



Organizational Inclusion and Leadership in Times of Global Crisis

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Abstract

The globe is facing a never before seen pandemic situation because of Covid-19. Virtual workspaces have become a reality today. With the emergence of newer ways of working, it is necessary to ensure that employees contribute and feel involved in the workspace. This paper attempts to explore the ways in which practitioners and policymakers of inclusion perceive it at the workplace in the current COVID-19 pandemic, outline the role of leaders in fostering inclusion, and empirically test how organizational inclusion (OI) impacts organizational outcomes during the disturbing times. The participants were employees working in the service sector companies in India. A mixed-method approach would be adopted for data collection. The content analysis technique would be used for the qualitative data analysis and Partial Least Square – Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to analyze the quantitative data. The paper provides insights on how inclusion is perceived differently by each individual, and though organizations have policies in place, getting them into practice is yet to be accomplished. The findings of the study indicate the benefits of having an inclusive work environment along with leadership commitment during disruption. The study is a novel attempt to empirically examine the way of leveraging a diverse workforce through inclusion to benefit the organization in the times of global crisis. It also adds to the existing body of knowledge on how inclusion and role of a leader are experienced by the employer and employee in Indian companies, which is a niche area of research.

JEL classification: M12, M14, M16, M51

Keywords: Organizational Inclusion, Global crisis, Disruption, Diversity, Inclusive leadership, Covid-19, Organizational citizenship behavior, Organization-based self-esteem

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INTRODUCTION

The global community is experiencing a pandemic situation owing to the spread of infectious coronavirus disease (COVID-19). According to the health care professionals, this disease not only affect physiologically but also psychologically; hence, due consideration needs to be given. In this pandemic scenario, the work culture has shifted from an office workspace to a virtual workspace. It has become all the more challenging to sustain the business as well as ensure employee's interests. While maintaining business as well as ascertaining employee motivation and performance in this outbreak, a higher systemic change is required. The business needs to find newer ways of functioning as well as fulfilling employee's interests. Therefore, the role of a leader is important at the time of crisis (Ulmer, 2012). One of the ways of dealing with employee unrest in the crisis is dependent on leadership, which encourages open communication and employee acceptance irrespective of their background. The concepts of organizational inclusion (OI) and inclusive leadership (IL) are novel initiatives that a company should focus on during tough times to enhance organizational outcomes.

The world environment is appreciating equality and encouraging inclusion across all fields. After re-looking at certain laws governing the Disabled Act (Act Amended from 1995 to 2016 in India), Sexual Harassment Act 2013, LGBT at the workplace, Equal employment opportunity, etc., have been in focus globally. With the government taking strong steps to enforce inclusion through the acceptance of disability, gender equality, LGBT policies, there is an impact on the private sector too. With globalization, the world is becoming one entity. Diversity in the customer base as well as employee base is inevitable today. The meaning of diversity and inclusion are different but have specific similarities. Diversity is defined as the heterogeneous make-up of groups in organizations, whereas inclusion is defined as promotion of participation and appreciation of diversity by integrating and leveraging it into daily work processes (Roberson, 2006; Stevens, Plaut, and Sanchez-Burks, 2008).

Researchers have focused increasingly on how diversity can be leveraged for the improved and enhanced organizational performance (Van Kleef *et al.*, 2008; Gonzalez and DeNisi, 2009). While diversity has gained memento, a stream evolved relatively unnoticed and started creating a culture where diverse individuals feel respected and included (Roberson, 2006). Inclusion is the crust of a multicultural organization (Cox, 1993) where individuals from diverse cultural background are integrated and accepted with their differences. Inclusion focuses on the degree of participation and belongingness of individuals into the daily work processes (Kuknor, 2020). Taking inclusion one step further, numerous studies have claimed the role of leader and support from top management to be an important contributor in the development of an inclusive culture (Greenberger and Goldberg, 1989; Jones, 2005; Shore, 2011).

Geographically, India being one of the most diverse countries in the globe with more than 22 spoken languages, studies on the way of leveraging diversity and inclusion to benefit the society is minimum. Inclusion in India has focused more on the education sector, specifically for the differently-abled (Sharma, Moore and Sonawane, 2009; Hodkinson and Devarakonda, 2011). One of the crucial areas of research in India is to understand inclusion for the Indian organization and how it can be practiced as well as be beneficial. While there are studies that conceptually highlight

the importance of inclusion at the workplace and the role of leader, limited research indicating how inclusion and leadership enhance organizational outcomes in a global crisis has been undertaken.

In stressful situations, leader behavior may be challenged and pushed to extreme levels. The study highlights the role of inclusive leader behavior in enhancing inclusive work culture and organizational outcomes. By addressing these gaps, the study has made an attempt to build new insights on organizational inclusion (OI) and empirically tested the impact of OI on organizational outcomes in the current pandemic situation of COVID 19. The two outcomes selected are organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and organization-based self-esteem (OBSE). The study further investigates the role of Inclusive Leadership (IL) as a moderator in the relationship between OI and OCB and OI and OBSE. Finally, the study tries to find if the presence of inclusion in the organization has an impact on organizational outcomes in the current situation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Inclusion (OI):

Inclusion has been considered in the organizational literature for over a few years (Roberson, 2006), but similar research has been undertaken in social psychology (Brewer, 1991) and social work (Barak, 2000). Though inclusion is much talked about in practice, it is an under-researched area. There is a lack of consensus regarding the understanding of inclusion. For a few, it is limited only to the inclusion of disabled learners in imparting education (Sreenath, 2008). Other studies (Miller, 1998; Barak, 2000; Podsiadlowski et al., 2014) have defined inclusion at workplace as participation and contribution of individuals toward decision making, respect and value for individual opinion irrespective of their diverse background. Podsiadlowski et al., (2014) found that inclusion is a two-dimensional concept comprising of authenticity and perceptions of belongingness. The extent of perceived inclusion impacts several organizational and employee outcomes like well-being, job satisfaction, employee engagement, organizational citizenship behavior, and self-esteem.

Dymski (2010) argued that social inclusion and exclusion are of utmost importance for a developing economy and further added that in a multilayered development phenomenon where inequality of wealth and power is dominant, the inclusion practices reduce the negative impact of inequality in the economy. The inclusion of women on board has no significant impact on the financial performance of the firm nor did it have any adverse impact (Singh *et al.*, 2019). Shore (2011) and Barak (2000) discussed the three antecedents of inclusion, i.e., inclusive practices, inclusive leadership, and inclusive climate. Similarly, Nishii (2013) measured climate for inclusion as equal employment opportunity, integration of differences, and participation in decision making. Shore (2011) stated that an individuals' perception of inclusion is influenced by multiple factors such as one's personality, self-confidence, locus of control, and self-esteem. Wasserman, Gallegos, and Ferdman (2008) constructed their narratives of inclusion by considering related views wherein they have defined an inclusive culture as the one where individual contributions are recognized, valued, and utilized across multiple lines of differences. Shore (2011) used optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT) given by Brewer (1991) to define inclusion. ODT explains the individual need for belongingness as well as uniqueness. Every individual would want to seek a balance between the

two needs to reach an optimal level of inclusion in workgroups. The framework of inclusion given by Shore (2011) proposed that the feelings of uniqueness and belongingness together lead to the feelings of inclusion at the workplace.

Inclusive Leadership (IL):

In an uncertain business environment, like one at present with the COVID 19 situations, various leadership styles have emerged. The charismatic leadership theories have shifted from a trait-based approach to a contingency-based theory (Conger & Kanungo, 1987; Halverson et al., 2004). Thought leadership and crisis communication have gained momentum in the recent times to manage crises (Ulmer, 2012). The classical definition of crisis (Hermann, 1963) describes crises as a surprise, threat, and short response time. The prevailing threat during a crisis can be overcome by effective leader behavior (Ulmer, 2012). Zhang et al. (2012) attempted to explain the relationship between transformational leadership and crisis management. A leader's emotional control and quality of leader-member exchange are the two moderators studied by the authors to understand this relationship.

While various leadership styles have their impact on crisis management, several researchers have emphasized on the importance of leader behavior in building and sustaining an inclusive and diverse workforce during the normal and uncertain times (Cox, 2001; Podsiadlowski et al., 2014; Kuknor, 2020). Nishii and Mayer (2009) adapted the leader-member exchange (LMX) theory to explain an inclusive leader behavior. In the diverse workgroups where all the followers participated with their leader in the same level of LMX relationships, employee turnover was reduced. Kuknor (2020) reviewed the way in which inclusive leader behavior can lead to OI. Inclusion at the workplace can be enhanced by a leader promoting and encouraging inclusiveness, which constitutes of open communication and dialogue, creation of a learning environment for diverse individuals and groups, flexibility in policy, as well as belief and conviction about inclusiveness leading to positive work culture (Wasserman, Gallegos, and Ferdman 2008; Kuknor 2015). Salib (2014) highlighted the similarity between servant leadership and IL. Studies have explored certain similar leader behaviors between the two styles of leadership. Servant leadership promotes employee collaboration and participation like IL, as well as fosters and builds trust in organizational processes and people, which is on the same lines of IL. Many of these behavior leads to citizenship behavior among employees. However, an empirical study is required to highlight the linkage between servant leadership and IL.

Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) found that psychological well being and psychological safety of employees can be reached by leader appreciation and encouragement of employee ideas and opinions where they are free to speak up and express their views. The model of inclusion and exclusion (Barak, 2011) recognizes leader as a significant factor in influencing the individual experience of inclusion at the workplace. Various researchers (Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, and Ziv 2010; Nishii and Mayer 2009) have found inclusive leader behavior but only few have related it to an inclusive work environment. Cottrill, Lopez, and Hoffman (2014) showed authentic leadership as an antecedent to organizational inclusion. Catalyst (2014) found empowerment, humility, courage, and accountability as key inclusive leader behavior that are important for business continuity.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB):

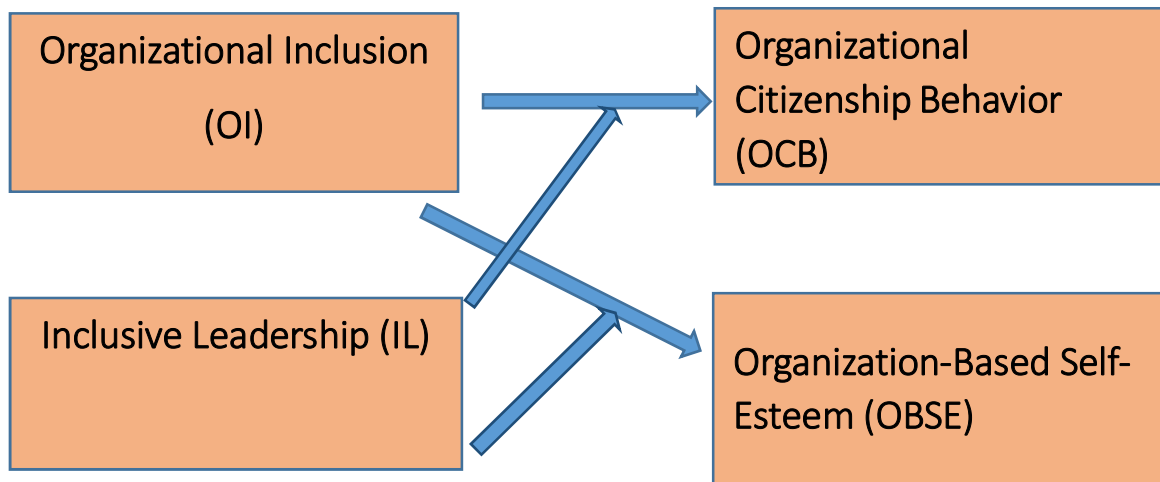
Several types of citizenship behavior are present in the literature (LePine, Erez, and Johnson, 2002; Organ, Podsakoff, and MacKensie, 2006). Barak's (2000) model of inclusion observed that the exclusion-inclusion influences individual behavior, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) can be one such behavior. OCB is a set of behavior actions that individuals engage in without being formally rewarded (Organ, 1995). Organ (1995) stated that there are five types of OCB, namely, altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy, and civic virtue. Altruism is demonstrated when an employee helps their peers in the smooth functioning of work. Conscientiousness is evident from employee's following organizational rules even when he or she is not being watched. Sportsmanship can be witnessed from the level of tolerance for the inconvenience of an employee (Organ, Podsakoff, and MacKensie, 2006). Courtesy is a preventive behavior to avoid work issues, and civic virtue is when employees participate in governance activities, industry, and market trend updates. Podsakoff and MacKensie, (1994) suggested the removal of conscientiousness as a measurement of OCB because conscientiousness has been found to be a regular behavior as expected from the managers. Similarly, altruism and civic virtue have analogous features, hence both of them are combined as one (Podsakoff and MacKensie, 1994). However, Lievens and Anseel (2004) discussed that OCB should be measured in other contexts apart from the U.S as the dimensionality of an OCB indicator may vary for different cultures; hence, it should not be taken for granted. Therefore, in this study, we selected three indicators of OCB, i.e., sportsmanship, courtesy and civic virtue.

Organization Based Self Esteem:

In the 1970s, Korman (1970, 1971) published many studies on employee self-esteem, which revolved around an individual's work and organizational experiences. In more than a decade of research, organizational based self-esteem (OBSE) evolved from the concept of employee self-esteem. Pierce *et al.* (1989) introduced OBSE as a concept, which refers to the degree to which employees feel as a part of the organization (Pierce *et al.*, 1989). Exclusion is negatively related to self-esteem and rejection diminishes self-esteem more than supervisory mistreatment or workgroup (Korman, 1971). The higher the OBSE, the higher the employee should perceive oneself as worthwhile in the organization. Barak (2011) suggested that exclusion-inclusion is linked to psychological developments, and self-esteem is one of them.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Given the linkages through the review of literature in the area of OI and IL, the following framework was proposed for the study:



The proposed model for the study attempts to explore the relationship between OI and OCB and OI and OBSE with regard to the current pandemic situation. The study tests whether IL acts as a moderator in the relationship between OI and OCB as well as OI and OBSE given the importance of an inclusive leader in crisis management.

Some researchers have investigated the relationship between organizational inclusion and organizational outcomes (Ely and Thomas, 2001; Pless and Maak, 2004; Wasserman, Gallegos, and Ferdman, 2010). Cottrill, Lopez, and Hoffman (2014) examined authentic leadership (AL) as an antecedent of inclusion, and studied the two outcomes, i.e., organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Furthermore, one of the essential factors that contribute toward creating inclusive environments is committed leadership that supports individual and cultural differences among employees (Miller, 1998; Pless and Maak, 2004; Ryan and Kossek, 2008; Shore, 2011). The study contributes to the literature by extending our theoretical understanding and empirically verifying the interrelationships among OI, IL, and organizational outcomes, many of these relationships have not been investigated.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

Ely and Thomas (2011) reflected an inclusive organization as one where different perspectives are considered as a source of insight to leverage better strategic outcomes. Barak (2011) identified the feelings of inclusion and exclusion related to psychological processes like depression, self-esteem, anxiety, and job satisfaction. These feelings also have impact on work motivation and work behavior. OCB and OBSE are two such organizational behaviors, which is an outcome of employee psychological well-being. In times of global pandemic, the mental health of employees is challenged (Halverson, 2004). In the earlier sections, it has been stated that inclusiveness has a positive impact on the psychological well-being of people. Brenner, Lyons, and Fassinger (2010) argued that employees of the LGBT community demonstrate better OCB behavior than the heterosexual employees probably because LGBT community employees are allowed to be open about the orientation; hence, the time and energy they spend on extra-role behavior is more than they would have spent hiding their identities.

Hypothesis 1: Organizational inclusion has a positive impact on organizational citizenship behavior.

Hypothesis 2: Organizational inclusion has a positive impact on organization-based self-esteem.

Several factors in an organization contribute to the development of an inclusive culture. These include shared understanding of inclusion (Ely and Thomas, 2011), engaged leaders (Nishii and Mayer, 2009; Kuknor, 2020) organizational beliefs and assumptions about diversity (Pless and Maak, 2004) as well as HR practices and processes that promote a climate of inclusion. The focus of leaders is to leverage differences and promote inclusion. Barak's (2011) model on inclusion and exclusion recognizes leaders as a significant factor in influencing the individual experience of inclusion at the workplace. Wasserman, Gallegos, and Ferdman (2008) highlighted that leaders must engage individuals and groups in open discussions, treat each of them in a unique and different manner, showcase behavior to encourage inclusivity in culture, and address grievances arising from diversity. Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, and Ziv (2010) defined inclusive leaders as one who is open, available, and accessible to employees coming up with new ideas creating a context where people are psychologically safe to express ideas that may often not be in sync with norms. Studies have highlighted that support and trust from management are some of the key indicators to foster inclusion.

The following hypotheses have been developed for analyzing IL:

Hypothesis 3: Inclusive leadership moderates the relationship between organization inclusion and organization citizenship behavior.

Hypothesis 4: Inclusive leadership moderates the relationship between organization inclusion and organization-based self-esteem.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted to explore the dimensions of inclusion and IL during crisis and how does inclusion impacts organizational outcomes. The triangulation method was adopted because of the implementation of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. In qualitative data, 20 expert interviews were taken and the raw data was converted into meaningful items using the technique of content analysis. To collect the quantitative data, the questionnaire tool was implemented. Each of the four constructs was measured using reliable tools. Partial least Square – Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyze the quantitative data.

Data collection:

Qualitative data:

The in-depth interviews of 20 experts were taken to explore the construct of OI and IL. Appendix A shows the questions asked during the interview. Each interview lasted for around 40-45 minutes.

To maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the interviewed, the code numbers from P1 to P20 were assigned. The experts comprised of Diversity and Inclusion heads, Inclusion consultants, and HR professionals. The reason for adopting the interview method was to explore from an industry perspective the concept of inclusion in an organization and their understanding of the term IL. The interviews were recorded and transcribed using content analysis (Kondracki and Wellman, 2002; Mayring, 2004). Content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005) has three different approaches, which are an inductive or conventional approach, a deductive or directed approach, and a manifest or summative approach. The main difference between the three approaches depends on the purpose of the study that influences the initial coding schemes. In this study, we adopted a conventional or inductive approach to content analysis, as this method focuses on the emergence of new themes from the raw data. Considering the inadequacy of an existing theory to explain a phenomenon without predetermined categories, this method provides new insights to the subject through investigation. The steps followed in this study were:

1. Formulation of the research questions
2. Selection of the unit of analysis
3. Collection of the data
4. Outlining of the coding process
5. Implementation of the coding process
6. Analyzation of the data - Theme identification
7. Conversion of the codes to measurable items

The emerging themes were developed by studying the transcripts repeatedly and considering possible meanings and how these fitted with developing themes (Table 1 and 2). For example, the words that described inclusion (*acceptance, value, trust, belongingness*) were coded in one color and then grouped to form one major theme '*acceptance of inclusion*'. Toward the end of the study, three new themes emerged for IL and OI. Table 1 represents the coding schemes for OI and identification of themes. Apart from content analysis, a theory from the literature review was identified to check similarities between the empirical data collected and the existing literature. Codes were further enhanced to measurable items.

Table 1: Themes and items of Organizational Inclusion

| Themes | Linkage to Prior Literature |
|---|---|
| 1. Equitable Employment Practices | Nishii (2010) |
| Ability to be whoever you are and bring your whole self to work | Shore (2011); Pierce <i>et al.</i> , (1989) |
| I feel comfortable about being myself and acceptance of my uniqueness | Roberson (2006) |

| | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 2. Integration of Differences | Nishii, (2010) |
| Respectful of differences | Nishii, (2010); Organ et al. (2006) |
| Appreciate the diversity | Ferdman, (2006); Davidson, (2002) |
| 3. Inclusion in Decision making | Nishii, (2010) |
| The environment allows you to accommodate people across the box. | Shore (2011), Ryan & Kossek (2008) |

Table 2 represents the coding schemes for IL and the identification of themes. For example, words like (*openness, embracing, appreciation to diverse ideas, communication*) were coded in one color to form a broad theme ‘*Appreciation*’.

Table 2: Themes and items of Inclusive Leadership

| Themes | Prior Literature |
|---|---|
| 1. Acceptance of Inclusion | |
| The manager creates an ecosystem where an employee feels belonged and trusted. | Hunter et al., (2007), Wasserman, Gallegos, & Ferdman (2008); Shore, 2011; Sharkie, (2009) |
| The manager anchors inclusion with conviction and belief that diverse thoughts lead to better business results. | Roberson (2006); Chatman, Polzer, Barsade, & Neale (1998); Ely & Thomas, (2001); Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, (1999) |
| 2. Authenticity | |
| The manager promotes a culture of respect for diverse opinions. | Baggs et al., (1999); Brown, Ohlinger, Delmore, & Ittmann (2003); Zimmerman et al., (1993); Nembhard & Edmondson (2006) |
| The manager stands up and clarifies his team’s differences in the organization. | Pless & Maak, (2004); Stewart & Johnson, (2009); Sabharwal, (2014) |
| 3. Appreciation | |
| The manager values and shows appreciation embracing the differences of opinions and ideas at work. | Nembhard & Edmondson (2006); Shore (2011) |
| The manager promotes open communication within the team. | Nishii (2010) |

These themes and items of Tables 2 and 3 were added in the existing measurement tools and the data was collected from the respective respondents.

Measures:

With a thorough literature review, the measurement tools were selected to measure the constructs of the study.

Organizational Inclusion (OI) – The construct was measured by adapting Climate for inclusion scale (Nishii, 2013). The 13-item measure scale reported a high internal consistency as evident from Alpha = 0.93. The statements were rated using a five-point scale (“1= strongly disagree” to “5 = strongly agree”)

Inclusive Leadership (IL): The construct was measured by adapting the Inclusive leadership scale (Sabharwal, 2014; Carmeli *et al.*, 2010) that constituted of 9-item, which reported a high internal consistency as was evident from Alpha = 0.91. The statements were rated using a five-point scale (“1= strongly disagree” to “5 = strongly agree”).

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB): The 9-item scale was developed by Podsakoff *et al.* (1990), wherein the scale comprised three dimensions, i.e., sportsmanship, courtesy, and civic virtue. The scale reported internal consistency as was evident from Alpha = 0.83. The statements were rated using a five-point scale (“1= strongly disagree” to “5 = strongly agree”).

Organization Based Self-Esteem (OBSE) – The 9-item scale was developed by Pierce *et al.* (1989), and the internal consistency of Alpha = 0.94 was reported. The statements were rated using a five-point scale (“1= strongly disagree” to “5 = strongly agree”)

Data Analysis:

The participants for the study were employees working in service sector companies. A sample of 113 was taken, of which 26% were females and 74% were male respondents. The average age of the respondents was 28-35 years. Further, 34% of employees were middle-level managers, and 26% had below 5 years of work experience, and the remaining others constituted 40%.

The data was collected from a sample of 113 working professionals in service sector companies in India. The statistical analysis of the theoretical model was tested with Smart PLS (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2015), a software tool for structural equation modeling (SEM) based on partial least squares (PLS) algorithm. PLS-SEM is a prediction oriented approach that helps in explaining the variance rather than covariance of the variables (Shmueli *et al.*, 2016). Since PLS-SEM does not adopt a particular data distribution, a resampling technique called bootstrapping was used to reduce the standard parameter error occurring because of the specific data distribution (Hair *et al.*, 2014). Figure 1 shows the empirically tested model using bootstrapping.

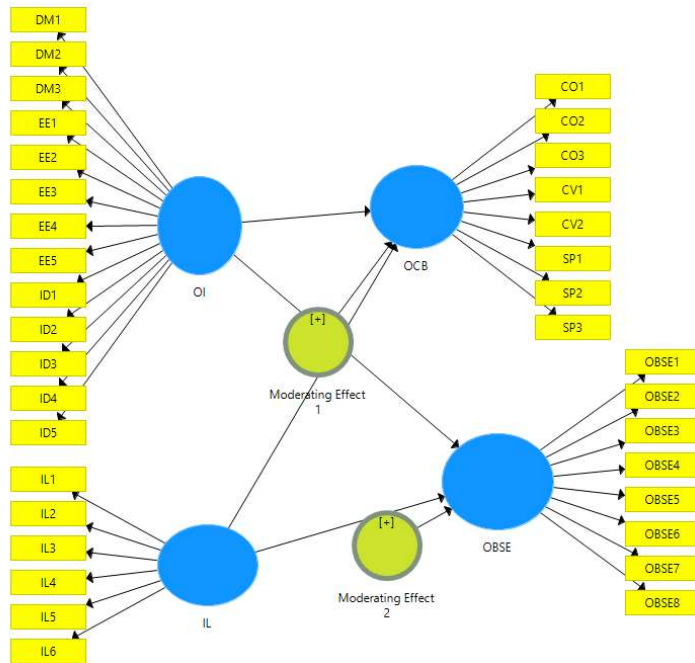


Figure 1: PLS Model

The measurement model: In the reflective model of PLS, the assessment was done through Internal consistency and reliability, Convergent validity, and Discriminant Validity.

Internal consistency and reliability: It provides a measure of the reliability based on the inter-correlations of the variables for checking whether the observed indicators measure the same construct or not. Cronbach’s alpha measures reliability for the set of indicators. An alpha value of more than 0.70 is acceptable in exploratory research (Fornell and Larcker, 1981b). Table 3 shows that the alpha value as well as the value of composite reliability is above 0.7 for all the constructs, thus indicating that the constructs have internal consistency and reliability.

Convergent validity: It provides the extent to which different measures of the same construct are positively correlated with one another. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is assessed to evaluate the convergent validity of the construct. The acceptable value for AVE (Hair et al., 2010) is more than 0.50, which indicates that the latent variable explains a minimum 50% of its item variance. Table 3 shows that the values of AVE for all the constructs are more than 0.5, thereby concluding the fulfilment of the criteria for convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981b; Hair et al., 2010).

Table 3: Internal consistency and reliability

| Construct | Cronbach's Alpha | Composite Reliability | Average Variance Extracted |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Organizational Inclusion | 0.928 | 0.939 | 0.545 |
| Inclusive Leadership | 0.899 | 0.922 | 0.665 |
| Organizational citizenship behavior | 0.833 | 0.869 | 0.524 |
| Organization based self esteem | 0.943 | 0.953 | 0.717 |

Discriminant validity: It measures the distinctiveness of the constructs, which shows whether each construct is unique in itself and does not replicate any other measurement construct. After the application of the Fornell and Lacker rule, Table 4 below compares the AVE values of each of the constructs with the square of a latent variable correlation. Table 4 also indicates that the AVE value is higher than the correlation square of other measurement constructs. Specifically, discriminant validity can be assessed by measuring the square root of a construct and that it should be higher than the highest correlation with other constructs.

Table 4: Discriminant validity

| Construct | OI | IL | OCB | OBSE |
|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| OI | 0.738 | | | |
| IL | 0.612 | 0.816 | | |
| OCB | 0.541 | 0.385 | 0.675 | |
| OBSE | 0.675 | 0.643 | 0.572 | 0.847 |

Path Coefficient: It is a coefficient linking the constructs in a structural model, which indicates the strength of the relationship between the constructs. Table 5 shows the path coefficient values. A value close to +1 indicates a strong relationship between the constructs, but the negative values indicates a weak relationship between the constructs. All the paths are statistically significant at 1%, except the OI*IL->OBSE relationship. The more the value of the path coefficient closer to 1.0, the stronger is the relationship (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 5: Path Coefficient

| Path posited | Path Coefficient | p-value |
|--------------|------------------|---------|
| OI ->OCB | 0.423 | 0.002** |
| OI -> OBSE | 0.466 | 0.001** |
| OI*IL->OCB | 0.239 | 0.034** |
| OI*IL->OBSE | -0.056 | 0.363 |
| IL ->OCB | 0.153 | 0.432 |
| IL ->OBSE | 0.352 | 0.015** |

Note: **Significant

Coefficients of determination R square: R square indicates the variance explained through the endogenous variable and the exogenous variable. R square is dependent and may vary depending on the research discipline. Table 6 below shows the values of R square, which being more than 0.25 represents the moderate level of predicting accuracy of the model. The R-squared value close to 1.0 indicates a higher level of predictability of the model (Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson, 2010).

Table 6: Coefficients of determination

| Construct | (R ²) | Adjusted R ² |
|-----------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| OCB | 0.374 | 0.340 |
| OBSE | 0.544 | 0.540 |

DISCUSSION

Building on the literature and the empirical findings, the study discusses about a conceptual model that brings novel insights on the OI and IL. Concerning the current pandemic situation, the premise of this research is to create inclusive environments that lead to increased organizational outcomes during difficult times. The study found that OI is positively associated with OCB and OBSE, thus supporting hypotheses 1 and 2, which indicates that if organizations initiate and manage inclusion at the workplace, it will have positive organizational outcomes. Further, IL is found to be a significant moderator in the relation between OI and OCB, thus supporting hypothesis 3. However, the findings indicate no moderating effect of IL on OI and OBSE relationship, thereby not supporting hypothesis 4.

In the earlier sections, it is stated that in the times of crisis, leadership makes or breaks an organization (Cox, 2001). The study findings confirm the claim regarding the role of leadership during crisis. IL moderated the relationship between OI and organizational outcomes. If the leader promotes inclusion and acceptance for diversity in the culture, it would result in a positive impact on OCB and OBSE. Both OCB and OBSE are related to the psychological aspect of employee well-being. Earlier studies have shown a direct link between employee well-being and organizational performance (Barak, 2011).

Furthermore, the conceptual model was tested by using a country-specific sample, and the results are in line with the previous findings of studies on other countries regarding OI (Ely and Thomas, 2001; Pless and Maak, 2004; Wasserman, Gallegos, and Ferdman, 2010). The results show that to improve OCB, there is need of efficient leadership, which is dedicated toward fostering inclusion and it can empower employees. The study findings are supported by earlier studies (Sabharwal, 2014) that stated the need of organizations to go beyond diversity management and create an inclusive environment. The premise of the study is that employee inclusion in organizational practices, decision making, and integration of differences along with support from the leader leads to positive organizational outcomes. The findings are in line with previous research, which stated that the role of dedicated leadership is crucial to foster inclusion (Pless and Maak, 2004; Shore, 2011). The study has also found that IL moderated the relationship between OI and OCB, thus indicating that if a leader practices inclusive behavior at work, it will have a greater impact on the extra role behavior of employees. Employees will be willing to go beyond their regular work and feel connected to their organization. Inclusion at the workplace does have positive impact on the self-esteem of employees working in their organization (Barak, 2011). The findings further reiterate the same that if employees feel included in their organization irrespective of their diverse background, they feel a sense of belongingness and trust toward the organization.

The study has explored the association of OCB and OBSE with OI and IL. Although no moderating relationship is found between OBSE and IL, there is a direct relationship between OBSE and IL. Cottrill, Lopez, and Hoffman (2014) examined the role of OI in leading to OCB and OBSE. The present study reconfirms the same by adding a new dimension of IL. Finally, the study has found that though organizations are recognizing the importance of inclusion in a business, they are still struggling to fully leverage the benefit of an inclusive workplace. Some of the struggles include buy-in from top management, traditional work set-up, mind-set of employees, and authenticity of the practices and policies promoting inclusion.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings have several practical and managerial implications. Firstly, it is important to recognize the differences and frame policies that promote respect, participation, and equitable employment practices at the workplace. The study has observed a positive relationship between an inclusive work environment and organizational outcomes. Managers can benefit from this finding and invest in inclusion practices, thus promoting an open culture irrespective of diversity. During difficult times, there is prevalence of uncertainty; hence, an environment that promotes trust and values employee opinion can thrive better and come out with positive results. The

moment the internal employee base reflects the organization's consumer base, there is a direct impact on business and employee outcomes. Secondly, the proposed model shows various indicators to measure inclusion, OCB, and OBSE. These can be of help to managers who wish to incorporate this behavior into their organization. One of the key benefits of inclusion is a reduction in the attrition rate because people don't wish to leave an environment where they feel included. Organizations can reap the benefits of an inclusive culture by understanding to the possible ways of effectively implementing and sustaining the practice.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE

Though new insights are provided in the paper, it is not free from limitations. Firstly, the limitation of the paper is the sample size. Future studies can employ a larger sample to get more diverse data and deeper insights into the arena of inclusion. Secondly, the study has been conducted on service sector employees of Gurgaon, Pune, and Mumbai. Hence, the study cannot be generalized to other geographies. Future research is encouraged to test the proposed model in different sectors and geographical areas. Thirdly, other organizational outcomes apart from OCB and OBSE can be explored to investigate their relationship with organizational inclusion. Fourth, the literature suggests that leaders play a crucial role in fostering inclusion. Future studies can be taken up to examine the direct relationship between leadership style and inclusive behavior as well as to examine whether there is similar leader traits between inclusive leadership and other styles of leadership.

CONCLUSION

COVID 19 is a never perceived scenario for any business. A crisis like this has also opened upon an opportunity to challenge the status quo. Managing diversity in the new work setting and promoting an inclusive culture can be a starting point to address the curiosity and doubt in employee minds. This study pioneers in contributing to the ways in which an inclusive workplace can positively benefit organizational outcomes and addresses the significance of a leader during times of crisis. We hope that the proposed model will be adopted by research scholars for further investigation.

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ANNEXURES:

Appendix A:

Interview Questions:

Organizational Inclusion

1. What is your understanding of the term inclusion in organizations in the current crisis time? What are its dimensions/includes like How can one measure inclusion?
2. Is there any difference between D&I?
3. What drives inclusion at the workplace or in the culture at this given Covid situation?
4. What initiatives organizations are taking for fostering inclusion?
5. From an employee's point of view, what is inclusion for them?
6. At what level do you think inclusion matters most?

Inclusive leadership

1. What are the Leader traits or behaviors associated with fostering/facilitating inclusion in how they differ from other leadership styles?
2. Role of HR or managers in the current time of crisis?
3. Does leader behavior have any impact on fostering OI?

Organizational Outcome

1. What organizational outcome/employee outcome can get affected by inclusion or IL?
2. Does your organization have an inclusion training for leaders?
3. What are the problems created in the absence of inclusive practices?
4. Why does org struggle to incorporate D&I effectively (/challenges associated)?
Done
5. Why do you think org are embarrassing OI so actively today?

Follow up questions

1. Any questions missing – feedback
2. Will you be open to give your feedback on the final tool/questionnaire developed as a result of expert interviews?