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“Employee inclusion: The Case of the Cypriot Workforce”

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that the present thesis was submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master in Science of the University of Cyprus. It is a product of original work of my own, unless otherwise mentioned through references, notes, or any other statements.

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Abstract

Organizations today are experiencing various changes in their workforce due to the diverse background of employees. Thus, it has become increasingly important to consider the inclusion of all the individuals in the workforce to avoid any biases, discrimination and marginalization of employees. This evolving nature of organizations is signaled by numerous types of diversity within the workforce, presenting challenges in managing inclusion. This research explores the concept of inclusion as a management paradigm that aims to foster an inclusive and cohesive workforce. It aims to provide empirical data on how inclusion is experienced and perceived by employees in Cyprus. This research focuses on the key drivers of inclusive climate initiatives, investigates inclusive HR practices and assesses how these factors influence the feeling of inclusion. This thesis aspires to offer insights into the level of inclusion that exist in Cyprus by investigating the current experiences of individuals that are employed in organizations that operate in Cyprus. Drawing on the sample of 131 participants working in Cyprus, this study finds significant gender and parental status disparities in perceived workplace inclusion. The analysis reveals that males generally report higher levels of inclusion across various dimensions including, individual, group/team, leadership, organizational training and organizational climate. Additionally, non-parents perceive higher inclusion levels than parents, indicating that parental responsibilities influence perceptions of inclusivity. Moreover, a further analysis was conducted to examine the interaction effect of gender and parental status on perceived inclusion. The results indicated no significant interaction, suggesting that the two factors independently affect the feeling of inclusion within the organization. Thus, the study underscores the importance of tailored organizational policies and practices, ensuring a more inclusive and equitable workplace for all employees.

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Introduction

In the past two decades, the notion of inclusion has become a significant advancement when it comes to organizational diversity research. While earlier reviews and analysis in organizations provided inconclusive results regarding the benefits of diversity in organizations (Joshi et al., 2009), the concept of workplace inclusion has emerged as a promising strategy for diversity management initiatives. As a result, to achieve the full potential of diversity, a lot of firms have moved their emphasis from diversity management to inclusion (Nishii, 2013). Thus, the notion of employee inclusion and fostering an inclusive culture in the workplace is now recognized to provide a lot of benefits that allow an organization to succeed (QIC-WD, 2022) as it is positively associated with work outcomes.

When an organization embraces inclusion, it brings out numerous advantages to its employees, stakeholders, and the organization's overall performance. As employees possess a diverse range of skills and capabilities, this diversity ultimately leads to the transformation of the organization into a high-performing and successful entity (Gita, 2021). An increasing body of research indicates that employee's perception of inclusion in the workplace is positively associated with higher level of job-satisfaction, motivation, work dedication and positive emotions (Shore et al., 2018). Furthermore, research focused on exploring the organizational impact regarding inclusive organizations and it has revealed a connection between the perception of inclusion from employees with enhanced productivity (Shore et al., 2011). Additional research also revealed that organizations with elevated levels of inclusion have lower employee disengagement, defined by the turnover or the intention to quit (Holmes et al., 2020) which

presents a competitive advantage for organizations. Lastly, inclusive organizations prioritize their employees (Sabattini et al., 2008) and foster a culture that emphasizes results, through enhancing organizational performance.

Moreover, as the workforce continues to evolve, the importance of adopting an inclusive culture among organizations has become increasingly vital. The transition from managing diversity to adopting inclusion reflects a strategic approach that considers the dynamics of diverse workgroups and the important benefits of inclusive environments. This thesis aims to delve deeper into the factors that influence the feeling of inclusion at various levels and assess the extent to which these factors affect the overall perception of inclusion in an organization.

Several frameworks have been created to describe the elements that influence inclusion, such as organizational culture, leadership techniques, and individual employee qualities. According to research, minority groups such as women, racial minorities and people that belong in the LGBTQ+ community do not always enjoy the same levels of inclusion as their colleagues. These groups may encounter specific obstacles and barriers that limit their ability to feel included and appreciated at work (Nishii, 2013).

As a result, many factors influence workplace inclusion, but the extent to which they affect minority groups of employees is unknown. The majority of the studies on this topic come from Western countries leaving a considerable gap in understanding how inclusion is experienced in other cultural instances. This study aims to delve deeper into the elements that influence perceived inclusion, with an emphasis on gender and parental status. By examining these dynamics in the context of Cyprus, a region that has receive little attention in inclusion matters we can address a critical gap in the literature.

The following chapters will provide a comprehensive review of the existing literature on the factors that influence inclusion, will explore the gender in the workplace and will discuss the current situation in Cyprus. In addition, the research methodology will explain the sample selection, data collection and the procedures that were used. Moving on, we will present the empirical results, highlighting the variations in perceived inclusion attributed to gender and parental status. Lastly, an in-depth discussion of the results and a conclusion will be presented.

Maria Mesiti

Literature Review

Individual & Work Group Inclusion

Perceived inclusion refers to employees' feelings of acceptance and inclusion in the workplace (Pearce et al., 2004). While the majority of studies of inclusion in the workplace concentrated on the individual's experience within the group, for instance the employee's perception of being included (Shore et al., 2011), there has also been some initial conceptual investigation on group inclusion as a collective entity. In 1998, Mor Barak and Cherin published the first academic research on the notion of workplace inclusion (Shore et al., 2018). In their study, they introduced what is known as Mor-Barak Inclusion- Exclusion scale (Mor Barak, 2005). This study expanded the notion of inclusion beyond the traditional aspects of diversity management. It defined inclusion as the "employees' perception of being included in critical work processes at various organizational levels" (Mor Barak et al., 1998, p.57-58). This signifies a turning point in diversity management as workplace inclusion becomes an independent area of study. Although other fields recognize that there can be many varied factors influencing a person's behavior, human sciences often focus on individuals. Korte (2007) explained that individual's behavior is determined by them, and they are also the main source of knowledge that drives the success of an organization. Thus, this section of the literature will focus on the perceived organizational inclusion as it refers to the individual and group level perception of employees.

Considering that, it is crucial to understand that the foundation of a sizable portion of the literature regarding inclusivity and diversity is grounded around Social Identity Theory (SIT).

Tajfel and Turner (1979) provided a thorough framework for comprehending prejudice,

discrimination, and conflicts in society. The theory was based on Tajfel's definition of social identity. He believed that social identity can be defined as the "individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership "(McKeown et al., 2016). Thus, according to the evolution of SIT, people tend to develop a psychological connection to the group that they feel they belong to (Social Identity).

Correspondingly, social identities can also be considered as “labels” that are used to categorize individuals into groups based on their unique characteristics such as: generation, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, disability status, relationship status, professional and socioeconomical status (CCL,2024). All the above identities constitute a major part of an individual's self-concept as they shaped the way that individuals view themselves. Alongside personal identity, social identity plays a significant role in shaping someone's values, motivation, beliefs, and actions thus, social identities are naturally dynamic. Individuals may be born into certain social identity groups such as a specific generation or adopt them throughout their lives based on their personal choices (e.g., pursuing a specific career). Furthermore, life experiences can create new social identities, for instance, an accident or chronic illness that might alter an individual's ability status. All identities can be both visible or invisible and they might remain constant or evolve throughout one's lifetime. These identities, because of their dynamic nature, can create an overlapping system of both discrimination and privilege. As a result, understanding the interaction among these identities is crucial when it comes to fostering inclusive work environments as they influence the interactions of people, can shape the relationships, and determine if individuals have access to opportunities (YW Boston, 2023).Moreover, people tend to crave positive self-esteem to get motivated and maintain the positivity of their social identity.

This can be achieved by increasing the social status of the in-group as the social identity is based on this. In addition, people favor their in-group which can increase the positivity regarding the association with their social identity. (McKeown et al., 2016).

Moving on, the primary attempt to construct a comprehensive framework for workplace inclusion was attributed to Shore et al. (2011). In their apprehension of inclusion, they focused on Brewer's (1991) Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT). ODT is a theory of Social Identity that explains why individuals are motivated to identify with a group and proposes that individuals "inherit" two fundamental needs. The need for belongingness and the need for uniqueness and as an optimal equilibrium between these needs, can be achieved through an individual's social interactions. Brewer (Brewer 1991) argued that individuals strive to find a balance among these two predominant needs while also achieving an optimal level of inclusion among the group they are part of. Moreover, people aim to find acceptance and connect with their group to not be isolated and fulfil the human need for belongingness. ODT experiments indicate that although both demands are vital for humans, based on the circumstances, one needs might become more important than the other. Thus, how important it is to differentiate from the group or blend in can change based on the situation and the person (Shore et al., 2011).

Jensen et al (2014), further redefined the uniqueness aspect of the model proposed by Brewer (1991). They introduce a similar dual-component, based on needs model of inclusion, which encompasses both the desire for belonging and the need for authenticity. While considering the ODT, Jensen et al. also integrated results from Self-determination theory (SDT, Ryan et al., 2000) to define authenticity. SDT hypothesizes that human motivation is rooted among the essential needs like autonomy and control on the activities individuals pursue and how they pursue them. This can extend to various aspects of motivation-relevant activities including work

tasks and how an individual expresses themselves. Thus, Jansen et al. (2014), proposed that individuals inherit the need for authenticity. They argue that this need better represent the experiences of an individual across various groups setting in comparison to the need for uniqueness. Thus, the concept of valuing authenticity is considered as more inclusive than valuing uniqueness as it acknowledges the individual's ability to conform or differentiate from the group. As a result, they defined inclusion as “the degree to which individuals perceive their organization as fostering a sense of belonging while feeling liberated and encouraged to be themselves.”

The model of inclusion proposed by Shore et al. (2011) and by Jansen et al. (2014) share significant similarities when it comes to the psychological mechanism behind the perception of inclusion in the workplace. However, Shore et al. go a step further by presenting a practical model of workplace inclusion, which represents how inclusion practices can indirectly impact the work outcomes based on the fulfillment of the need for belongingness and uniqueness (referred in the model as felt inclusion). This model operates on two hypotheses. Firstly, that felt inclusion provides a psychological process that is linking the different implementation of inclusion practices to work outcomes and secondly, that inclusion practices and felt inclusion are two distinct but interconnected aspects of inclusion. (Keating, 2023).

Figure 1. Basic Theoretical Model of Workplace Inclusion and Representation of Paths in the Research Literature

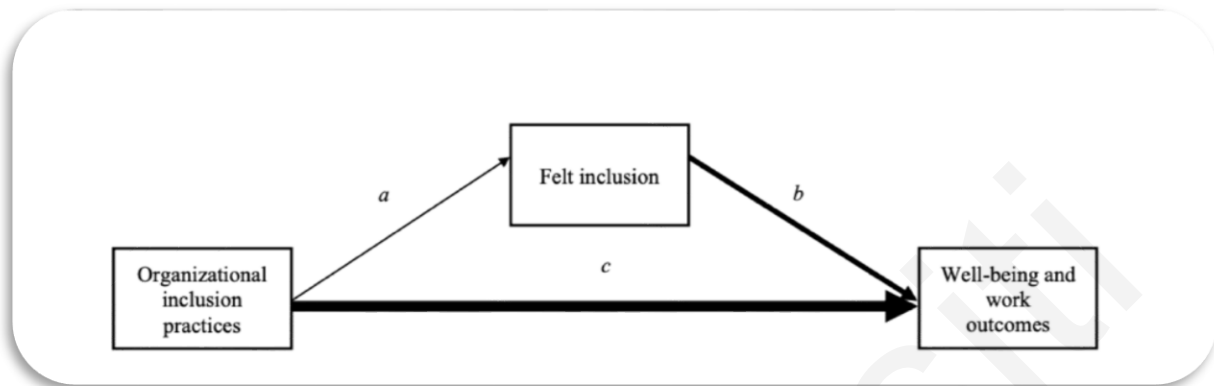


Figure 1 Note: The a and b paths represent the Shore et al. (2011) theoretical model by which organizational inclusion practices are hypothesized to be indirectly associated with individual work outcomes through the psychological experience of inclusion. The c path is not explicitly represented in the Shore et al. (2011) model, but it represents direct associations between inclusion practices and work outcomes, which have been the focus of most workplace inclusion research. Arrow thickness indicates degree of representation in the research literature; thicker arrows indicate higher volume of research examining that relationship. (Keating, 2023).

In my subsequent examination and assessment of the literature on workplace inclusion and specifically the case of individual and group inclusion, I considered the definition of inclusion both theoretically and empirically. Nevertheless, the focus was on the various factors that affect perceived inclusion and in this case the individual level and group/ team inclusion with an emphasis on gender and parental status. The aforementioned will allow me to determine whether the individual and group level inclusion can determine and affect the overall feeling of inclusion in an organization.

Inclusive Leadership

Recent research and theoretical explorations have highlighted inclusion practices known as inclusive leadership. The notion of inclusive leadership was initially conceptualized and defined by Nembhard and Edmonson (2000) as “the words and deeds by leader or leaders that indicate an invitation and appreciation by others (p.947). In addition, Lopez and Hoffman (2014, p. 276) also stated that “Leaders of diverse and inclusive organizations must model comfort with diversity, alter rules for accepted behaviors to ensure wide application, create opportunities for dialogue about and across differences, demonstrate an interest in learning and be authentic about their own challenges and triumphs to encourage authenticity to others”.

Thus, the main objective to develop a leader’s inclusiveness was to identify leaders' behavior that puts as a priority the involvement of all work-group members in decision making processes especially the group members who might otherwise not be included. Thus, Lopez and Hoffman’s (2014, p.276) framework highlights the importance of psychological safety. This refers to the degree to which employees feel comfortable sharing their concerns and ideals without the fear of facing negative comments and criticism. This mechanism associates the inclusiveness of a leader with work outcomes (Nembhard et al., 2006), thus offering evidence that inclusive leadership is positively associated with psychological outcomes.

Succeeding studies have broadened the scope of inclusive leadership to encompass other important work outcomes, such as the well-being and the engagement/motivation at work. For instance, in a study that involved technology professionals (Fang et al.,2019) it explored the connection among inclusive leadership, employees' innovative behaviors and resilience.

According to the results, they found statistical evidence indicating an indirect effect in which the

inclusivity of leaders influenced innovative thinking and work outcome through resilience. Moreover, a similar study (Carmeli et al., 2010) that was conducted on technology employees, likewise discovered that inclusive leadership was indirectly related to higher levels of creativity in work tasks through psychological safety.

In a separate study, Randal et al. (2016) expanded the observation of inclusive leadership's correlations to also include behavioral outcomes. More specifically, they explored the possible connections among inclusive leadership, the individual's perception of diversity climate and investigated any group-directed assisting behaviors. Their results indicated that inclusive leadership was positively linked with higher assisting behaviors both by the leaders and the groups. Moreover, these behaviors are strengthened when psychological diversity climates are present.

In addition, another study about "positive leadership" was explaining a multi-level dimension of leadership that considers aspects such as: authenticity, inclusivity, and respectful leadership. Adam et al. (2019) discovered that "positive leaders" were correlated with higher levels of perceived inclusion, improved well-being (lower levels of burnout and higher levels of self-worth) as well as increased work engagement by employees. Moreover, Cottrill et al. (2014) investigated the notion of authentic leadership regarding the perception of inclusion and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCBs). The results of the research identified a significant positive correlation between all the variables of authentic leadership with the OCBs. OCBs are defined as "actions or behaviors that employees are willing to engage beyond their recommended role requirements" (Mallick et al., 2015).

Similarly, Randel et al.'s (2018) expanded the observation of Shore et al. (2011) conceptual framework and focused on the application of this model regarding leadership inclusion. Randel

et al's definition highlights that "leader's efforts are significantly aimed to cultivate group members' perception of both belongingness and uniqueness" (p.192). Their apprehension focuses on the individual experience among the team/group, with the leaders' efforts focusing on satisfying both the need for belongingness and the need for recognizing everyone as unique. Their results indicate that pro-diversity beliefs and actions pave the way for leadership inclusion.

Moreover, Randel et al. (2018) proposed various behaviors that allow leaders to foster belongingness among their group. Firstly, providing support for group members entails leaders who create an environment of safety, where members feel at ease and that all action that happen have their best interest (Nemhard et al.,2006). Secondly, inclusive leaders ensure justice and equity among their team. This refers to fair treatment towards all the group members. This signals to individuals that they are both valued and respected (Shore et al.,2011). Lastly, leaders ought to promote diverse contributions from individuals. This can be achieved by actively looking for a variety of perspectives and approaches. Thus, according to this model, the leader's inclusion behaviors generate a sense of inclusion for members within the group. Moreover, while the empirical research on this topic is still limited, all the existing evidence strongly supports the importance of leadership inclusion in promoting positive outcomes among teams. Ashikali et al. (2020) research supports the notion that increasing team diversity does not necessarily lead to inclusive environments. Rather, they concluded that inclusive leadership plays a pivotal role when it comes to cultivating an inclusive team. Accordingly, I expect a similar pattern of relationship between inclusive leadership and the overall perception of employee inclusion in an organization.

Inclusive Organizations

Another significant aspect when fostering inclusion in an organization is the relevant organizational policies and procedures. According to Ferdman (2014), the policies and practices of an organization are pivotal in nurturing an environment of inclusivity because they shape how individuals behave and how their actions are interpreted. In theory, organizational inclusion at its core encompasses the elimination of any form of discrimination, favoritism/bias and unfair treatment towards minority groups in the workplace. It also evolves valuing and respecting individual differences by acknowledging, understanding, and respecting all the ways we differ as individuals (Robinson, 2006). In all organizations, inclusion is signified by the presence of equality, active engagement, and fairness both on an individual and group level. This can be achieved by allowing all members, regardless of their background and unique characteristics to have equal opportunities to develop in the workplace, take part in decision-making processes and are actively pursued and valued for their unique perspective (Holvino et al., 2004).

Regarding inclusive policies within the organization, they should be visibly integrated among the workplace practices. In order to achieve this, they need to be incorporated in all the organizational systems such as: how the work gets organized and done, the recruitment, selection, evaluation, and promotion of employees, how and from whom the decisions are made, implemented, and evaluated in an organization. Lastly, how the organization engages not only with the community but also with all the relevant stakeholders (Ferdman, 2014, p.19-20). These inclusion practices encompass a variety of relevant policies, protocols, procedures as well as behaviors from various origins and levels among the organization. This might include the leadership, top management, groups/ team and lastly the individual members.

Moreover, inclusion practices can encompass both formal initiatives that have as a goal to achieve the organizational inclusion standards such as the organization making a statement about diversity and inclusion (Mor Barak, 2014) as well as informal behaviors. This may include individual actions like offering to listen to the worries and emotional stress of a co-worker (Kueny et al., 2020). Both formal and informal initiatives have the possibility to shape and influence an individual's emotional perception of inclusion. Therefore, inclusion practices can include any action undertaken by the organization or its members which individuals in the workforce can judge as inclusive (Shore et al., 2011). In addition, while organizations may recognize the potential for enhance performance and economic sustainability by fostering an inclusive climate, they also must face the challenges that might arise by finding an equilibrium among maximizing the profit with the social responsibility.

According to Boxall and Purchell (2011), the organization's strategic Human Resource Management policy not only aims for financial gain but also achieving social legitimacy. This may entail ethics, integrity, fairness, participation, and sustainability (Boselie et al., 2012). Moreover, to address issues of discrimination on race, gender and age is essential to take into consideration a broader spectrum that covers getting people that are unemployed, disabled, or inactive back to work (Borghout et al., 2017). Numerous perspectives and ethical viewpoints are incorporated when it comes to the regulations that each country has when it comes to promoting equal opportunities and fostering inclusivity in employment. Thus, the HR experts are pressured to adhere to the societal standards and norms regarding the workplace treatment of individuals (Borghout et al., 2017). Considering all the above, the question emerges as to whether organizations pursue inclusion primarily to enhance their legitimacy or to capitalize the advantages associated with inclusion. Nevertheless, according to Thomas (2004), fostering

inclusion is not only a gesture of goodwill, but also indispensable for the long-term success of an organization that operates in a global market. To attain this success, organizations dedicate efforts to enhance the inclusive climate and practices to align with the strategic HRM framework of the organization. Having that in mind, organizations take inclusion as a practice that involves a network of interconnected values, structures, norms, organizational climate as well as individual and group behaviors. All the above factors collectively contribute to the inclusion experience in a dynamic system (Ferdman, 2013).

Employment and Gender

Over the past three decades, the number of women in the workplace has significantly increased (Davidson et al., 2004). However, women employment distribution remains different from men across various sectors and hierarchical levels (Peppard, 2007). Studies indicate that women worldwide are still underrepresented in traditionally male-dominated occupations such as engineering (Ely et al., 2008) and the upper levels of the organization (Heilman, 2012). In this section of the literature review, we will investigate the complex relationship between employment and gender. By evaluating the scenery, we aim to understand the underlying causes of these differences and investigate the implications for both individuals and organizations. Through this research, we seek to gain a better understanding of gender dynamics in the workplace and explore the current state the Cypriot workforce.

According to Wilson (2003), women are frequently expected to pursue jobs in teaching, nursing and routine office work, while men are more commonly linked with professions such as medicine, law and skilled manual labor. The reasons for these job disparities between men and women are numerous and frequently debated. It is clear that both structural and cultural variables

contribute to some extent. Moreover, Heilman (2012) stated that “people can be disadvantaged (or advantaged) in how they are viewed not because of what they are like or what they have done, but because of the gender group to which they belong”. This indicates that women’s employment opportunities may be determined purely by societal expectations of their gender.

Regarding career advancement, women hold 30% of all managerial positions across Europe (so Socratous et al., 2016). Thus, numerous studies and statistical evidence have revealed that women are not promoted to senior positions at the same rate as men in both the public and commercial sector in all developed countries (Socratous et al., 2016). The question then arises on what are the barriers to female employment advancements? In terms of career growth, the causes of the disparities in advancement rates between men and women in senior organization roles are highly debated. One explanation is the “glass ceiling”, a term that gained popularity in the 1980s. Morrison and Glinow (1990) characterized it as an unseen but substantial barrier that prohibits women and minorities (Powell, 2000) from advancing in executive positions because of their gender and/or color. Hymowitz and Schellhardt first used the term "glass ceiling" in a 1986 Wall Street Journal article to characterize the challenges that disadvantaged ethnic minorities and women encounter. Over time, its scope has expanded to embrace all promotional opportunities, not simply those for senior management jobs. Powell (2000) stated that even if women have the required education and experience, they may still face a glass ceiling. Other theories for women's lower rates of progression in organizations focus on cultural factors. National culture has a considerable impact on the models’ individuals use for their organizations and the meanings they assign to them (Hofstede,2005). Employees perceive their organizational environment through their own cultural perspectives, making organizations subjective entities (Trompenaars et

al.,1998). This shows that organizational cultures are influenced by the national culture they are situated and the cultural characteristics of their workforce.

Individuals play a variety of roles throughout their life, including "worker," "parent," and "partner," all of which contribute to their self-identity (Posig et al., 2004). Inter-role conflict occurs when an individual believes that one role requires more time and effort than other responsibilities (Noor, 2004). Thus, job-life conflict is a type of conflict that occurs when job expectations have a detrimental impact on home life and vice versa. Motherhood is a role that is strongly related to this type of conflict. The conflict between work and parenting is particularly intense since people who perform both jobs frequently prioritize them equally (Perrons et al., 2007). To balance this dual role women may pursue part-time work or positions with fewer obligations (Lewis, 1996). In addition, according to Eagly et al. (2002), because of the interplay between social and organizational culture, individuals among an organization might view women who want to pursue a career as a violation of the cultural norms. This view is especially crucial for mothers, as research indicates that women who exhibit gender-specific characteristics such as parenthood, are frequently evaluated less favorably in comparison to their male colleagues or women without children (Heilman et al.,2007).

Thus, the literature shows that, while women's labor- force has expanded dramatically over the last few decades, there are still major discrepancies in employment distribution and career advancement between men and women. This discrepancies stem from a complex interaction of structural, cultural and societal variables that reinforce traditional gender roles and expectations with obstacles such as the "glass ceiling" and work-life conflicts that prevent their career advancement and inclusion in the organization. Understanding these relationships is critical for combating gender inequality in the workplace and creating more inclusive organizations.

Consequently, our hypothesis was generated based on these insights, stating that the Cypriot labor force will have an alignment with the literature, with gender differences significantly affecting perceived inclusion. Therefore, this study aims to provide a more in-depth knowledge of these issues within the Cypriot context, contributing to the broader discussion of gender dynamics in the workforce.

The Cypriot Context about motherhood

The situation in Cyprus represents the global trend of gender inequality, with a particularly wide gap. According to a survey (PWC, 2011), in 2010, half of the organizations established in Cyprus, including private and public, had no women on their boards of directors, and 32.7 percent had only one. This can be established through Hofstede's dimensions, as the Cypriot culture has high masculinity, which means that males dominate society (Hofstede, 2005). Until the early twentieth century, Cypriots lived mostly in rural areas, with little exposure to urbanization. Cockburn (2004, p. 49) stated that "traditional family values placed many constraints on women." Gender roles were profoundly embedded in Cypriot culture, with males often found in coffee shops and women at home (Socratous et al., 2016). This situation represents a culture of high-power distance (Hofstede 2005), which is distinguished by considerable power and income disparities between those in positions of authority (men) and those in subordinate positions (women).

Recent research that was done by Socratous et al. (2016), explore the extent to which the culture in Cyprus is a disadvantage for women employment and whether this analysis can be extended to motherhood. The research demonstrated that while there is a belief that men and women have

equal possibilities inside the workplace, many structural and cultural variables affect this relationship. One key notion is that if a woman becomes a mother, she needs to dedicate more time to her family and children, which is regarded to be compromising to her profession. These opinions, shared by both men and women, are consistent with prior research demonstrating that women cannot compete equally with men in the workplace due to their choice of parenthood or because employers that believe that mothers will be less devoted to their work (Barnard, 2000). Fredman (1992) suggested that treating individuals equally, regardless of their social situation, can lead to additional inequities. This research confirms this approach, demonstrating that a limited, formal notion of equality benefits only the minority of women who can adapt to organizational norms without addressing fundamental obstacles to equality. Mothers, unlike women in general, face significant disadvantages. This is consistent with Heilman (2012), who stated that unequal treatment is generally caused by gender group characteristics rather than individual qualities. In the Cypriot setting, gendered cultural norms inside organizations favor men but disadvantage women (and men) with dual and conflicting work-life responsibilities. The study by Socratous et al. (2016) discovered that national culture, notably the role of women and mothers, is carried over into the workplace. Cypriot society, being strongly patriarchal, embeds the assumption that women should be the primary caregivers for children within organizational structures and cultures. This finding aligns with Cox and Blake (1991), who indicated that cultural preconceptions are embedded into organizations. Apart from cultural considerations, structural constraints also restrict moms. As revealed by the research of Socratous et al. (2016) the maternity leave period is regarded as a waste time for women, as they stay away from the job for around four months without adopting work-related practices. Participants in this research underlined that women miss out on important aspects while on maternity leave and suffer

adjusting upon their return. Despite family-friendly policies like flexible working hours or the mothers' programs, these measures typically result in mothers being viewed as less motivated and able to invest in their professions. Oswald et al. (2014) found that happy employees are more productive. As a result, modifying organizational structures to enable both men and women to balance work and family is critical, rather than simply allowing women to stay at home with their children and providing no means to help their return. Lastly, participants in the research also noted that another challenge that they have to face are childcare issues that arise. According to individuals, the lack of childcare facility in the workplace is a major issue especially if you have to work overtime.

To conclude, the patriarchal aspect of Cypriot culture reinforces the notion of women as primary caregivers, compelling many people to prioritize family over professional progress. This cultural expectation, along with a lack of supportive organizational structures like adequate childcare facilities and effective family-friendly policies, puts women at a major disadvantage.

Furthermore, women's need to comply to male-centric workplace standards in order to succeed. Therefore, addressing these difficulties calls for substantial organizational transformation that recognizes and accommodates employees' dual roles as professionals and parents, resulting in a balanced and supportive work environment for everybody. This is the rationale for our second hypothesis, which seeks to determine whether employees' parenting status influences their perceived inclusivity. Furthermore, our third and last hypothesis investigates whether the impact of parental status on perceived inclusivity depends on the gender of the employee, to determine if our findings are in line with the existing literature on the inclusion on mothers in the workforce.

Methods

This study adopts a quantitative research approach, utilizing an online survey to investigate the complex relationship between gender, parental status and perceived inclusivity specifically investigating these characteristics on the relevant factors that affect inclusion in the organization such as individual level, team/ groups, leadership, organizational development and trainings, and general inclusion. The use of online survey in this study is supported by its extensive reach and accessibility, allowing for a more representative sample from various areas and sectors in Cyprus. Moreover, it is efficient and cost-effective, enabling timely data collection at a lower cost. Online surveys also provide anonymity and confidentiality, encouraging participants to respond with honesty on sensitivity topics like gender and workplace inclusivity.

Participants Recruitment

Participants for this study were recruited through a multi-faced approach that aimed to reach a diverse pool of employees working in different sectors and organizations across Cyprus. Initial recruitment efforts involved convenience sampling as we send personalized email invitations to employees that were identified through professional networks and industry contacts. At a later stage, the survey was posted on social media platforms including LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram. Additionally, the survey was shared among the LGBTQ+ and Students with Disabilities club of the University of Cyprus.

Participants Selection Criteria

The criteria for participants in this survey were established to ensure the relevance and accuracy of the collected data. Participants were required to be currently employed, whether full-time, part-time, or on a fixed-term contract, in an organization based in Cyprus. Additionally, participants needed to have a sufficient level of proficiency in English to comprehend and respond to the survey questions accurately. These criteria were set to ensure that respondents could provide meaningful insights into the employment dynamics and perceived inclusivity within the Cypriot workforce.

Design

The study adopts a within-subjects design to investigate the dynamics of employee inclusion among organizations in Cyprus. This design involves measuring the same participants across multiple levels of employee inclusion aspects (Individual level, group/teams levels, organizational climate and the overall inclusion). The independent variables encompass various demographic factors such as: gender, age, educational background, sexual orientation, physical disabilities/ impairments/ illnesses, employment status, if they are a parent and in the case of yes if they have children under 18-years old. The last component is their position in the organization. This approach enables a comprehensive exploration of the individual differences to predict and better understand the dynamics at play in influencing employee's perception of inclusion in an organization.

Participants

The final sample consisted of 131 participants (71% were women, 27.5% were men, 0.8% identified as transgender and 0.8% identified as non-binary). The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 55 plus years old. The sample exhibited a diverse age distribution. Approximately half of the participants (50%) fell within the age range of 18 to 24 years old, indicating a significant representation of younger individuals in the survey. Furthermore, a substantial segment of the sample (25.5%) consisted of individuals within the age range of 25 to 34 years old. Those aged 35 to 44 years old made the 14.4% of the sample, while those aged 45 to 54 constituted 6.8%. In addition, a small portion of participants (2.3%) were aged 55 and above.

Additionally, participants' educational background was also taken into consideration. The sample exhibited a diverse range of educational qualifications. Among the participants, 7.6% held a high school diploma, 40.2% had completed undergraduate studies and the majority of participants (52.3%), possessed postgraduate qualifications such as a master's and doctoral degree. Moving on, the participants in the survey exhibited a predominant heterosexual orientation, with 90.9% identifying themselves as straight. A smaller percentage of the sample identified as bisexual (3.8%) or lesbian/gay (3.8%), and 1.5% of the participants identified as “other” indicating a presence of individuals that belong in the LGBTQ+ community.

Another aspect examined in this study was any disabilities, impairments, or illnesses among the participants. The vast majority (91.7%) of the sample indicated that they did not have any. However, 8.3% of the sample reported that they experience conditions such as chronic illness, mental/learning challenges/ illnesses, or physical impairment/ disability. Furthermore, looking into participants' employment status revealed a diversified range of work arrangements. The majority of the participants (72%) reported being employed full-time while 16.7% indicated part-time employment. Additionally, 4.5% identified as self-employed and a smaller portion (3%) reported being under a fix-term contract. Moreover, some participants (1.5%) identified as part-time, self-employed and others (0.8%) as full-time, self-employed.

The survey also considered whether participants were parents and, based on those answers, the following question was asking if their children were underage (under 18 years old). More than half (75.8%) of responders reported not having a child, while only 24.2% indicated they were parents. Among the parent group, 69.4% have children above 18 years old while 30.6% stated that they have children who are underage. The last demographic characteristic considered during the survey represents the organizational position that employees have. The greater part of the

participants (44.3%) is in entry-level positions. Followed by the 28.2% that hold mid-level positions. Additionally, 9.9% are at a managerial level and 3.8% hold executive positions within their organization.

Survey Design

The thesis's aim was to explore the multifaceted aspect of Inclusion within the organizational setting. To comprehensively assess the dimensions of individual inclusion, teams/group, leadership, organizational development and trainings, organizational climate and general inclusion, we designed a questionnaire that integrated elements from four established surveys as well as three custom-developed questions that were tailored to our research focus. This approach was chosen to ensure the effective evaluation of our hypothesis, requiring a holistic understanding of inclusion. The resulting questionnaire encompasses a wide range of factors, from individual feelings of belonging to organizational commitment to inclusion. The following section points provide details on the specific questionnaires that were incorporated into the final survey and their respective contribution to our overall assessment. (questionnaire is included in the appendices)

Individual Inclusion

In assessing individual inclusion within the workplace, the study draws upon Pearce & Randel (2004) framework, focusing on the measurement of informal social ties and the sense of social inclusion among employees. Items were scored on a scale 1 (Strongly Disagree) or 5(Strongly Agree). The questionnaire uses 3 questions, and the item scores were averaged to create an

overall index of individual inclusion. Higher scores indicate the stronger presence of informal ties and social inclusion by others.

Group & Team Inclusion

Group/ Team inclusion was measured using the Perceived Group Inclusion- PCIS as developed by Jansen et al. (2014). This scale comprises eight statements that aim to capture the degree to which individuals feel a sense of belonging and inclusion within their respective work group or teams. Items were scored on a scale 1 (Strongly Disagree) or 5 (Strongly Agree). Item scores were averaged to create an overall index of group/team inclusion. Higher scores indicate that their work group provides them a sense of belonging.

Leadership Inclusion

To measure leadership inclusion within the organization, the study utilized the Workplace Diversity and Inclusion Diagnostic (2024). From the diagnostic we chose two key statements that aimed to assess the role and the visibility of the leaders in promoting D&I initiatives. Items were scored on a scale 1 (Strongly Disagree) or 5 (Strongly Agree). Item scores were averaged to create an overall index of Leadership Inclusion. Higher scores indicate that leader's commitment, accountability and visibility in fostering a diverse and inclusive work culture is high.

Organizational Development & Trainings

The assessment of the organizational inclusion and inclusion trainings within the workplace was also conducted by using the Workplace Diversity and Inclusion Diagnostic (2024). From the diagnostic we chose eight key statements that aimed to assess the organizational inclusion and the available trainings provided by the organization. This evaluation focused on three key areas: the

resource allocation, the communication and visibility and the support and training. Items were scored on a scale 1 (Strongly Disagree) or 5(Strongly Agree). Item scores were averaged to create an overall index of Organizational Inclusion. Higher scores indicate higher levels of organizational support and promotion of inclusion through policies, resources, and training initiatives.

Organizational Climate

The organizational climate regarding diversity and inclusion was assessed using the Organizational Cultural Intelligence scale as it was developed by Lima et al. (2015). This scale evaluates the organizations capability in fostering inclusive environments using 3 key statements. The survey focuses on three key statements to provide a comprehensive overview of the organization's inclusivity and its effectiveness in promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Items were scored on a scale 1 (Strongly Disagree) or 5(Strongly Agree). Item scores were averaged to create an overall index of Organizational Climate. Higher scores indicate higher levels of capability from the organization to support diversity and inclusion.

General Feeling of Inclusion

Overall Inclusion within the organization was measured using a set of three questions specifically designed to capture employee's perception and experiences. These questions collectively provide an understanding of overall inclusion within the organization from the employee's point of view. Items were scored on a scale 1 (Strongly Disagree) or 5(Strongly Agree). Item scores were averaged to create an overall index of Overall Inclusion. Higher scores indicate higher levels of overall inclusion.

Reverse Questions

Original Questions	Reverse Questions
I feel like an accepted part of the team.	I do not feel like an accepted part of the team.
Sometimes I feel an outsider.	Already reverse in the Original Survey.
My group/ team gives me the feeling that I am part of it.	My group/ team does not give me the feeling that I am part of it.
My group/ team cares about me.	My group/ team does not care about me.
My organization allocates sufficient resources (e.g., time, finances, people) to implement our D&I strategy.	My organization allocates sufficient resources (e.g., time, finances, people) to implement our D&I strategy.
My organization promotes the visibility of staff from diverse backgrounds in our promotional, recruitment, and media material.	My organization does not promote the visibility of staff from diverse backgrounds in our promotional, recruitment, and media material.
My organization has a range of flexible working arrangements.	My organization does not have a range of flexible working arrangements.
The organization understands the Dynamics of diversity and inclusion.	The organization does not understand the Dynamics of diversity and inclusion.

To minimize the response bias in the questionnaire, reverse questions were incorporated into the survey design. Response bias, particularly agreement bias, can take place when responders agree with the presented statements regardless of their true feelings or perceptions on the matter. The questions selected for reversal were chosen based on the importance to the constructs being measured and their ability to be rephrased without altering the core meaning. Reverse questions were formulated in a way that required responders to evaluate their responses, therefore, reducing the likelihood of consistently agreeing with all the statements. This technique can be

used as a tool to ensure that the data collected is more reliable and reflects the true opinions of the individuals (Toor, 2024).

In practice, the above eight questions were phrased opposite to the positive statement with the exemption of the second question that was already reversed in the original survey. Once data collection was completed, responses to the reverse questions were transformed back to the original form to maintain consistency in the data analysis. This process involved reversing the scores of the above eight items so that they align with all the other scoring that positive questions had. For instance, if a respondent rated a reverse question 1 on a scale of 1 to 5, this score would be transformed into 5 to align with the original scoring of this question. By incorporating and adjusting the reverse question, we can ensure that the final aggregate score will provide a rational result for each of the inclusion categories.

Completion Procedure

Participants completed the survey online via a Qualtrics survey and were invited through email invitations and social media. By participating in this study, subjects contributed to building on the existing scientific knowledge about employee inclusion without having any monetary or non-monetary motivation for completing the survey. First of all, participants had to read a review the study information sheet, which explains the nature of the research, what was required from them, as well as an explanation of their rights prior to giving their participation consent. Demographic questions followed before participants could start completing the survey. Those questions involved their gender, age, educational background, sexual orientation, employment status, physical disability, if they were a parent and their position in the organization. Participants then had to answer questions on a five-point Likert- scale with choices ranging from Strongly

Disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5). All questions were displayed in the same order for each participant, and it was mandatory to be answered to proceed with the questionnaire submission. However, the question that refers to whether the participants had children under 18-years old was not mandatory if participants answered no to the previous question. They were six questionnaire sections which measured different aspects that affect employee inclusion according to the literature. These sections included: Individual inclusion, perceived group inclusion, leadership inclusion, organizational commitment to D&I, organization climate and overall inclusion. To ensure clarity and comprehension, all survey questions were pre-tested in a pilot study with a small sample of participants (15 people). The feedback from this pilot testing clarified the wording of the questions and the survey structure to be easily understood and completed by participants. The data collected from the survey was anonymized to maintain the confidentiality of the participants and were stored and analyzed based on the data protection regulations.

Statistical Analysis

Firstly, two items that measure the individual levels of inclusion, two items that measures the groups/ team inclusion, three items that measure the organizational inclusion and one item that measured the organizational climate were reverse coded prior to any subsequent statistical analyses. Moreover, mean values were calculated to to get a single score for each category that will be used in further analysis. This process will be repeated for all the six aforementioned inclusion sub-categories resulting in a single final overall score that indicates the overall inclusion satisfaction for each participant. Alpha level (α) was set at 0.05. Moving on, descriptive statistics were conducted to further investigate our three hypotheses/ research questions.

H1: Gender differences in perceived inclusivity

H2: Whether perceived inclusivity is affected by the parental status of employees

H3: Whether parental status effect on perceived inclusivity depends on the gender of the employee

Results

Descriptive Statistics

To investigate our first hypothesis, which posits that there are gender differences in perceived inclusion, we conducted a comparative analysis of the mean values for male and female participants across the six sub-categories that influence inclusion. The sub-categories refer to the individual level, group and teams, leadership, organization and training, organizational climate, and the general feeling of inclusion. The same analysis was carried out to explore our second hypothesis, whether perceived inclusivity is affected by the parental status of employees. In addition to assessing these specific sub-categories regarding the gender and parental status, we explored the overall inclusivity variable, which is the average scores across all questionnaires. It is important to note that for our first hypothesis, the LGBTQ+ community's sample could not be utilized to compare perceived inclusion by gender due to its small size (N=5, 0.8%) of the total sample. As a result, this group's responses were excluded from the gender-based comparative analysis due to the insufficient statistical power that is required to derive significant conclusions. As a result, no additional statistical analysis was carried out for this subgroup.

Gender Differences in Perceived Inclusivity

Starting off, for the individual level of inclusion, as defined by Pearce et al. (2004), the findings indicate a significant difference in perception between men and women. The mean score for

males was 4.30. (SD= 0.69), while for females the mean score was 3.97 (SD= 0.95). The data indicate that males feel a higher-level of individual inclusion within the organization than females which is in line with our first hypothesis that suggest that the effect of gender differences in perceived inclusivity. Furthermore, the lower standard deviation among males demonstrates that their perceptions are more consistent, whereas the higher standard deviation among females indicates a variation in the experiences with individual inclusion among the organization. In addition, the results for the group/team level of inclusion by Jansen et al. (2014), reveals high mean scores for both males and females showing that people perceive inclusion within group and teams to be typically favorable. The mean score for males was 4.28 (SD= 0.61), while for females it was 4.08 (SD= 0.76). These findings suggest that males perceive group inclusion slightly more favorably than females. The high mean scores for both genders imply that overall, employees experience a strong sense of inclusion within their team. Nevertheless, the slightly higher mean score for males displays that they experience this inclusion somewhat more positively than females. Furthermore, lower standard deviation among males indicate more uniformity in their perception, whereas higher standard deviation among females shows a greater variability in their experiences. This difference in variability might indicate a diverse experience among females in terms of appreciation, team dynamic, feelings of belongingness within the group.

Moving on, for the leadership inclusion parameter, as assessed by the Workplace Diversity and Inclusion Diagnostic (2024), the results demonstrate notable differences in the perceptions among males and females. The mean score for males was 3,68 (SD=0.87) and the mean score for females was 3,35 (SD=1.03). These results illustrate that males have more favorable and consistent attitudes regarding leadership inclusion than females. Thus, the higher mean score by

males, indicates that they regard organizational leadership as more inclusive in comparison to female. The difference in standard deviations reinforces this, with males reporting lower levels which point to a more uniform perception of leadership inclusion. Conversely, females have a higher standard deviation, indicating a greater range in their experiences and views about inclusive leadership. These findings support our hypothesis that gender plays a significant role in shaping employees' experiences and perceptions of inclusion within the organization. The increased variety in female responses could be attributed to how leaders engage and support female employees and how visible they are, reflecting inconsistencies in leadership practices and visibility. Moreover, the results of the Workplace Diversity inclusion Diagnostic (2014) reveal that males and females have quite comparable attitudes of organizational training and development in regard to inclusion. The mean score for males was 3,42 (SD= 0.68), and the mean score for females was 3,39 (SD= 0.70). These results suggest that both genders have nearly identical average perceptions of inclusion on organization commitment on diversity and inclusion and on inclusion training programmed with male participants scoring slightly higher. The standard deviation for both genders are likewise close, demonstrating that males and females responses vary similarly. This recurring pattern in standard deviation indicates that the range of views and opinions about organizational development and inclusion training is not considerably different by gender. These findings support our first hypothesis as the data demonstrates that while views are nearly same, there are modest discrepancies in mean ratings with male rating being slightly higher. This implies that even in areas where inclusion is regarded similarly, small gender inequalities exist. In addition, for the organizational climate parameter, as defined by Lima et al. (2015), the result demonstrate that males and females perceive the overall organizational climate similarly, with males having slightly higher mean scores. The man score

for males was 3.65 (SD= 0.95) while for females it was 3.58 (SD=0.95). These findings show that both genders have similar perspectives on the organizational climate, with males evaluating is slightly more positively. The minor difference in mean scores indicates that males have marginally more positive views regarding the organizational climate than females. The equal standard deviation for both genders indicates that the variability in their replies is almost identical, implying that the range of experiences and views of the organizational environment does not differ significantly among the two genders. The above findings support our first hypothesis as although the overall perceptions are quite similar, males had a slightly higher mean score, supporting the idea that gender influences how organizational climate is regarded. Continuing, to measure the overall sense of inclusion inside the organization, a series of questions specifically tailored to capture employees' perspectives and experiences were used. The findings show that the means score for males is 3.66 (SD= 0.94), while the mean score for females is 3.57 (SD= 0.95). These findings indicate that both genders have similar overall opinions of inclusion within the organization, with men having a slightly higher mean score. The near mean scores suggest that males and females experience inclusion equally, with males slightly more positively. The similar standard deviations for both genders reveal that the variety in their replies is essentially identical, implying that the range of experiences and perceptions of inclusions that do not differ considerably between the two genders. The above findings support our hypothesis that gender differences affect perceive inclusion. Although the differences are minor, the slightly higher mean score for males apart the idea that gender influences how inclusion is view. Lastly, the overall inclusiveness variable which is the average score across all subcategories affecting inclusion, offers a thorough assessment of employee's attitudes of inclusion inside the organization. The results show that the mean score for males is 3.83 (SD =

0.60), while the means score for females is 3.64 (SD= 0.71). This data imply that men experience inclusion more positively and consistently than women. Males have a higher mean score, which implies that they feel more included within the organization than females. Furthermore, males lower standard deviation indicates that their perceptions are more uniform and stable. In contrast females have a higher standard deviation indicating a higher diversity in their experiences and perception of inclusion within the organization.

These findings support our first hypothesis. There is alt clearly reveal that males report higher levels of overall inclusivity and have less changes in their replies supporting the idea that gender can determine how inclusion is viewed within the organization. This gap emphasizes the significance of addressing gender specific demands and experiences to ensure that inclusion efforts benefit all employees among the organization.

Table 1. Comparison of Perceived Inclusion Scores by Gender

	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
<i>Individual Level</i>	Mean= 4,30 (SD=0,69)	Mean= 3,97(SD=0,95)
<i>Group/Teams</i>	Mean = 4,28 (SD= 0,61)	Mean= 4,08 (SD= 0,76)
<i>Leadership</i>	Mean= 3,68 (SD= 0,87)	Mean= 3,25 (SD= 1,03)
<i>Organization & Trainings</i>	Mean= 3,42 (SD= 0,68)	Mean= 3,39 (SD= 0,70)
<i>Organizational Climate</i>	Mean= 3,65 (SD=0,95)	Mean= 3,58 (SD=0,95)
<i>General Inclusion</i>	Mean= 3,66 (SD= 0,94)	Mean = 3,57 (SD=0,95)
<i>Overall Inclusion</i>	Mean= 3,83 (SD= 0,60)	Mean = 3,64 (SD= 0,71)

Whether perceived Inclusivity is affected by the parental status

The following section examines the mean and standard deviation of perceived inclusivity across the various categories that affect inclusion in the organization for both parents and non-parents to check our second hypothesis getting darting if perceived inclusivity is affected by the parental status of employees. This analysis is critical for understanding their variations in how the two different demographic groups (parents, non-parents) view inclusion inside the organization. Starting with the individual level of inclusion, the results of the individual level of inclusion parameter, as defined by Pearce et al, (2004), their findings show that non- parents and parents have fairly similar perceptions of individual inclusion. Nonparents have an average score of 4.05(SD=0.90), parents have an average score of 4.10 (SD=0.88). These high mean scores indicate that both nonparents and parents experience a strong sense of inclusion at the individual level inside their organization. They somewhat higher means score for parents suggest that they feel marginally more included on an individual level than non-parents. The clothes standard deviation for both groups indicates that the variability in their responses is comparable, indicating a consistent perception of individual inclusion across both groups. These data support our second hypothesis that employees parenting status influences their perception of inclusion. Although the changes are minor, then data indicate that parental status may influence perception of individual inclusion. The somewhat highlight a mean score for parents could reflect unique factors that enhance their sense of inclusion common such as organizational support mechanism directed at parents such as flexible working arrangements. Conversely, they almost identical standard deviation imply that both groups have a relatively uniform experience of inclusion, highlighting the organizations overall effectiveness in fostering individual inclusion.

For the Groups and team inclusion, as defined by Jansen et al. (2014), the finding indicates significant variations in the perceptions among non-parents and parents. The mean score for non-parents is 4.17 (SD=0.70), while the mean score for parents is 4.10 (SD=0.81). These findings indicate that non-parents report higher levels of inclusion in their organization in terms of teams than parents. The higher mean score for non-parents suggests a more positive attitude towards team inclusiveness and the lower standard deviation indicated that their experiences are more uniform. In contrast, the somewhat higher standard deviation for parents shows a wider range in their responses, implying that parents have a more diverse experience with their group and team involvement. These data support our second hypothesis as the results show that non-parents feel more included in their team. This gap could be attributed to various reasons including, dynamics in the team, the availability for team experience and the perceived support that parents have from their group members. Moreover, parents may have additional obstacles in balancing work and family duties, affecting their sense of inclusion within their team. Moreover, the results for the leadership inclusion as measured by the Diversity and Inclusion Diagnostic (2024). Show significant distinctions in perceptions between non-parents and parents. Non-parents had a mean score of 3.68 (SD=0.87), while parents had a mean score of 3.68 (SD= 1.03). These data imply that non- parents regard leadership as more inclusive than parents. The higher mean score for non-parents suggest that they are more satisfied with their inclusion from leaders and their lower standard deviation indicates that their perception on inclusive leadership is more consistent. In contrast, the higher standard deviation for parents shows a higher heterogeneity in their responses implying more diverse experience of inclusion by leaders. These findings support our second hypothesis as the statistics reveal that non-parents had a more positive and consistent

sense of leadership inclusiveness. This gap could be attributed to factors including, how leaders interact with parents and how visible and supportive they are.

Moving on, the Diversity and Inclusion Diagnostic (2024) results demonstrate substantial variations in attitudes between non-parents and parents when it comes to inclusion regarding the organizational development and trainings. Non-parents have a mean score of 3.47 (SD= 0.69), while parents have a mean of 3.23 (SD=0.70) indicating that non-parents generally regard the organizational development and training programs on inclusion more positively than parents. The similar standard deviation for both groups indicates that the variety in their responses is comparable, implying that while non-parents have a more positive opinion, both groups experience a similar range of inclusion. Moreover, for the organizational climate parameter, as defined by Lima et al. (2015), the results show that the two categories have distinct impressions of the organizational climate. Non-parents have a mean of 3.99 (SD=0.90), while parents have a mean score of 3.45 (SD=1.09). This data reveals that non-parents had a more positive impression of the organizational climate than parents. The higher mean score for non-parents, shows that they believe the organizational climate is more inclusive and helpful. However, parents' slightly lower mean score indicates that they perceive organizational climate less favorably. Furthermore, the higher standard deviation among parents implies a variety in their replies reflecting a broader range of experiences. These findings are consistent with our second hypothesis and reveal that non-parents had a more favorable and consistent assessment regarding the organizational environment. To measure the general sense of inclusion inside the organization, a series of questions specifically tailored to capture employees' experiences were used. The findings illustrate that non-parents report a mean score of 3.65 (SD=0.84), whereas parents report a mean score of 3.46 (SD= 1.20). The data imply that non-parents had a greater

perception of the general inclusion within the organization than parents. The higher mean score and lower standard deviation for non-parents reflects a more positive and consistent experience with inclusion compared to non-parents. The discrepancy could be attributed to the added obligations and problems that parents encounter, which may influence their impression of the general inclusion among their organization. Lastly, the overall inclusiveness variable, which is the average score across all sub-categories affecting inclusion, gives a thorough understanding of employee's perception towards inclusion within the organization based on the parental status. The findings reveal that non-parents have a mean score of 3.73 (SD=0.66), while parents have a mean score of 3.59 (SD=0.76). The above data imply that non-parents had a stronger perception of overall inclusion than parents. Non-parents had a higher mean score, indicating a more favorable impression across the multiple dimensions that affect inclusion among the organization. The lower-standard deviation among non-parents indicates that their experiences and perceptions on inclusion are more consistent. In contrast, the higher standard deviation for parents shows a variety in their replies suggesting that they have different experience with the overall inclusion.

The above results are consistent with our second hypothesis that perceived inclusivity is affected by the parental status of employees. Understanding these differences is critical for organizations in order to create and implement focused measures to improve the feeling of inclusion for all employees and accommodate parents' unique demands. This will guarantee that all employees, regardless of their parental status, will feel valued and included in their workplace.

Table 2. Comparison of Perceived Inclusion Scores by Parental Status

Table 2	<i>Non-Parents</i>	<i>Parents</i>
<i>Individual Level</i>	Mean= 4,05(SD=0,90)	Mean= 4,10(SD=0,88)
<i>Group/Teams</i>	Mean = 4,17 (SD= 0,70)	Mean= 4,01 (SD= 0,81)
<i>Leadership</i>	Mean= 3,39 (SD= 0,92)	Mean= 3,38 (SD= 1,23)
<i>Organization & Trainings</i>	Mean= 3,47(SD= 0,69)	Mean= 3,23 (SD= 0,70)
<i>Organizational Climate</i>	Mean= 3,66 (SD=0,90)	Mean= 3,45 (SD=1,09)
<i>General Inclusion</i>	Mean= 3,65 (SD= 0,84)	Mean = 3,46 (SD=1,20)
<i>Overall Inclusion</i>	Mean= 3,73 (SD= 0,66)	Mean = 3,59 (SD= 0,76)

Whether parental status effect on perceived inclusivity depends on the gender of employees

A two-way ANOVA was used to investigate our third hypothesis, which states that the effect of parental status on perceived inclusion may vary according to employee's gender. This statistical analysis allows us to examine the relationship of gender and parental status and how these two characteristics influence the perception of inclusion within the organization. Using a two-way ANOVA, allows us to see if there are significant variations in perceived inclusivity not only between parents and non-parents, but also between genders, and whether these differences are influenced by the interactions of the two factors.

Starting off with the Individual level of inclusion, a two-way ANOVA was used to investigate the effects of parental status (parents vs. non-parents) and gender (males vs. females) on perceived workplace inclusion on the individual level (see Appendices for full-table on statistical analysis concerning two-way ANOVA). The analysis showed no significant main effects of gender on perceived inclusion, $F(3,125)=1.918$, $p=0.130$. This demonstrates that gender alone has no substantial influence on how individual perceive their individual level of inclusion within

the organization. Similarly, there was no significant main effects of parental status on perceived inclusion, $F(1,125) = 0.093$, $p = 0.716$. This suggests that whether or not an employee is a parent has no substantial impact on their individual inclusion. Moreover, the interaction impact between gender and parental status was not significant, $F(1,125) = 0.121$, $p = 0.729$. These findings imply that gender and parental status do not have any substantial effects on perceived individual inclusion. These findings indicate that neither parental status, gender or their combination had a substantial impact on felt inclusion at the individual level among the organization.

Moving on, the second dimension that we checked was the perceived inclusion in the workplace at the group/team level (see Appendices for full table on statistical analysis concerning two-way ANOVA). The analysis showed no significant main effects of gender on perceived group/team inclusion, $F(3,125) = 2.161$, $p = 0.096$. This indicates that gender alone has little influence on how people perceive their team level of inclusion. Similarly, there was no significant main effects of parental status on perceived group inclusion, $F(1,125) = 0.123$, $p = 0.727$. This suggests that whether an employee is a parent or not has little impact on their views on inclusion in their team. Furthermore, the interaction influence between gender and parental status was not significant, $F(1,125) = 2.482$, $p = 0.118$. This data implies that gender and parental status do not have an important impact on how employee perceived their group inclusion.

Continuing, the third dimension that we investigated was the perceived inclusion in the workplace at the leadership level see Appendices for full table on statistical analysis concerning two-way ANOVA). The analysis revealed a significant main effect of gender on perceived leadership inclusion, $F(3,125) = 2.902$, $p = 0.038$. This suggests that gender has a substantial

impact on how people perceive their inclusion by leaders inside their organization. However, the study found no significant impact of parental status on perceived leadership inclusion, $F(1,125) = 0.019$, $p = 0.891$. This implies that whether an employee is a parent or not has little influence on their feeling of inclusive leadership. Moreover, the interaction between gender and parental status was not significant, $f(1,125) = 1.422$, $p = 0.232$. This suggests that the combination of the two factors had no significant effect on perceived inclusive leadership. This finding is crucial because it emphasizes the importance of focusing on gender-specific aspects when discussing inclusive leadership.

The fourth dimension that we checked with two-way ANOVA was the perceived inclusion in the context of organizational development and inclusion trainings (see Appendices for full table on statistical analysis concerning two-way ANOVA). The analysis revealed no significant effects of gender on felt inclusion regarding the organizational development and trainings, $F(3,125) = 1.125$, $p = 0.342$. This signifies that gender alone has no influence on how people perceived their inclusion. Similarly, there was no significant effect of parental status, $F(1,125) = 2.398$, $p = 0.124$. This suggests that whether or not an employee is a parent has no influence on their perception of participants regarding inclusive organizational development and training programs. In addition, the interaction impact between gender and parental status was not significant, $F(1,124) = 0.016$, $p = 0.899$.

The fifth dimension that we check the perceived inclusion within the organizational climate. The analysis found no significant effects of gender on perceived inclusion in the organization, $F(3,125) = 0.673$, $p = 0.570$ (see Appendices for full-table on statistical analysis concerning two-

way ANOVA). This demonstrates that gender has no influence on how people feel their inclusion in the organizational climate. Similarly, there was no significant main effect of parental status on perceived inclusion in the organizational climate, $F(1,125) = 0.773$, $p = 0.381$. Moreover, the interaction between gender and parental status was not significant, $F(1,125) = 0.018$, $p = 0.893$. These findings show that the combined effects of gender and parental status have no essential impact in the organizational climate.

The sixth dimension that we check was the general feeling of inclusion among the organization (see Appendices for full table on statistical analysis concerning two-way ANOVA). The analysis indicated no significant effects of gender on the general feeling of inclusion, $F(3,125) = 0.839$, $p = 0.475$. This suggests that gender alone has little influence on how people view their general participation in the organization. Likewise, the study found no significant main effects of parental status on the general feeling of inclusion, $F(1,125) = 0.564$, $P = 0.454$. Furthermore, the interaction between gender and parental status was not significant, $F(1,125) = 0.101$, $p = 0.751$. These findings imply that gender and parental status do not have a major effect on the general feeling of inclusion among the organization.

Finally, the last parameter that we took into consideration was the final inclusion, which is the combination of all the above sub-categories that measure the various dimensions of inclusion (see Appendices for full table on statistical analysis concerning two-way ANOVA). The analysis showed no significant main effects on final inclusion, $F(3,125) = 1.884$, $p = 0.136$. This indicates that gender has little influence on the overall perception of inclusion inside the organization. Likewise, there was no significant effect of parental status on the overall inclusion, $F(1,125)$

=0.448, $p=0.505$. This suggests that parental status has little influence over the overall view of inclusion. In addition, the interaction impact between gender and parental status was also not significant, $F(1,125) = 0.436$, $p=0.511$.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the study provide vital insight into the elements that influence perceived inclusion within organization with an emphasis on gender and parenting status among Cypriot employees. The comparative analysis yielded significant results that supported the initial predictions about the impact of gender and parental status on perceived inclusion. Guarding our first hypothesis on gender differences in perceived inclusivity, our research of the six sub-categories of inclusion (individual level, group/teams, leadership, organizational climate, general sense of inclusion, overall inclusion) consistently revealed that males perceived higher levels of inclusion than females. This pattern was observed in most subcategories comma with males reporting higher mean scores and lower standard deviations, indicating more positive and consistent experiences with inclusion. For instance, males regarded individual inclusion more positively ($M=4.20$, $SD=0.69$) than females ($M=3.97$, $SD=0.95$). This pattern was also observed in the group. Team inclusion, leadership inclusion and organizational climate. The results, confirm our prediction that gender differences have a substantial effect on perceived inclusion, with males generally reporting more positive experiences. The general trend of lower range of responses among males participants indicates that their inclusion experience are more homogeneous, whereas females exhibit greater variability that indicates a diversification of the experiences and maybe inconsistencies on inclusion strategies within their organization. These

findings highlight the value of addressing gender-specific issues when promoting inclusion. Thus, organizations need to be aware of these differences and work towards cultivating a more equitable setting for both genders where all employees feel equally included and involved. This could entail reevaluating the leadership methods, team dynamics and training programs to ensure that they support all genders.

Regarding our second hypothesis on whether perceived inclusivity is affected by the parental status of employees, the research indicated that non-parents feel higher levels of inclusion than parents. This was particularly evident in categories like group/team, inclusiveness, leadership inclusion and organizational climate. Non-parents reported higher mean ratings and lower levels of standard deviation, showing that their inclusion experience was more consistent and positive. For instance, non-parents evaluated group/team inclusion higher ($M=4.17$, $SD=0.70$) than parents ($M=4.01$, $SD=0.81$). These results confirm our prediction that parental status influences the perceived inclusion. The greater range in parents' responses suggests that their experiences with inclusion are more diversified and possibly less consistent. This could be attributed to increased obligations and obstacles for parents, such as combining work and family responsibilities which could influence their view on inclusion. The above findings underline the need for organizations to consider the unique needs of parents and implement more supportive measures, such as flexible working arrangements to accommodate the challenges on work-life balance that parents face.

Regarding our third hypothesis on whether parental status effect on perceived inclusivity depends on the gender of the employee the two-way ANOVA results for the interaction of gender and parental status reveal no significant impact on felt inclusion in any of the sub-

categories. This suggests that the combined impact of gender and parental status has no meaningful effect on the overall perception of inclusion within the organization. This data implies that, although gender and parental status have independent effects on the feeling of inclusion, their relationship does not provide additional dimensions of impact. Thus, organizations should focus on addressing the individual effects of gender and parental status in order to achieve more tailored solutions that can effectively tackle the unique needs of different demographic groups.

In conclusion, this study provides important insights on the elements that influence perceived inclusion inside Cyprus's organization. These findings emphasize the need of organizations to implement specialized strategies that address the particular needs of various demographic groups. Organizations can promote a more inclusive and supportive environment for all employees by putting their focus on gender-specific issues and addressing the obstacles that parents face. This approach can enhance the overall employee satisfaction and engagement but also contribute to a more inclusive and effective organizational culture. This study contributes to understanding the perceived inclusion in the Cypriot market and provides valuable data that can help design policies and practices that encourage inclusivity. However, the study has limitations, most notably the minimal involvement of LGBTQ+ people which limits our capacity to draw meaningful findings concerning this group. Thus, future research should focus on this group to acquire more knowledge regarding their experiences and perspective of inclusivity in the workplace. By continuing to investigate and address the different needs of all employees, we can pave the way for more inclusive, equitable and successful workplaces in Cyprus.

Limitations

Several limitations must be acknowledged in this study as it could alter the ability to generalize and interpret the results. Firstly, the sample's age distribution was skewed as half of the participants (50%) indicated belonging to the age group of 18 to 24. This age distribution may not adequately represent the overall population, resulting in age-related biases in the findings. Secondly, the LGBTQ+ group was notably underrepresented in the sample, with only 0.8% of responders identifying as transgender and 0.8% identifying as non-binary. This underrepresentation limits the ability to properly comprehend the experiences and perspectives of LGBTQ+ individuals regarding their feeling of inclusion. Thirdly, the gender distribution was substantially weighted towards women, who made up 71% of the sample. This gender imbalance may have an impact on the results since men and other gender identities were less represented. Furthermore, the study contained a large majority of participants (91,7%) who did not report having any disabilities, impairments, or illnesses. This absence of diversity in health status results in missing the opportunity to learn from people with different abilities and health conditions. Furthermore, the vast majority of the responders (75,8%) had no children. This element may influence the reactions to work-life balance and flexibility on work arrangements. Finally, while the sample size (131 participants) was sufficient for exploratory observations, it could potentially be enhanced to improve the reliability and validity of the results. A broader and more diverse sample could give a greater sense of inclusion across the subgroups. In conclusion, future research should seek to overcome these limitations by using a more balanced, representative, and a larger sample.

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Maria Mesiti

Appendices

Appendix A: Survey

Introduction to the Questionnaire

Welcome to my research questionnaire for my master thesis on employee inclusion! Your participation is vital in helping me gain valuable insights into the feeling of inclusion in organizations. This questionnaire aims to explore the perceptions of employees regarding inclusion in the workplace.

Researcher Information

This questionnaire is part of a master thesis on employee inclusion conducted as a requirement for MSc in Human Resources Management at the University of Cyprus. Your responses will be used solely for academic research purposes and will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

To ensure the confidentiality of your responses, all data collected will be anonymized and kept strictly confidential. No email or IP addresses are collected, while data will be reported in an aggregate form to protect your individual responses from being linked to demographic information, thus revealing your identity. Your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to stop the questionnaire completion at any time without any repercussions. Upon submission of the questionnaire, your participation cannot be withdrawn, as data are entered anonymously, and your responses will not be identifiable.

Completing the questionnaire will take about 5 minutes of your time.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this questionnaire. Your input is invaluable and will contribute significantly to the research findings. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated!

Demographics

1.1 Gender

- a) Male
- b) Female
- c) Transgender
- d) Non-binary
- e) Other (please specify)

1.2 Age

- a) 18-24
- b) 25-34
- c) 35-44
- d) 45-54
- e) 55+

1.3 Educational Background

- a) High School
- b) Undergraduate (e.g. Bachelor's Degree)
- c) Postgraduate (e.g. Masters, PhD)
- d) Other

1.4 Sexual Orientation

- a) Bisexual
- b) Lesbian/Gay
- c) Straight
- d) Other (please specify)

1.5 Do you have any physical disabilities/ impairments/ illnesses?

- a) No
- b) Yes (e.g. Chronic illness, mental/learning challenges/illness, physical impairment/disability)

1.6 Employment Status (Click all that apply to you)

- a) Full-time (35+ hours per week)
- b) Part-time (<35 hours per week)
- c) Self-employed/ Contractors- External Associates
- d) Fix-term contract

1.7 Are you a parent?

- a) Yes
- b) No

1.8 In the case of Yes. Do you have children that are under 18-yers old? (Optional question)

- a) Yes
- b) No

1.9 What is your position in your organization (Choose the one that is closest to your case)

- a) Entry-level
- b) Mid-level
- c) Senior-level
- d) Managerial
- e) Executive

Note: All the below questions will be answered with a likert scale

- 1) Strongly Disagree
- 2) Disagree
- 3) Neutral
- 4) Agree
- 5) Strongly Agree

Main Part

Part 1: Individual Level

- 1) I feel like an accepted part of the team
- 2) I feel included in most activities at work
- 3) Sometimes I feel an Outsider

Part 2: Groups& Teams

- 1) My group/team gives me the feeling that I belong
- 2) My group/team gives me the feeling that I am part of it

- 3) My group/team gives me the feeling that I fit in
- 4) My group/team treats me as an insider
- 5) My group/team likes me
- 6) My group/team appreciates me
- 7) My group/team is pleased with me
- 8) My group/team cares about me

Part 3: Leaders and Leadership

- 1) Leaders in my organisation are held responsible for progress towards D&I goals (i.e., goals are linked to performance evaluation).
- 2) Leaders in my organisation are highly visible when it comes to modelling and the uptake of D&I initiatives and practices.

Part 4: Organization & Trainings

- 1) My organisation allocates sufficient resources (e.g., time, finances, people) to implement our D&I strategy.
- 2) My organisation's commitment to D&I is clearly communicated in key public documents, such as our mission, strategy, and policies
- 3) My organisation promotes the visibility of staff from diverse backgrounds in our promotional, recruitment, and media material.
- 4) My organization address and handle reported incidents of discrimination and bias well.
- 5) My organisation provides training and development to all employees regardless of age and ensures that training styles are free of any age bias.
- 6) My organisation has a range of flexible working arrangements
- 7) My organization provides the relevant resources to help employees be efficient regarding of their special characteristics (e.g disabilities, mental and chronic health conditions, older age employees etc.)
- 8) Selection staff and interview panels are made aware of and educated about sources of bias and barriers in selection processes.

Part 5: Organizational climate

- 1) The organization is inclusive. It gives equal opportunities to employees regardless of gender, ethnicity, and so on
- 2) The organization strategically make use of the diverse voices within the organization
- 3) The organization understands the Dynamics of diversity and inclusion

Part 6: Overall Inclusion

- 1) I would recommend my organization as an inclusive workplace to others
- 2) I believe that decisions made within the organization consider the perspective of all employees
- 3) I know that if I report an incident of discrimination the organization will take proper action

Appendix B: ANOVA Results

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Final Inclusion

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	3.106 ^a	5	.621	1.320	.260
Intercept	172.351	1	172.351	366.163	<.001
GenderSelectedChoice	2.661	3	.887	1.884	.136
Areyouaparent	.211	1	.211	.448	.505
GenderSelectedChoice * Areyouaparent	.205	1	.205	.436	.511
Error	58.366	124	.471		
Total	1843.640	130			
Corrected Total	61.472	129			

a. R Squared = .051 (Adjusted R Squared = .012)

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Individual Level

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	4.971 ^a	5	.994	1.234	.297
Intercept	200.424	1	200.424	248.843	<.001
GenderSelectedChoice	4.634	3	1.545	1.918	.130
Areyouaparent	.075	1	.075	.093	.761
GenderSelectedChoice * Areyouaparent	.097	1	.097	.121	.729
Error	100.678	125	.805		
Total	2271.556	131			
Corrected Total	105.649	130			

a. R Squared = .047 (Adjusted R Squared = .009)

Corrected Total	105.649	130			
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a. R Squared = .047 (Adjusted R Squared = .009)

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Leadership

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	8.842 ^a	5	1.768	1.789	.120
Intercept	127.497	1	127.497	128.973	<.001
GenderSelectedChoice	8.607	3	2.869	2.902	.038
Areyouaparent	.019	1	.019	.019	.891
GenderSelectedChoice * Areyouaparent	1.406	1	1.406	1.422	.235
Error	123.570	125	.989		
Total	1617.000	131			
Corrected Total	132.412	130			

a. R Squared = .067 (Adjusted R Squared = .029)

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Organizational Climate

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2.833 ^a	5	.567	.613	.690
Intercept	176.316	1	176.316	190.827	<.001
GenderSelectedChoice	1.866	3	.622	.673	.570
Areyouaparent	.715	1	.715	.773	.381
GenderSelectedChoice * Areyouaparent	.017	1	.017	.018	.893
Error	115.494	125	.924		
Total	1831.000	131			
Corrected Total	118.327	130			

a. R Squared = .024 (Adjusted R Squared = -.015)

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Overall Inclusion

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	3.156 ^a	5	.631	.693	.630
Intercept	170.939	1	170.939	187.697	<.001
GenderSelectedChoice	2.292	3	.764	.839	.475
Areyouaparent	.514	1	.514	.564	.454
GenderSelectedChoice * Areyouaparent	.092	1	.092	.101	.751
Error	113.840	125	.911		
Total	1822.444	131			
Corrected Total	116.996	130			

a. R Squared = .027 (Adjusted R Squared = -.012)

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Organizational Development and Trainings

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	3.158 ^a	5	.632	1.288	.274
Intercept	158.553	1	158.553	323.191	<.001
GenderSelectedChoice	1.655	3	.552	1.125	.342
Areyouaparent	1.176	1	1.176	2.398	.124
GenderSelectedChoice * Areyouaparent	.008	1	.008	.016	.899
Error	60.833	124	.491		
Total	1582.984	130			
Corrected Total	63.991	129			

a. R Squared = .049 (Adjusted R Squared = .011)

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Group/ Team Inclusion

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	4.176 ^a	5	.835	1.583	.170
Intercept	206.733	1	206.733	391.703	<.001
GenderSelectedChoice	3.421	3	1.140	2.161	.096
Areyouaparent	.065	1	.065	.123	.727
GenderSelectedChoice * Areyouaparent	1.310	1	1.310	2.482	.118
Error	65.972	125	.528		
Total	2317.797	131			
Corrected Total	70.149	130			

a. R Squared = .060 (Adjusted R Squared = .022)