EFFECT OF WORKPLACE DIVERSITY ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT WITH THE MEDIATION OF INCLUSION - A STUDY AMONG INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) EMPLOYEES IN KERALA

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ABSTRACT
Purpose– The primary purpose is to find the relationship between workplace diversity and employee engagement among the employees working in the Information Technology (IT) sector of Kerala. It also tries to examine a possible mediation effect of workforce inclusion in the relationship between workplace diversity and employee engagement

Design/methodology/approach – An extensive literature review develops a conceptual model. The study formulated some hypotheses based on the model and tested the same with the data collected through the survey. The study uses a descriptive research method. The sample consists of 221 IT sector employees working in Trivandrum Technopark and Kochi Infopark in the State of Kerala.

Findings– The results reveal that workplace diversity has a positive and significant relationship with intellectual, social, and affective engagement, with workforce inclusion significantly partially mediating the association between workplace diversity and employee engagement. Hence when inclusive and diversity practices are included in the organization, it can lead to better employee engagement.

Research implications/limitations– The result of this study presents an understanding of how workplace diversity and inclusion can affect the engagement of employees. The study can provide implications for employees working in the IT sector.

Practical implications– The study provides insights to IT organizations for creating a working environment where workplace diversity and inclusion are accepted and given due importance. Studies on workplace diversity and inclusion are scarce in the IT sector of Kerala. Hence the outcomes of this study can be very relevant in the present scenario.

Originality/value – Many researchers have studied the influence of diversity on inclusion. But there was a shortage of studies that identified inclusion as mediation between diversity and engagement, especially in the state of Kerala. This study sheds new light on the possible mediation of inclusion in the relationship between workplace diversity and employee engagement.

Keywords – Workplace Diversity, Workforce Inclusion, Employee Engagement, IT sector
Paper type - Research paper

INTRODUCTION

Companies around the world have become diverse as a result of globalization. As companies compete in a global market, they recognize that they need a skilled and diverse workforce, the best production processes, and the most innovative products. Diversity and inclusion in the workplace are essential factors in retaining and engaging employees. Diversity in the workplace refers to the presence of workers from diverse cultures, backgrounds, ages, and races (Mor Barak and Cherin 1998). Perceived Organizational Diversity analyzes how employees perceive the importance of diversity management in their organization. . Shore et al. (2011) defined diversity as an essential element of work groups and the value of work groups. The workplace has diversity when employees are different in age, gender, ethnicity, education level, etc.

Organizations need to understand and measure these differences if they are to be successful. (Dupper & Garbers, 2012). Many studies have proven that assimilating individuals with diverse backgrounds can be successful (Pedula, 2020). An employee's sense of inclusion is defined as the sense of belonging to an essential part of the organization in all operations, such as having a voice in decision-making processes and participating in crucial projects. Behavioral psychologists have taken a great deal of interest in inclusion as a concept (Pless and Maak, 2004; Lirio et al., 2008). There is a strong relationship between employee perceptions of inclusion and commitment and job performance (Cho & Mor Barak, 2008). The results of a study by Razzak, M.R reveals that inclusion has a significant positive relationship with intellectual, affective, and social engagement (Razzak, M.R., Khan, G.M. and AlAbri, S, 2021).

Inclusion refers to the desire individuals have to be part of an elite group, and each employee's diversity is recognized (Corell and Park, 2005). Inclusion is more accessible when there is a match between people and groups. Inclusion is explained as "the extent to which individuals receive treatment that satisfies their needs." Overall, three key issues emerge: As a first step, inclusion lets individuals become a part of a group. Secondly, both belonging to and being unique in a particular group are embodied in this concept. Ultimately, it is the group that must agree to include the individual. Integrating diversity and recognizing its value is the concept of "inclusion" (Nishii, 2013). Studies have been conducted based on Racial, ethnic, religious, gender, and sexual diversity (Chung et al., 2019). Diversity and individuality are salient aspects of inclusion within an organization (Ferdman and Dean, 2014). So, inclusion includes more than diversity by bringing people different from the majority to the table. To be truly inclusive, the organization needs to value such differences and develop an environment that fosters a sense of belonging for these individuals (Guilléne et al., 2014). A pluralistic framework that respects diversity in the workplace encourages workplace inclusion, which leads to better employee engagement (Shore et al., 2018).

Various studies have shown that organizations with diverse and inclusive workforces can develop multiple problem-solving approaches, ultimately enhancing organizational performance. It increases morale and encourages employees to be positive at work if they feel they are an essential part of their company (April, Katoma, & Peters, 2009). It has been cited that diversity and inclusion in the workplace are crucial to an organization's success and its employees' performance. Studies on diversity and inclusion at work have been conducted for decades (Mamman, Kamoche, & Bakuwa, 2012; Groeneveld, 2011; Barak, 2013). Unfortunately, despite their best intentions, many organizations fail to emphasize the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Managing the differences created by diversified employees has been crucial to the organization's success and must be given due priority. NASSCOM annually organizes Diversity and Inclusion Summits for IT organizations, aiming for long-term development and sustainability. Diversity literature faces several challenges, including improving and creating an environment conducive to organizational success and fostering trust among a diverse workforce. Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, Ditlmann, & Crosby (2008). The researchers propose that the examined relationship between workforce diversity and employee engagement will strengthen the presence of strong workplace inclusion. Inclusion has major importance as it facilitates the extent to which an employee gets a feeling that he is a part of the organization and gets himself engaged (Mor Barak, 2008). This study has thus attempted to study the relationship between perceived organizational diversity and engagement with the mediation of workforce inclusion.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND
Workplace diversity and inclusion
Organizing diversity practices can signal external stakeholders that an organization is committed to supporting diversity. Rather than treating diversity as a threat or a hurdle to be overcome, successful diversity programs frame diversity as a challenge and an opportunity (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). Both

employees and organizations can benefit from diversity practices. The majority group's job performance and outcomes, such as organizational commitment, employee engagement, and turnover intention, are directly impacted by perceptions of an equitable diversity climate (McKay, Avery, & Morris, 2008). Because of this, diversity management has become a strategic initiative and is increasingly recognized (Algahtani, 2013). A study by Haq, R., Klarsfeld, A., Kornau, A., and Ngunjiri, F.W. (2020) reveals that in India, there is a relevance of revoking the theories on diversity and inclusion. Deformation on the aspects of diversity is necessary to get better employee engagement.

According to Barak (2016), workforce diversity is about recognizing, accepting, valuing, and celebrating differences among employees. Diverse factors such as race, class, and gender may influence people. Barak (2016) also stated that disagreements might extend to organizational values, roles, and behavior styles. Gomez and Bernet (2019) state that a diverse workforce increases productivity. It increases revenue, reduces costs, and improves numerous other economic benefits, including innovation and increased productivity. Researchers distinguish surface diversity from deep diversity. It can easily be observed on the surface that the characteristics of a group (such as its race, age, gender, etc.) will affect its behavior. Deep-level diversity (attitudes, opinions, information, and values) can be evident as a result of verbal and nonverbal communication. Deep level diversity is challenging to measure as compared to surface level diversity. Our research uses surface-level characteristics such as age and gender. Diversity studies have been conducted in several IT organizations. From the reports of Infosys, it is evident that they have come up with the idea of creating a diverse set of employees, including employees from 144 nations, and they have also opted for making inclusion a basic practice among employees for better performance.

A sense of inclusion can be defined as "the degree to which an employee feels included in the organization." According to Shore et al., 2010 through receiving treatment that meets the needs of the workgroup, he or she is considered an esteemed member of the organization. According to Miller (1998), inclusion refers to how individuals feel included. Ferdman, Holvino, and Merrill-Sands (2004) consider inclusion to be the "achievement of equal rights, justice, and participation; as a result, members of different groups are not only evaluated individually but also as a group. In addition to being afforded equal access to opportunities, decision-making, and power, they are also accorded equality of opportunity. They (Vohra et al., 2015) are actively desired because of their differences. Workplace inclusion is somewhat ambiguous since inclusion entails various things. It is used both for strategic and operational purposes and as an analytical tool (Ozbilgil, 2009). Inclusiveness can be framed as the belief that employees will be appreciated for their efforts and encouraged for their unique contributions to the organization. It is an action-oriented model that incorporates all aspects of the organization (Mor Barak, 2015). Inclusion at work has the following outcomes like the engagement of employees, commitment to the organization, job satisfaction, and retention. Research by Nair and Vohra 2015; Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004) opined that fairness, open communication, and transparency contribute to an inclusive environment. Employees are willing to participate by speaking up more and experiencing more effectively in such an environment (Detert and Burris, 2007). Chorbot-Mason et al. (2013) found lower rates of discrimination and harassment in an inclusive environment. According to Mor Barak and Cho (2008), inclusion refers to how people feel included in every aspect of the organization, including access to information. Several authors suggest that inclusion manifests as a sense of belonging, an appreciation of one's identity, and engagement from others to live one's best life. Inclusiveness is a cultural shift in organizations. It is a means of communicating and making each employee feel included. Due to inclusion, employees feel they are essential to the organization's success (April, Ephraim, & Peters, 2012). Many organizational rules are stated in corporate inclusion practices, which intend to create a welcoming, helpful, and supportive organization and participatory environment for the diverse workforce (Tang, Zheng, & Chen, 2017). According to Hwang and Hopkins (2015), when a worker feels included in an organization, the feeling of belonging will be

enhanced, resulting in a more significant commitment to the organization. Gallup Business Journal and diversity wall street journal are just a few of the practitioner-based platforms addressing the intersection of diversity and inclusion and employee engagement (Whiston & Robison, 2014; Anand, 2013; Simons, 2017; Clarke, 2015). Nita Clarke, director of IPA, explores the inter-relationship between employee engagement and diversity and inclusion at work in a recent article.

Diversity and inclusion practices followed by top IT companies

International Business Machine (IBM) has been concentrating on workplace diversity and inclusion practices as part of its corporate culture. IBM incorporates no gender discrimination inside its organization. Disabled persons are given more resources, and their disabilities are focused on and trained. IBM also supports worklife balance of employees. The Women leadership council run by the company has gained popularity as its gives assistance to women employees. Fair treatment is given to LGBT communities is given by the company, and for this, an agency called EAGLE is working efficiently. (source: IBM website)

Infosys: A fundamental tenet of the company's Code of Conduct and Ethics is respect for others, which guides our inclusion efforts and ensures a discrimination-free workplace. They say that a balanced and inspired workforce is built by celebrating diversity and fostering inclusion. In addition to being a signatory to UN Women's Empowerment Principles (WEP), Infosys is committed to gender diversity in the organization. Infosys emphasize women's involvement in both technology and management. Twenty-five percent of the company's board members consist of women employees. Their long-term target includes involving 45% of their employees with women by 2030. IWIN, Me app, and Moms net are some of the company's initiatives to help the employees who return after delivery. Opportunities are provided by the company for LGBTQIA+, and additionally, the community is given full support for inclusiveness. Infosys also embrace diverse cultures and support an inclusive environment. They believe that changing the organizational mindset can be accomplished through empowered Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). In addition to creating a broader understanding of diverse groups, they assist organizations in building inclusive workplace policies and practices that enable everyone to be their best selves at work. .(source: Infosys website)

Accenture has been focusing on WDI practices for many years. Global Inclusion and Diversity policy, and Accenture Diversity Council, Accenture Diversity Forum work for this purpose. Accenture feels that it is important that equality for all is accelerated and that each people feels a sense of belonging at work. They are unwaveringly committed to diversity. They believe that within the organization, everyone should feel like they belong. Each Accenture employee is responsible for creating and sustaining an inclusive environment. There are many groups that support women employees and other minority groups in the company. The I movement (ISWI) concentrates on the inclusion of each and every employee of the company. Accenture has accommodated one thousand fourhundred emploiyees with disabilities around 27 parts of their company.(source: Accenture website)

Employee Engagement

Engagement is explained as an employee's sense of belonging to the organization, which will assist them in maintaining positive relationships with their group mates. This sense of belonging can deliver a sign of engagement among the employees. A number of studies have been conducted on employee engagement in several sectors. The company strives to ensure its employees are prepared to go above and beyond to achieve success through employee engagement (Saks, 2019). The construct was introduced by Kahn (1990) and further developed by researchers such as Schaufeli et al. (2019). Various models present antecedents, mediators, and mediator types surrounding employee motivation and engagement. Engaging people outside the workgroup positively impacts employee engagement at work (Downey et al., 2014).

Work-related engagement can be defined as a positive, fulfilling attitude toward work which can be quantified by the quality of vigor, devotion, and absorption.

Employee engagement is defined by Saks (2006) as the level of conscientiousness and dedication of an employee to their job, and it is the affirmative feeling they exhibit towards their jobs, along with their motivation and commitment to work. Employee engagement is the constant affective-cognitive state of the employee possessing a positive form of mind results in gratification through vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli et al., 2005). Previous studies have demonstrated that high levels of engagement promote employee retention within domestic and international firms (Wilson, 2009). Engaged workers enjoy their jobs and translate that happiness into value (Lee, 2012). Engagement and commitment at work contribute to an organization's success. It is, therefore, not surprising that all types and sizes of organizations value employee engagement.

An engaged employee is upbeat and satisfied with their work-related activities, described by dedication, vigor, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2019). Further expanded by Kenexa (an IBM Institute) in terms of employees' perceptions of work satisfaction and feel motivated to go beyond what is expected of them to contribute to the organization's success. According to these definitions, employee engagement is an emotional, behavioral, and intellectual component. These behavioral and cognitive dimensions can impact the organization's success (Gruman and Saks, 2020; Phuanthuen et al., 2018). Numerous researchers have analyzed and concluded that Employee engagement is a challenge for organizations (Saks, 2019). Employee Engagement has been a widely discussed topic in the IT industry for the past few years. The IT industry is a sector of very prominent importance in the present scenario. In order to make its mark on the global map, India relies heavily on the IT industry. The information technology industry, due to its steady growth, has been attributed to its contribution to the country's GDP. The employment opportunities in the sector are very high, and organizations have been continuously focusing on training, engaging, and retaining this heavy workforce. IT employees have been exhibiting a high turnover rate, and to reduce the turnover, employers have been concentrating on employee engagement.

This study focuses on the effect of workplace diversity on employee engagement. The data has been obtained from employees working in IT sector companies in Kerala. A study in an IT industry like this will aid organizations aiming at making employees feel a part of the company by engaging them and ensuring inclusive growth and a low turnover rate.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Study objectives include investigating and measuring the relationships between workplace diversity and inclusion, employee engagement,
1. To study the relationship between workplace diversity and EE
2. To examine the relationship between workforce inclusion and EE
3. To find the mediating effect of workplace diversity and workforce inclusion on EE.
4. To examine the relationship between demographic variables with Workplace diversity, Workforce Inclusion, and Employee Engagement

HYPOTHESES FORMULATION

Diversity representation alone is insufficient to produce diversity benefits (Guillaume et al., 2013). Research shows that diversity and inclusion are positively correlated and are interdependent, with gender being the only characteristic that consistently relates the two (Findler, Wind, and Mor Barak, 2001). Study's by many researchers (e.g., Anand and Winters,2008; Shore et al., 2010) explain that there exists a relation between workplace diversity and inclusion. Previous researches show that diverse people feel included in environments where various people are present (Bilimoria, Joy, and Liang, 2008; Roberson,

2006). A similar paradigm is discrimination, fairness, and holistic approach that include equality of opportunity, fair treatment, recruiting, and compliance taken as diversity approaches (Thomas and Ely, 1996). SIT theory has also shown that people categorize themselves according to nationality, age, gender, race, and affiliation (Billig and Tajfel, 1973; Tajfel, 1982). It links diversity with the process of identity formation in real life and employees' perception of inclusion (Cho and Mor Barak, 2008). As a measure of inclusion, employees must feel that they are a part of the essential organization functions, such as influencing decisions and engaging in meaningful activities. They also think that information and resources are shared among groups (Mor Barak and Cho, 2008; Roberson, 2006). According to recent research, By focusing on inclusion management, diversity issues can be reduced (Tang et al., 2015). Diversity is important, and it requires dedication. Individuals need to be different but also committed. It is important for them to be included and to have their voices heard" (Dehaze, 2018). Diversity itself as a term can have some inadequacy and insecurity (Singh et al., 2013; Findler et al., 2007). In this study, we examine how workforce inclusion, including the feeling of belongingness, serves to betterment the perception of workplace diversity. Holvino, Ferdman, and Merrill-Sands (2004) state that a diverse climate in an organization can proactively encourage to create of inclusivity which can leverage diversity's potential advantages. Shore et al. (2011) and Ferdman and Davidson (2004) argue that organizations should create environments that are inclusive of all employees in order to manage both problems and potential benefits associated with diversity (Nishii, 2013).

H1: There is a significant relationship between Workplace diversity and Workforce Inclusion

Workforce inclusion has been studied as a strong predictor of employee engagement. Studies have been done on inclusion and have revealed that perception of inclusion is a strong predictor of employee engagement (Mor Barak and Levin, 2002; Mor Barak et al., 2001). Inclusion reportedly fosters a trusting climate that leads to employee engagement (Downey et al., 2014). Similar studies have revealed that employees with greater access to all information in the organization feel a sense of inclusion and get engaged (Hallberg and Schaufeli,2006; Zhu et al., 2009; Salanova et al., 2005). The authors discuss previous   studies   which   suggest   that inclusion is positively linked with a variety of outcomes of interest to employers, such as "organizational commitment, job performance, job satisfaction and work engagement" Matz, Carapinha, et al. (2012). According to a study by OPM (2015), employee engagement and employee performance are strongly predicted by Workplace inclusion. Settles, Ashley N (2016), in their study connecting the five inclusion factors and employee engagement, found that the five factors of inclusion: fairness, empowerment, openness, support, and cooperation are predictors of employee engagement.

H2: There is a significant relationship between Workforce Inclusion and Employee Engagement.

By promoting diversity practices, organizations signal to employees that they care for their health and well-being and appreciate their individuality. This, in turn, increases employee engagement. Diversity in the workplace is one such thing that affects employee engagement. According to scholars such as Miles (2001) and Harter, Schmidt, and Keyes (2002), employee engagement is influenced by various diversity factors in the workplace. In his study, Robinson (2006) argues that the degree of employee engagement is highly influenced by individual differences. Garg (2014) further describes that gender differences are also linked to engagement levels in the workplace. In order for a diversity program to be successful, its goals must be clearly communicated. Diversity is framed as an opportunity and a challenge rather than as a threat or obstacle, as outlined in Howard-Grenville & Hoffman (2003) and Jayne & Dipboye (2002). It is possible for diversity practices to pay off in significant ways. Organizations and employees both benefit from it. Fairness in diversity perceptions surely affects the engagement of employees, according to McKay, Avery, & Morris (2008), and has outcomes including turnover intentions and organizational commitment (Buttner, Lowe, & Billings-Harris, 2010). According to results based on 4,597 employees in

the health sector, It has been found that diversity practices increase trust, which, in turn, enhances employee engagement Downey, S. N., Thomas, K. M., van der Werff., L.& Plaut, V. C. (2014). According to SET, diversity practices can demonstrate to employees that their employers value them, support their individual differences, and care about their well-being. As a result, employees become more engaged. The purpose of this particular study is to determine whether Employee engagement can be predicted by workplace diversity. Hence we propose the hypothesis.

H3: There is a significant relationship between Workplace diversity and Employee Engagement.

Organizations have identified inclusion as a means of fulfilling diversity statements. A company's level of inclusion can be defined as its employees' sense of belonging, participation in organization-wide processes, including influence in critical decision-making processes (Mor Barak, 2008; Roberson, 2006). The perceptions of employee commitment are highly correlated with inclusion as well as job performance and engagement of employees (Cho & Mor Barak, 2008; Mor Barak, 2015). There is a perception among employees, particularly women and minorities, that they are excluded and also report lower job commitment in such situations. Jaiswal, A. and Dyaram, L. (2020). This paper proposes that workplace inclusion can boost employee engagement by implementing diversity practices. It is possible to think of inclusion as a measure of an individual's sense of belonging to an organization. Based on self-categorization theory, Turner & Reynolds (2012) explain how individuals internalize membership in in-groups and out-groups. Members of an ingroup place value on their membership, which contributes to their well-being and better engagement by facilitating cooperative and positive relationships between people. The benefits of belonging to an ingroup are numerous (Turner, 1975), such as loyalty, cooperation, engagement, and self-sacrifice. Diversity practices can have negative outputs, and it is revealed that when inclusion is practiced and moderated by workforce inclusion, this negative effect can be minimized. The very purpose of the present study is to determine how diversity practices promote employee inclusion through specific practices. It is expected that people will have positive perceptions when they have positive attitudes. Having a positive perception of overall diversity practices will enhance their perception of inclusion. Following that, employees' engagement levels can be improved. As a result, we predict the hypothesis as

H4: Workforce inclusion acts as a mediator in the relationship between workplace diversity and Employee Engagement.

To analyze whether there is any significant difference among demographic variables regarding Workplace diversity, Workforce Inclusion, and Employee Engagement, the researchers propose the following hypothesis.

H5: There is a significant difference in demographic variables (Age, Gender, marital status) with Workplace diversity, Workforce Inclusion, and Employee Engagement.
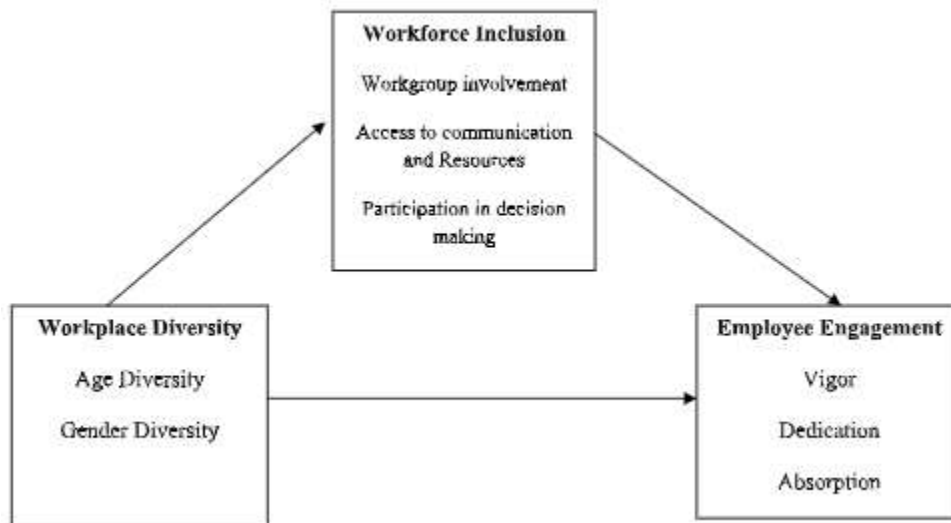
PROPOSED MODEL

Figure 1: Proposed model

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data

Primary and secondary data were used for conducting the study. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 31 scale items. The questionnaire was circulated among Information Technology employees working in Technopark and Infopark, which are Kerala's two major IT destinations. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed. From this, the fully filled responses of 221 employees were taken for analysis. The sampling method used was convenience sampling.

Measures

Independent variable

The independent variable used for the study is Workplace Diversity. The adapted version of the scale developed by Abbas and Hameed (2010) was used for the measurement. It consists of scale items measuring age and gender diversity.

Mediating variable

The dependent variable used for the study is Workforce Inclusion. The adapted version of the scale developed by Mor Barak and Cherin (1998) was used to measure the construct. It consists of 14 scale items measuring Influence in Decision making, Workgroup involvement, communication, and resource access.

Dependent variable

Employee Engagement has been studied through vigor, dedication and absorption scale developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003). The scale used for measurement of the construct was a shortened version Utrecht Work Engagement Scale–9 [UWES-9]).

RESULTS

Respondent's Profile

Table 1 describes the respondent's profile in the select IT firms. It gives a picture of the constitution of Gender, Age, and marital status of the respondents for the study. The category, frequencies, and percentages are as follows.

Table 1: Profile of the respondents

Profile	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	116	52.5
	Female	105	47.5
Age	Less than 25	64	29.0
	25-35	98	44.3
	35-45	19	8.60
	Above 45	40	18.1
Marital Status	Single	120	54.3
	Married	92	41.6
	Divorced	9	4.10

Reliability analysis

The Cronbach's alpha value of Workplace Diversity, Workforce Inclusion, and Employee Engagement was found to be $\alpha > 0.70$, which shows that the scale is reliable. Table 2 shows the Chronbach's Alpha values of the variables.

Table 2: Reliability of scale

Variable	Scale	Chronbach Alpha
Workplace Diversity	WD	0.760
Workforce Inclusion	WI	0.789
Employee Engagement	EE	0.816

Descriptive statistics of Workplace diversity, Workforce Inclusion, and Employee engagement with a demographic profile

One-way ANOVA was used to analyze whether there is any significant difference in demographic variables on WD, WI, and EE. Table 4 shows that all the p values are greater than 0.05 showing no significance of gender, age, or marital status on WD, WI, and EE, rejecting hypothesis H5.

Table: 4 One-way ANOVA on WD, WI, and Employee Engagement based on Gender, Age, and Marital Status

Descriptives						
	WD		WI		EE	
	t value	p value	t value	p value	t value	p value
Gender						
Male						
Female						
Others						
Total	**0.321**	**0.0572**	**0.168**	**0.682**	**0.932**	**0.335**
Age						
less than 25						
25-35						
36-45						
46-55						
above 55	**1.1**	**0.348**	**2.6**	**0.052**	**3.8**	**0.11**

Total					
Marital Status					
Single					
Married					
Divorced					
Total	3.3	0.069	0.55	0.459	1.1	0.275

Correlation analysis

The Karlpearsons correlation analysis was conducted to analyze the relationship between the variables and subconstructs of Workplace Diversity, Workforce Inclusion, and Employee Engagement. Table 5 shows the correlation matrix of all the factors and sub-factors of Workplace Diversity, Workforce Inclusion, and Employee Engagement. It is visible from the table that the relations between the variables are all positively significant, with p values less than 0.05.

Table: 5 Correlation values of Workplace Diversity, Workforce Inclusion, and Employee Engagement

							DEDI CATI ON	ABSO RP			
		AD	WGI	CRA	PDM	VIGOR			WD	WI	EE
GD	Pearson Correlation	.519**	.337*	.234**	.407**	.386*	0.068	.405**	.901**	.388**	.411**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.014	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
AD	Pearson Correlation	1	.351*	.182**	.340**	.260*	.163*	.437**	.831**	.353**	.395**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.007	0.000	0.000	0.045	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
WGI	Pearson Correlation		1	.566**	.571**	.399*	0.126	.558**	.400**	.881**	.510**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			0.000	0.000	0.000	0.041	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
CRA	Pearson Correlation			1	.546**	.423*	0.092	.497**	.250**	.817**	.482**
	Sig. (2-tailed)				0.000	0.000	0.017	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
PDM	Pearson Correlation				1	.450*	0.093	.500**	.448**	.820**	.497**
	Sig. (2-tailed)					0.000	0.007	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

VIGOR	Pearson Correlation							1	0.109	.582**	.387**	.499**	.826**
	Sig. (2-tailed)								0.006	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
DEDICATION	Pearson Correlation								1	.218**	0.116	0.126	.514**
	Sig. (2-tailed)									0.001	0.046	0.032	0.000
ABSORP	Pearson Correlation									1	.481**	.620**	.841**
	Sig. (2-tailed)										0.000	0.000	0.000
WD	Pearson Correlation										1	.438**	.464**
	Sig. (2-tailed)												0.000	0.000
WI	Pearson Correlation												1	.590**
	Sig. (2-tailed)													0.000
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).													
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).													

Table 5 shows that workplace diversity and workforce inclusion positively correlate with r = 0.438 and p value<0.05. Workplace diversity and employee engagement are positively correlated with r =0.464, p value<0.05, and workforce inclusion and employee engagement are positively correlated with r =0.590 and p value<0.05. The analysis also reveals that workplace diversity is more correlated to the absorption factor of employee engagement with r=0.481, and workforce diversity is more correlated to the absorption factor of employee engagement with r= 0.620.

Regression analysis
Regression analysis was used to analyze the predictability of the variables using beta coefficients. In this study, regression is also used to analyze the mediation effect of workforce inclusion in the relationship between workplace diversity and Employee Engagement.

Independent variable: WD-Workplace diversity (X)
Mediating Variable: WI-Workforce inclusion (M)
Dependent variable: EE-Employee Engagement (Y)

Work place Inclusion

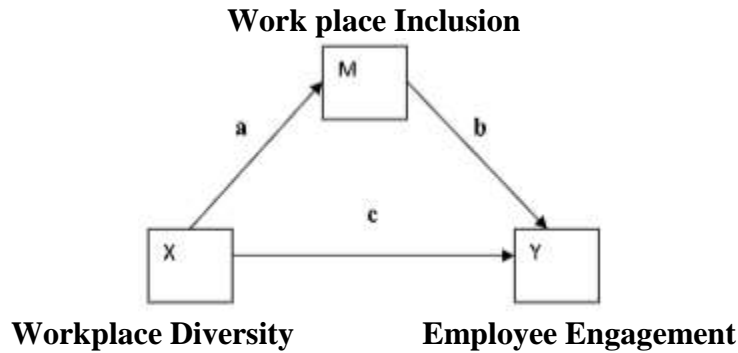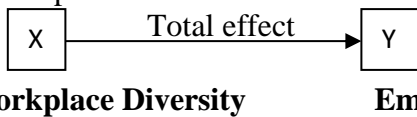
Workplace Diversity   Employee Engagement
Figure1: Model with mediation

Figure 1 shows the direct and indirect effects between the variables, where c is the direct effect between independent and dependent variables and a*b is the indirect effect.

The mediation effect is done with the help of SPSS using bivariate, multiple regression, and SOBEL test.

Step 1: The first step done was to find whether there exists any total effect between the independent variable and dependent variable to check if mediation is to be done.

Workplace Diversity   Employee Engagement

This is done by using the bivariate regression model with predictor variable- Workplace Diversity and Dependent variable- Employee Engagement.
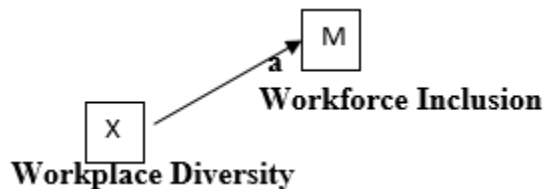
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error		
1	(Constant)	20.760	2.245	9.245	0.000
	WD	0.309	0.040	7.751	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: EE					

Table 6

Table 6 shows that the total effect is statistically significant, with a Beta coefficient of 0.309 and a p-value less than 0.05. It also indicates that WD explains 30.9% of the variance in EE. So the mediation analysis is further conducted.

Step 2: The direct effect of Workplace diversity on Workforce inclusion was studied using a Bivariate regression model with Workplace diversity as the independent variable and Workforce inclusion as the dependent variable.
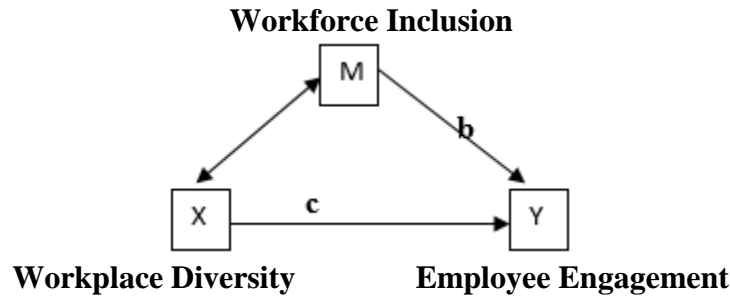

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error		
1	(Constant)	36.214	3.360	10.778	0.000
	WD	0.431	0.060	7.214	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: WI					

Table 7

Table 7 shows that the direct effect between X and M is statistically significant, with a Beta coefficient of 0.431 and a p-value less than 0.05.

Step 3a: To analyze the direct effect of X, M, and Y (direct effect-b and direct effect-c), multiple regression is conducted with WD and WI as the predictor variables and EE as the dependent variable.

Workforce Inclusion

Workplace Diversity   **Employee Engagement**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error		
1	(Constant)	9.009	2.434	3.701	0.000
	WD	0.110	0.039	4.358	0.000
	WI	0.324	0.040	8.201	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: EE					

Table 8

The beta value of the direct effect of WD on EE with mediation was found to be 0.170 (0.039), and the direct impact of the mediating variable (WI) on the dependent variable (EE) was found to be significant with a beta value 0.324 (0.040) with p-value less than 0.05. The results in table 8 show a statistically significant direct effect on Workplace diversity and employee engagement. The result explains that when mediation is included, the impact of WD is also reduced, 32.4% of the variance in EE is explained by WI. The mediation results are illustrated in the below figure.

Workplace Inclusion

a =0.431(0.060)   b=0.324(0.040)

c= 0.110(0.039)
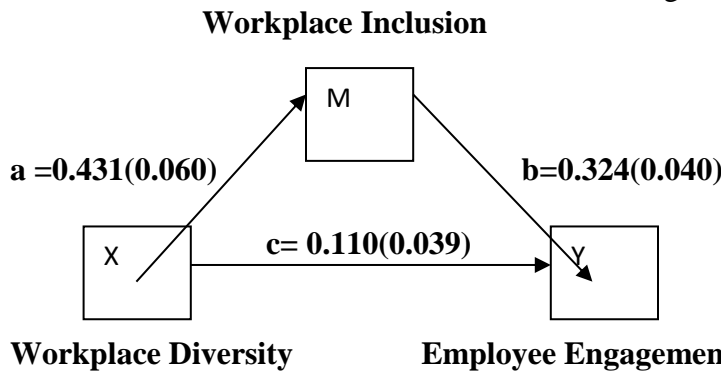
Workplace Diversity   **Employee Engagement**

Step 3b: SOBEL test was used to analyze the statistical significance of the indirect effect (a*b). A webpage calculator for the SOBEL test was used for the purpose.

Input:		Test statistic:		Std. Error:	p-value:
a	0.431	Sobel test:	5.37437778	0.02598329	8e-8
b	0.324	Aroian test:	5.35159722	0.02609389	9e-8
S_a	0.060	Goodman test:	5.39745175	0.02587221	7e-8
S_b	0.040	Reset all		Calculate	

Table 9 SOBEL Test

Table 9 shows the result of the SOBEL test with a z value of 5.374 and a p-value less than 0.005, which shows that the indirect effect between Workplace diversity and Employee Engagement via the intervening variable is statistically significant. The point estimate of the indirect impact of WD and EE through WI is a*b, 0.139. Through the SOBEL test, it is analyzed that this point estimate is statistically significant. The results of the mediation analysis show that there is a partial mediation effect of WI in the relationship between WD and EE. Since the relation between WD and EE, which is statistically significant, had reduced from 0.309 to 0.110 when the mediator (WI) was included, we can conclude that partial mediation is supported.

DISCUSSION
The study was done to examine the relationship between workplace diversity and employee engagement with the mediating effect of workforce inclusion among IT sector employees in the state of Kerala. Today's potential employees and employees are more diverse than ever before. The success of any corporation lies with how well it manages its various workers and brings new ideas to the table. The study reveals that workplace diversity was found to be positively correlated to workforce inclusion with r=.438, which indicates that Workplace diversity is positively correlated to workforce inclusion accepting hypothesis H1. Workforce inclusion positively correlates to employee engagement with a p-value less than 0.05. Correlation coefficient r=0.590 with a p-value less than 0.05 indicates that Workforce inclusion is positively related to employee engagement accepting the hypothesis H2.
Further, the study reveals that workplace diversity was found to be positively correlated to employee engagement with r= 0.464 and which indicates that Workplace diversity is positively correlated to employee engagement accepting the hypothesis H3. The analysis also reveals that workplace diversity is more correlated to the absorption factor of employee engagement with r=0.481, and workforce diversity is more correlated to the absorption factor of employee engagement with r= 0.620. The hypothesis H4 is intended to test the mediating effect of inclusion in the relationship between workplace diversity and employee engagement. There is a significant direct positive relationship between workplace diversity and employee engagement 3220with a beta value of 0.110 (0.039), with a p-value less than 0.05. All the indirect relationships being significant, the current study posits that there exists a partial mediation of workforce inclusion in the relationship between workplace diversity and employee engagement accepting the Hypothesis H4. SOBEL test was done to find the significance of the mediation. Since the p values were less than 0.05, the mediation result was significant.

CONCLUSION
The study examines the relationship between Workplace Diversity and Employee Engagement by mediating Workforce Inclusion. It also explains how inclusion plays a role in Employee Engagement in the Kerala IT sector. The results indicate that diversity is essential in developing Employee Engagement through Workforce Inclusion. The results reveal that workplace diversity has a positive and significant relationship with intellectual, social, and affective engagement. At the same time, workforce inclusion significantly partially mediates the association between workplace diversity and employee engagement. Hence when inclusive practices are included in the organization following diversity, it can lead to better employee engagement. The study provides insights to IT organizations for creating a working environment where workplace diversity and inclusion are accepted and given due importance. The outcomes and findings of this study can be very relevant in the present scenario. A critical aspect of this research is that it provides insight into how organizations can facilitate and encourage employee participation and inclusiveness to promote employee engagement. The study findings suggest the relation

of workplace diversity to employee engagement holds important and significant implications for designing and implementing diversity management and inclusion practices in organizations.

IT businesses must address diversity as a priority in the current global environment. Processes involved in diversity management need to be enlightened to increase the productivity of the organization. A variety of parameters have been examined in this study based on diversity and inclusion. Benefits and management of diversity and inclusion programs are confirmed by the study, revealing that diversity through the mediation of inclusion can promote employee engagement which can lead to better performance and retention of employees. Indian multiculturalism is symbolized by the mantra "unity in diversity." In order for managerial interventions to be effective, social categories and hierarchies must be transcended, and mainly diversity and inclusion perspectives must be given due importance for the better performance of the company.

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