

The Impact of Diversity and Inclusion on Employee Engagement: A Restructured Case Study of Microsoft

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines how diversity and inclusion shape employee engagement at Microsoft and extends the earlier draft by adopting a more publication-style structure. The study argues that diversity contributes to engagement only when it is translated into inclusion through fairness, voice, psychological safety, accessibility, and a sense of belonging. Methodologically, the paper adopts a qualitative case-study design grounded in academic and corporate sources published up to 2020. To enrich the analysis, the paper also integrates an uploaded operational dataset containing 5,718 recorded task steps across 165 recordings and 50 processes. Descriptive analysis of the dataset reveals a multi-application, process-intensive work environment in which coordination, clarity, and inclusive managerial support are critical. The findings indicate that Microsoft is best understood as a systems-based case: inclusive leadership, employee voice, accessibility, fair systems, and supportive work design jointly strengthen the conditions that keep employees engaged. The paper contributes by expanding the previous studies section with 20 additional sources, relocating that synthesis under the literature review, and using operational evidence to show why inclusion matters for execution quality and employee morale.

Keywords: Diversity, Inclusion, Employee Engagement, Microsoft, Psychological Safety, Operational Complexity, Case Study.

I. INTRODUCTION

Diversity and inclusion have become central management concerns because organizations increasingly compete through talent, innovation, and knowledge sharing. Diversity refers to the presence of differences among employees, including gender, age, disability, ethnicity, background, and perspectives. Inclusion refers to the degree to which employees feel respected, heard, supported, and able to contribute fully without suppressing important aspects of their identity. Employee engagement, in turn, reflects the psychological investment, energy, and commitment that employees direct toward their work and organization.

In knowledge-intensive firms such as Microsoft, these concepts are deeply intertwined. A diverse workforce can improve creativity, learning, and responsiveness, but those benefits are not fully realized unless employees also experience inclusion. For this reason, the present study focuses on Microsoft as a management case. Microsoft is suitable because it is a large global organization whose public materials up to 2020 emphasize culture, accessibility, inclusion, managerial accountability, and employee support systems. The paper also benefits from the uploaded operational dataset, which shows how complex work routines can heighten the value of inclusion in practice.

II. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Many organizations succeed in improving workforce representation but fail to translate diversity into genuine employee engagement. The central managerial problem is that diversity alone does not

automatically create commitment, voice, discretionary effort, or trust. Employees may still experience exclusion, unequal opportunity, weak recognition, inaccessible systems, or low psychological safety. Accordingly, the present paper investigates how diversity and inclusion can be converted into meaningful engagement outcomes in a large technology company such as Microsoft.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

The paper addresses four guiding questions: What is the relationship between diversity, inclusion, and employee engagement? Which inclusion-related practices are visible in Microsoft up to 2020? What does the uploaded task dataset add to the managerial interpretation of the case? How can operational complexity deepen the practical importance of inclusive management?

IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is significant because it connects two influential management themes—diversity and inclusion, and employee engagement—within one integrated case. It also extends the discussion beyond general culture statements by using uploaded operational data to demonstrate that inclusive management matters not only symbolically but also operationally. In multi-step, multi-application work environments, disengagement can create friction, silence, weak coordination, and lower execution quality. Therefore, the paper contributes both a theoretical synthesis and a more grounded organizational interpretation.

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on employee engagement and organizational inclusion has evolved through several interrelated theoretical and empirical streams. The foundational contribution of Kahn (1990) established that employee engagement emerges when individuals experience psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability in their work roles. This early framework was further extended by Maslach et al. (2001), who situated engagement conceptually in contrast to burnout and emphasized its association with energy, involvement, and efficacy. Subsequent empirical studies strengthened this theoretical base. For example, Harter et al. (2002) demonstrated that employee engagement is positively associated with business-unit performance outcomes, while Schaufeli et al. (2002) refined the construct by distinguishing engagement empirically from burnout. May et al. (2004) operationalized Kahn's model by confirming that meaningfulness, safety, and availability significantly predict engagement in the workplace. Saks (2006) further argued that engagement is shaped by organizational antecedents such as perceived support and justice, whereas Macey and Schneider (2008) clarified that engagement should be understood as a multidimensional construct incorporating trait, state, and behavioral components. Later studies by Rich et al. (2010) and Christian et al. (2011) provided robust evidence that engagement is strongly related to individual job performance, including both task and contextual dimensions.

A second major stream of research focuses on diversity and inclusion as organizational capabilities rather than merely demographic conditions. Thomas and Ely (1996) argued that diversity creates organizational value when it is embedded within a learning-and-effectiveness paradigm, in which differences are integrated into core work processes. Mor Barak and Cherin (1998) contributed to this stream by conceptualizing inclusion–exclusion as a measurable employee experience, thereby moving inclusion from abstract principle to operational construct. Roberson (2006) further clarified that diversity and inclusion, although related, are conceptually distinct and should not be treated as interchangeable concepts. A major advancement in this area was offered by Shore et al. (2011), who defined inclusion as the simultaneous experience of belongingness and uniqueness. This conceptualization was later strengthened by Jansen et al. (2014), who refined the measurement and analytical framing of inclusion in organizational settings. Shore et al. (2018) additionally highlighted the maturation of the field by showing that inclusion research has increasingly shifted toward employee experience, perception, and relational processes as central explanatory dimensions.

A third stream examines the relational and contextual mechanisms through which inclusion influences employee outcomes. Edmondson (1999) provided a critical foundation by showing that psychological safety promotes team learning and participation, thereby explaining why inclusive environments matter for

organizational functioning. Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) extended this argument by demonstrating that leader inclusiveness enhances employee voice and improvement efforts through greater psychological safety. Similarly, Carmeli et al. (2010) found that psychological safety mediates the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee creativity, while Hirak et al. (2012) showed that inclusive leadership also supports learning from failures, particularly in complex and knowledge-intensive work environments. At the collective level, Guillaume et al. (2013) argued that the outcomes of diversity depend not on workforce heterogeneity alone but on the surrounding organizational context and social processes. Nishii (2013) reinforced this view by showing that a climate for inclusion improves outcomes in diverse workgroups, and Sabharwal (2014) demonstrated that organizational inclusion contributes positively to performance beyond diversity management alone. Building on these insights, Randel et al. (2018) synthesized the literature by positioning inclusive leadership as a mechanism that enables employees to experience both belongingness and uniqueness in organizational life.

A fourth stream links inclusion more explicitly to human resource systems, fairness, and employee attitudes. Luu et al. (2019) found that inclusive human resource management practices improve employee attitudes and work engagement, suggesting that inclusion is most effective when embedded in organizational systems rather than treated as a symbolic commitment. Likewise, Cencki et al. (2019) showed that fairness and inclusion mediate the relationship between diversity management and employee outcomes, reinforcing the argument that representation alone does not guarantee positive work experiences. Collectively, these studies support a consistent theoretical proposition: diversity contributes to engagement and performance indirectly through inclusive leadership, psychological safety, fairness perceptions, supportive climates, and inclusion-oriented human resource systems.

Taken together, the reviewed literature indicates that prior studies have often concentrated on isolated elements of the broader relationship, such as psychological conditions of engagement, inclusion measurement, diversity paradigms, inclusive leadership, climate for inclusion, or fairness mechanisms. However, fewer studies have integrated these strands within a single analytical framework that also considers the operational and executional demands of digitally intensive work environments. In this respect, the current study contributes to the literature by combining established theoretical perspectives with evidence from Microsoft and operational task data, thereby extending prior research toward a more practically grounded understanding of how inclusion shapes engagement and execution in contemporary organizational contexts.

Table 1. Previous studies synthesized under the literature review.

No.	Study	Primary focus	Method	Key result	Relevance to current paper
1	Kahn (1990)	Psychological conditions of engagement	Conceptual/qualitative	Meaningfulness, safety, and availability shape engagement.	Provides the core engagement lens.
2	Thomas & Ely (1996)	Managing diversity as learning and effectiveness	Conceptual	Diversity creates value when integrated into work systems.	Links diversity to organizational learning.
3	Mor Barak & Cherin (1998)	Inclusion–exclusion in organizations	Scale development	Inclusion can be measured as a distinct employee experience.	Supports the inclusion construct.
4	Edmondson (1999)	Psychological safety and team learning	Field study	Psychological safety encourages participation and learning.	Explains why voice matters.
5	Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter (2001)	Burnout and engagement foundations	Review	Engagement is conceptually linked to energy and involvement.	Clarifies engagement antecedents.

6	Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes (2002)	Engagement and business outcomes	Meta-analysis	Engagement positively relates to performance outcomes.	Supports the strategic value of engagement.
7	Schaufeli et al. (2002)	Measurement of engagement	Quantitative	Engagement is distinguishable from burnout.	Improves construct precision.
8	May, Gilson, & Harter (2004)	Meaningfulness, safety, availability at work	Field study	Psychological conditions predict engagement.	Operationalizes Kahn's model.
9	Saks (2006)	Antecedents and consequences of engagement	Survey study	Perceived support and justice shape engagement.	Supports fairness and support pathways.
10	Nembhard & Edmondson (2006)	Leader inclusiveness and voice	Field study	Inclusive leaders increase safety and improvement efforts.	Connects leadership to engagement.
11	Roberson (2006)	Meaning of diversity versus inclusion	Conceptual/empirical	Diversity and inclusion are conceptually distinct.	Strengthens theoretical clarity.
12	Macey & Schneider (2008)	Meaning of employee engagement	Conceptual review	Engagement includes trait, state, and behavioral elements.	Clarifies multidimensionality.
13	Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, & Ziv (2010)	Inclusive leadership and creativity	Survey study	Psychological safety mediates leadership effects.	Relates inclusion to innovation.
14	Rich, LePine, & Crawford (2010)	Job engagement and performance	Survey study	Engagement predicts job performance.	Supports outcome relevance.
15	Shore et al. (2011)	Belongingness and uniqueness	Conceptual review	Inclusion requires both insider status and uniqueness.	A core inclusion model.
16	Christian, Garza, & Slaughter (2011)	Meta-analysis of work engagement	Meta-analysis	Engagement predicts task and contextual performance.	Reinforces performance implications.
17	Hirak et al. (2012)	Leader inclusiveness and failure learning	Field study	Inclusive leadership supports learning from failures.	Important in complex workflows.
18	Nishii (2013)	Climate for inclusion	Multilevel study	Inclusive climates improve outcomes in diverse groups.	Shows climate-level effects.
19	Guillaume et al. (2013)	Making diversity work	Review	Diversity outcomes depend on context and processes.	Supports systems-based interpretation.
20	Jansen et al. (2014)	Conceptualization and measurement of inclusion	Quantitative	Inclusion can be assessed systematically.	Useful for analytical framing.
21	Sabharwal (2014)	Organizational inclusion and performance	Public sector empirical	Inclusion adds value beyond diversity management alone.	Shows diversity is insufficient without inclusion.

22	Randel et al. (2018)	Inclusive leadership	Conceptual review	Inclusive leadership enables belongingness and uniqueness.	Integrates leadership and inclusion.
23	Shore et al. (2018)	Inclusion and diversity developments	Review	Inclusion research increasingly centers employee experience.	Shows field maturation.
24	Luu et al. (2019)	Inclusive HRM and employee outcomes	Empirical	Inclusive systems improve attitudes and engagement.	Supports HR-system explanation.
25	Cenkci et al. (2019)	Diversity management and fairness	Empirical	Fairness and inclusion mediate employee outcomes.	Strengthens fairness pathway.
26	Current study	Microsoft operational data plus task data	Qualitative case study	Integrates theory, company context, and workflow evidence.	Extends prior work through uploaded data.

The table shows that earlier studies often focused on one element of the relationship—engagement conditions, inclusive leadership, climate, fairness, or measurement. By contrast, the present paper brings these strands together in a single Microsoft case and strengthens the practical interpretation by integrating uploaded operational task data. The resulting research gap is therefore not simply theoretical; it is the lack of studies that connect inclusion to execution demands in digitally intensive workflow environments.

VI. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

The paper adopts a qualitative case-study design. Its purpose is analytical and interpretive rather than econometric: it does not attempt to estimate causal coefficients, but instead identifies plausible mechanisms linking diversity and inclusion to engagement. The literature review suggests a theoretical chain in which diversity contributes to engagement only when mediated by inclusion. Inclusion is operationalized through belongingness, fair treatment, psychological safety, employee voice, accessibility, and leader inclusiveness.

Data sources consist of: (a) academic literature published up to 2020; (b) Microsoft public materials available up to 2020, including the Annual Report 2020 and public diversity-and-inclusion communications; and (c) the uploaded dataset Recorded_Business_Tasks.csv, which is used descriptively as supplementary operational evidence. Because the uploaded dataset contains time-stamped task records from later operational activity, it is treated as user-supplied analytical enrichment rather than as part of the pre-2021 literature base.

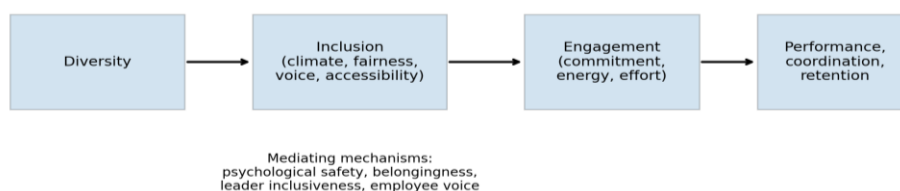


FIGURE 1. Conceptual model used in the current study.

Table 2. Analytical variables and expected relationships.

Variable	Operational meaning in this paper	Expected contribution to engagement
Diversity	Differences in workforce identity, background, disability, age, and perspective	Creates the potential for broader knowledge, innovation, and representation
Inclusion	Belonging, respect, voice, fairness, accessibility, and recognition of uniqueness	Direct positive effect on trust, commitment, and participation
Inclusive leadership	Leader behaviors that invite contribution, support fairness, and respond constructively	Raises psychological safety and discretionary effort
Employee voice	Formal and informal opportunities to share concerns and ideas	Improves ownership, learning, and problem solving
Operational complexity	Process-intensive, multi-application task execution shown in the uploaded dataset	Increases the managerial value of clarity, support, and coordination
Engagement	Psychological investment, energy, persistence, and commitment to work	Shapes performance, cooperation, and retention

VII. MICROSOFT AS A MANAGEMENT CASE

Microsoft is an appropriate management case because it is a large knowledge-intensive company in which value creation depends on collaboration, problem solving, digital coordination, and continuous learning. In public materials available up to 2020, Microsoft emphasizes culture transformation, accessibility, leadership accountability, inclusion, and support for employees. From a management perspective, such commitments are relevant because they indicate that inclusion is treated as an operating principle rather than only a compliance category.

The case is particularly useful because the uploaded operational dataset reveals how demanding digital work can be: employees navigate multiple applications, recurrent actions, and varied process lengths. This makes the Microsoft case analytically richer than a purely symbolic discussion of diversity. It suggests that inclusion matters not only because employees should feel respected, but because execution in complex digital environments depends on voice, clarity, support, and psychologically safe coordination.

VIII. DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE UPLOADED OPERATIONAL DATASET

The uploaded dataset contains detailed records of business-task execution. It includes 5,718 step-level observations distributed across 165 recordings and 50 processes. The data also capture application usage, action types, event identifiers, and process variation. For the purpose of this paper, the dataset is used descriptively to answer a practical question: what does workflow complexity add to the interpretation of inclusion and engagement?

Table 3. Descriptive summary of the uploaded Microsoft operational dataset.

Indicator	Value
Total recorded steps	5,718
Number of recordings	165
Number of processes	50
Distinct applications	17
Distinct step types	19

Distinct event names	619
Distinct event IDs	752
Average steps per recording	34.7
Median steps per recording	32
Minimum–maximum steps per recording	8–86
Average applications per recording	1.89
Maximum applications in a recording	5

Table 4. Top applications used across recorded business tasks.

Rank	Application	Recorded steps	Share of all steps (%)
1	chrome	1661	29.0
2	msedge	1128	19.7
3	firefox	884	15.5
4	Teams	570	10.0
5	PBIDesktop	125	2.2
6	OUTLOOK	119	2.1
7	ApplicationFrameHost	107	1.9
8	Ssms	46	0.8
9	CoollePDFConverter	42	0.7
10	SearchApp	38	0.7

Table 5. Most frequent action types in the uploaded dataset.

Rank	Action type	Recorded steps	Share of all steps (%)
1	Click UI element in window	2504	43.8
2	Press button in window	1406	24.6
3	Populate text field in window	718	12.6
4	Select menu option in window	405	7.1
5	Send keys	387	6.8
6	Drag and drop UI element in window	110	1.9
7	Select tab in window	75	1.3
8	Set checkbox state in window	44	0.8
9	Set drop-down list value in window	20	0.3
10	Select radio button in window	16	0.3

Table 6. Process complexity profile (top processes by total steps).

Rank	Process ID	Steps	Recordings	Applications	Distinct events	Avg. steps/recording
1	Process_26	240	6	3	30	40.0
2	Process_9	199	3	4	18	66.3
3	Process_21	195	3	6	18	65.0
4	Process_49	195	3	2	15	65.0
5	Process_27	177	6	5	24	29.5
6	Process_43	169	3	4	21	56.3
7	Process_22	167	3	4	21	55.7
8	Process_25	164	6	6	24	27.3
9	Process_19	158	3	7	18	52.7
10	Process_1	150	3	4	16	50.0

Table 7. Most frequent business events captured in the dataset.

Rank	Event name	Occurrences
1	Connect the database server with podcasting app	61
2	Send project Manuals to Teamates through email	42
3	Prepare Customer Request Form Template	42
4	Add team leads to the directory	39
5	Send the approval request	38
6	Open the roadmap to create tasks.	36
7	Generate a flow	34
8	Assign task to lead for the performance improvement of bottom performers.	33
9	Create a tasks through roadmap app.	32
10	Add team members to the directory	31

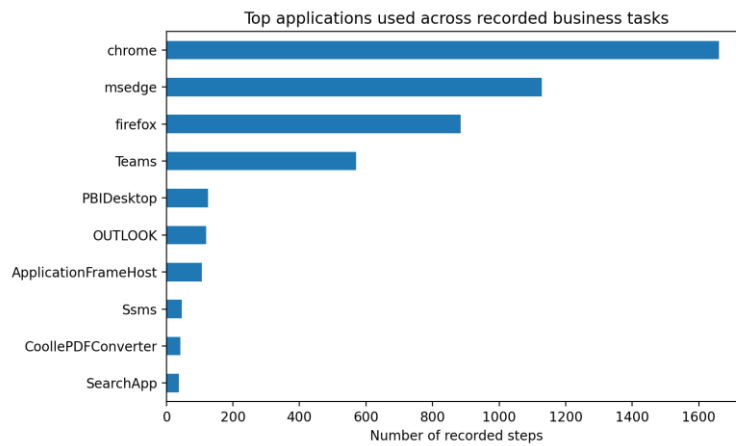


FIGURE 2. Top applications used across recorded business tasks.

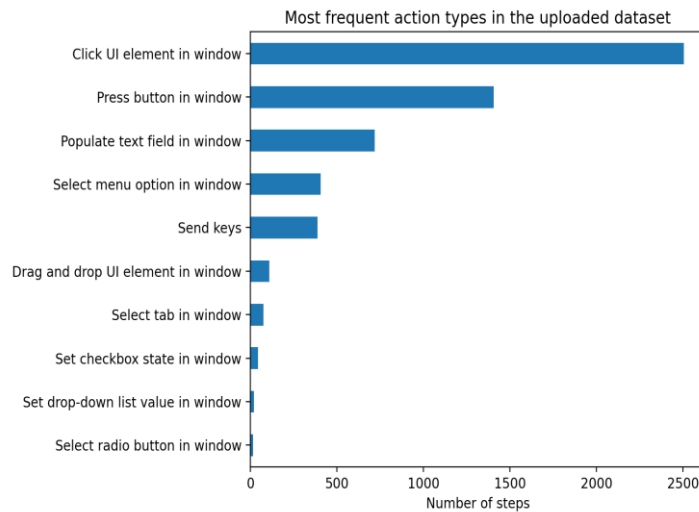


FIGURE 3. Most frequent action types in the uploaded dataset

The descriptive results show that work execution is distributed across several digital environments, with browsers and collaboration tools representing a large share of all steps. In addition, the task mix is dominated by clicking, button pressing, text population, and menu selection, which indicates high interaction density. Process complexity is uneven: some recordings are short, but others exceed 60 or even 80 steps. Several processes also involve multiple applications and many distinct events. This pattern implies that workflow quality depends not only on formal process design but also on the employee experience of support, and coordination, communication.

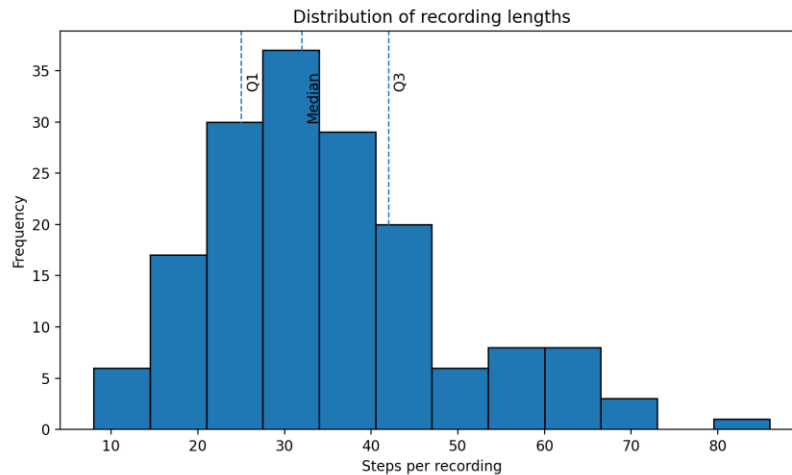


FIGURE 4. Distribution of recording lengths

IX. INTEGRATED ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The literature and the Microsoft case converge on a systems-based explanation. Diversity alone does not generate engagement. Instead, engagement emerges when employees experience fair treatment, safety, recognition, and voice. In Microsoft's context, such conditions are particularly important because work is digitally intensive and operationally interdependent. Employees who feel unsupported in complex environments may disengage by withholding ideas, reducing discretionary effort, or avoiding problem escalation. By contrast, inclusive leadership and supportive systems make it more likely that employees will ask questions, report bottlenecks, coordinate across functions, and remain committed to task completion.

Psychological safety is especially relevant in the uploaded dataset context. When a process is long, multi-step, or spans several applications, the cost of silence increases. Employees need confidence that they can raise errors, request clarification, and discuss process weaknesses without embarrassment or punishment. The literature on leader inclusiveness, climate for inclusion, and engagement strongly supports this mechanism. Similarly, fairness matters because employees are unlikely to remain highly engaged if access to opportunity, recognition, or support is perceived as unequal.

The uploaded dataset also highlights a less discussed managerial point: inclusion is not only about representation or social belonging, but also about usable systems. Accessibility, supportive interfaces, understandable routines, and collaborative norms can reduce friction in process-intensive work. Therefore, the Microsoft case suggests that inclusion improves engagement both psychologically and operationally. It increases the likelihood that employees will bring their full effort to work, and it supports the coordination quality required in complex digital execution.

Table 8. How operational complexity strengthens the inclusion–engagement argument.

Operational observation from uploaded data	Managerial implication	Expected engagement implication
Many tasks require repeated actions across multiple applications	Employees need clear coordination norms and supportive management	Higher confidence and lower task frustration
Recording lengths vary substantially across processes	Longer processes increase cognitive and coordination demands	Inclusive support helps sustain effort and persistence
Frequent text entry, clicking, and menu navigation dominate the task mix	Routine intensity can amplify fatigue if support systems are weak	Belonging and fairness help protect sustained engagement
Several processes show high event diversity	Employees must manage exceptions and context switching	Psychological safety supports asking questions and reporting issues
Collaboration tools and browsers dominate many tasks	Digital work depends on communication and cross-boundary interaction	Voice and inclusion improve coordination quality

X. FINDINGS

Five main findings emerge. First, the literature consistently shows that engagement depends on conditions that inclusion can shape directly, especially safety, fairness, belongingness, and voice. Second, Microsoft is analytically suitable because public materials up to 2020 portray inclusion as part of leadership, accessibility, and employee support systems. Third, the uploaded dataset demonstrates that work in this context is process-intensive and digitally distributed, which increases the practical importance of inclusive coordination. Fourth, workflow complexity strengthens the value of leader inclusiveness because employees in such environments need support to raise issues, learn from mistakes, and sustain effort. Fifth, the current study adds value over prior work by integrating operational evidence into the theoretical argument rather than treating inclusion as a purely symbolic or cultural construct.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the literature and the Microsoft case, organizations should align diversity goals with inclusive managerial systems rather than representation alone. Managers should be trained in listening, fairness, recognition, and psychologically safe response behaviors. Employee voice channels should be visible and credible, especially in process-heavy work environments. Accessibility and workflow usability should be treated as part of inclusion rather than as peripheral technical concerns. Finally, organizations should monitor engagement alongside inclusion indicators and workflow complexity, because high coordination demands can magnify the cost of exclusion and disengagement.

XII. CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between diversity, inclusion, and employee engagement through a restructured case study of Microsoft. The analysis shows that diversity alone is not sufficient to improve employee engagement unless it is supported by inclusive organizational practices. Inclusion becomes effective when employees experience fairness, belonging, psychological safety, accessibility, voice, and supportive leadership. In this sense, inclusion functions as the mechanism through which workforce diversity is transformed into stronger commitment, participation, and work engagement.

The Microsoft case demonstrates that inclusion should not be viewed only as a cultural or ethical value, but also as an operational requirement. The uploaded operational dataset depicts a digitally intensive work environment with multiple applications, repeated task steps, and varying process complexity. Such

conditions increase the need for clear communication, inclusive leadership, employee support, and psychologically safe coordination. When employees feel respected and supported, they are more likely to raise concerns, share ideas, solve problems, and remain committed to completing complex work processes.

Overall, the study concludes that inclusive management strengthens employee engagement by connecting human experience with organizational execution. For Microsoft and similar knowledge-based organizations, diversity creates potential value, but inclusion determines whether that potential becomes real organizational performance. Therefore, organizations should move beyond representation-based diversity efforts and build systematic inclusion practices into leadership, human resource systems, accessibility policies, employee voice mechanisms, and workflow design. This integrated approach can improve both employee morale and execution quality in complex digital workplaces.

Author Contributions

The author conducted the conceptualization, methodology, data analysis, investigation, writing, review, editing, and final approval of the manuscript.

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Data Availability

The dataset will be available from the author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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