

A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE IMPACT OF INCLUSIVE MANAGEMENT ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE THROUGH EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Ranny Fitria Puspitasari¹, Budi Eko Soetjipto², Ludi Wisnu Wardhana³

¹ Universitas Negeri Malang: Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis, Indonesia

² Universitas Negeri Malang: Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis, Indonesia

³ Universitas Negeri Malang: Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis, Indonesia

Email correspondence: ranny.fitria.2404138@students.um.ac.id, budi.eko.fe@um.ac.id,
ranny.fitria.2404138@students.um.ac.id

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Abstract

This study systematically reviews 71 scholarly articles from the past five years in the Scopus database (Q1–Q4) that examine the relationship between inclusive management—which includes diversity management, equality policies, and inclusion initiatives—and organizational performance, with employee engagement as a mediating variable. Using a Systematic Literature Review approach and thematic analysis, the findings reveal that DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) practices significantly enhance organizational effectiveness, efficiency, innovation, and sustainability. Diversity management strengthens decision-making and innovation; equality policies promote accountable governance and distributive justice; and inclusion initiatives foster collective participation and employee loyalty. Employee engagement serves as a mediating factor linking DEI practices to performance at both individual and institutional levels. The study develops an integrative conceptual model and identifies directions for future research, including contextual frameworks and longitudinal approaches. These insights offer a strategic foundation for formulating inclusive, equitable, and sustainable management policies.

Keyword: *Diversity Management, Equality Policy, Inclusion Initiatives, Employee Engagement, Organizational Performance.*

Introduction

In the increasingly complex context of global business, issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) have evolved into strategic dimensions that determine an organization's competitiveness and sustainability. Globalization, digitalization, and growing social demands have driven a paradigm shift in human resource management—from a focus on efficiency to systems grounded in humanistic values. Diversity management practices, equity policies, and inclusion initiatives are no longer viewed as merely normative agendas, but rather as key elements in enhancing innovative capabilities, organizational effectiveness, and institutional reputation (Ed-Dafali et al., 2025; Abdullah et al., 2024; Maside-Sanfız et al., 2024). Various studies have shown that diversity demographic, functional, or digital is positively correlated with decision-making quality, organizational resilience, and adaptability to market dynamics (Komakech & Ombati, 2024; Rahman et al., 2024; Mahapatro et al., 2024). Equity policies, such as those addressing gender, digital access, and health, have been proven to strengthen accountable governance (Fossung, 2024; Tchouaket et al., 2024; O'Riordan, 2024). Meanwhile, inclusion initiatives contribute to increased employee engagement as well as team cohesion and collaboration (Canales et al., 2025; Durojaiye et al., 2025).

The existing literature presents several conceptual and methodological limitations. Many studies are partial in scope, focusing on specific dimensions of diversity, such as gender (Abdullah et al., 2024; Yahaya et al., 2024), and have yet to comprehensively examine the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between inclusive management—including diversity management, equity policy, and inclusion initiatives (DEI)—and organizational performance (Singh & Khan, 2025; Dubickis et al., 2024). Furthermore, the causal pathways linking inclusive managerial practices to organizational outcomes such as innovation, accountability, and strategic resilience remain underexplored (Zani et al., 2025; Cherkaoui & Oudrhoug, 2025; Vasquez-Peñaloza et al., 2025). Other challenges include a lack of longitudinal research on sustainable, diversity-based HRM practices (Kamaruddin & Ali,

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2025), limited application of bibliometric approaches to map DEI trends (Noor & Isa, 2025; Ribeiro et al., 2024), and a scarcity of studies on governance diversity, inclusive leadership, digital inclusion, health- and education-based equity, as well as inclusive HRM practices in the context of organizational agility (Freeman et al., 2025; Prestiani & Mujtaba, 2024; Safuan, 2025; Leitão et al., 2024; Hadmar et al., 2024; Mansour & Vadell, 2024; Okoro et al., 2024; Rosmiati & Haryana, 2025; Pereira & Manzo, 2025; Kamaruddin & Ali, 2025). Moreover, a theoretical framework that integratively connects DEI, employee engagement, and organizational performance as a dynamic system has yet to be developed. Future research agendas also lack evidence-based synthesis approaches. The exploration of engagement as a multivariate mediator and comparative studies across public and private sectors are still notably limited (Ali & W MI, 2024; Faisal, 2024; Chisini et al., 2024; Ribeiro et al., 2024). In response to these gaps, this study adopts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to synthesize empirical evidence and construct an integrative conceptual framework on the influence of inclusive management—comprising diversity management, equity policies, and inclusion initiatives—on organizational performance, with employee engagement as a mediating variable. This study has three primary objectives: (1) to analyze the relationship between diversity management, equity policies, and inclusion initiatives and organizational performance; (2) to explore the mediating role of employee engagement; and (3) to formulate a future research map and theoretical contributions. Specifically, the study addresses three core research questions: (1) How do diversity management, equity policies, and inclusion initiatives relate to organizational performance? (2) How does employee engagement function as a mediator in the relationship between diversity management, equity policies, and inclusion initiatives and organizational performance? (3) What research gaps and future research directions are relevant for further exploration?

Methods

This study adopts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to systematically, transparently, and replicably synthesize scientific knowledge from relevant prior studies, while also identifying thematic patterns, theoretical gaps, and future research directions (Snyder, 2019). As an evidence-based method, the SLR enables literature review grounded in peer-reviewed publications, using both structural and interpretive approaches. The SLR process was conducted manually, and data were analyzed using a narrative thematic approach to examine conceptual constructs, variable interrelationships, and the dynamics of research related to DEI, employee engagement, and organizational performance (Page et al., 2021). Inclusion criteria covered scholarly articles published between 2019 and 2025 in reputable journals indexed in the Scopus database (Q1–Q4), which explicitly address the relationship between diversity management, equity policy, inclusion initiatives, employee engagement, and organizational performance. Articles that were not peer-reviewed, such as editorials or opinion pieces, or those not written in academic English or Indonesian, were excluded from the review. Literature was sourced from the Scopus database. The search strategy employed Boolean operators with keywords: “diversity management AND organizational performance”, “equality policy AND organizational performance”, “inclusion initiatives AND organizational performance”, and “employee engagement AND organizational performance” (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2015). All data were analyzed thematically to categorize findings based on inter-theme relationships, methodological trends, and to inform the development of a conceptual map and recommendations for further research (Nowell et al., 2017).

Result

General Description of the Literature

Theme 1: Diversity Management and Organizational Performance

Diversity management has now assumed a strategic position in contemporary literature, in line with growing awareness of the importance of diversity in the structure and dynamics of modern organizations. Based on the mapping results, 17 reputable scholarly articles were identified that discuss the relationship between diversity management and organizational performance across various dimensions. The dominance of publications from 2024–2025 underscores the high relevance of this issue in current strategic management and human resource discourses. The review reveals significant methodological variations, including systematic literature reviews (Cherkaoui & Oudrhough, 2025; Pandey et al., 2025; Taneja et al., 2024), bibliometric analyses (Abdullah et al., 2024; Mahapatro et al., 2024; Ribeiro et al., 2024), and quantitative and mixed methods such as Fuzzy Delphi, Random Forest (Zani et al., 2025), text mining, and topic modeling (Kamaruddin & Ali, 2025). The majority of these articles are published in high-ranking Scopus-indexed journals (Q1–Q3), lending credibility and validity to the empirical findings. The sectoral contexts examined include manufacturing, supply chains, public sector, education, digital finance, healthcare, and the green economy. This sectoral diversity highlights the cross-industry application of diversity management practices. Various forms of diversity are thoroughly analyzed, including gender (Abdullah et al., 2024; Ed-Dafali et al., 2025; Pandey et al., 2025), board diversity (Yahaya et al., 2024; Cherkaoui & Oudrhough, 2025), digital (Mansour

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& Vadell, 2024), demographic-functional (Almeida et al., 2024), leadership (Ribeiro et al., 2024; Leitão et al., 2024; Mahapatro et al., 2024), and subject diversity (Azis, 2025). Overall, these studies indicate that diversity contributes positively to operational efficiency, innovation, productivity, accountability, and organizational competitive advantage. Komakech and Ombati (2024) highlight the role of diversity in supply chain and total quality management. Meanwhile, Rahman et al. (2024) and Zani et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of talent diversity in driving innovation and adaptability. The role of board diversity in governance is also underscored by Cherkaoui and Oudrhoug (2025) and Yahaya et al. (2024). On the other hand, Kamaruddin and Ali (2025) along with Souza (2024) link diversity to sustainable HRM practices that impact workforce well-being and productivity. Ed-Dafali et al. (2025) and Mahapatro et al. (2024) emphasize the contribution of diversity to ESG reputation and organizational transformation. Azis (2025) and Ribeiro et al. (2024) further argue that diversified perspectives are key to addressing managerial complexity, particularly in public and financial sectors.

Theme 2: Equity Policy and Organizational Performance

Equity policies have evolved from symbols of social commitment into managerial strategies that directly impact organizational performance. Based on a systematic literature review of 16 academic articles, such policies have been shown to strengthen organizational effectiveness through enhanced transparency, accountability, employee well-being, and the optimization of public service delivery. Most of these articles were published between 2019 and 2025, reflecting the ongoing relevance of equity issues in contemporary managerial practice. The methodological approaches employed in these studies include systematic literature reviews (Salabay & Nurhaeni, 2024; Ed-Dafali et al., 2025; Taneja et al., 2024), bibliometric analyses (Mansour & Vadell, 2024; Hadmar et al., 2024; Freeman et al., 2025), as well as scoping and narrative reviews (Fossung, 2024; Tchouaket et al., 2024; O’Riordan, 2024). Some studies applied descriptive quantitative methods (Chisini et al., 2024; Prestiani & Mujtaba, 2024), and all were published in Scopus-indexed Q1–Q3 journals.

The literature reflects the multidimensional scope of equity policy, covering gender, digital, health, education, and equity-based CSR aspects. Gender equity emerges as a major focus, with several studies highlighting its contribution to leadership quality, service effectiveness, and organizational outcomes (Prestiani & Mujtaba, 2024; O’Riordan, 2024; Freeman et al., 2025; Pandey et al., 2025). Digital equity is identified as a catalyst for transformation in organizational communication, public service delivery, and operational efficiency (Mansour & Vadell, 2024; Hadmar et al., 2024; Su & Chen, 2024). In the dimensions of education and professional training, equity policies play a vital role in enhancing innovation and developing human resource capabilities (Pereira & Manzo, 2025; Chisini et al., 2024; Freeman et al., 2025). Equity-based CSR has also been found to contribute to improved organizational reputation and financial performance (López-Penabad et al., 2024; Tchouaket et al., 2024). In terms of sustainability and governance, these policies serve as a foundation for climate risk mitigation and institutional capacity building (Ed-Dafali et al., 2025; Fossung, 2024; Oguntuase & Ajibare, 2024).

Theme 3: Inclusion Initiatives and Organizational Performance

Inclusion initiatives have become strategic components in shaping participatory, adaptive, and socially just organizational structures and cultures. Based on a Systematic Literature Review of 19 academic articles, this study highlights the strategic contribution of inclusion to enhancing organizational performance across both public and private sectors. The majority of the publications originate from the 2024–2025 period, reflecting the growing urgency of inclusion issues in contemporary academic debate. Methodological approaches include quantitative surveys (Aziz & Abiddin, 2024; Chinomso et al., 2024), systematic reviews (Durojaiye et al., 2025; Jalal et al., 2024; Rosmiati & Haryana, 2025), as well as bibliometric analysis and topic modeling (Zafar & Abu-Hussin, 2025; Hadmar et al., 2024; Noor & Isa, 2025), collectively portraying inclusion as a social, structural, and digital variable within organizational governance practices. The literature shows the widespread cross-sectoral application of inclusion. In the health sector, inclusive work design and interventions have been shown to improve efficiency and productivity (Durojaiye et al., 2025; Jalal et al., 2024; Okoro et al., 2024). In education, inclusive policy and talent management foster innovation and enhance institutional competitiveness (Aziz & Abiddin, 2024; Pereira & Manzo, 2025). In the public and governmental sectors, inclusive strategies play a critical role in strengthening governance, service quality, and institutional capabilities (Canales et al., 2025; Najar et al., 2025; Hadmar et al., 2024). Other studies highlight the role of inclusion in supply chains and digital financial services as drivers of system efficiency and adaptability (Gaffar & Andriana, 2024; Mansour & Vadell, 2024). Culturally, inclusive work values and sustainable HRM practices support organizational integrity and long-term sustainability (Zafar & Abu-Hussin, 2025; Kamaruddin & Ali, 2025). Inclusion initiatives also positively impact organizational reputation, particularly in responding to consumer issues and building brand trust (Mulyono & Rolando, 2025). Furthermore, inclusive leadership promotes broader

participation, supports eco-conscious leadership styles, and enhances the effectiveness of strategic decision-making (O’Riordan, 2024; Maside-Sanfiz et al., 2024; Pandey et al., 2025).

Theme 4: Employee Engagement and Organizational Performance

Employee engagement is a critical factor in promoting sustainable organizational performance. In the context of modern organizations that demand high productivity, adaptability, and top talent retention, engagement serves as a strategic link between managerial policies and performance outcomes. Based on a systematic literature review of 19 scholarly articles, employee engagement has been found to play a significant role across various sectors and institutions. All reviewed articles were published between 2019 and 2025, highlighting the strong relevance of this issue in academic discourse. The methodologies employed are diverse, including bibliometric reviews (Austen & Piwowar-Sulej, 2024; Singh & Khan, 2025; Zani et al., 2025), systematic literature reviews (Shalihati et al., 2025; Tan et al., 2024), quantitative surveys (Dubickis et al., 2024; Alshagrawi et al., 2025; Ametefe et al., 2025), and NLP-based topic modeling (Kamaruddin & Ali, 2025), demonstrating the breadth of approaches used in this research area.

Empirically, employee engagement contributes to strengthening organizational innovation (Zani et al., 2025; Rahman et al., 2025), implementing green HRM (Austen & Piwowar-Sulej, 2024; Prasidi, 2025), digital transformation, and improving organizational adaptability (Mansour & Vadell, 2024; Tan et al., 2024). Engagement also acts as a mediator between sustainable HRM practices and organizational outcomes (Kamaruddin & Ali, 2025), and reinforces the relationship between leadership styles and work effectiveness (Safuan, 2025; Zani et al., 2025; Alshagrawi et al., 2025). The effects of engagement include increased efficiency, retention, and organizational resilience (Ali & W MI, 2024), as well as reduced turnover intention (Alshagrawi et al., 2025) and enhanced managerial integrity (Safuan, 2025). In public and educational sectors, engagement improves service efficiency and institutional capacity (Shalihati et al., 2025; Ochieng et al., 2025), and boosts motivation through character-based and strengths-based engagement approaches (Vásquez-Pailaqueo et al., 2025). Beyond being a psychological construct, engagement reflects a productive and humanistic organizational culture (Austen & Piwowar-Sulej, 2024; Xiao & Chin, 2025), and serves as a driver for digital technology adoption (Mansour & Vadell, 2024; Tan et al., 2024). Furthermore, engagement operates as a strategic mediator between work-life balance and productivity (Faisal, 2024), and between green behavior and organizational performance (Prasidi, 2025), making it a vital element in integrated corporate strategy.

Discussion

Thematic Synthesis of the Literature Review

Theme 1: Diversity Management and Organizational Performance

The thematic synthesis of the analyzed literature indicates that diversity management has evolved from a normative concept into a strategic determinant in driving organizational performance comprehensively. The reviewed studies consistently confirm that diversity within organizational structures—whether in terms of gender, function, demographics, leadership, or digitalization—makes a tangible contribution to enhancing effectiveness, innovation, operational efficiency, and competitiveness. Several studies highlight that gender diversity supports governance quality and performance stability. Abdullah et al. (2024), Cherkaoui & Oudrhough (2025), and Ed-Dafali et al. (2025) demonstrate that gender diversity not only reduces earnings management practices but also enhances ESG reputation and governance accountability. Similarly, Yahaya et al. (2024) affirm that board diversity directly influences decision-making effectiveness and organizational accountability.

Talent and leadership diversity also play a strategic role in building innovative capacity and intellectual capital. Rahman et al. (2024) and Leitão et al. (2024) emphasize that inclusive talent management and leadership diversity foster collaborative and innovative work environments, while Mahapatro et al. (2024) show that diversity-based leadership improves organizational responsiveness to external dynamics. The literature further confirms that functional and demographic diversity strengthen managerial structures and the quality of public services. Almeida et al. (2024) note the positive impact of demographic-functional diversity in the public sector, while Souza (2024) emphasizes the contribution of HR diversity to the efficiency of healthcare supply chains. Komakech & Ombati (2024) support these findings by highlighting the role of diversity in SCM and TQM in enhancing systemic organizational efficiency. In terms of innovation, Zani et al. (2025) demonstrate that diverse marketing strategies increase the innovative capacity of the wine industry in Brazil. Pereira & Manzo (2025) add that the synergy between education and gender diversity boosts gender-based entrepreneurial productivity. Diversity of perspectives emerges as a catalyst for creating sustainable competitive advantage.

Digital diversity also receives attention as a crucial element of organizational transformation. Mansour & Vadell (2024) link digital diversity with the efficiency of legal and financial systems as well as digital governance.

Taneja et al. (2024) and Amin et al. (2024) show that diversity in technology applications, including AI, enhances supply chain performance and digitalization-based efficiency. From a sustainability perspective, Kamaruddin & Ali (2025) position diversity as an integral part of sustainable HRM, which not only promotes employee well-being and productivity but also strengthens sustainable organizational practices. Ribeiro et al. (2024) affirm that leadership and subject diversity drive the development of adaptive and innovative organizations. This thematic synthesis confirms that diversity management is not merely a form of social responsibility but a core corporate strategy within the architecture of organizational performance. Diversity in its various forms provides substantial added value to productivity, effectiveness, and long-term sustainability.

Theme 2: Equity Policy and Organizational Performance

Equity policy has become a strategic foundation in the managerial architecture of modern organizations. Far from being a symbolic gesture of social commitment, such policies are theoretically and empirically proven to strengthen organizational systems, service efficiency, managerial accountability, and institutional reputation. The thematic synthesis of 17 analyzed articles highlights the transformative role of equity policies in shaping inclusive, competitive, and sustainable organizations. Salabay and Nurhaeni (2024) show that equity policies in sexual harassment prevention directly contribute to workplace comfort and productivity. Tchouaket et al. (2024) add that the application of equity principles in long-term care facilities improves service efficiency and quality. Fossung (2024) and Yahaya et al. (2024) also emphasize that equality-based governance enhances transparency and the effectiveness of decision-making.

Moreover, equity facilitates the participation of vulnerable groups within organizational structures. Leia et al. (2024) and O’Riordan (2024) stress that gender equity and inclusive leadership support the success of public services and improve outcomes in the health sector. Freeman et al. (2025) show that equal access to professional training enhances HR competitiveness and long-term organizational effectiveness. In the digital era, equity has been shown to support the effectiveness of e-government. Hadmar et al. (2024), Su and Chen (2024), and Mansour and Vadell (2024) highlight that digital equity broadens service access, accelerates technology adoption, and improves the efficiency of public service structures. Meanwhile, Noor and Isa (2025) associate equity policies with work-life balance, which positively affects employee well-being and retention. In the fields of education and innovation, equity serves as a catalyst for organizational renewal. Chisini et al. (2024) and Pereira & Manzo (2025) emphasize that applying equity principles in education strengthens meritocracy and enhances the innovative capacity of women-led organizations. Pandey et al. (2025) and Abdullah et al. (2024) add that gender diversity in leadership reinforces change management effectiveness and ESG-based governance.

Equity also contributes to organizational sustainability. Ed-Dafali et al. (2025), Poorisat et al. (2024), and Oguntuase & Ajibare (2024) affirm that equity policy strengthens economic sustainability systems, climate risk mitigation, and the design of inclusive organizations. In the context of CSR, López-Penabad et al. (2024) show that equality-based CSR not only broadens social impact but also improves the effectiveness of microfinance organizations. The literature further underscores the role of equity in advancing sustainable HRM practices. Kamaruddin & Ali (2025) and Maside-Sanfíz et al. (2024) position equity as the foundation for building a humanistic, resilient, and productive HR system. At the strategic level, equity at the board of directors level enhances accountability and decision-making quality (Prestiani & Mujtaba, 2024; Taneja et al., 2024). This review confirms that equity policies have evolved into strategic instruments across domains—from governance, HRM, and CSR to digitalization and sustainability. Their successful implementation directly strengthens organizational structures, managerial effectiveness, human capital quality, and institutional productivity.

Theme 3: Inclusion Initiatives and Organizational Performance

The issue of inclusion in organizational governance has evolved from a social initiative into a strategic instrument that impacts performance structurally, operationally, and culturally. A synthesis of 19 scholarly articles reveals that inclusion initiatives have multidimensional effects, encompassing improvements in innovation, operational efficiency, public service effectiveness, and human resource productivity. The concept of inclusion now spans digitalization, occupational health, governance, and organizational cultural transformation. Aziz and Abiddin (2024) and Chinomso et al. (2024) show that implementing inclusion through self-leadership and agile strategies enhances innovative behavior and individual efficiency. Durojaiye et al. (2025) add that inclusive organizational design significantly impacts performance through the Balanced Scorecard perspective, particularly in terms of efficiency, service delivery, and stakeholder satisfaction.

Wungrath et al. (2024) and Jalal et al. (2024) confirm that inclusive interventions in social services and health programs strengthen institutional legitimacy and accelerate the achievement of organizational goals. Meanwhile,

Zafar and Abu-Hussin (2025) demonstrate that inclusion-based work ethics foster a productive organizational culture and encourage commitment. In the context of supply chains and crisis management, Gaffar and Andriana (2024) show that inclusion principles enhance adaptive capacity and operational efficiency. Rosmiati and Haryana (2025) support this by finding that inclusion-based nutrition interventions improve workplace health and HR productivity. Inclusion also enhances competencies in the public sector. Canales et al. (2025) show that inclusion-based skills foster the effectiveness of public management and the sustainability of government services. Rahman et al. (2025) emphasize that inclusive talent management strengthens innovative capacities and organizational resilience against external changes.

Inclusive leadership is a dominant theme in the literature. O’Riordan (2024), Pandey et al. (2025), and Maside-Sanfiz et al. (2024) affirm that inclusion-oriented leadership improves decision-making quality, service effectiveness, and sustainable performance. Participatory approaches and value diversity are also proven to enhance social and environmental performance. Organizational reputation is also strengthened through inclusion initiatives. A study by Mulyono and Rolando (2025) shows that responsiveness to consumer inclusion enhances brand reputation and organizational outcomes. In the digital realm, Hadmar et al. (2024) and Mansour & Vadell (2024) demonstrate that digital inclusion promotes bureaucratic efficiency and improves the performance of technology-based public services. Kamaruddin and Ali (2025) and Yahaya et al. (2024) confirm that inclusion in sustainable HRM practices enhances resource balance and creates resilient management systems. In the context of women's occupational health, Okoro et al. (2024) show that inclusive policies foster healthy and productive work environments. This synthesis confirms that inclusion initiatives are fundamental elements in strengthening organizational structures, processes, and culture. Their impact is not linear but simultaneously touches various aspects of the organization—from innovation, efficiency, and retention to the reinforcement of institutional legitimacy.

Theme 4: Employee Engagement and Organizational Performance

Employee engagement has emerged as a strategic element in enhancing organizational performance, spanning individual productivity, systemic efficiency, and institutional sustainability. Thematic synthesis of 19 reviewed academic articles affirms that employee engagement is not merely a psychosocial construct, but also functions as a structural mechanism that drives work effectiveness, innovation, resilience, and the strengthening of managerial capacities across sectors. Within the framework of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM), engagement acts as a catalyst for sustainability. Austen and Piwovar-Sulej (2024) show that engagement enhances the effectiveness of GHRM implementation in the manufacturing sector, increasing both efficiency and productivity. Similarly, Zani et al. (2025) and Prasidi (2025) confirm the mediating role of engagement in linking pro-environmental behavior to organizational performance. In the domain of leadership, employee engagement serves as a significant mediating variable in the relationship between leadership style and organizational performance. Zani et al. (2025), Safuan (2025), and Ametefe et al. (2025) state that humanistic and transformational leadership styles enhance engagement, which in turn strengthens performance and reduces turnover intention (Alshagrawi et al., 2025).

In response to digitalization challenges, engagement acts as a driver of adaptability. Tan et al. (2024) highlight the role of engagement in supporting the effectiveness of digital interventions and enhancing organizational capabilities. Mansour and Vadell (2024) add that engagement catalyzes digital transformation and technology-based competitiveness, including in the context of the metaverse. Engagement is also closely linked to organizational innovation. Zani et al. (2025) and Rahman et al. (2025) demonstrate that engagement increases innovation capacity through intrinsic motivation, team collaboration, and idea exploration. In the knowledge dimension, Dubickis et al. (2024) affirm that engagement strengthens knowledge-sharing readiness and accelerates organizational learning processes.

In education and public service sectors, engagement has been shown to improve service efficiency and the effectiveness of institutional CRM systems (Shalihati et al., 2025; Ochieng et al., 2025; Cardillo & Basso, 2025). Moreover, engagement reinforces organizational loyalty and culture (Xiao & Chin, 2025; Saufi & Qin, 2025) through the internalization of healthy and collaborative collective values. Engagement also plays a role in building organizational resilience. Ali & W MI (2024) show that engagement enhances institutional flexibility and responsiveness to workplace disruptions. In the context of work-life balance, Faisal (2024) identifies engagement as a mediating variable between employee well-being and work productivity. Employee engagement is not merely an indicator of job satisfaction, but a strategic pillar in the architecture of organizational performance. Engagement functions as both a mediating and reinforcing variable in the relationship between leadership, culture, innovation, and sustainability and the organization’s overall outcomes.

Based on the thematic synthesis of the four main themes in this study—diversity management, equality policy, inclusion initiatives, and employee engagement—an integrative conceptual model was developed to represent the

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systemic interrelationship among the key variables. This model illustrates that DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) practices not only exert a direct influence on organizational performance but also an indirect one through the mediation of employee engagement. Within this framework, diversity management, equality policy, and inclusion initiatives are positioned as exogenous variables that shape a fair, inclusive, and diverse organizational environment. These three influence employee engagement as a mediating variable that bridges DEI practices with organizational outcomes such as innovation, efficiency, productivity, and institutional sustainability.

The literature findings consistently support this framework. Diversity—particularly in gender and leadership—has been proven to improve governance quality and institutional accountability (Abdullah et al., 2024; Cherkaoui & Oudrhough, 2025; Ed-Dafali et al., 2025). Equality policy enhances institutional fairness and work motivation (Fossung, 2024; O’Riordan, 2024; Freeman et al., 2025), while inclusive culture increases participation and strengthens employees’ affective attachment to the organization (Pandey et al., 2025; Jalal et al., 2024; Zafar & Abu-Hussin, 2025). On the other hand, employee engagement serves as a psychosocial bridge mediating the impact of DEI on organizational performance (Austen & Piwovar-Sulej, 2024; Singh & Khan, 2025).

Unlike previous models that are often linear and symbolic, this model integrates structural and affective dimensions in a more comprehensive manner. Most existing models have yet to consider engagement as a psychological mechanism that reinforces the relationship between managerial practices and organizational outcomes (Boekhorst, 2015; Nishii, 2013). This model also transcends conventional human capital approaches by emphasizing the internalization of DEI values within organizational culture (Zani et al., 2025; Xiao & Chin, 2025). In this model, employee engagement enhances the organization's dynamic capabilities—driving agility, resilience, and strategic adaptability (Rahman et al., 2025; Kamaruddin & Ali, 2025). Therefore, the model articulates not only theoretical relationships but also provides an applicable foundation for designing superior and sustainable HRM systems.

The synthesis results show that DEI practices, with employee engagement as a mediator, have a significant structural relationship with organizational performance. To deepen this understanding, conceptual reflection through the lenses of Human Resource Management (HRM), Organizational Behavior, and Humanistic Management is necessary. From an HRM perspective, these findings affirm that organizational effectiveness is determined not solely by structural efficiency but also by the managerial system’s capacity to manage diversity, ensure equity, and foster an inclusive work environment. The strategic HRM approach positions HR systems as catalysts for productivity, innovation, and organizational agility (Boxall & Purcell, 2016; Wright & Ulrich, 2017). Within this framework, employee engagement acts as an internal driver linking DEI systems to organizational performance.

From the organizational behavior perspective, the relationship between DEI and performance can be explained through job engagement theory, social exchange theory, and the organizational commitment model. Employee engagement arises from perceptions of fairness, trust, psychological safety, and inclusive experience (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006). Studies by Zani et al. (2025), Safuan (2025), and Austen & Piwovar-Sulej (2024) show that engagement grows from procedural justice and inclusive work relationships. From a humanistic management approach, DEI and engagement are not merely tools of efficiency but expressions of an organization that honors human dignity and participation (Pirson, 2021). This is reinforced by findings from Pandey et al. (2025), Maside-Sanfiz et al. (2024), and Kamaruddin & Ali (2025), who emphasize the importance of humanistic values as the foundation of sustainable organizations.

Contrary to previous models (Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2018), this study offers a critical evolution by positioning employee engagement as an active mediator in the structural dynamics of DEI, rather than a passive outcome. This model integratively combines structural and affective dimensions in organizational management. Furthermore, this evidence-based theoretical model strengthens the direction of an evidence-based HR strategy. Beyond its theoretical robustness, the model also holds practical implications for driving HRM system reform that is responsive to diversity. Hadmar et al. (2024), Mansour & Vadell (2024), and Noor & Isa (2025) affirm that DEI and engagement shape organizations that are inclusive, innovative, efficient, and resilient in the long term. This systematic review provides substantial contributions both theoretically and practically to the development of human resource management, organizational behavior, and DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion)-based strategic frameworks. Theoretically, the integrative conceptual model proposed in this study demonstrates that diversity management, equality policy, and inclusion initiatives not only exert a direct impact on organizational performance but also have an indirect effect mediated by employee engagement. The primary theoretical implication lies in the reconstruction of inter-variable relationships that have previously been examined in isolation. This study offers a more interconnected HRM framework, positioning engagement as the key link between the organization’s social structure and the dynamics of collective performance (Singh & Khan, 2025; Austen & Piwovar-Sulej, 2024). These findings also reinforce the organizational behavior literature, particularly in the domains of affective commitment and job embeddedness, while expanding the conceptual foundation of engagement theory in the context of pluralistic

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organizations (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006). Practically, this study provides strategic direction for organizations seeking to build managerial systems that are responsive to DEI challenges. First, DEI should be fully integrated into HRM policies as a foundational element, not merely as a symbolic gesture—given its proven impact on retention, innovation, and productivity (Cherkaoui & Oudrrough, 2025; Kamaruddin & Ali, 2025). Second, engagement practices should be embedded across the entire managerial cycle, from recruitment to performance evaluation (Shalihati et al., 2025; Ochieng et al., 2025; Dubickis et al., 2024).

Third, leadership should be repositioned as a facilitator of inclusion and a driver of engagement, where transformational, participative, and humanistic leadership styles are critical to improving organizational outcomes (Zani et al., 2025; Safuan, 2025; Alshagrawi et al., 2025). Fourth, this model is also relevant to public policy domains, especially in strengthening DEI- and engagement-based HR governance in the public sector. Studies by Noor & Isa (2025), Hadmar et al. (2024), and Mansour & Vadell (2024) highlight that digital inclusion and equality-based governance play essential roles in enhancing bureaucratic effectiveness and citizen participation. As with all scientific inquiries, this study has methodological and conceptual limitations that should be acknowledged as part of academic integrity and as a foundation for future research development. Methodologically, while the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and thematic analysis approaches provide robust synthesis, they are not without constraints. First, the selection of literature was limited to the Scopus database (Q1–Q4), potentially excluding grey literature with practical relevance. Second, the qualitative thematic analysis approach does not allow for quantitative generalization or statistical testing between variables (Snyder, 2019; Page et al., 2021).

Conceptually, the integrative DEI–engagement–performance model developed in this study has not yet been empirically validated using quantitative methods such as SEM or PLS-SEM. Furthermore, the mediating role of employee engagement may be influenced by other intervening variables such as organizational culture, psychological empowerment, and leadership climate (Zani et al., 2025; Kamaruddin & Ali, 2025). For future research, several directions are recommended: (1) quantitative testing of model validity across industries and cultural contexts; (2) longitudinal studies to explore long-term causal dynamics (Austen & Piwowar-Sulej, 2024; Rahman et al., 2025); (3) the application of mixed-methods and big data integration to enhance value-based managerial analysis; and (4) further bibliometric exploration using methods such as co-word analysis or AI-based topic modeling (Singh & Khan, 2025; Dubickis et al., 2024). Additionally, expanding studies to informal sectors and marginalized communities is crucial for understanding the complexity of DEI within underexplored social landscapes. Finally, the integration of Global South perspectives should be strengthened to expand external validity and avoid Western-centric epistemological dominance in DEI and engagement literature.

Conclusion

This study systematically synthesizes scientific evidence from recent literature (2019–2025) to analyze the impact of diversity management, equality policy, and inclusion initiatives (DEI) on organizational performance, with employee engagement serving as the key mediating variable. Through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and thematic analysis, this study constructs an integrative conceptual model that supports the advancement of sustainable human resource management. In response to the first research question, findings reveal a positive relationship between the three DEI dimensions and organizational performance. Diversity management fosters innovation, enhances decision-making effectiveness, and strengthens competitive advantage. Equality policy improves governance and institutional reputation, while inclusion initiatives increase participation and reinforce organizational culture. In response to the second question, engagement has been confirmed as a strategic mediating mechanism that bridges DEI and organizational performance. Employee engagement reflects the internalization of justice and participation values, serving as a catalyst for improving organizational efficiency, innovation, and resilience.

Regarding the third question, this study identifies several research gaps, including the limited application of quantitative methods such as SEM, the lack of longitudinal designs, and minimal exploration of intervening variables such as organizational justice and leadership climate. The literature remains predominantly focused on formal, Western-centric contexts. Future studies should develop locally contextualized approaches, apply mixed methods, and integrate big data with humanistic management principles to broaden theoretical and practical understanding of the DEI–engagement–performance nexus. Based on the literature synthesis, model integration, and theoretical reflection, the following strategic recommendations are proposed: 1) For academics and researchers: Expanding exploration of the DEI–engagement–performance relationship using longitudinal designs, multi-level modeling, and mixed-methods approaches is crucial. Future studies should also include small organizations, local communities, and underrepresented Global South contexts in the literature; 2) For practitioners and managers: DEI should be fully embedded within the HRM cycle, from recruitment to retention. Engagement must be positioned as a strategic investment to create psychological safety, work meaningfulness, and inclusive participation in decision-making

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processes; 3) For educational and professional training institutions, DEI and engagement should be incorporated as core competencies in 21st-century leadership development. Higher education must cultivate multicultural awareness and participatory capabilities as foundational elements for future management; 4) For all stakeholders, diversity, equity, and inclusion must be understood not merely as moral imperatives, but as strategic organizational assets. The institutionalization of DEI and engagement should be pursued systematically so that organizations can transform both socially and economically.

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