are yet to achieve high levels of employee engagement despite the adoption of diversity and inclusion programs. Inclusive organizational practices encompassing the concepts of fair treatment, participation, belongingness, and supportive leadership have been identified as the key factors of positive employee outcomes. Nevertheless, the mechanisms that underlie the role of inclusive organizational practices in the process of employee engagement are not sufficiently investigated. Relying on the Social Exchange Theory, this research will form a conceptual framework to understand the association between inclusive organizational practices and employee engagement. In particular, the research hypothesis states that inclusive organizational practices are socio-emotional resources that promote the engagement of employees, both directly and indirectly, via mediation of the perceived organizational support. Moreover, the model adds the trust climate as the moderating variable that reinforces the correlation between the inclusive organizational practices and employee engagement. The researchers use a conceptual research design as it has been conducted through a thorough review and synthesis of existing literature published in the period between 1990 and 2025. The proposed study will add value to the literature by not only expanding the scope of the Social Exchange Theory to the context of employee engagement in terms of inclusive organizational practices but also by incorporating the elements of mediation and moderation into one conceptual framework. The suggested paradigm can be beneficial to any organization that aims to improve the involvement of employees by incorporating inclusivity in the workplace. The results indicate that inclusive, supportive working conditions are highly strategic in enhancing motivation programs among employees, relational commitment, and organizational performance.

Keywords –Inclusive organizational practices, employee engagement, social exchange theory, perceived organizational support, trust climate, inclusion.

INTRODUCTION

The modern day dynamic and competitive organizational environment has made the engagement of employees a crucial factor that determines the organizational effectiveness, productivity, and sustainability. Employees who are engaged will be more energetic, committed and interested in the jobs they perform and this leads to better individual and organizational performance (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Nonetheless, employee engagement is a major challenge that many organizations do not succeed in promoting. The recent workplace trends have underlined the need to focus on the diverse organizational practices towards developing positive environments that increase the motivation and engagement of the employees. Inclusive organizational practices make employees feel respected, appreciated, and engaged in organizational procedures without giving them any consideration of their backgrounds (Downey et al., 2015).

The increased diversity of the global workforce has also added to the significance of inclusion as an important strategic priority. It has been found that the engagement of employees, trust, and commitment to the organization are positively impacted by inclusive working environments (Jerónimo et al., 2022; Fan et al.,

2023). A global workplace survey indicates that a low number of employees (only 23 percent of the global workforce) are currently engaged in their jobs, and it is necessary to find the factors in the organization that contribute to engagement (Gallup, 2023). With the help of inclusive practices, workers have access to socio-emotional resources like fairness, belongingness, and respect that enhance their association with the organization and facilitate their involvement (Goswami and Goswami, 2018).

An effective theoretical framework that can be used to explain this relationship is the Social Exchange Theory. According to the theory, employees would feel obliged to repay their organizations by having positive attitudes and behaviors like engagement when employees feel that they are treated in a positive way (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

Problem Statement

Although most organizations have spent more in diversifying and inclusion programs, employee engagement rates are relatively low within various industries (Gallup, 2023). Inclusion policies can be applied in many organizations, but employees might not necessarily find these practices as sincere and helpful. This introduces a disconnect between organizational plans and the employee perception. Moreover, although the inclusion practices are believed to increase engagement, the psychological processes behind the association are not well understood. The organizational practices that are aimed at inclusive practices will fail in bringing the intended impacts unless there is a clear understanding on how the practice affects the engagement of the employees.

Research Gap

The available literature has developed a positive relationship between inclusive organizational practices and employee engagement (Downey et al., 2015; Jerónimo et al., 2022). However, several gaps remain. First, there has been little research to support the mediating nature of perceived organizational support in interpreting how inclusive practices result in employee engagement. Second, little attention is given to the moderating effect of trust climate that would enhance or undermine this relationship. Third, most of the studies that have been conducted so far are more inclined towards direct relationships without considering the mediation and moderation processes in a broad theoretical context. Lastly, conceptual models that are based on Social Exchange Theory that describe inclusive organizational practices as relational exchange resources that affect engagement are lacking.

Research Objective

The ultimate aim of the research paper is to come up with a conceptual framework of the association between inclusive organizational practices and employee engagement in terms of Social Exchange Theory. In particular, the research will focus on:

- To Explore and understand the association between inclusive organizational practices and employee engagement.
- To comprehend the mediating impact of perceived organizational support in this relationship.
- To understand the moderating effect of trust climate on this relationship.

Research Method

The research design adopted in this study is conceptual in that it aims at generating a theoretical model out of the existing literature. The model is constructed through perusing and synthesizing over 30 peer-reviewed research articles published between 1990 and 2025, including the area of inclusive organizational practices, the Social Exchange Theory, and employee engagement. Conceptual research is the correct one when it comes to theory building and model development especially when the empirical evidence is scattered (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). The proposed model has three main constructs, and one variable is a mediator, and the other one is moderating explaining the process of exchange that affects engagement.

Significance of the Study

This work contributes to the literature in a significant theoretical and practical way. In principle, it builds upon the Social Exchange Theory as it describes the role of inclusive organizational practices as socio-emotional exchange resources that drive employee engagement. It adds to the inclusion literature and the engagement literature by taking the mediation and moderation processes as one conceptual framework.

In practice, the paper offers useful information to organizations aiming at enhancing the engagement of employees using inclusive practices. Organizations can create more effective inclusion strategies by being aware of the role that perceived organizational support and trust climate plays. Since the profitability and productivity of organizations whose staff are engaged are increased by up to 21 times (Gallup, 2023), inclusion would be a powerful competitive benefit.

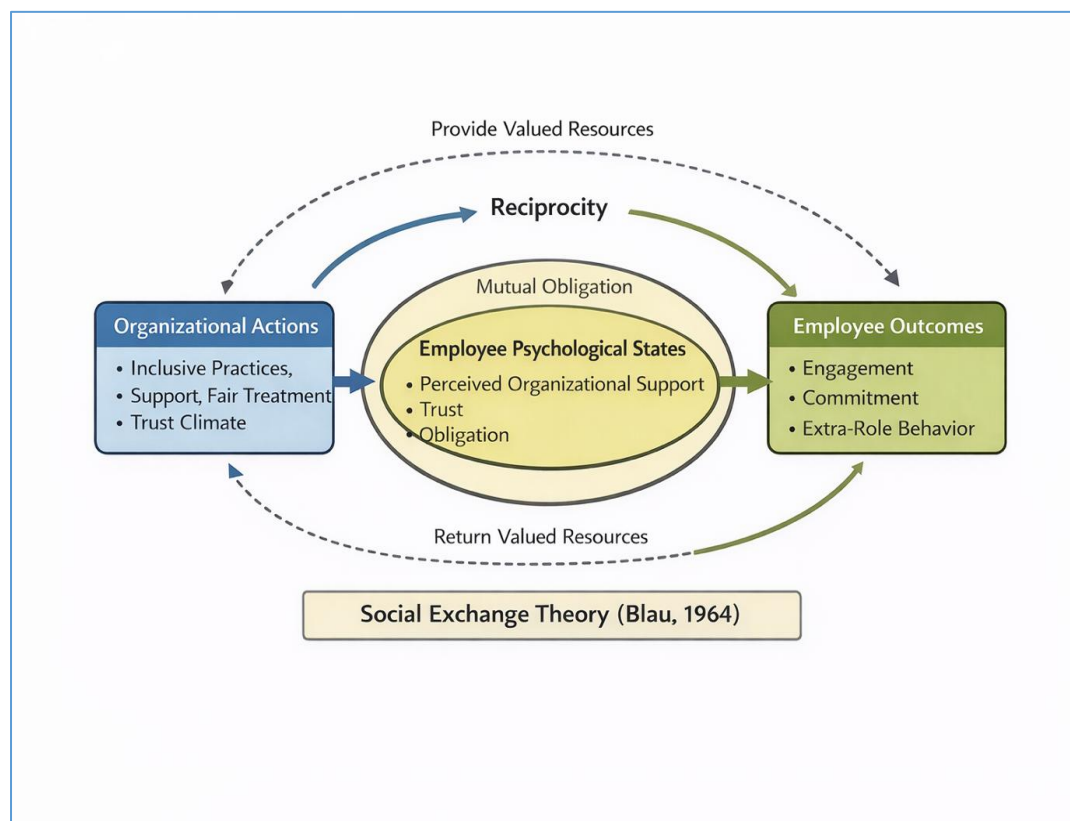
On the whole, the study can be used in furthering the understanding of inclusive practices in organizations and their contribution to increasing employee engagement.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Social Exchange Theory: Background, Propositions and Mechanisms.

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) offers an effective theoretical framework through which the interrelations between the employees and the organizations are comprehended. Blau (1964) has conceptualized the social exchange as a sequence of voluntary activities because of anticipation of future benefits when the very nature of the giveback was not specified and changed with time. In contrast to economical transactions where there exist formal contracts, social transactions rely on trust, good will and norms of relation. Blau believed that when people are valued by getting benefits, they become compelled to return the same to keep or maintain the relationships further. This is a norm of reciprocity which is the main mechanism that works behind the exchange processes.

Figure 1 – Social exchange theory



Source - Blau, 1964

Emerson (1976) also contributed to SET by highlighting the relational and structural aspect of exchange where social exchange is said to be the interdependent actors which depend on each-other to get the resources they appreciate. He emphasized the fact that exchange relationships are formed as a result of recurring contacts and motivated by the availability of resources and reliance. The input by Emerson highlights the fact that the exchange relations are not static, and they vary with time, establishing long-lasting relations of interdependency.

Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) adapted the use of SET to the organizational context and found it applicable in explaining the attitudes and behaviors of employees. They pointed out that the social exchange relations are characterized by the socio-emotional resources of respect, support, and recognition leading to the development of trust and commitment. As they defined, there are a number of fundamental mechanisms in which social exchange comes into play. Reciprocity means that there is a need to reciprocate favorable treatment with positive responses. Mutual obligation arises when both sides put resources into the relationship giving them a sense of obligation to each other. Repeated positive interactions form trust which decreases uncertainty and enhances commitment to relations. Social exchange relationships arise out of resource exchange, especially socio-emotional resources exchange. All these processes explain why positive organizational treatment results in positive employee outcomes.

Social Exchange within Organizational situations

In the organizations, organizational practices, policies, and managerial behavior are the starting point of social exchange relationships, which give signals that the organization highly values its employees. The employees make sense out of these practices in relation to organizational intent and support, which influence their attitudes and behaviors. When organizations offer supportive and inclusive practices, employees feel that the organization appreciates their efforts, and that it is concerned about their welfare, which results in the development of social exchange relationships.

One of the key differences in SET is the economic exchange and social exchange relationships (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Economic exchange deals with explicit and contractual commitments in which the employees work in exchange of financial benefits. These conversations are transactive, brief, and do not involve many emotions. Conversely, social exchange is a long-term obligation, but implicit and grounded on trust and relational investment. The relationships based on social exchange are not only regarding the job demands but also including emotional hook and commitment.

Notably, relationships that occur in social exchanges are built over time by repetition. The employees would build trust and the feeling of obligation to give back to the organizations as they willingly offer valuable resources over time. Such a continuous process of exchange creates long run relational exchange, which is characterized by loyalty, commitment and discretionary effort. Therefore, organizational practices are a major catalyst of social exchange relationships that define the engagement with employees and behavioral reactions.

Positioning Inclusive Organizational Practices as Social Exchange Resources

Inclusive organizational practices constitute important socio-emotional resources in the framework of social exchange. Inclusion is an organizational practice where the employees feel appreciated, honored and participating in organizational processes. In terms of social exchange, the practices are indicative of organizational investment in employees, thus, thereby, evoking corresponding reactions.

Respect is a primary socio-emotional factor that conveys the worth and value of the employees in the organization. When employees feel that they are treated with respect and warmth, then they feel that they are treated positively in relations and this builds trust of the employee and motivates them to return the same. The other important resource is fairness, which is the equitable treatment and unbiased organizational processes. Just organizational practices do not only increase the perceptions of justice among the employees, but also increase confidence in the organization.

When employees are given a chance to voice their opinions and engage in decision making, voice, which is defined as such, also enhances social exchange relationships. Giving voice cues that the organization appreciates the views and the input that employees make, hence increasing their feeling of belonging and relational attachment.

These inclusive practices establish exchange commitments due to the feeling by the employees that they are investments in the organization. In SET, people pay back positive treatment to have a balance on the exchange relationships (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Inclusive organizational practices, therefore, serve as socio-emotional resources that help in building trust, mutual obligation, and reciprocal engagement, which lead to the enhancement of the employee-organization relationship.

Conceptualization of Core Constructs

Inclusive Organizational Practices: Definition, Dimensions and Conceptual Domain

Inclusive organizational practices are organizational policies, leadership behaviours, and workplace processes that make employees feel that they are valued, respected and capable of contributing to organizational operations in all its fullness despite their background or identity. These practices ensure that the diversity is not only tolerated but also promoted by treating people with fairness and inflating their inclusion (Downey et al., 2015; Ezeafulukwe et al., 2024). The inclusion can be attributed to how well employees experience the work environment and feel that they are part and parcel of the organization and not just present in a diverse workforce (Goswami and Goswami, 2018).

According to scholars, inclusive organizational practices have various dimensions such as fair treatment, participation, support of belongingness and inclusive leadership. Fair treatment is the term which denotes unbiased and fair organizational processes and decisions. Employees will gain trust in the organization and will be more engaged when they feel that the performance evaluation, promotion, and resources are fairly distributed (Cenkci et al., 2021; Razzak et al., 2022). Fairness is an indicator of organizational integrity and strengthens the employees with their sense of relational value.

The other critical aspect of inclusion is participation, which is an opportunity of the employees to take part in the decision-making process and share their ideas. Engagement improves the feeling of control and psychological ownership of the employees thus increasing their attachment to the organization (Lubis, 2024). It has been shown that employees motivated to engage in organizational processes have more chances of displaying greater engagement and commitment to the organization (Jerónimo et al., 2022).

Belongness support denotes organizational practices that enhance the feeling of acceptance, respect and social integration by the employees. Inclusive cultures promote the sense of belonging through understanding personal input and conducive atmosphere (Cahyono, 2025). Feeling part of the organization leads to employees having more positive attitudes towards work and the organization, which increases engagement (Fan et al., 2023).

Inclusive leadership is an important mechanism in which inclusion is implemented. Inclusive leaders are welcoming, open, and sensitive to different voices, thus providing an atmosphere, in which employees feel significant and advocated (Atiku et al., 2024; Ly, 2024). Inclusive leadership improves the quality of relationships and increases the level of engagement among employees due to the development of trust and a sense of psychological safety (Choi et al., 2015; Vakira et al., 2023).

Notably, inclusion should be differentiated with other similar concepts but different, like diversity. Diversity means the representation of demographics, and inclusion is the subjective experience of being appreciated and engaged by employees (Downey et al., 2015). On the same note, inclusion does not focus on token policies or diversity programs that are based on compliance. Inclusion does not mean token representation without any significant involvement. Inclusion must be an organizational commitment to the psychological and relationship needs of the employees (Ayres, 2025). Inclusive organizational practices are therefore a multi-dimensional construct that involves fair treatment, participation, belongingness and inclusive leadership.

Employee Engagement: Conceptual Domain and Theoretical positioning

Employee engagement can be defined as a favorable, satisfying work-related mental condition that is defined by the active involvement of the employees to invest their cognitive, emotional, and physical energies in their work positions. Kahn (1990) initially developed engagement as the exploitation of the selves of organizational members to their work jobs where the employees are involved in harnessing their selves in a cognitive, emotional, and physical way when performing the role. Kahn believes that engagement is the extent to which people make full selves of themselves in their work.

In their study, Schaufeli et al. (2002) expanded this conceptualization by stating that engagement is an ongoing and omnipresent affective-cognitive state that is vigorous, committed, and absorbing. Vigor is a term suggesting great energy and strength, dedication is one that shows strong participation and commitment and absorption is one that means profound focus in work engagements. This is the view that engages with an active and motivational focus as opposed to passive attitude.

One should differentiate between such related constructs like job satisfaction and organizational commitment and employee engagement. Job satisfaction entails evaluative judgment of employees regarding their job and it is the extent that they like or dislike their work. It is more of a passive feeling of emotion instead of an active investment (Gusain & Gujral, 2024). Organizational commitment is a psychological attachment of the employees in the organization, which is not always accompanied by active role performance (Cohen, 2022). Engagement on the contrary, represents the active participation and enthusiastic contribution of employees in their working positions.

The engagement of employees is especially necessary since it is linked to better performance, innovation, and organizational effectiveness (Davis, 2021). The inclusive organizational cultures are instrumental in promoting the engagement because they have the potential to provide the employees an environment that has the ability to promote the psychological investment in the working environment.

Intermediary Process: Psychological States based on Social Exchanges

According to Social Exchange Theory, psychological exchange mechanisms may be used to determine the outcomes of employees in terms of organizational practices. Perceived organizational support is one of the key mediating mechanisms, that is, whether employees feel that the organization appreciates their efforts and is interested in their welfare or not. Organizational support is an indicator of inclusivity, and it forms a feeling of obligation on the employees to return it through interaction (Downey et al., 2015).

Another important mediating mechanism is psychological safety. The concept of psychological safety is that the employees feel that they are able to speak freely without fear of being punished. Psychological safety in an organization is enabled by inclusive organizational practices that ensure supportive and respectful environment (Vakira et al., 2023). This is a perception that prompts the employees to be more committed to their line of work.

Felt obligation also has a significant role in the relationship between inclusive practices and engagement, which it mediates. The social exchange theory argues that employees who are treated positively attain a sense of duty to pay back in form of good behaviors (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Inclusive practices reinforce this mandate by indicating organizational investment on employees.

Moderating Conditions

The moderating variables that could affect the relationship between inclusive organizational practices and employee engagement would also include leader member exchange and trust climate. Leader-member exchange involves the type of the relationship between employees and leaders. Good quality relationships reinforce social exchange mechanisms and increase interactions (Atiku et al., 2024).

Trust climate reflects the mutual understanding of trust among employees in the firm. Inclusive practices would be more effective in encouraging engagement when the employees have trust in the organization as

well as the leadership (Downey et al., 2015). On the same note, the fulfillment of the psychological contracts improves the perception of the employees towards organizational commitment, which boosts the level of engagement.

These moderating variables affect the intensity of the social exchange relationship and establish whether the inclusive organizational practices are effective in ensuring engagement.

Model Development and Proposition Development

This part elaborates the conceptual model, which articulates how inclusive organizational practices, perceived organizational support, trust climate, and employee engagement are related to each other based on the Social Exchange Theory (SET). SET assumes that relationships develop as a result of mutual interactions of desirable resources in which positive organizational treatment produces a sense of commitment amongst the employees to the organization that is consequently returned in terms of positive attitudes and behaviors (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Inclusive organizational practices are the valuable socio-emotional resources that trigger and maintain such exchange relationships eventually affecting the engagement of employees.

Inclusion Organizational Practices and the Employee Engagement

The inclusive organizational practices are also supposed to be instrumental in improving the employee engagement due to the fact that they offer socio-emotional resources to employees in the form of respect, fairness and belongingness. Such practices are indicators that the organization appreciates employees and do not ignore their efforts and this enhances the relationship between employees and the organization. The employees, who feel that they are treated inclusively, will tend to dedicate their cognitive, emotional, and physical energy to their work roles.

Applying the Social Exchange Theory, inclusive practices are organizational investments on employees, which elicit responses. As SET would suggest, people have the feeling of a need to repay positive treatment by giving positive attitudes and behaviours that are beneficial to the organization (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Inclusive practices give the feeling of relational value and belonging which encourages employees to express the same by engaging them more.

This is the relationship that has been supported by empirical research. Downey et al. (2015) discovered that the application of inclusive diversity has a strong positive effect on employee engagement through the development of trust and relational attachment. Equally, Jeronymo et al. (2022) established that inclusive organizational cultures enhance the impact of diversity practices in boosting engagement. Fan et al. (2023) also discovered a positive impact of HR inclusive practices on employee engagement, which results in a supportive, respectful workplace.

Logically, employees have high chances to experience psychological safety, appreciation, and motivation to work towards the success of an organization whenever they feel like they are included. This enhances their participation and interest in putting in discretionary effort.

Proposition 1: Employee engagement has a positive correlation with inclusive organizational practices.

Mediating Effect of Perceived Organizational Support

Although the idea of inclusive organizational practices has a direct impact on the engagement level of employees, the same relationship can be described by the mediating concept of perceived organizational support (POS). Perceived organizational support is the conviction that the organization appreciates the contribution of employees and is concerned with their welfare (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Fair treatment, voice, and leadership support as inclusive practices are indicative of organizational care and supporting this improves the process of POS.

The social exchange theory offers a good theoretical support of this mediating relationship. Employees will feel obliged to give back through positive work behaviors including engagement when they have a feeling of

organizational support (Blau, 1964). Perceived organizational support enhances the social exchange relationship in that it helps to build trust and commitment.

Literature indicates that this mechanism is significant. The results of Downey et al. (2015) showed that inclusion in an organization boosts trust and engagement because it improves the relational perception. In the same manner, Gusain and Gujral (2024) highlighted that the inclusive organizational culture improves the engagement of employees by reinforcing the perception of the employees regarding the organizational support. Another correlation is that inclusive leadership practices also enable the employee to be engaged through enhanced relational attachment and perceived support (Atiku et al., 2024).

Rationally, the ability to be inclusive enhances the feelings of employees that they are treasured by the organization, thus boosting their willingness to pay back by engaging more. Therefore, the perceived organizational support defines the way in which the practice of inclusion can be converted into engagement.

Proposition 2: Organizational support perceived forms the mediating relationship between inclusive organizational practices and employee engagement.

Intermediating Effect of Trust Climate

Despite the beneficial impacts that inclusive organizational practices have on engagement, the effectiveness of this association is possibly determined by the trust in the organizational environment. Trust climate is a shared belief among the employees about the trust to organizational practices and leadership. Trust enhances social exchange relationship by minimizing uncertainty and enhancing the readiness of employees to repay positive treatment.

According to the Social Exchange Theory, trust constitutes a very important condition reinforcing the relationship of exchange (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). In situations where trust is high, then the employees will tend to see the inclusive practices as real organisational investments instead of symbolic behaviours. This enhances their sense of commitment and interest.

This argument is proved by empirical research. Downey et al. (2015) established that inclusive practices encourage the engagement based on trust-building mechanisms. Equally, Vakira et al. (2023) have shown that inclusive leadership can be more effective when supported by the psychological safety and trust on engagement. Through trust, the inclusive practices become effective as the relational exchange processes are reinforced.

Logically, employees who have confidence in their organization have increased chances of responding positively to inclusive practices. But in a situation where there is low trust, employees can be skeptical of the genuineness of such practices which dilute their effectiveness in influencing engagement.

Proposition 3: Trust climate moderates the association between inclusive practices in the organization and employee engagement, with a stronger relationship in the case where trust climate is high.

Table 1 – Summary of Propositions

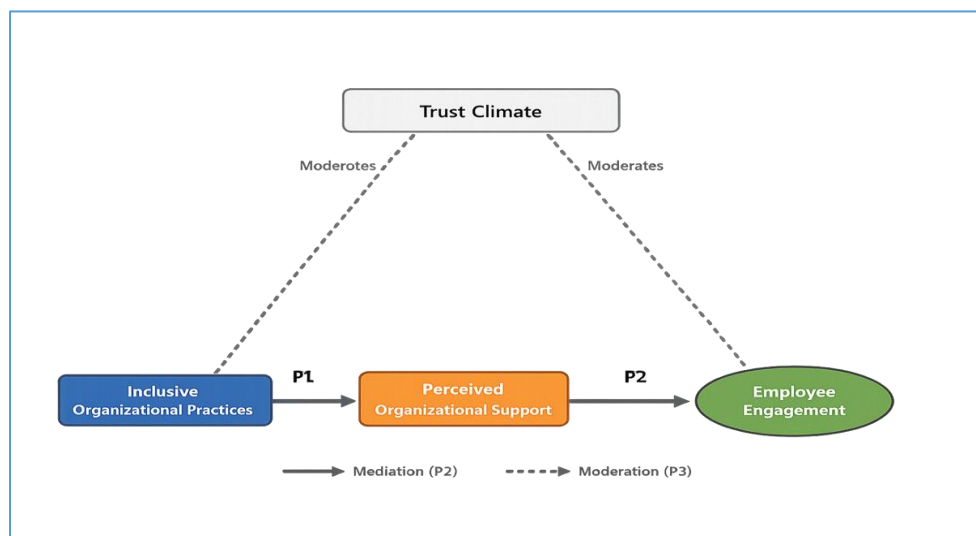
Proposition No.	Relationship	Theoretical Basis	Supporting Literature	Proposition Statement
Proposition 1	Inclusive Organizational Practices → Employee Engagement	Social Exchange Theory suggests that when organizations provide socio-emotional resources such as respect, fairness, and belongingness, employees feel obligated to reciprocate through positive attitudes and	Blau (1964); Cropanzano & Mitchell (2005); Downey et al. (2015); Jerónimo et al. (2022);	Inclusive organizational practices are positively related to employee engagement.

		behaviors. Inclusive practices signal relational investment, which enhances engagement.	Fan et al. (2023)	
Proposition 2	Inclusive Organizational Practices → Perceived Organizational Support → Employee Engagement	According to SET, favorable organizational treatment enhances employees' perception of organizational support, which creates a sense of obligation to reciprocate through engagement. Perceived organizational support acts as a psychological exchange mechanism linking inclusive practices and engagement.	Eisenberger et al. (1986); Cropanzano & Mitchell (2005); Gusain & Gujral (2024); Atiku et al. (2024); Downey et al. (2015)	Perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between inclusive organizational practices and employee engagement.
Proposition 3	Trust Climate moderates Inclusive Organizational Practices → Employee Engagement	SET emphasizes trust as a critical condition strengthening exchange relationships. High trust climate enhances employees' willingness to reciprocate inclusive practices through engagement, whereas low trust weakens this relationship.	Cropanzano & Mitchell (2005); Downey et al. (2015); Vakira et al. (2023)	Trust climate moderates the relationship between inclusive organizational practices and employee engagement, such that the relationship is stronger when trust climate is high.

Conceptual Model

The offered conceptual framework describes the connection between inclusive organizational practices and employee engagement in the framework of Social Exchange Theory. Some socio-emotional resources availed by the organization include inclusive organizational practices, including fair treatment, participation, belongingness support, and inclusive leadership.

Figure 2 – Conceptual Framework proposed by the study



The Social Exchange Theory holds that employees will have a sense of indebtedness to repay the favor of the treatment they receive when they believe this treatment to be positive and supportive. Consequently, the practices of inclusion in the organization are likely to directly improve the employee engagement by encouraging employees to commit their cognitive, emotional, and physical efforts to the aspects of their work. The model also suggests the mediation of this relationship through perceived organizational support. Inclusive practices will be an indicator that the organization is concerned with the welfare of the employees and is willing to value them, hence, perceived organizational support. Employees, in its turn, give this support back by being more engaged. Also, there is a moderating role of trust climate between inclusive organizational practices and employee engagement. Employees tend to perceive inclusive practices as true investments made by the organization and enhance their involvement when the levels of trust are high. Low trust on the other hand undermines this relationship.

All in all, the model implies that inclusive organizational practices improve the level of employee engagement via the social exchange mechanism in which perceived organizational support serves as the mediator and trust climate as the moderator.

CONCLUSION

This theoretical paper contributes to the knowledge on the concept of employee engagement by coming up with a theoretically sound model that connects the inclusive organizational practices and employee engagement within the context of the Social Exchange Theory. Based on the main concepts of reciprocity, mutual obligation, and trust, the paper describes the way inclusive organizational practices are crucial socio-emotional resources that determine the relations perceptions and behavioral reactions of employees. Such inclusive practices as fair treatment, participation, support of belongingness, and inclusive leadership are cues of organizational care and value of employees, and thus, create a social exchange process.

It is hypothesized in the model that inclusive organizational practices directly work to increase the level of employee engagement and indirectly work to increase the level of engagement with the help of the mediating variable of perceived organizational support. Once employees feel that the organization appreciates their contributions, and it cares about their well-being, they will feel a sense of responsibility to give back in the form of increased engagement. Moreover, the model emphasizes the moderating influence of trust climate, which means that trust can enhance the power of the inclusive practices by supporting the confidence of the staff members to the intentions of the organization. This reinforces the relationship in the exchange and increases the engagement of the employees.

The paper is unique to the literature because it applied the Social Exchange Theory to the area of inclusive organizational practices and employee engagement. It offers a detailed conceptual model that explains the underlying psychological mechanisms and boundary conditions affecting engagement in order to explain not just the straightforward relationship. The model contests the notion of inclusion as a diversity initiative but instead as a resource of relationship upon which to foster the engagement of employees.

Altogether, the paper highlights that inclusive organizational practices are not solely ethical and socially advisable, but also strategically relevant towards the promotion of engaged, motivated, and committed employees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the developed conceptual model, it is important that organizations focus on developing and establishing inclusive organizational practices to improve employee engagement. To begin with, organizations must provide fair and equal treatment in all their human resource practices, such as recruitment, promotion, and performance appraisal, as well as rewards. Equity enhances the confidence of the employees and makes them feel that they are supported in the organization.

Second, organizations ought to ensure that employees are engaged through the encouragement of free communication and engaging the employees in decision making. Giving voice opportunities improves the levels of belonging and psychological ownership of employees leading to increased engagement.

Third, companies ought to strive towards the creation of inclusive leadership. The leaders must be open emotional and respectful of the employees and acknowledge divergent thinking. Inclusive leadership is an important factor in enhancing social exchange relationship.

Lastly, there is the need to build the strong climate of trust by making sure that there is transparency, consistency and integrity when it comes to organizational actions. Belief will bolster their contentedness towards the organization and determination to reciprocate by participating.

Organizational commitment to inclusive practice and the creation of conducive and trusting environments will enable the organizations to increase the engagement of employees and overall organizational performance.

Scope for further research

This theoretical framework presents multiple guidelines on the upcoming research. The proposed relationships should be tested and the mediating influence of perceived organization support and moderating influence of trust climate should be proven by empirical studies. Further studies in the future can also analyze other mediators including psychological safety, organizational identification, and job satisfaction. Other moderating variables are also open to the researcher, and these include leadership styles and organizational culture. Longitudinal research studies may have greater insight into the dynamism of the social exchange relationships. Along with this, further studies may be able to prove the model in various industries, culture, and organizational conditions to increase its generalizability and theoretical strength.

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