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Leveraging Workforce Diversity and Inclusion to Foster Employee Engagement: Evidence from Pakistan's Textile Sector

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Abstract

Employee engagement has emerged as a critical determinant of organizational performance, particularly in labor-intensive industries operating within culturally diverse contexts. This study examines the direct effects of workforce diversity, workplace inclusion, and managerial support on employee engagement in Pakistan's textile sector, drawing on Social Exchange Theory as a guiding framework. Using a quantitative, cross-sectional research design, data were collected from 258 employees working across multiple departments in textile firms located in Faisalabad. The study employed structured questionnaires and analyzed the data using correlation and multiple regression techniques in SPSS. The results indicate that workforce diversity, workplace inclusion, and managerial support each exhibit a significant positive relationship with employee engagement. Among the predictors, managerial support explained the highest proportion of variance in employee engagement when assessed independently. Reliability analysis confirmed satisfactory internal consistency across all measurement scales. The findings suggest that while diversity and inclusion contribute meaningfully to employee engagement, their effectiveness is substantially reinforced by consistent and supportive managerial behavior. This study contributes empirical evidence from a developing-economy context and offers practical insights for managers and policymakers seeking to enhance employee engagement through inclusive workplace practices and effective supervisory support in the textile industry.

Keywords: Workforce Diversity; Inclusion; Managerial Support; Employee Engagement; Textile Industry; Pakistan

1. Introduction

Employee engagement now ranks among the forces that quietly, yet decisively, steer organizations toward success in crowded markets. When workers feel a genuine connection to their roles, productivity and inventive thinking rise, the turnover clock slows, and overall performance usually enters a noticeably brighter zone. Executives in places such as Pakistan have begun searching for the precise pulses that can spark and sustain that same level of commitment across a patchwork of job settings. Competition has also pushed another issue to center stage: diversity and inclusion as tactical must-haves, especially within labor-heavy fields such as the Pakistani textile sector. Employers confronted with a mosaic of gender, age, ethnicity, and educational experience quickly learn that steering that mosaic toward common purpose is no side project; it is the only route to keeping engagement high and performance steady (Alshaabani, Hamza, & Rudnák, 2021). Scholars generally define workforce diversity as the variety of characteristics and backgrounds represented in a given group, whereas inclusion describes the deliberate organizational work that welcomes, respects, and actively exploits those differences Mulyanti et al., (2024) Ashmawy (2023) tested that idea in several field studies and found that diverse teams demonstrated measurably higher levels of innovation, collaboration, and commitment when inclusive practices were consistently applied. Equity and Inclusion Theory backs that intuition by arguing plainly that mere demographic variety-no matter how striking-does not itself boost organizational performance (Roberson, 2019). Absent proactive inclusion, otherwise heterogeneous workforces frequently devolve into internal conflict, employee disengagement, and unforced turnover. Textiles loom large in the economic landscape of Pakistan, providing

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jobs that touch more households than any other single industry. The sub-segment drives a noteworthy slice of GDP growth and is still the crown jewel of export revenue. Union boards and the factory courtyard gossip reveal, however, that power is still hoarded at the top, with women and contract workers kept at the margins. When hierarchy bites that hard, genuine employee engagement the feeling that one's work matters and the mind is fully in the game- tends to wither on the vine.

In this industry, inclusivity considering equitable representation in the decision-making process, communication flow, culture-specific training, and leadership accessibility has been observed to enhance employee trust, job satisfaction, and engagement. As noted by Ayres (2025), absenteeism and turnover are mitigated and psychological safety and well-being both of which indicate engaged behavior are enhanced, in organizations implementing inclusivity frameworks. The body of empirical research in the context of Pakistan's industry, particularly the textile sector, is scant. The existing literature predominantly centers on inclusivity or diversity, overlooking the interplay of both concepts and employee engagement (Mushtaq et al., 2024). Very few studies have sought to examine this triad diversity, inclusion, and engagement in the context of a developing economy using quantitative methods. This research is framed around Social Exchange Theory (SET) which indicates how organizational rewards are reciprocated with loyalty and engagement (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The theory is useful in exploring employees' perceptions of fairness, respect, inclusivity, and how these factors shape employees' emotions and behaviors. Through this lens, the theory helps explain the reciprocation aspect of employee engagement resulting from organizational initiatives aimed at promoting diversity and inclusion. This research aims to fill this gap by analyzing the impact of diversity and inclusion on employee engagement in Pakistan's textile industry. It seeks to identify the most impactful dimensions of D&I by analyzing structured survey data through regression analysis. The outcome can help shape HR interventions, leadership development programs, and strategic initiatives in manufacturing companies seeking to build inclusive high-performing workplaces.

1.1. Research Questions:

- How does workforce diversity affect employee engagement in Pakistan's textile industry?
- Does workplace inclusion raise employee engagement levels?
- How does support from management impact employee engagement?

1.2. Research Objectives:

- To examine the direct effect of workforce diversity on employee engagement in Pakistan's textile industry.
- To assess the influence of workplace inclusion on employee engagement among textile-sector employees.
- To evaluate the role of managerial support in predicting employee engagement.
- To compare the relative explanatory power of workforce diversity, workplace inclusion, and managerial support in explaining variance in employee engagement.

2. Literature Review

Modern organizations, whether in Silicon Valley or the Sundarbans, are coming to terms with a simple truth: a workforce that mixes backgrounds, beliefs, and abilities is no longer optional. Plenty of firms still cling to yesterday's playbook, yet places such as Pakistan's sprawling textile parks paint a different picture. Long-standing customs ripple through production lines, offering a live test case for anyone curious about the real-time effects of diversity and inclusion on daily worker behavior. Meeting planners and compliance officers can talk about modernization until the cows come home, but the heart of the matter remains human; welcoming staff from various walks of life is the fastest way to hire, hold on to, and genuinely engage talent that could wander off at a moments notice. The following review sifts through textbooks, journal articles, and the odd case study to map out how workforce mix, true inclusion, and employee investment fit together, all the while keeping the Pakistani experience in plain sight.

2.1. Workforce Diversity and Employee Engagement

Workforce diversity-almost shorthand now for mixing gender, age, ethnicity, education, and lived experience in one space-has lately been put forward as a dependable lever for higher employee engagement. Researchers keep spotting the same pattern: when mismatched backgrounds are farmed out into small teams, fresh ideas bubble up, working relationships tighten, and motivation heads in a northward direction. Goswami and Goswami (2022) put it plainly: an assorted crew is more likely to poke holes in the standard playbook, and that provocation, in turn, pulls everyone deeper into the task. Even so, managing such a mix is not optional anymore, because, as Agrawal (2016) notes, varying ages, genders, and value sets quietly steer who shows up ready to contribute and who drifts away. The organizations that brazenly write inclusive strategies on their websites, rather than leave them as lunch-table talk, almost always end up

with departments that feel more engaged (Agrawal, 2016). Take Pakistan's textile sector-charcoal-stained factories stacked behind concrete walls, rigid chain-of-command, and women still mostly pushing pedals in the background-and you find diversity shoved into the bottom drawer. Malik et al. (2023) discovered that the managers often juggle mere headcounts, fixing a token woman or two on the payroll but scarcely worrying about how their cultures or mind-sets might clash or cross-pollinate. Turi et al. (2022) argue this patchwork, quota-driven strategy wastes talent as if it were thread left over at closing time. When variety is genuinely harnessed, surprise insights sprout, commitment tightens, and workers, for once, feel like partners in the firms' scheme of things. Fieldwork conducted by the Manasco Group revealed that diverse staffing enhances both team output and the fluidity of internal exchanges, a finding that correlates with heightened engagement among members.

Mushtaq et al., (2024) found that when workers from different backgrounds see fairness, respect, and an even playing field, they feel a surge of internal drive and loyalty that noticeably boosts retention and engagement. The same connection appeared in research by Goswami and Goswami (2022), who pointed out that the psychological empowerment linked to gender and generational diversity is only fully realized in genuinely inclusive settings. Supporting this line of thought, Osibanjo et al., (2020) argued that thoughtful management of difference cultivates a climate in which every team member feels recognized, building trust and deepening engagement. Seidemann and Weißmüller (2022), however, cautioned that overly uniform teams tend to fall into groupthink, stifling innovation; by contrast, mixed groups are generally more adaptable and better at solving complex problems, traits that correlate strongly with higher employee engagement. Diversity often appears in mission statements, yet its mere presence is rarely enough to animate a workplace. Vedres and Vásárhelyi (2022) caution that when diverse voices go unmanaged, the result can quickly devolve into intergroup conflict or a widespread sense of inequity, both of which drain engagement. That judgement does not happen in a vacuum; leaders, the prevailing culture, and well-structured HR practices act as the backdrop against which difference either flourishes or fades. Maduka and Osita (2020) observed that employees stay motivated only when they believe the organization genuinely values-and actively deploys-the unique attributes they bring. Nguyen et al., (2021) went further, arguing that thoughtful diversity management should replace compliance checklists with a forward-looking HR strategy capable of boosting both motivation and retention. Taken together, these studies insist that engagement is never an automatic by-product of numbers; it arrives only when organizations pair diversity with deliberate, visible effort to appreciate and utilize those differences.

2.2. Workplace Inclusion and Its Impact on Engagement

Although many people conflate diversity and inclusion, they describe two separate phenomena. Diversity measures who shows up, while inclusion concerns the deliberate effort to give those individuals a real seat at the table. Scholars such as Yadav and Katiyar (2017), argue that strategies rooted in emotional intelligence and participatory leadership create the psychological safety that keeps employees engaged. Agrawal (2016) claims the same set of practices strengthens both emotional and cognitive ties to the work at hand. Radhika and Srinivas (2021) add that when teams consistently feel respected, a deeper bond forms between them and the organization, and that bond in turn boosts overall engagement. Something similar is playing out in Pakistans textile plants, where historically sidelined groups-women, seasonal hands, and temporary laborers-are discovering that inclusion matters a great deal. Naz et al., (2024), report that open talk channels, cross-functional projects, and formal grievance paths begin to shatter the silence that usually isolates these workers. Amin et al., (2024), find that when people sense fairness and real participation, they become more embedded in their roles, and that embeddedness then mediates the relationship between engagement levels and turnover risk. Seidemann and Weißmüller (2022) warn that genuine inclusion cannot be reduced to a ceremonial seat at the table; it demands a hardwired commitment from the organization to put every voice on an equal footing in the decision-making process. When that level of seriousness is achieved, stakeholder engagement tends to rise substantially.

A bunch of recent surveys from multiple countries backs up the idea that welcoming everyone pays off. In a cross-border project Mulyanti and et al., (2024), companies that baked DEI goals right into manager ratings recorded a 15 to 20 percent bump in how staff said they felt about their jobs. Besides those numbers, Radhika and Srinivas (2021) that letting a wide range of ideas into the room gives groups sharper decision-making and bigger buy-in. They underline that when messaging about inclusion is deliberate, folks of different ages and backgrounds jump in more. A different twist came from Goswami and Goswami (2022) found that inclusion turns up the volume on diversity's positive vibe. Without a welcoming culture, they warn, the spark flat-lines. Nguyen et al., (2021) back this up by naming psychological safety as a direct outgrowth of inclusive practices. Osibanjo et al., (2020) add one more brick to the wall by linking those same practices to a strong feeling of belonging. All of this pushes the point that inclusion is not just a nice extra; it's the switch that lights up diversity. If work settings lock in these habits, the payroll crowd ends up more emotionally and mentally invested.

2.3. Managerial Support and Its Influence on Employee Engagement

Good managers can turn a boring job into a place where workers feel valued and needed. When supervisors lend a hand, staff members suddenly see real purpose in what they do. Even in highly-structured outfits like Pakistan's textile mills, the tone set at the top matters a lot. Research from different corners of the globe keeps showing that help from the boss—whether emotional, practical, or career-focused—makes people show up ready to give their best. Recent research out of the textile industry shows that a supportive manager can dull the sting of workplace toxicity and lift employees' spirits (Mushtaq et al., 2024). That finding lines up with a separate study in manufacturing that says coaching, honest talk, and public praise boost workers' self-confidence and tighten team bonds (Mumtaz et al., 2023). A third paper even pinpoints supervisor backing as a straight-line cause of job energy, with fairness and job roots acting as the glue (Amin et al., 2024). Think about Social Exchange Theory, first sketched by Blau (1964). When a boss dispenses real advice, respect, and even-handed rules, employees trade back extra effort, loyalty, and the odd spark of initiative. (Mushtaq et al., 2024) says the opposite is just as true; yank out that support and the top performers start dragging, burn out, and quietly plan an exit.

Similar findings appear across other streams of scholarship. Mulyanti et al., (2024) argue that leadership marked by inclusiveness and emotional intelligence is a cornerstone of any lasting DEI engagement effort. In a related vein, Vedres and Vászárhelyi (2022) show that the day-to-day conduct of managers determines whether diversity and inclusion policies show up as concrete improvements in workplace sentiment. Leadership training still encounters blind spots in the Pakistani manufacturing landscape. Raziq and Wiesner (2016) note that many midsize enterprises and larger textile firms rely on ad-hoc mentoring, leaving mid-tier supervisors without a clear developmental pathway. Absent that structure, staff experience becomes patchy; low morale, hazy communication, and a hesitance to invest fully in assigned tasks often follow. Close examination of the available research underscores how the cross-section of diversity, inclusion, and managerial backing decisively molds engagement levels, a point that resonates especially in the context-sensitive garment sector of a developing economy.

2.4. Research Gaps

Scholars nearly universally agree that a diverse workforce, coupled with deliberate inclusion and vocal managerial backing, lifts the level of employee engagement on the shop floor and beyond. The sheer variety of backgrounds brings fresh ideas; structured inclusion ensures those ideas do not simply echo in an empty hall (Omale et al. 2025; Goswami and Goswami 2022). Steering that energy into observable behaviour rests largely on managers, who act as the practical bridge between glossy policy statements and the lived experience of everyday work (Mushtaq et al. 2024; Amin et al. 2024). Yet much of the research sits on a Western bookshelf, divorced from the realities faced by labor-heavy sectors like Pakistan's textile mills. Vedres and Vászárhelyi (2022) as well as Mulyanti et al. (2024) offer valuable global snapshots, but none confront the specific role that South Asian hierarchies and cultural codes play. Even studies closer to home—such as Raziq and Wiesner (2016) or Mumtaz et al., (2023) treat engagement as an endpoint rather than dissecting the inner workings that allow diversity and inclusion to transform mere compliance into genuine psychological commitment. Most quantitative studies stop at bold averages and never pause to ask how plant operators feel in comparison to staffers who work behind desks. Because the textile trade sorts workers by skill and station more clearly than some other fields, breaking the numbers out by group matters a great deal. With this gap in mind, the research now on the table tests whether workplace diversity, formal inclusion efforts and everyday managerial support really boost engagement across spinning, weaving and finishing lines in Pakistan's mills. Findings will give fresh texture to Social Exchange Theory and hand line managers and policy-makers a set of practical, locally grounded clues they can act on.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Social Exchange Theory (SET), originally proposed by Blau (1964) and later refined by Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), which explains workplace attitudes and behaviors as outcomes of reciprocal relationships between employees and organizations. In line with SET, employees are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of engagement when they interpret organizational practices as signals of fairness, support, and recognition. Within this framework, workforce diversity, workplace inclusion, and managerial support are conceptualized as distinct yet complementary organizational factors that shape employees' exchange perceptions. Workforce diversity represents the demographic and experiential heterogeneity present within the organization, while workplace inclusion reflects the extent to which employees experience belonging, voice, and equitable participation in organizational processes. Managerial support captures employees' perceptions of supervisors' concern, guidance, and accessibility in daily work interactions. The framework proposes that each of these organizational factors exerts a direct and positive influence on employee engagement. Employee engagement, positioned as the dependent variable, reflects employees' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in their work roles. Consistent with Social Exchange Theory, when employees

perceive diversity initiatives, inclusive practices, and supervisory behaviors as genuine organizational commitments, they are more inclined to reciprocate through heightened engagement. Rather than assuming complex causal pathways, the conceptual framework adopts a direct-effects model that allows for the examination of the relative contribution of workforce diversity, workplace inclusion, and managerial support in explaining employee engagement. This approach is particularly appropriate for the context of Pakistan's textile industry, where hierarchical structures and labor-intensive work environments make managerial behavior a salient and immediate indicator of organizational support.

3.1. Research Hypotheses

Drawing on Social Exchange Theory, this study proposes that employee engagement emerges as a reciprocal response to favorable organizational practices and supportive workplace relationships. When employees perceive that their organization values diversity, fosters inclusion, and provides consistent managerial support, they are more likely to respond with heightened engagement in their work roles. Based on the conceptual framework, the following hypotheses are formulated:

- **H1:** Workforce diversity has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement.
- **H2:** Workplace inclusion has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement.
- **H3:** Managerial support has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement

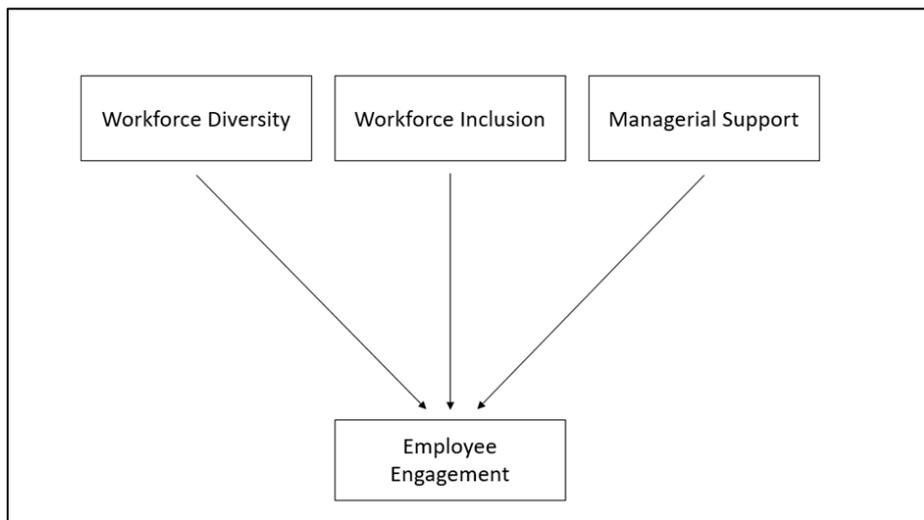


Figure 1 Conceptual Model

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

The present investigation employs a quantitative, descriptive design rooted in a relational-survey framework. Such an approach systematically maps out how workforce diversity, workplace inclusion, managerial support, and employee engagement are interlinked. As earlier noted by Karasar (2009), the relational-survey model excels at pinpointing both associative and predictive ties among several variables within a given cohort.

4.2. Population and Sample

The study draws its subjects from Faisalabad's sprawling textile district, a hub where long shifts and piecemeal wages remain the norm. Stratified random sampling yielded 258 completed questionnaires, a haul that spreads evenly across spinning, weaving, dyeing, and finishing departments. With this number in hand, the dataset comfortably clears the minima prescribed for most multiple-regression tests and thus affords analysts the statistical leverage they seek.

4.3. Data Collection Instrument

Data were gathered through a structured self-administered questionnaire comprising 20 items distributed across four constructs:

- Workforce Diversity (5 items)
- Workplace Inclusion (5 items)
- Managerial Support (5 items)
- Employee Engagement (5 items)

The measure drew on Balay and Sa-lam's (2004) Diversity Management Scale, a tool that has been cross-validated in a number of organizational behavior inquiries. Respondents rated each item on the familiar 5-point Likert scale, where 1 signaled strong dis-agreement and 5 signaled strong agreement; thus, elevated scores tracked with increasingly favorable views of the target construct.

4.4. Validity and Reliability

Reinforcing content validity, a panel of management-science scholars scrutinized the instrument and proposed revisions. A subsequent pilot-test involving thirty participants affirmed item lucidity and internal consistency, prompting only cosmetic edits. For reliability assessment, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated:

- Workforce Diversity = 0.818
- Workplace Inclusion = 0.857
- Managerial Support = 0.866
- Employee Engagement = 0.827

All values exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating high internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

4.5. Variables and Measurement

- Independent Variables: Workforce Diversity, Workplace Inclusion, Managerial Support
- Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

The study borrowed existing measurement schemes that had been validated in earlier research, then fine-tuned each scale to the peculiar ways textile workers talk about their jobs.

4.6. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS (Version 25). Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondent characteristics. Pearson correlation analysis examined the associations among the study variables. To test the research hypotheses, separate simple linear regression analyses were conducted to assess the independent predictive relationship between each organizational factor and employee engagement. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha was performed to evaluate the internal consistency of the measurement scales.

5. Results and Data Analysis

5.1. Descriptive Statistics

Two hundred fifty-eight (258) complete surveys were ultimately coded and examined. Those who replied spanned almost every tier of Faisalabad's textile sector, from blunt-end operators through mid-line supervisors to top-floor administrators. Core statistics-gender, age, time on the job-are set aside in the main text but will be lodged in an appendix for any later inquiries.

5.2. Correlation Analysis

The strength and direction of relationships among the primary variables were examined through Pearson correlation coefficients. Those coefficients, summarized in Table 1, reveal statistically meaningful positive links between workforce diversity, perceptions of workplace inclusion, levels of managerial support, and overall employee engagement.

Table 1 Correlation Matrix (n = 258)

Variables	1	2	3	4
Workforce Diversity	1			
Work Inclusion	0.464**	1		
Managerial Support	0.449**	0.539**	1	
Engagement	0.532**	0.522**	0.590**	1

Note: $p < .01$ (2-tailed). All correlations are statistically significant.

The findings presented here illustrate that workforce diversity and proactive inclusion policies are modestly linked to the degree of employee engagement experienced across departments. Managerial backing figures prominently in that equation, reinforcing the anticipated connections drawn in the original hypothesis.

5.3. Regression Analysis

An ordinary least-squares regression analysis- conducted via the Enter command-set out to measure how well each independent variable forecasts levels of employee engagement. Three distinct models emerged from the procedure, and a concise summary of their statistics follows.

- **Model 1** examined the impact of inclusion on employee engagement and yielded a significant result, $R^2 = .273$, $F(1, 256) = 96.10$, $p < .001$, with a standardized beta coefficient of $\beta = .522$, $t = 9.80$, $p < .001$.
- **Model 2** analyzed workforce diversity, explaining 28.3% of the variance in employee engagement ($R^2 = .283$, $F(1, 256) = 101.15$, $p < .001$). The standardized beta was $\beta = .532$.
- **Model 3** tested managerial support, which emerged as the strongest predictor with $R^2 = .348$, $F(1, 256) = 136.34$, $p < .001$ and $\beta = .590$, $t = 11.67$, $p < .001$.

The evidence indicates that each of the three examined variables serves as a statistically reliable predictor of employee engagement. The results indicate that workforce diversity, workplace inclusion, and managerial support each independently predict employee engagement when examined through separate regression models. Among the three predictors, managerial support demonstrated the highest explained variance in employee engagement when assessed independently, followed by workforce diversity and workplace inclusion. These findings support all three hypotheses and highlight the importance of organizational and supervisory practices in shaping employee engagement within Pakistan's textile sector.

Table 2 Regression Models Predicting Employee Engagement

Predictor	R ²	Adjusted R ² (optional)	β	F-value	t-value	Sig.
Inclusion	0.273	0.270	0.522	96.10	9.80	<.001
Workforce Diversity	0.283	0.280	0.532	101.15	10.05	<.001
Managerial Support	0.348	0.345	0.590	136.34	11.67	<.001

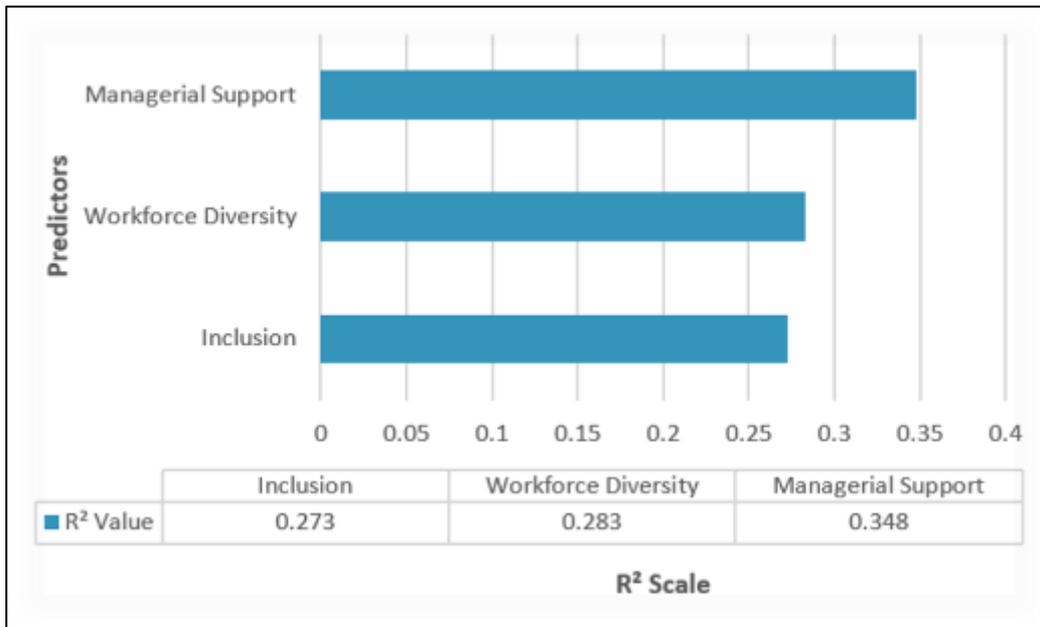


Figure 2 Comparison of R2 Values: Predictors of Employees Engagement

5.4. Reliability Analysis

Internal consistency was gauged with Cronbach’s alpha across every multi-item instrument, and in every case the resulting figures underscored strong reliability:

Table 3 Cronbach’s Alpha

Construct	Cronbach’s Alpha
Workforce Diversity	0.818
Workplace Inclusion	0.857
Managerial Support	0.866
Employee Engagement	0.827

The computed alpha coefficients for every measure comfortably surpassed the conventional cutoff of 0.70 suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), affirming that the instruments produced stable and reliable scores across the sample.

6. Discussion and Implications

This investigation set out to map the links among workforce diversity, the sense of inclusion felt on the shop floor, the encouragement offered by managers, and the overall engagement of personnel in Faisalabad’s textile sector. The data collected throughout the study lend robust empirical weight to the proposition that a varied workforce coupled with genuine inclusion-when bolstered by visible managerial backing-sparks higher levels of employee commitment.

6.1. Interpretation of Key Findings

The findings provide empirical support for the argument that workforce diversity, workplace inclusion, and managerial support are positively associated with employee engagement. The results of the correlation and regression analyses indicate that employees who perceive their organizations as diverse, inclusive, and supportive report higher levels of engagement in their work roles. These findings are consistent with prior research suggesting that organizational practices signaling fairness and support contribute to enhanced employee engagement. Global studies such as Rudolph and Zacher (2015), Nguyen et al. (2021), and Osibanjo et al. (2020) offer reassuring company for the present work; the reported beta weights match those earlier findings and reinforce the idea that leadership backing magnifies the effect of inclusion and diversity on employee engagement. Because the country’s textile assembly lines tilt toward hierarchy, the steady footprint of managerial support makes intuitive sense; supervisors in that milieu are seen not only as policy

enforcers but also as living proof of the firms commitment to fairness, acting on cues that top management supplies but often coloring those cues with personal judgment. Social Exchange Theory, first articulated by Blau (1964) and later refined by Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) posits that workers are likely to pay back fair treatment with boosts in engagement, loyalty, and even retention. In the present analysis, the positive coefficient linked to diversity reinforces that insight; teams whose members bring a mix of backgrounds report livelier interactions. Yet that benefit does not appear automatically; it hinges on leaders who champion inclusivity and on organizational practices designed to welcome every voice, as (Roberson, 2019) and Seidemann and Weißmüller (2022) both caution. Taken together, the findings suggest that diversity and inclusion initiatives can certainly boost employee engagement, yet the ongoing support of organizational leaders does far more. In labor-intensive, culturally varied sectors such as textiles, that steady backing turns ephemeral goodwill into lasting commitment.

6.2. Contextual Relevance

Pakistan's textile sector, notable for its mix of workforce backgrounds and tiered management frameworks, serves as a compelling case study. The data indicate that simply hiring across demographic lines falls short unless leaders back those hires with training, fair policies, and a culture that welcomes all voices. Motivation and morale in labor-heavy firms like these ripple straight through to output and efficiency, so the point is hardly abstract. New evidence from a developing economy rarely appears in the Western-dominated literature on workplace inclusion, and this gap has lingered too long. By filling it, the study enriches the global conversation about diversity management and shows that good principles travel; they boost employee engagement even in cultural and industrial settings far from their point of origin.

6.3. Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to the literature by extending Social Exchange Theory to the context of Pakistan's textile industry through an examination of direct relationships between organizational practices and employee engagement. By demonstrating that workforce diversity, workplace inclusion, and managerial support are independently associated with employee engagement, the study reinforces the relevance of Social Exchange Theory in explaining how perceived organizational investments shape employee attitudes in labor-intensive settings. The findings also contribute context-specific evidence from a developing economy, addressing a gap in the predominantly Western-focused engagement literature.

6.4. Practical Implications

Textile managers, human-resources officers, and policy framers may translate these results into concrete strategies meant to lift employee engagement. Adding genuinely diverse voices and equitable practices, the evidence suggests, infuses work cultures with renewed energy and purpose:

- **Leadership Enablement:** Supervisors and middle managers gain practical training in inclusive leadership, learning how support, fairness, and accessibility spark genuine employee engagement.
- **Policy Institutionalization:** Formal rules spell out workplace inclusion, pairing grievance redressal pathways with equal-opportunity mandates and clear promotion criteria that all staff can examine.
- **Equitable Development Opportunities:** Structured upskilling, mentoring, and mobility programs reach every employee, regardless of gender, background, or how long they have worked for the organization.
- **Culture Transformation:** A culture of trust and respect blossoms when colleagues celebrate differences and the contributions of underrepresented groups receive visible recognition.
- **Sector-Wide Standards:** Industry regulators and textile associations promote benchmarking and certification so companies can measure progress against consistent inclusive-practice yardsticks.

6.5. Limitations

The present research sheds considerable light on how workforce diversity, inclusiveness practices, and employee engagement unfold in Pakistan's textile landscape; however, a few important methodological and contextual boundaries ought to be recognized:

- **Cross-sectional Design:** Data were gathered through a one-off cross-sectional survey, meaning every response was recorded in a single sweep. This snapshot design, though efficient, precludes the research from tracing causal links over time. The persistent question is whether robust diversity-and-inclusion initiatives spark genuine employee engagement or-if the lens is reversed-whether highly engaged staff simply characterize their environment in a more favorable light.

- **Self-Reported Data:** Each variable in the analysis relied exclusively on self-reported data from staff members. Such a design inevitably invites social desirability bias, since survey participants can exaggerate feelings of inclusion or commitment out of habit, hope, or simple wish to avoid disapproval.
- **Single-Industry Scope:** Grounding a study exclusively in Faisalabad's textile corridor inevitably narrows its reach. Service enterprises and nascent tech outfits now pulse through the city, yet their distinct cultures and workflow blueprints remain outside the original lens. Generalizing from one cloth mill to a call centre-or to a coding shop tucked above a roadside coffee stall-is at best speculative. Researchers tempted to extrapolate should watch how quickly the moral unravels.
- **Common Method Bias:** Employing a single instrument and identical measurement source across every variable introduces a well-documented vulnerability known as common-method variance. This statistical artifact can artificially swell the apparent correlations among the constructs under investigation.
- **Unmeasured Confounding Variables:** The present analysis did not isolate compensation, workload, perceptions of organizational justice, or the prevailing leadership style, even though each of those variables commonly interacts with inclusion and diversity measures and likely shapes employee engagement outcomes.
- **Moderating Role of Organizational:** Justice Subsequent inquiries might examine whether perceptions of organizational justice temper the link between workplace inclusion and employee engagement. Other lines of study could isolate psychological safety as a mediator that channels the same relationship.

Additionally, because the regression analyses were conducted using separate models, the study does not assess the simultaneous effects of the predictors, which future research may examine using more comprehensive multivariate analytical approaches.

6.6. Suggestions for Future Research

Advancing the present inquiry will require a deliberate effort to address its acknowledged shortcomings. In that spirit, subsequent investigations might profitably pursue the lines of inquiry set forth below:

- **Longitudinal Studies:** A longitudinal study permits researchers to observe how employee engagement fluctuates across multiple points in the work-life cycle. Because the same individuals are measured repeatedly, stronger causal links can be drawn than in snapshots taken at a single moment.
- **Multi-Source and Mixed Methods:** Triangulating self-reports with supervisor evaluations, personnel files, and in-depth qualitative interviews tends to deepen data texture while also curtailing the influence of individual prejudice.
- **Cross-Sector Comparison:** Repeating the experiment in arenas as disparate as healthcare, education, and technology would furnish researchers with cross-sector benchmarks and bolster the overall generalizability of the findings.
- **Inclusion of Moderators and Mediators:** Subsequent research might examine cohort-based moderators-gender, age, or length of service-as well as mediating pathways such as psychological safety and perceptions of fairness, thereby sharpening the contours of the engagement framework.
- **Cultural and Regional Extensions:** People have different gut feelings about diversity depending on where they sit. Testing those feelings in places such as Bangladesh or Vietnam would pull in wider viewpoints on whether policies actually lift workers in the same sweat-based sectors.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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