

REVIEW ARTICLE

Uniting the Workplace: How Inclusion, Fairness, and Trust Weave Stronger Bonds of Organizational Embeddedness – A Conceptual Exploration

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Abstract: This conceptual paper explores the dynamic interplay between perceived workplace inclusion, interpersonal trust, perceived organizational embeddedness, and perceived workplace fairness, adopting the lenses of social exchange theory and equity theory. The proposed conceptual model posits that establishing an inclusive work atmosphere that prioritizes fairness enhances interpersonal trust, which enhances employees' integration into the firm. However, research on the integrated effects of perceived workplace inclusion and workplace fairness on organizational embeddedness, particularly in South Asian contexts, is scarce despite the increased emphasis on employee integration (Mujajati et al., 2024). This is a significant gap since varied workforces make it difficult for businesses to sustain their performance and integrate talent. The central argument is that perceived workplace inclusion, which is mediated by interpersonal trust and moderated by perceptions of fairness, is a crucial mechanism for improving organizational embeddedness. This fills a theoretical gap in embeddedness research, which has traditionally concentrated on relational and structural factors without incorporating perspectives on justice and inclusion. Understanding these relationships is extremely important for maintaining staff integration, especially in areas of hospitality, information technology, and financial services, where labour markets are dynamic and workforces are diverse throughout Sri Lanka and the larger South Asian region (Wickramasingha, 2023). We emphasise the need for future research to test these ideas across different industries, such as hospitality, information technology, and financial services, in service-oriented and knowledge-intensive sectors. Practical consequences involve establishing inclusion-focused policies and initiatives that encourage workplace fairness and interpersonal trust and enhance organizational embeddedness.

Keywords: conceptual model, interpersonal trust, organizational embeddedness, workplace fairness, workplace inclusion

INTRODUCTION

Scholars and practitioners have devoted significant attention over the last seven decades to understanding why employees are rooted with a company, even when better opportunities exist elsewhere to address what motivates employees to integrate with an organization (Ng & Feldman, 2007). Scholars discovered that organizational embeddedness is the answer to this integration (Ampofo et al., 2021; Zia et al., 2022). Mitchell et al. (2001) introduced the concept of organizational embeddedness to explain why people integrate with companies despite going for better opportunities. Organizational embeddedness is a network of on-the-job elements that can influence employees' decisions and attitudes about integrating with their organization and forces that enable people to be integrated into their existing workplaces (Mehmood et al., 2023). So, firms are continuously finding ways of integrating company's existing workers, as embedding a new employee is challenging, expensive and time-consuming (Mujajati et al., 2024).

High labour mobility, competitive overseas employment opportunities, and the rise of short-term contracts have exacerbated employee disintegration in industries like financial services, hospitality, IT, and apparel, making this concern especially pertinent to Sri Lanka and South Asia (Manjaree & Shakyara, 2023; Wickramasingha, 2023). Since the cost of replacing seasoned workers is increased by the shortage of high-skilled personnel in several industries, integrating skilled workers has emerged as a strategic goal for firms

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in these situations (Li, 2024). Additionally, the study of organizational embeddedness in South Asian workplaces is both relevant and contextually essential, since cultural elements, including collectivism, hierarchical workplace standards, and strong community influence on how employees view inclusion, justice, and trust (Setthakorn et al., 2024).

Organizational embeddedness is more complicated for firms, as changing companies frequently is a new trend among employees, affecting how individuals feel about their relationships and devotion to their companies (Saedin et al., 2024). For example, the increasing popularity of flexible work has widened the traditional limitations of organizational links. Employees who work remotely might experience less integration into their companies since such employees lose personal contacts, shared values, and unplanned relationships, all of which create embeddedness. The inability to maintain a physical presence might result in isolation, as people feel less connected to the company (Rosita et al., 2024). Furthermore, the gig economy and short-term contract employment have altered how employees interact with companies, considering independence and versatility over stable employment. This pattern challenges ordinary approaches in organizational embeddedness, in which employees create ties, make devotions, and thrive within a single firm. Therefore, businesses face challenges integrating freelance workers and workers on temporary agreements, as these individuals may not be as committed as permanent employees (Wu & Huang, 2024). Career mobility and globalization additionally create new obstacles for embeddedness. Individuals today are becoming more flexible and seeking to move to more excellent prospects or advancement. Globalization has created new opportunities for people to work in various companies, frequently taking top talent away from local businesses. Career mobility causes employees to disintegrate and lowers their organizational embeddedness (Jo et al., 2024).

Furthermore, employees in diverse locations might appreciate different features of organizational embeddedness (Bibi, 2024; Jain & Chhabra, 2024). Therefore, another challenging task for organizations is integrating a diverse workforce into the organizational context since people are different and have roots from diverse backgrounds. Over the years, equal opportunity programs and novel corporate practices have prompted businesses to make significant efforts to hire diverse workers. Despite numerous rules and fresh initiatives in diversity recruitment, many firms have trouble recruiting individuals from marginalized groups. Even well-intentioned diversity programs backfire or cause adverse feelings in marginalized groups (Chung et

al., 2015; Gee & Rackley, 2017). While approaches to diversity management have primarily focused on incorporating underrepresented populations into employment settings, inclusion practices have proven effective in ensuring that these individuals have equivalent opportunities for making choices, assets, and possibilities for upward mobility (Fuentes et al., 2020).

Therefore, managers utilize different managerial practices to integrate a diverse workforce and keep them embedded in organizations. Workplace inclusivity is one such facet of measures (Nishii, 2013). Perceived workplace inclusion is viewed as a spectrum representing the extent to which people feel included in essential company operations, such as information availability, peer connection, and decision-making capacity (Nishii, 2013).

However, individuals may not experience uniformly positive effects from embeddedness. Increased perceived organizational embeddedness leads to lower external job mobility (Allen et al., 2016; Brewster et al., 2023; Greene et al., 2018; Jain & Chhabra, 2024; Mitchell et al., 2001). Some prior studies have identified that elevated levels of perceived organizational embeddedness are connected with adverse outcomes, such as moral offences and an inefficient work environment (Collins & Mossholder, 2017; Ghosh, 2017; Lee et al., 2022). Since perceived organizational embeddedness has positive and negative effects, further studies are required to identify the real impact of organizational embeddedness, especially when organizations implement positive managerial practices such as workplace inclusion to embed people into the organization since the direct effect is not straightforward (Brewster et al., 2023; Ghosh, 2017; Lam & Dreher, 2004; Lee et al., 2022).

Therefore, this conceptual paper seeks to fill this gap by arguing that an interpersonal trusting climate will provide a mechanism (Oswick & Noon, 2014; Shore et al., 2011) through which perceived workplace practices that promote inclusion can increase an employee's perceived organizational embeddedness. Previous studies highlighted the importance of studying the mediating effect of interpersonal trust to understand the association between perceived workplace inclusion and perceived organizational embeddedness (Rezai et al., 2020; Rodriguez, 2018). Interpersonal trust is critical in understanding the link between perceived workplace inclusion and organizational embeddedness (Singh, 2021). Employees' trust in the organization improves when they believe they are valuable members (Aristana et al., 2022). Downey et al. (2015) examined that when individuals feel involved, their interpersonal trust is improved significantly, but the real impact of

interpersonal trust on organizational embeddedness requires further examination.

However, a key obstacle to inclusion research is determining how firms can develop trust within an inclusive workforce (Jahanshahi et al., 2023; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Feelings of inclusion will boost the interpersonal trust climate when employees feel corporate fairness. Greenberg (Colquitt et al., 2001; Tan, 2014) developed the notion of organizational justice after considering justice theories that may be used to investigate organizational phenomena (Greenberg, 1987). Greenberg (1987) identified organizational justice as an individual's view of fair treatment. Such impressions influence the views and actions of staff members, which are reflected in organizational dedication, trust, and fulfilment (Tan, 2014). Employees assess fairness by comparing their inputs and the results of others (Adams, 1965). Contextual factors that impact the effectiveness of inclusion initiatives were taken into consideration by incorporating perceived workplace fairness as a moderating variable. Distributive fairness, which is the perceived equity of results or allocation of resources; procedural fairness, which is the perceived fairness of procedures and decision-making techniques; and interactional fairness, which is the standard of interpersonal treatment, involving honor, respect, and openness during interactions, are the three categories into which workplace fairness can be categorized (Mulgund, 2022; Wonde et al., 2025). Inclusive practices ensure perceived fairness, hence moderating the relationship between perceived workplace inclusion and interpersonal trust (Tan, 2014). If fairness breaches, trust deteriorates, eroding this path. This suggests a gap, so further research is required to evaluate the effect of perceived fairness at work on the connection between perceived workplace inclusion and interpersonal trust. Thus, the researcher focuses on studying interpersonal trust as a mediator of the relationship between perceived workplace inclusion and perceived organizational embeddedness, arguing that if employees believe organizational practices are fair, this strengthens the link between perceived workplace inclusivity and employee interpersonal trust.

This conceptual model is especially applicable to industries such as hospitality, IT, finance, and other service-oriented sectors in Sri Lanka and South Asia that are marked by high employee disintegration, diversified workforces, and complicated organizational dynamics (Wickramasingha, 2023). These sectors confront particular difficulties with regard to labour mobility, worker diversity, and the growing popularity of contract and flexible work arrangements (Downey et al., 2015). Both small businesses and international enterprises can

use this conceptual framework to improve employee organizational embeddedness through equitable, inclusive, and trust-building management techniques (Singh, 2021).

This conceptual paper aims to provide a theoretically grounded-conceptual model examining how perceived inclusion in the workplace impacts interpersonal trust and perceived organizational embeddedness, while perceived workplace fairness moderates the relationship between workplace inclusion and interpersonal trust. In developing the conceptual model, the researcher integrates organizational embeddedness literature and workplace inclusion literature to provide a theoretically grounded conceptual model. This conceptual paper further examines the mediating effect of interpersonal trust and the moderating effect of employees' perceived fairness. Furthermore, while the suggested framework is applicable globally, it is particularly pertinent to Sri Lanka and other South Asian nations where maintaining employee organizational embeddedness is rendered more challenging by diverse, and multicultural workforces (Malalage & Perera, 2025). The study adds to the larger body of global literature while providing insights that can guide managerial practices specific to the region by placing the model within the sociocultural and economic framework of South Asia.

METHODOLOGY

The study requires no primary data due to its conceptual temperament. Instead, the paper draws on existing studies to formulate a conceptual framework, demonstrating the effect of workplace fairness as a moderator in the interaction between workplace inclusion and interpersonal trust, and interpersonal trust's mediating effect on organizational embeddedness. The methodology facilitates evidence from previous research, recognition of theoretical gaps, and the development of novel avenues for further empirical validation. The framework suggested in this article is based on two recognized theories. First, equity theory (Adams, 1965) lays the groundwork for understanding how perceptions of workplace fairness affect employees' workplace inclusion and interpersonal trust in a firm. Second, social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) backs up the claim that inclusive workplaces promote beneficial social interactions by strengthening interpersonal trust and organizational embeddedness through mutually beneficial connections. By combining these theoretical approaches, the study creates a new conceptual model that explains how workplace inclusion influences interpersonal trust and organizational embeddedness and how employee perceptions of workplace fairness moderate these effects. Following the literature on key perspectives, the conceptual framework was created

to demonstrate the theoretical links among variables. The model was developed by combining previous literature, identifying gaps in the literature, notably in relation to workplace fairness as a moderator, and proposing theoretical connections that have yet to be investigated. This structured method enables a more in-depth analysis of how workplace inclusion affects interpersonal trust and organizational embeddedness under the moderating effect of fairness. To improve the study's practical utility, the paper additionally includes measurements for each variable to facilitate future empirical validation. Scholars interested in evaluating the suggested model might use structural equation modelling (SEM) with SmartPLS to examine the links between perceived workplace inclusion, fairness, interpersonal trust, and organizational embeddedness.

KEY PERSPECTIVES

Perceived workplace inclusion refers to how much an employee believes he or she is valued as a workgroup member since he or she is treated in a way that meets individual desires for being connected and distinctiveness (Shore et al., 2011). Perceived workplace inclusion is explained as the degree to which employees feel as an integral part in critical aspects of the firm, such as decision-making power, being a part of essential company teams and accessibility to resources and knowledge (Barak, 2008; Downey et al., 2015; Roberson, 2006; Shore et al., 2018). Therefore, the major dimensions of perceived workplace inclusion include the extent to which employees feel involved in critical company procedures, such as involvement in decision-making, being part of critical work groups, and accessibility to resources and knowledge.

Interpersonal trust plays a mediating role in the conceptual model. Interpersonal trust is the person's readiness to be exposed to another person based on an optimistic view of the other person's conduct (Mayer et al., 1995; Rousseau et al., 1998). Trust is a mental condition that originates with the person. However, trust in work settings is two-way, implying that all sides must trust and believe in one another to conduct interactions that benefit both parties. Trust has been considered a significant factor in literature, including work-related perspectives such as dedication, fulfilment, and intention to disintegrate (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002), employee performance inside and outside of the workplace (Madjar & Ortiz-Walters, 2009), and the company's revenue and earnings (Davis & Thompson, 2000). Interpersonal trust dimensions are identified as trust between managers, employees, and co-workers (Davis & Thompson, 2000). An organization's leaders are primarily responsible for fostering workplace trust (Creed et al., 1996; Shaw et al.,

1997; Wang et al., 2020). Connell et al. (2009) indicated that a manager must learn to trust her or his subordinates just as much as he must earn their trust. Subordinates who trust their bosses will have a favourable attribution of motives (Kramer, 1999; Wang et al., 2020).

Perceived workplace fairness describes how employees' views of fairness shape the intensity and direction of the relationship between workplace inclusiveness and interpersonal trust. The three key elements of perceived workplace fairness of employees are distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001). In an inclusive environment, distributive justice should represent equal entitlement to rewards based on merit and achievement, without discrimination based on demographics. Fairness in decision-making procedures is critical. An inclusive workplace guarantees that procedures are open and neutral and provide equal opportunity for involvement to all employees, particularly to underrepresented groups (Barrow, 2005). How employees are treated interpersonally with respect, dignity, and fairness is crucial to workplace inclusion. Inclusive organizations create an atmosphere where everyone feels appreciated and respected, regardless of identity or background information (Le et al., 2021). When employees see fairness in the company's procedures, such as equitable treatment, unbiased decision-making, and open communication, inclusion has a greater beneficial impact on interpersonal trust (Bonache, 2004; Tan, 2014). Individuals who believe they are being considered fairly are more prone to trust their co-workers and superiors, strengthening their organizational embeddedness (Dahanayake et al., 2018). However, when employees experience unfairness in workplace procedures, such as compensation distribution, procedural errors, or interpersonal treatment, the positive effect of inclusion on trust may be diminished or eliminated (Schulz et al., 2022).

Research objectives

- RO1: To propose the relationship between perceived workplace inclusion and perceived organizational embeddedness.
- RO2: To propose the relationship between perceived workplace inclusion and interpersonal trust.
- RO3: To theoretically examine the relationship between interpersonal trust and perceived organizational embeddedness.
- RO4: To develop a theoretical explanation of the mediating role of interpersonal trust in the relationship between perceived workplace

inclusion and perceived organizational embeddedness.

RO5: To examine the moderating effect of perceived workplace fairness on the relationship between perceived workplace inclusion and interpersonal trust.

Model of perceived workplace inclusion, perceived workplace fairness, interpersonal trust, and perceived organizational embeddedness

The model investigates the relationship between perceived workplace inclusion, fairness, interpersonal trust, and organizational embeddedness. Workplace inclusion was selected as the independent variable due to its critical role in cultivating work environments in which employees feel appreciated, acknowledged, and involved (Downey et al., 2015). This model describes perceived workplace inclusion as the level at which individuals feel accepted and enmeshed in the organization, and it serves as a critical antecedent that positively influences both interpersonal trust and perceived organizational embeddedness. When employees feel an increased level of inclusion, they are more prone to trust their co-workers and bosses, which promotes interpersonal trust (Mehmood et al., 2023).

Perceived workplace fairness was incorporated as a moderating variable to consider contextual factors that affect the efficacy of inclusion initiatives. Therefore, perceived workplace fairness increases the favourable impact of inclusion on interpersonal trust when employees perceive fair treatment, opportunity, and outcomes (Mehmood et al., 2023). If employees experience unfairness in the form of biased or inconsistent policies, it can decrease the favourable benefits of inclusion on trust, weakening the association between perceived workplace inclusion and interpersonal trust (Adams, 1965; Greenberg, 1987). In turn, interpersonal trust serves as a mediator, increasing individuals' feelings of embeddedness inside the business, which includes the employees' compatibility with organizational culture (fit), their connections (links), and the prospective costs of disintegrating the organization (sacrifice) (Downey et al., 2015; Oswick & Noon, 2014). Interpersonal

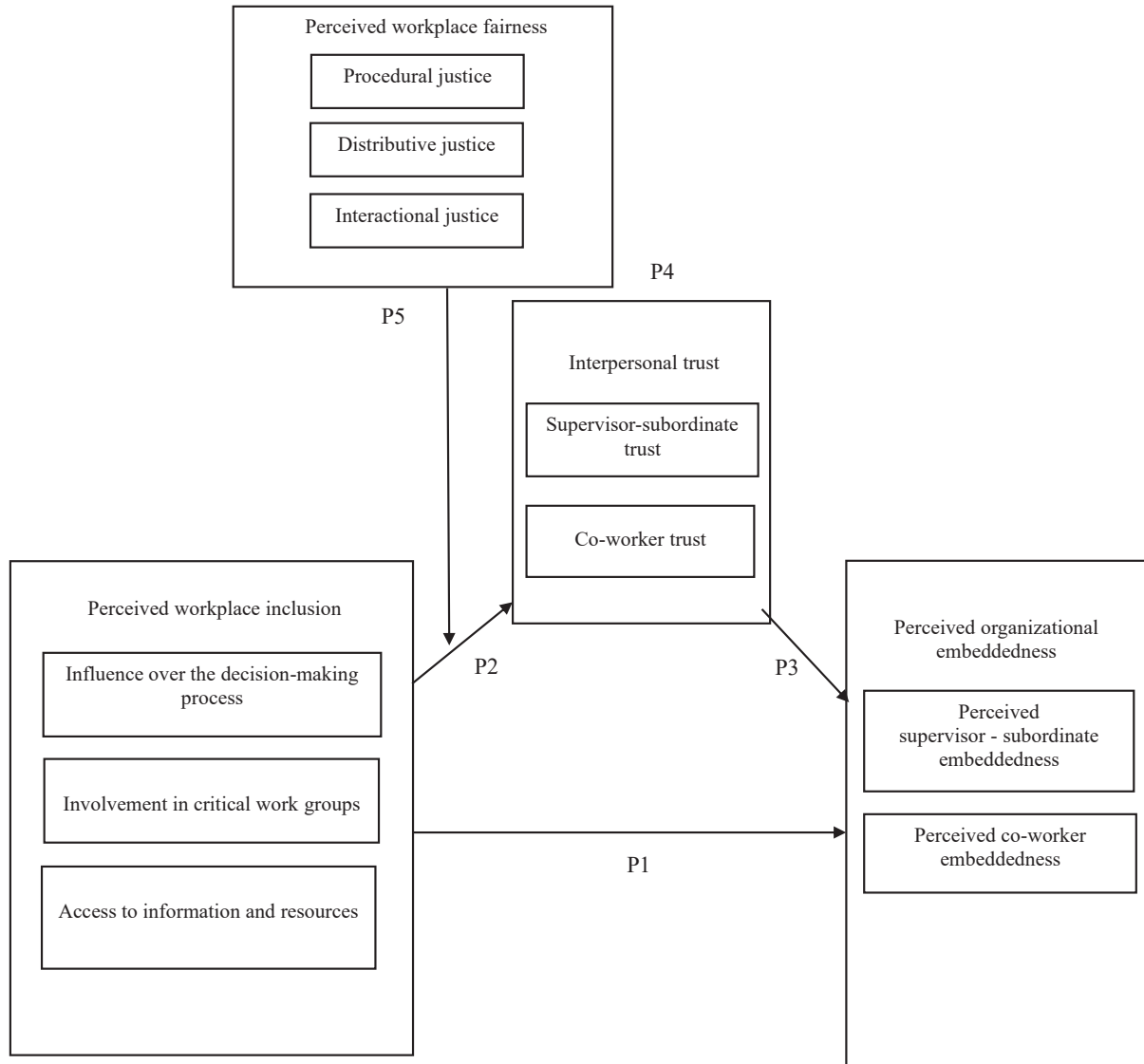
trust is considered the mediating variable, considering its importance in promoting cooperation, lowering uncertainty, and increasing collaboration within an organization. This model highlights the necessity of increasing perceived workplace inclusion and interpersonal trust to increase employees' organizational immersion and the importance of researching perceived workplace fairness to identify the solidity of the link between perceived workplace inclusion and interpersonal trust (Le et al., 2021; Schulz et al., 2022).

Perceived organizational embeddedness was chosen as the dependent variable due to its comprehensive nature in capturing the reasons as to why employees integrate with an organization (Lee et al., 2022; Mitchell et al., 2001; Sekiguchi et al., 2008). Perceived organizational embeddedness encompasses several components that integrate employees into an organization, including official and personal connections within the organization, views on the employee's compatibility with the environment, and the expenses connected with disintegrating the organization (Lee et al., 2022; Mitchell et al., 2001; Sekiguchi et al., 2008).

This study specifically focuses on workplace inclusion, fairness, and interpersonal trust, even if a variety of other factors, including job satisfaction, organizational support, career growth, and leadership style, may also have an impact on organizational embeddedness (Ampofo et al., 2021; Zia et al., 2022). The variables that have been selected for the study offer a logical foundation for analysing how relational and fairness-based mechanisms influence employees' organizational embeddedness, since they are theoretically grounded in social exchange theory and equity theory. This focus is especially pertinent to South Asian and Sri Lankan industries like finance, information technology, and hospitality, where sustaining relationships with workers is made more difficult by labour mobility, workforce diversity, and rapid organizational change (Manjaree & Shakyara, 2023; Wickramasingha, 2023). For firms looking to improve organizational embeddedness, this model offers a theoretically sound and practical method by emphasizing perceived workplace inclusion, workplace justice, and interpersonal trust.

Figure 1

Model of Perceived Workplace Inclusion, Perceived Workplace Fairness, Interpersonal Trust, and Perceived Organizational Embeddedness



Note. Researcher’s construction. P1 to P5 denote the propositions of the study.

Theoretical base

The researchers adopted the social exchange theory and equity theory to identify the proposed relationships of the model.

Social exchange theory explains that an organization’s inclusive qualities ensure that employees are fully enmeshed in their organizations. As per the selected theory, actors exchange resources in a reciprocal process in which one individual expects to return the favourable or adverse behaviour of the other (Blau, 1964; Gergen & Taylor, 1969; Gouldner, 1960). Social

exchange theory further explains that individuals who expect the company to appreciate their requirements and generate well-being have more favourable feelings about their occupations. Shore et al. (2011) indicated that inclusion is vital for maximizing the advantageous effects of diversity since it guarantees that workers see themselves as essential to the company’s accomplishment. Thus, analysing the potential benefits that employees receive from an inclusive workplace, employees tend to repay the organization by embedding into the company, considering the reciprocity norm of the social exchange theory (Arici et al., 2023).

Therefore, social exchange theory, which contends that when workers get positive socio-emotional support from the company, they reciprocate through positive attitudes and behaviours, is a solid foundation for perceived workplace inclusion (Blau, 1964; Hom et al., 2009). According to recent research, inclusive procedures, such as participation in decision-making, transparent communication, and fair access to information, indicate organizational support and elicit reactions based on mutual trust (Grosser et al., 2023; Singh, 2021). Therefore, perceived workplace inclusion encourages involvement and the formation of high-quality connections, making it an important component of interpersonal trust. Stronger interpersonal trust is a result of high inclusion among employees (Arici et al., 2023; Rezai et al., 2020). This interpersonal trust serves as the primary exchange mechanism that transforms perceived workplace inclusion into greater organizational embeddedness. According to recent studies, trust enhances workers' sense of fit, connection, and willingness to make compromises in order to stay, all of which are essential components of perceived organizational embeddedness (Lee et al., 2022; Luke et al., 2020).

Therefore, previous research has focused on the significance of examining the mediating effect of interpersonal trust to clearly understand the association between perceived workplace inclusion and perceived organizational embeddedness (Rezai et al., 2020; Rodriguez, 2018). As per social exchange theory, interpersonal trust is an important construct, positing that relationships are founded on mutual transfers of compassion (Blau, 1964). When employees feel included and believe they are integral to the organization, their trust in the company grows because employees repay the organization with good deeds for the positive things they received from the organization by participating entirely and integrating themselves in the firm, confirming the mediating relationship between perceived workplace inclusion and organizational embeddedness (McAllister, 1995). Prior research conforming to social exchange theory (Oswick & Noon, 2014; Shore et al., 2011) indicated that strong perceptions of inclusion among employees enhance interpersonal trust. So, employees who feel appreciated by their employer trust the organization and naturally demonstrate good attitudes and behaviours.

While social exchange theory provides a solid framework for analysing workplace relationships by emphasizing reciprocal exchanges of resources and trust, it ignores the essential role of fairness in structuring these exchanges. Social exchange theory believes that people compare the benefits and drawbacks of exchanges before committing to partnerships, but it fails to directly

explain how perceptions of fairness influence this process (Blau, 1964; Neveu & Kakavand, 2019). This theoretical gap can be addressed by adopting equity theory, which will provide an in-depth viewpoint by underlining that individuals evaluate the reciprocity of transactions and weigh their input-output ratios with others. Equity theory emphasizes how perceptions of fairness influence the quality and outcomes of transactions, as disparities can decrease interpersonal trust. Fairness guarantees that inclusion is perceived as honest and fair, which increases its impact on trust. Without fairness, the impact of inclusion efforts was minimal, weakening trust and decreasing employees' integration into the company (Greenberg, 1990). By integrating equity theory, this gap in social exchange theory can be addressed.

Equity theory, established by John Stacey Adams (1965), is a psychological theory that describes how views on fairness influence motivation, attitudes, and behaviour in the workplace. It is based on the premise that people assess the equity of their interactions by comparing their efforts and costs with others (Bonache, 2004; Tan, 2014). The conditional aspect of this process is further explained by equity theory, which highlights employees' fairness assessments. According to equity theory, workers assess the fairness of organizational inputs and results, influencing their psychological responses and reciprocity behaviours (Adams, 1965). According to recent research, whether inclusion efforts are perceived as real or symbolic depends on distributive, procedural, and interactional fairness (Le et al., 2021; Mehmood et al., 2023). By demonstrating that inclusion procedures are impartial, courteous, and consistent, high fairness enhances the beneficial impact of inclusion on interpersonal trust (Akram & Pervaiz, 2024; Dahanayake et al., 2018). On the other hand, employees perceive a discrepancy between professed inclusion values and actual treatment, which weakens or neutralizes the inclusion-trust relationship (Collins & Mossholder, 2017; Schulz et al., 2022). To provide a theoretically sound justification of the avenues and boundary conditions within the suggested conceptual model, the combination of social exchange theory and equity theory shows how perceived workplace inclusion, interpersonal trust, workplace fairness, and organizational embeddedness interact.

Hence, this comparison process influences their psychological and behavioural reactions. Equity theory enhances social exchange theory by addressing the necessity of fairness in these transactions. Employees evaluate whether their efforts (inputs) are proportionate to the rewards (outcomes) they get, and perceptions of fairness strengthen the favourable impacts of inclusion on interpersonal trust. If employees sense unfairness,

reciprocal exchanges break down, reducing interpersonal trust. Therefore, workplace fairness was identified as a moderating variable that affects the effectiveness of inclusion initiatives. By incorporating these variables, the model offers a comprehensive view that fills gaps in the literature on perceived workplace inclusion, interpersonal trust, perceived workplace fairness, and perceived organizational embeddedness. It also provides a framework for investigating the subtle interactions between these variables, allowing for a more comprehensive and context-sensitive study of company behaviour (Colquitt et al., 2001; Shore et al., 2011).

PROPOSED RELATIONSHIPS

Hwang and Hopkins (2012) indicated that workers' views of inclusion are predominantly linked with the perceived organizational embeddedness of employees. Based on the social exchange theory, perceived workplace inclusion improves employee fit, linkages, and sacrifices. Individuals who feel appreciated and included in the work environment are inclined to have higher levels of fit with the company, which relates to how effectively their principles, opinions, and actions match the company's values (Peltokorpi et al., 2015). This integration encourages more significant ties and dedication to the company. Inclusion also improves employees' relationships with their peers and the company. These relationships, also known as links, relate to the interpersonal interactions and relationships individuals make, which can improve their feelings of belongingness and encouragement (Jansen et al., 2015). Strong connections are critical for organizational embeddedness and increase employees' likelihood of integrating with the company based on their developed organizational connections. Furthermore, employees' perception of workplace inclusion influences individuals' willingness to compromise for the firm. Accepted and appreciated employees are more inclined to believe their efforts are valuable and eager to take a step ahead in their duties, corresponding to the reciprocity rule of the social exchange theory (Shore et al., 2011). This readiness to make sacrifices, including investing in greater diligence or performing extra hours, contributes to employees' organizational embeddedness by confirming their dedication to the organization. Reflecting on this idea, the researcher proposed the proposition below.

Proposition 1: Perceived workplace inclusion positively related to perceived organizational embeddedness

Perceived workplace inclusion and interpersonal trust are closely related concepts critical to fostering a healthy and productive workplace. Using social exchange theory, the intended study proposes that inclusive workplaces provide employees with a psychologically

comfortable environment. Employees who feel comfortable expressing themselves and their ideas and being authentic, foster trust among team members and leadership. Furthermore, inclusion promotes fair and equitable treatment of employees. When individuals feel they receive fair and equal treatment from the organization, they develop trust in the company and its managers. Employees who work in an atmosphere where co-workers freely exchange information feel included because they have access to necessary informational resources, which increases trust in relationships (Grosser et al., 2023). Based on these arguments, it is proposed that:

Proposition 2: Perceived workplace inclusion positively related to interpersonal trust

As per social exchange theory, employees develop trust in the company since they want to repay the organization with positive behaviours for the benefits they gained from the company. Therefore, individuals are intended to believe that the company possesses the competence and goodwill to keep its promises. When interpersonal trust increases, employees consider their company links as more secure and less hazardous, which increases their embeddedness. Moreover, interpersonal ties with fellow employees are essential for creating organizational embeddedness (Luke et al., 2020). Purba et al. (2016) found that organizational ties with supervisors are essential for creating organizational embeddedness. Superior trust, in particular, promotes robust organizational embeddedness. Trust is associated with judgments of embeddedness and attachment to the company, which are steady during initial employment (Holton et al., 2015). Powerful links enhance organizational embeddedness and create a challenging task to disintegrate since organizational embeddedness jeopardizes valued relationships if they choose to disintegrate (Siddique et al., 2020). As a result, an elevated embeddedness rate indicates that the company respects its people with affection, respect, and tenderness or exhibits other characteristics that an average individual values. Considering the above arguments, the following proposition is presented.

Proposition 3: Interpersonal trust positively related to perceived organizational embeddedness

Researchers argued that an organization's inclusive characteristics ensure that employees are embedded in their organizations as a mutual exchange when they feel like they are part of the organization, which may improve their trust based on social exchange theory (Scrima et al., 2021). Perceptions of inclusion boost overall trust (Downey et al., 2015) and improve the organizational embeddedness of employees (Korsgaard et al., 2015). Individual assessments of the workplace's trust climate

improve as there are more opportunities for contact and engagement with superiors and co-workers. People who favour inclusion expect that they are essential assets of the company's in-group. As a result, the working environment will be more trust-based. Therefore, when employees perceive high levels of inclusion, a trusting environment can positively improve organizational embeddedness (Korsgaard et al., 2015; Scrima et al., 2021). Therefore, based on these arguments, it is proposed that:

Proposition 4: Interpersonal trust mediates the relationship between perceived workplace inclusion and perceived organizational embeddedness

Workplace fairness is crucial in developing an inclusive workplace. Views of fair treatment lead to beneficial results, such as organizational embeddedness (Zhou et al., 2020) interpersonal trust (Kim & Park, 2017), and improved company performance (Buengeler & Den Hartog, 2015). According to equity theory, people evaluate justice by comparing their input-output ratios to those of others in equivalent circumstances (Adams, 1965). Employees who see fairness in their work environment believe their efforts are acknowledged and adequately recognized, which increases the effect of inclusion on interpersonal trust (Shore et al., 2011). Fairness in the workplace, on the other hand, influences how much inclusion leads to trust. Employees who sense fairness are more likely to see inclusion as a reflection of the company's dedication to fairness, which builds interpersonal trust (Cropanzano et al., 2007). For example, when inclusion measures are combined with open decision-making and fair distribution of resources, employees are more inclined to trust their co-workers and managers. In contrast, inadequate levels of fairness might impair the relationship between inclusion and trust. In the absence of fairness, inclusion efforts may appear unimportant or insignificant, leading employees to distrust the organization's objectives (Akram & Pervaiz, 2024; Ambrose & Schminke, 2009). Therefore, perceived workplace fairness, as a moderator, influences how perceived workplace inclusion affects interpersonal trust by guaranteeing that inclusive activities are considered equitable. High fairness strengthens the positive benefits of inclusion on trust by promoting an environment where employees are treated respectfully and fairly (Ağalday, 2022; Cropanzano et al., 2007).

Proposition 5: Perceived workplace fairness moderates the relationship between perceived workplace inclusion and interpersonal trust

DISCUSSION

The proposed model, which connects perceived workplace inclusion, perceived workplace fairness,

interpersonal trust, and perceived organizational embeddedness, sheds light on the changes in workplace relationships and employee immersion. As firms strive to create welcoming atmospheres, understanding the complicated relationships among workplace inclusion, perceived workplace fairness, interpersonal trust, and organizational embeddedness becomes critical for devising ways to increase employees' organizational integration.

This conceptual paper applies social exchange theory and equity theory to investigate the relationships among workplace inclusion, interpersonal trust, and organizational embeddedness. Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) denotes that, relationships are guided by reciprocal exchanges in which employees compare the advantages and disadvantages of their contacts. In the context of workplace inclusion, this theory emphasizes the mutual advantages of inclusive behaviours and surroundings that create interpersonal trust and employee organizational embeddedness. Shore et al. (2011) identify workplace inclusion as employees considering themselves as valued company members, contributing to beneficial exchanges that increase interpersonal trust and organizational embeddedness. Individuals who feel included are more inclined to create stronger interpersonal trust, which promotes their integration into the organization. In line with Mitchell et al. (2001), underlining the relevance of organizational embeddedness, the framework shows that workplace inclusiveness influences employees' organizational embeddedness. Workplace inclusion encourages a sense of belonging and value, which strengthens employees' alignment with the organizational culture and values (fit), enables them to establish meaningful relationships with their co-workers (links), and perceives higher costs connected with disintegrating the organization (sacrifices), resulting in a deeper sense of embeddedness (Ghosh et al., 2024).

Developing perceived workplace inclusion frequently necessitates active involvement in diversity efforts, education initiatives, and committees. For specific individuals, the increased workload and psychological strain from these tasks can lead to exhaustion, lowering overall job fulfilment and readiness to integrate with the organization and negatively impacting organizational embeddedness (Elsaied, 2020). Since perceived workplace inclusion generates favourable and unfavourable effects on organizational embeddedness, previous scholars focused on the importance of studying the impact of interpersonal trust to explain the direct relationship unambiguously (Rezai et al., 2020; Rodriguez, 2018).

Supporting the above idea, perceived workplace inclusion is a significant driver in creating interpersonal

trust (Rezai et al., 2020; Rodriguez, 2018), and organizational embeddedness (Cho & Mor Barak, 2008; Shore et al., 2018). When employees feel included, they believe they are being valued and heard and become a critical part of organizational decision-making processes, which generates a psychologically safe environment. Inclusive cultures promote employee interpersonal trust by conveying justice, respect, and appreciation. Moreover, employees who work in an environment where colleagues openly share knowledge feel included since they have exposure to crucial sources of information, which builds trust in relationships (Grosser et al., 2023). Interpersonal trust between managers and co-workers influences a worker's decision to become connected with the firm. Individuals who trust their co-workers and supervisors are more loyal to the organization and less inclined to consider other possibilities (Scrima et al., 2021). Employees who believe their managers or colleagues care about, encourage, or have confidence and trust in them are more engaged in unconventional behaviour, generate innovative concept (Carmeli & Spreitzer, 2009; Vinarski-Peretz & Carmeli, 2011), have a stronger devotion to the company (Mulki et al., 2006; Scrima et al., 2015), elevated contentment with the company (Mulki et al., 2006), more organizationally immersed (Madsen et al., 2005), and having enhanced organizational embeddedness (Luke et al., 2020).

However, in line with equity theory, this study shows that the trust-building capacity of inclusion varies with the extent of workplace fairness. Colquitt et al. (2001) define workplace fairness as distributive fairness (equitable resource distribution), procedural fairness (fair decision-making processes), and interactional fairness (fair interpersonal treatment). When employees sense fairness in their workplace, their trust in the company and their co-workers grows, which strengthens the link between workplace inclusion and organizational embeddedness. On the other side, perceived injustices can erode these bonds, resulting in diminished trust and integration in the organization (Le et al., 2021).

Therefore, the conceptual model relies heavily on interpersonal trust as a mediator of the connection between perceived workplace inclusion and organizational embeddedness and workplace fairness moderates the strength of that connection between inclusion and trust. Individuals who trust their colleagues and bosses are more inclined to feel supported, strengthening their embeddedness in the company and increasing their inclination to embed with the company (Oswick & Noon, 2014; Shore et al., 2011). This idea adds to current literature, indicating that interpersonal trust improves employee satisfaction, collaboration, and immersion (Cho & Mor Barak, 2008; Rezai et al.,

2020; Rodriguez, 2018; Shore et al., 2018). In contrast, individuals who perceive a high level of fairness are more inclined to believe that workplace inclusion is authentic, which strengthens trust in a company. Employees who experience unfair treatment may regard inclusive behaviours as shallow, reducing inclusion's trust-building capacity and impact on organizational embeddedness (Collins & Mossholder, 2017).

Implications for academic research and management practices

For scholars, this framework provides an excellent foundation for further inquiry into the relationship between perceived workplace inclusion, considered workplace fairness, interpersonal trust, and perceived organizational embeddedness. To confirm the conceptual framework, scholars might adopt a mixed-methods strategy that includes quantitative and qualitative methods. On the qualitative side, interviews or focus groups could provide useful information about employees' perceptions of inclusiveness, justice, and trust inside their firms. This qualitative data would supplement the quantitative findings by revealing context-specific details that could influence the proposed associations. This method would assist in improving the measuring items and identifying contextual subtleties that current scales might not adequately capture (Bourke, 2022; Molla & Shawlin, 2023).

Quantitative research could include survey-based studies that use validated scales to assess the hypothesized relationships between perceived workplace inclusion, workplace fairness, interpersonal trust, and organizational embeddedness. Holtom et al. (2006) developed global embeddedness items, which could be employed to assess perceived organizational embeddedness. Perceived workplace inclusion could be measured using items adapted from Mor-Barak and Cherin (1998), which indicate workplace inclusion as the degree to which individuals feel involved in critical company procedures, such as involvement in decision-making, key organizational groups, and accessibility to resources and knowledge. Colquitt et al. (2001) designed measures to assess workplace distributive, procedural, and interactional fairness. Interpersonal trust can be assessed using Cook and Wall (1980) trust scale, which measures interpersonal trust.

These quantitative measurements could then be evaluated using structural equation modeling (SEM) or partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to investigate the framework's suggested direct, mediated, and moderated interactions. SEM and PLS-SEM are ideal for testing complicated connections, including moderated mediation effects (Hair et al.,

2019; Legate et al., 2023). Since the model comprises several latent constructs and simultaneous evaluation of the measurement and structural components is required, SEM or PLS-SEM is justified in the quantitative phase (Hair et al., 2019). PLS-SEM is suitable for smaller sample sizes or when the emphasis is on prediction and theory creation, whereas SEM is especially well-suited when the data satisfy normalcy assumptions and the study stresses theory confirmation. A more thorough grasp of the conceptual model would result from the integration of both methodological strands, guaranteeing both theoretical rigor and practical usefulness (Hair et al., 2019; Legate et al., 2023).

The provided model suggests several exciting directions for future research. Since workplace inclusion is an important component of this framework, additional research is needed to determine its different levels and how they influence perceived workplace fairness, interpersonal trust, and perceived organizational embeddedness (Fulmer & Dirks, 2018). For example, fundamental level conformity and understanding, structural level diversity-driven inclusion, emotional empowerment, and a common purpose, all perform important roles in building trust and embeddedness. Furthermore, scholars are encouraged to look into how these dimensions interact with contextual variables, including organizational culture, industry type, and national culture, to influence employee outcomes. For example, examining the notion in cross-cultural or international situations may demonstrate that individuals in revolutionary cultures are more responsive to inclusive actions, strengthening trust and increased awareness of organizational embeddedness than those in individualistic cultures (Ikram et al., 2024).

To investigate the moderating influence of workplace fairness, researchers can generate interaction terms by multiplying the standardized values of workplace inclusion and fairness. Moderation analysis can then determine how fairness affects the strength of the connection between perceived workplace inclusion and interpersonal trust. A bootstrapping approach (Preacher & Hayes, 2004) can be used to assess the indirect impacts of interpersonal trust as a mediator, yielding accurate estimations of mediation effects and their significance.

From a management standpoint, this concept stresses the importance of creating an inclusive work atmosphere to improve individuals' organizational embeddedness. Superiors must go beyond general inclusion and apply customized measures that guarantee individuals feel valued, appreciated, and actively involved with company operations (Elsaied, 2020). Companies should create formal diversity training programs to

implement perceived workplace inclusiveness into action, demand inclusive growth in leadership, and set clear accountability criteria for diversity and inclusion operations. These should include measurable objectives such as staff involvement participation in decision-making committees. Furthermore, mentorship programs that connect minority staff members with senior executives can help them improve their careers while reinforcing the company's dedication to inclusion.

To preserve a sense of workplace fairness, organizations need to incorporate fair policies into performance assessments, incentive systems, and allocation of resources. Blind performance reviews, for example, can mitigate bias, while clear salary structures can aid in the elimination of inequities. Periodic equity audits, which examine promotion rates, equal wages, and performance-assessment uniformity, might reveal early signs of systematic discrimination. Furthermore, engaging employee feedback platforms and whistle-blower protections should be reinforced to ensure workers feel comfortable disclosing fairness issues. Frequent staff assessments evaluating views on fairness, examined using emotion analysis technologies, can offer practical information to address disparities. Ensuring equitable procedures in promotion, grievance management, and decision-making would boost employees' faith in the company's devotion to equity, ultimately leading to increased interpersonal trust.

If empirical research confirms the mediating function of interpersonal trust, businesses should tailor their strategies to workplace inclusion by implementing policies that actively encourage trust-building connections. Based on social exchange theory, superior social interactions are marked by shared respect and encourage interpersonal trust creation (Blau, 1964; Hom et al., 2009; Setthakorn, 2023). Managers may create this climate by implementing systematic peer-recognition programs in which workers frequently appreciate each other's efforts and open-door management rules that promote clear, open communication. Team-based cooperation incentives, such as cross-functional initiatives with shared performance targets, can reinforce trust and increase individuals' sense of embeddedness (Kistyanto et al., 2022).

Furthermore, industry-specific inclusion initiatives should be explored, as the impact of workplace inclusion differs by industry. As a potential application of the conceptual model, in hospitality, where front-line workers often engage with consumers, inclusion-driven trust can have a stronger influence on organizational embeddedness than in businesses with less contact with customers (Ampfo et al., 2021). In such situations,

customer-service training that incorporates inclusion principles, real-time dispute-resolution techniques, and cultural proficiency classes can be especially effective. In contrast, in information technology or production, where relationships between workers are more team-oriented, incorporating emotional safety mechanisms as confidential feedback instruments and systematic team-building exercises may be more successful at creating trust and dedication.

By adopting these tangible, sector-specific suggestions into action, firms can ensure that workplace inclusion is more than just a theoretical ideal but also an essential promoter of trust and long-term employee integration.

CONCLUSION

The model highlights the critical interplay between perceived workplace inclusion, perceived workplace fairness, interpersonal trust, and perceived organizational embeddedness explained by social exchange theory and equity theory. As firms increasingly understand the value of building inclusive work environments, this model shows how inclusion can strengthen interpersonal trust and enhance employees' feelings of embeddedness in the organization. Integrating fairness into company practices is critical in creating sustainable and high-performing workplaces. By recognizing the importance of workplace fairness alongside inclusion and trust, organizations can develop strategies that nurture a mutually beneficial relationship with their employees, leading to long-term success and organizational resilience. Interpersonal trust, in turn, functions as an important mediating factor, relating workplace-inclusive behaviours to employees' readiness to integrate and succeed in their workplaces. This nuanced approach enables firms to create specific strategies to improve staff integration. The model offers theoretical insights and practical recommendations for increasing workplace inclusiveness, perceived workplace fairness, interpersonal trust, and organizational embeddedness. It encourages future research into the intricacies of inclusion and employee behaviour and directs managers toward more successful approaches for developing inclusive, fair, trusting, and embedded organizational cultures. Therefore, this proposed conceptual model and related propositions offer a significant foundation for future scholars and open new avenues for organizational embeddedness research.

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