

Who is an Inclusive Leader? – The Relationship between Line Managers' Experiences and Traits, and Employees' Perceived Inclusion

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Abstract: While responsibility for effective diversity management on the line relies on line managers, relatively little is known about what leads them to engage in diversity management and foster inclusive environments. In this study, we investigate how line managers' experiences with individuals from an immigrant background, diversity values and orientation relate to subordinates' perceived inclusion. Moreover, we examine the mediating role of perceived inclusion in the workgroup in the relationship between perceived supervisor support and job embeddedness. We conducted a field study with 91 pairs of line manager-subordinate dyads at a highly multicultural, labor-intense organization in Norway. Our findings indicate that line managers' experiences and other-orientation predicted subordinates' feeling of inclusion. The mediation effect of perceived inclusion was supported. Theoretical and practical implications, as well as directions for further research, are discussed.

Keywords: workplace diversity; contact quality; other-orientation; perceived supervisor support; perceived inclusion; job embeddedness

1. INTRODUCTION

Workforce demographics are becoming increasingly diverse and there is an emerging necessity for effective diversity management (DM), which are two major strategic challenges faced by today's organisations (Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013; Shen, Chanda, D'Netto, & Monga, 2009). Since diversity may lead to both positive and negative outcomes in an organisation (Cox, 1994), which of these two dramatically different scenarios will develop often relies on the work environment and the extent to which diversity is well managed (Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013). For DM to be effective line managers (LMs) are pivotal, since they have the responsibility on the line (Shen et al., 2009). Both academics and practitioners have been investigating what kind of leadership and LMs' behaviour are most effective for achieving these goals. Current study aims to contribute to this stream of research by empirically investigating the relationship between experiences and characteristics of LMs and relevant subordinates' outcomes. More specifically, we examine whether the relationship between LMs' high quality of contact with individuals from an immigrant background, diversity values, self-interest and other-orientation on the one side, and employees' perceived inclusion in a highly multicultural workgroup on the other is mediated by employees' perceived supervisor support (PSS). In addition, we investigate whether perceived inclusion may further lead to attachment to one's job (Figure 1).

DM literature has emphasised that top leaders and LMs are pivotal for delivering effective DM (Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006; Ng & Sears, 2012). In this sense, Kalev et al. (2006) found that the most effective means of increasing diversity in organisations were organisational structures that embed specific responsibility for change. Moreover, LMs who do not discriminate and differentiate between subordinates, but build equally good relationships across the whole group, tend to experience lower employee turnover and exercise effective DM on the line through inclusive leadership (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). As Mor Barak (2015) emphasised, inclusion is the key to effective DM. The question remains how to achieve it and why some LMs are far better at fostering inclusion than others (e.g., Shore, Randel, Chung, Dean, Ehrhart, & Singh, 2011).

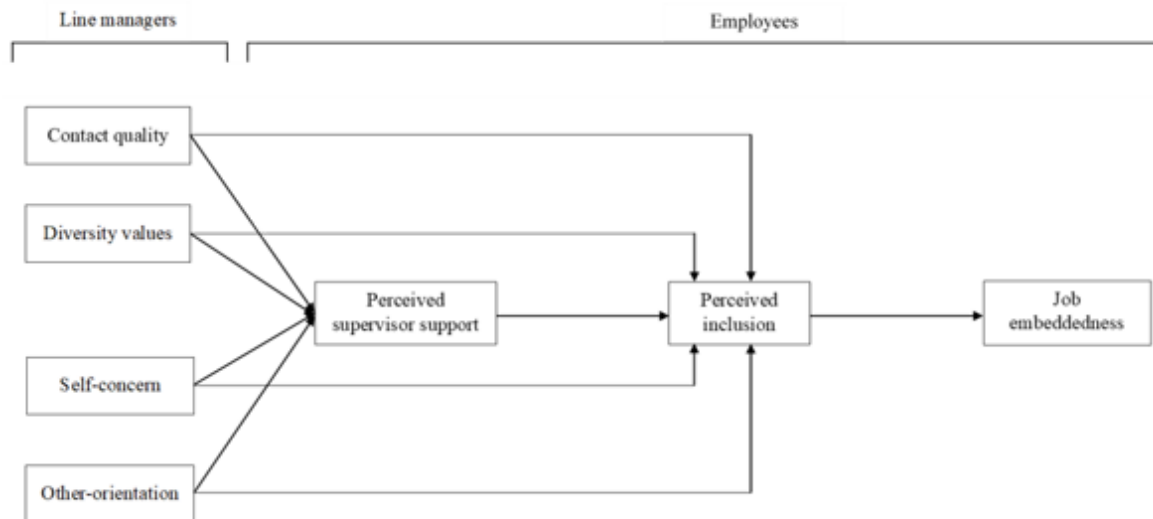


Figure 1. Conceptual model

Drawing on recent research on DM and inclusion, and emphasising the pivotal role of the LMs’ personal characteristics in effective DM on the line, we seek to contribute to both theory and practice. This study enriches the theory on effective DM by applying and expanding contact theory to DM and contributes to the inclusion literature by examining the necessary antecedents of perceived inclusion in the workgroup. In addition, we aim to contribute to the empirical findings by examining the significance of experiences with individuals from an immigrant background, diversity values, orientation towards one’s own and/or others’ interests and supervisor support for employees’ perceived inclusion. Moreover, we contribute to the literature on job embeddedness, investigating its antecedents in a highly multicultural organisation. Given that the LM’s characteristics are important for effective DM on the line and, thus, creation of an inclusive environment, the question persists how their experiences, values and orientations relate to support they provide to subordinates and, consequently, subordinates’ attachment to the job, by fostering an inclusive environment.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

DM literature has drawn attention to LMs and their importance in managing a diverse workforce (Nishii & Mayer, 2009), thus effective DM requires their active involvement and actions toward fostering inclusive environments. In this section, we review the construct of inclusion to identify possible factors within LMs that may be especially important for fostering a supportive and inclusive environment, as well as the benefits of inclusion.

2.1. Perceived Inclusion

When employees feel excluded at their workplace, they are prone to experience job dissatisfaction and lower sense of well-being (Mor Barak & Levin, 2002). As these authors argued, in such situations employees are likely to leave, and if they decide to stay in the organisation they might feel they do not have the opportunity to reach their potential. A gap remains in the inclusion research regarding the underlying mechanism explaining why some managers are better than others at fostering inclusive environment among their subordinates (e.g., Nishii, 2013). While the inclusion concept has received growing attention in recent years, there is little consensus on its nature and theoretical support (Shore et al., 2011). In an attempt to provide an overall theoretical framework intended to guide future research, Shore et al. (2011) conceptualised inclusion as a two-facet construct entailing satisfaction of both the needs of belongingness and uniqueness in a workgroup.

Need for belongingness refers to the “need to form and maintain strong, stable interpersonal relationships” (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497). These authors emphasised that people form social attachments readily and under most conditions while resist losing existing bonds. According to them, this represents a need “for frequent, nonaversive interactions within an ongoing relational bond” (p. 497) and seems to have multiple strong effects on emotional patterns and cognitive processes. While previous research on exclusion mainly focused on social rejection, working with colleagues who treat

unique characteristics as irrelevant or unimportant may contribute to feeling of exclusion to the same degree, and therefore the need for uniqueness gains importance (Shore et al., 2011). These authors defined uniqueness as “individual talents”, “contribute fully”, “valuing contributions from all employees” and “to have their voices heard and appreciated” (p. 1268). This concept is based on the literature emphasising the importance of individuals being valued for their unique points of view, as well as evidence from the stigma literature showing that devalued identities are often concealed in order to avoid work groups’ rejection.

In addition, Shore et al. (2011) proposed that joint consideration of both belongingness and uniqueness through inclusion has high potential to enrich research and practice in the area of diversity. Moreover, they suggested that this framework provides a basis for further research on diversity focused on “capitalizing on the unique value of diverse individuals” (p. 1281). In line with their argumentation about the importance of inclusive leadership, this study aims to empirically test their conceptual framework, since while DM programmes may vary, inclusion is often one of their main goals.

Nishii’s (2013) conceptualisation of climate for inclusion consists of three dimensions. The first dimension refers to fairly implemented employment and diversity-specific practices, which contribute to eliminating bias. The second refers to integration of differences, capturing the interpersonal integration of diverse employees at the workplace. Finally, the third dimension refers to inclusion in decision-making, representing the extent to which employees’ diverse perspectives are actively encouraged and integrated (Nishii, 2013). Thus, in order to capture the extent to which leaders contribute to integration of differences and sense of inclusion of each of the employees, the present study investigates the dyadic relationship between LMs and each of their subordinates rather than inclusive climate as a whole. Dyadic analysis provides a measure of the degree to which LMs’ characteristics help to integrate differences and create feelings of inclusion in the workgroup for each subordinate, in line with the second dimension of Nishii’s (2013) climate for inclusion. Hence, we first elaborate on the importance of LMs’ previous experiences for their subordinates to feel included in the workgroup.

2.2. LMs’ Previous Experiences and Fostering Inclusive Environments

Diversity as a term may refer to differences between people on any personal trait, which defines how these individuals perceive each other (Ragins& Gonzalez, 2003). However, demographic traits have usually been in the spotlight of diversity and integration efforts (cf. Kalev et al., 2006). Nowadays, there is a global tendency for workforce becoming increasingly multicultural (Integration and Diversity Directorate – IMDi, 2012). Integrating these groups in both society and the workforce is a challenge and, thus, many organisations are focusing their efforts on integration of employees from an immigrant background. However, individuals from an immigrant background tend to occupy lower positions in organisations, while majority individuals dominate leader positions across organisational levels (PAMA, 2010). Accordingly, an immigrant background may be one of the most prominent diversity dimensions in many countries’ work contexts and, hence, the dimension that we focus on in this study.

Organisational integration efforts tend to place employees into different group categories that may both reflect social reality of intergroup interaction and/or affect it. With regard to managing diverse workgroups, LMs’ previous experiences with different ethnic groups may to a large extent affect their perceptions and attitudes toward these groups and, thus, how they behave towards them. According to intergroup contact theory, contact experiences with out-group members have a tendency to reduce prejudice (Allport, 1954). As Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) clarified, the ability for contact to diminish prejudice is grounded in the propensity for familiarity between people to provoke liking. Previous research on the impact of contact has been rather limited by focusing on solely favourable contact situations (e.g., Paolini, Harwood, Rubin, Husnu, Joyce, & Hewstone, 2014), while effects of negative contact have often been neglected. Distinguishing between positive and negative contact, Barlow et al. (2012) revealed that the relationship between intergroup contact and prejudice is dependent on the valence, while negative contact seemed to have a stronger impact on prejudice compared to the positive one. Similarly, a recent study by Graf, Paolini, and Rubin (2014) suggests that both types of contact need to be taken into account. Taken together, the studies by Graf et al. (2014) and Paolini et al. (2014) imply that past negative intergroup contact has a stronger effect in forming attitudes towards the out-group on the one hand, while past extensive or positive contact largely diminishes the

impact of present negative intergroup contact situations on intergroup relations. While it is likely that past intergroup contact should be associated with LMs’ efforts to foster an inclusive environment among their subordinates, to the best of our knowledge this has not been examined yet. We suggest that understanding the history and the range of the contact LMs had with different ethnic groups from positive to negative, could be a crucial mechanism underlying their embrace of subordinates from an immigrant background in the workgroup. Thus, we hypothesise:

Hypothesis 1. There is a positive relationship between majority LMs’ contact quality and subordinates’ perceived inclusion.

2.3. Diversity Values of LMs and Subordinates’ Perceived Inclusion

Previous research has emphasised the importance of individual attitudes toward organisational strategies and whether a manager’s personal beliefs, values and motivation are in line with them (e.g., Kuvaas&Dysvik, 2010). Individuals’ values are highly associated with their attitudes and behaviours in a large spectrum of work-related contexts (e.g., Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007). Therefore, awareness of LMs’ values has been suggested as highly important in organisations as a trustful predictor of their future behaviour (e.g., Ng & Sears, 2012). Values may also largely affect diversity climate in organisations (Cox, 1994) as well as anticipate one’s attitudes and behaviours towards other organisational members (Mor Barak, Cherin, & Berkman, 1998).

Moreover, values are crucial in shaping individuals’ ideologies, social attitudes, decisions and actions, implying that knowing individuals’ core values may facilitate rather solid predictions of their behaviour in the future (Ng & Sears, 2012). These authors discovered that top managers’ leadership style, social values and age were important factors for the implementation of diversity practices to be successful. Moreover, values may also relate to an individual’s social identity. Mor Barak et al. (1998) suggested that diversity values might have an impact on people’s attitudes and behaviours towards other employees in the organisation. According to the mentioned research LMs are prone to vary in their values as well and, thus, the extent to which they see value in diversity. It is likely that LMs who value diversity to a higher extent will be more engaged in fostering inclusive climates and, hence, delivering effective DM. Hence, we hypothesise:

Hypothesis 2. There is a positive relationship between majority line managers’ diversity values and employees’ perceived inclusion.

2.4. The Role of LMs’ Self-concern and Other-orientation in Nurturing Inclusion

In organisations people have to choose between serving one’s own interests, teams’ interests or some superordinate company’s goal, implying that judgement and decision-making take place within the boundaries of a “social dilemma” (De Dreu, 2006). In a deeper appraisal of these constructs, self-interest has a tendency to increase attention to self-related information (Bobocel, 2013). As Bobocel (2013) further emphasised, other-orientation has a tendency to increase attention to other-related information, such as group and organisational characteristics, collaborative inputs and outcomes and joint success. Other-orientation has also been found to be a predictor of basic differences in a variety of judgement and decision-making situations (Korsgaard et al., 1996), as related to helping and altruistic acts (Meglino&Korsgaard, 2004), supportiveness toward diversity practices (Abramovic&Traavik, 2017), as well as the lack of it leading to over-inflated views of one’s own performance (Korsgaard, Meglino, & Lester, 2004). Usually referred to as orientation and information processing styles (e.g., De Dreu&Naura, 2009; Meglino&Korsgaard, 2004), self-interest and other-orientation have been found to be solid predictors of behaviours that advance the self and behaviours that advance another person or group, respectively (Gerbası& Prentice, 2013).

Accordingly, it is likely that LMs with higher levels of self-concern will be less apt to engage in DM ensuring that all the subordinates feel well-accepted in the workgroup. In contrast, LMs oriented toward others should be more prone to demonstrate appreciation for each of their subordinates. Therefore, we hypothesise:

Hypothesis 3. There is a negative relationship between majority LMs’ self-concern and employees’ perceived inclusion.

Hypothesis 4. There is a positive relationship between majority LMs’ other-orientation and employees’ perceived inclusion.

2.5. The Mediating Role of Perceived Supervisor Support

Direct supervisors may have a strong impact on the experiences of subordinates in a workgroup, particularly in a diverse workgroup where different values and perspectives may exist (Shore et al., 2011). When LMs consider individual differences and are aware of both the strengths and unique contributions that each employee makes to the organisation, subordinates are likely to feel more valued and supported by their immediate supervisor (Kuvaas et al., 2014). LMs’ favourable attitudes toward certain individuals may result in more training provided and developmental opportunities for these employees, who may then feel being invested in and, thus, supported by their closest leader (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2012). These authors indicated that variation in values among LMs might result in both variation in support they provide to their subordinates and in the quality of implementation of organisational strategies. Hence, managers’ ability to demonstrate genuine compassion and care for the welfare and goals of other employees is prerequisite for effective DM (Ng & Sears, 2012). Moreover, Korsgaard et al. (2004) referred to other orientation as a basic prosocial propensity to be concerned about and helpful to others.

Accordingly, LMs who had more positive experiences with individuals from an immigrant background should be more inclined to seek and engage in often and friendly-toned interactions with such individuals. Higher levels of supervisor support have been argued to contribute to inclusion at the workplace (Ryan & Kossek, 2008), as well as high quality relationships that leaders develop with their subordinates (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Further, we expect that LMs’ values regarding diversity should be associated with the degree to which they provide support to their subordinates in a highly multicultural workgroup. In addition, we propose that LMs who are other-oriented will provide more support to their subordinates and, thus, will be more effective in conducting DM, since their subordinates will feel valued and well-accepted as members of the workgroup. Hence, we hypothesise:

Hypothesis 5. The relationship between majority LMs’ (a) contact quality with individuals from an immigrant background, (b) diversity values, (c) self-concern and (d) other-orientation, and employees’ perceived inclusion will be mediated by perceived supervisor support.

2.6. Perceived Inclusion as the Mediator

While a large body of research has focused on the antecedents of workplace inclusion (e.g., Nishii, 2013; Roberson, 2006), rather few studies have looked at its outcomes (Shore et al., 2011). Especially in highly multicultural organisations, detachment of employees from an immigrant background from their job and organisation may be an issue, since they often encounter stereotypes, lack of acceptance and social support from the organisation and colleagues (e.g., Shore et al., 2011). As Mor Barak and Levin (2002) emphasised, employees from a minority background are far more likely to feel excluded, while those who feel excluded usually leave, which can often be due to lack of support from the supervisor. Turnover is an important challenge in multicultural organisations, since it affects the bottom-line outcomes associated with diversity. In order to reach a better understanding of retention, job embeddedness theory emphasises the role of employee attachment (Halvorsen, Treuren, & Kulik, 2015). Consequently, the function of LMs needs to be investigated and how their supportive and inclusive behaviour may contribute to subordinates’ feeling of attachment to their job in multicultural workgroups.

When employees feel supported by their closest supervisor they are likely to see a future in the organisation and less likely to leave (Kuvaas et al., 2014). Similarly, employees’ perceptions of high-quality relationships with the supervisor tend to affect their perceived status, inclusion and worth within the workgroup (Nishii and Mayer, 2009). Hence, subordinates who feel included in the workgroup should perceive stronger bonds with their organisation. Job embeddedness represents a robust predictor of employee retention across diverse populations (Mallol, Holtom, & Lee, 2007). As a meta-analysis by Jiang, Liu, McKay, Lee, and Mitchell (2012) showed, job embeddedness negatively relates to turnover intention and actual turnover, beyond affective commitment, job satisfaction and job alternatives. It represents a general attachment construct and assesses the extent to which people feel attached, regardless of the reason they feel that way (Crossley, Bennett, Jex, & Burnfield, 2007). Building attachment to their workgroup and organisation might be more challenging for individuals from an immigrant background, since perceived similarity would be lower, which may, in turn, decrease the perception of both fit and links to their job, two of the underlying facets of job embeddedness (Crossley et al., 2007).

Drawing on previous research on supervisor support, inclusion and job embeddedness, this study proposes that the degree to which employees feel supported by their closest leader will be positively associated with their attachment to the job, since perceived support should lead to their perception of inclusion in the workgroup. Consequently, we hypothesise:

Hypothesis 6. Perceived inclusion will mediate the relationship between perceived supervisor support and job embeddedness.

3. METHOD

3.1. Sample and Procedure

We conducted a pen-and-paper survey from September 2014 until February 2015. During this time, we organised meetings and personally distributed the questionnaire to random workgroups at different customer locations of the Norwegian branch of an international facility services company. This company provides a range of services, such as facility management, cleaning, security, property, catering and support services, indicating that this is a labour-intensive context. In order to reduce the presence of response distortion, before responding to the survey the participants were informed that their responses would be treated confidentially. The scales were translated from English to Norwegian using back translations conducted by researchers at our institution.

Of 162 distributed questionnaires, we received completed responses from 151 employees, of which 17 were LMs, representing a response rate of approximately 93 per cent and an average of 10.21 subordinates responded per LM. In our sample, the majority of both subordinates (64.2 per cent) and the LMs (65.7 per cent) were male. The age of the subordinates ranged from 18 to 60 or older categorised by 5 age intervals, where the mode was in the age interval 30–39 comprising 33 per cent of subordinates. The age of the LMs ranged from 18 to 60 plus and were categorised according to 5 age intervals where the mode was in the age interval 40–49 comprising 63.6 per cent of LMs. Regarding country of origin, the majority of subordinates (81.3 per cent) had an immigrant background, while most of the LMs were born in Norway (64.7 per cent). Since the aim of this study was to investigate how LMs that belong to the ethnic majority in the society create supportive and inclusive environments, and we measured the quality of contact they experience with individuals from an immigrant background, we included only LMs with a majority background and their subordinates in the analyses. Within these workgroups, individuals from an immigrant background comprised between 42.9–94.7 per cent of the subordinates and accounted for the majority in most of the groups.

3.2. Measures

All the items (excluding demographic variables) were scored on two types of a five-point Likert scale either measuring agreement with statements ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) or measuring occurrence of behaviour ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

3.2.1. Independent variables

Contact quality was measured using the eight-item scale developed by Islam and Hewstone (1993) with an internal consistency (alpha) of 0.84. Diversity values were assessed with a three-item scale developed by Mor Barak et al. (1998). However, the factor structure indicated that the first item in the scale should not be retained, resulting in an internal consistency (Spearman-Brown) of 0.78. Self-concern was measured using the three-item scale developed by De Dreu and Nauta (2009). However, looking at the factor structure, the first item in the scale was not retained, resulting in an internal consistency (Spearman-Brown) of 0.91. Other-orientation was measured using the three-item scale also developed by De Dreu and Nauta (2009). Similarly, the first item in the scale was not retained due to the factor structure and translation, resulting in an internal consistency (Spearman-Brown) of 0.86. Employees’ PSS was assessed using the short four-item scale developed by Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, and Sowa (1986). Due to the factor structure, the fourth item was not retained, resulting in an internal consistency (alpha) of 0.93.

3.2.2. Mediating variable

The hypothesised mediator perceived inclusion (PI) was assessed using a two-dimensional eight-item scale based on theoretical suggestions of Shore et al. (2011). Due to the factor structure, the third and

the fourth items were not retained, resulting in an internal consistency (alpha) of 0.81. The two dimensions addressed perceived belongingness (measured using a four-item scale developed by Godard, 2001) and perceived value in uniqueness (four items developed by the researchers in line with theoretical suggestions from Shore et al., 2011).

3.2.3. Dependent variable

Job embeddedness was assessed by the seven-item scale developed by Crossley et al. (2007). Due to the factor structure, the sixth item was not retained, resulting in an internal consistency (alpha) of 0.86.

3.2.4. Control variables

To rule out alternative explanations of the observed relationships, we included other diversity dimensions, such as gender, age, tenure and the country of origin.

3.3. Analytic Strategy

This study examined dyad data from LMs and their subordinates. Independent variables were measured from the LMs. The mediating and dependent variables were measured from the subordinates. The data were first approached using factor analysis, where principal component analysis with varimax rotation was performed on all multiple scale items in order to determine item retention. Factor analysis supported that all the dependent variables were different constructs, even though they were collected from the same source (subordinates). Together, these factors accounted for 64.42 per cent of the variance.

Before analysing the model, it was investigated whether dyad analysis was appropriate for the data. The intraclass correlation was estimated for PSS and perceived inclusion. Intraclass correlation is used in dyadic data analysis and multilevel modelling in general (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). It was not significant for PSS; on the contrary perceived inclusion had a value of .68 ($p < .001$). This implies that assumption of non-independency for dyadic analysis is violated in the case of PSS, where employees’ scores within the group are not more similar than across the groups, which is not the case with perceived inclusion. This indicates that dyadic data analysis could be applied only for the construct of perceived inclusion (Kenny et al., 2006).

The data were analysed using multilevel modelling (MLM), commonly referred to as hierarchical linear modelling, a relatively new statistical technique that is particularly useful for the analysis of dyadic data (Kenny et al., 2006). This method may be used when data have a hierarchically nested structure (Birdi, Clegg, Patterson, Robinson, Stride, Wall, & Wood, 2008; Kenny et al., 2006). According to Kenny et al. (2006), data from the one-with-many design are hierarchically structured since partners are tied to a focal person; in this case the subordinates to their LM. Improvement in model fit between subsequent stages of analyses is determined by the change in -2 times the log-likelihood statistic ($-2LL$) compared to the change in degrees of freedom, that has a chi-square distribution (Birdi et al., 2008). This technique has many advantages. Compared to standard regression techniques, it allows for investigation of within-subjects and between-subjects variance separately (Birdi et al., 2008). Moreover, with indistinguishable members in one-with-many design, the data can be most easily analysed by MLM, allowing for a much more detailed analysis of dyadic processes than the standard design (Kenny et al., 2006). This technique also enables to test whether the effect of LM’s contact quality, diversity values, self-concern and other-orientation is similar across subordinates. In order to apply this technique, SPSS 22.0.0.0 (SPSS Mixed, IBM SPSS Statistics) for multilevel modelling was used. The three-step procedure recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986) was applied to test the mediation hypotheses. In order to test Hypothesis 6, linear regression modelling was applied.

4. RESULTS

Means, standard deviations, bivariate correlations, Cronbach’s alpha and Spearman-Brown for all multiple and two-item scales are reported in Table 1.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, Scale Reliabilities, and Bivariate Correlations

Variable	Mean ^a	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Employee Gender ^b	1.63	.49	–													
2. Employee Age ^c	2.00	1.18	.16	–												
3. Employee Tenure ^d	1.97	1.08	.06	.52***	–											
4. Employee Country of Origin ^e	1.76	.43	.09	–.03	.15	–										
5. Manager Gender ^b	1.55	.52	–.07	–.03	–.19	–.07	–									
6. Manager Age ^c	3.00	1.00	.23*	.22*	.13	.03	.02	–								
7. Manager Tenure ^d	2.18	1.25	–.08	–.01	–.26*	–.15	.36***	–.57***	–							
8. Contact quality	4.03	.46	.08	.11	.01	–.27**	.01	.58***	–.37***	.84						
9. Diversity values	4.50	.55	.14	.21*	–.04	–.36***	–.01	.14	.25*	.60***	.76					
10. Self-concern	4.59	.49	.21*	.23*	.27*	.14	–.42***	.49***	–.22*	.15	.20	.91				
11. Other-orientation	4.64	.55	.11	.10	–.31**	–.31**	.52***	.15	.33**	.46***	.72***	.18	.86			
12. Perceived Supervisor Support	4.08	1.01	–.04	–.02	.00	.04	–.02	–.13	.06	.02	–.03	–.06	–.06	.93		
13. Perceived Inclusion	3.98	.73	–.13	.01	–.17	–.18	.16	–.25*	.26*	.04	.10	–.25*	.26*	.47***	.81	
14. Job Embeddedness	3.30	.94	.22*	.30**	.19	.17	.11	.08	.07	–.05	.06	.11	.08	.22*	.30**	.86

Notes: The correlations and internal reliabilities (Cronbach’s alphas) are based on $n = 91$ (level 1) and $n = 11$ (level 2). Scale reliabilities are displayed on the diagonal. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

^a Mean: In order to more precisely present the sample we reported the mode of the respondents’ age, where 33 per cent of the subordinates were aged between 30 and 39, while 63.6 per cent of the LMs were aged between 40 and 49.

^b Gender: We coded female as “1” and male as “2”.

^c Age: We assessed age on an interval scale where 18–29 years was coded as “1”, 30–39 years was coded as “2”, 40–49 years was coded as “3”, 50–59 years was coded as “4”, and 60 years and above was coded as “5”.

^d Tenure: We assessed organisational tenure on an interval scale where 0–2 years was coded as “1”, 3–5 years was coded as “2”, 6–9 years was coded as “3”, and more than 9 years was coded as “4”.

^e Country of origin: We coded individuals born in Norway as “1” and individuals born in other countries as “2”.

Normal distribution, error terms and multicollinearity of the data were inspected and the results indicated that the data met the assumptions of the statistical models. The first stage of the modelling process was the construction of a baseline (null) model, consisting of the dependent variables. As Kenny et al. (2006) recommended, we initially tested the simplest multilevel model, with no control or independent variables, called the unconditional (intercept only) or the empty model. Thereafter, we entered the control variables in model 1. In model 2, we introduced the independent variables. In the next stages, we entered the mediators in models 3 and 4, respectively. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Regression Analysis Predicting Employees’ Perceived Supervisor Support and Perceived Inclusion

Variable	Perceived supervisor support		Perceived inclusion		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Employee Gender ^a	–.02	.01	–.07	–.07	–.09
Employee Age ^b	.00	.04	.16	.11	–.00
Employee Tenure ^c	.01	.00	–.18	.01	.01
Employee Country of Origin ^d	.04	.07	–.12	–.08	–.10
Manager Gender ^a	–.01	–.04	.13	–.26	–.28
Manager Age ^b	–.15	–.31	–.27	–.49*	–.33
Manager Tenure ^c	–.00	.22	.02	.31	.19
Contact quality		.55*		.59*	.28
Diversity values		–.25		–.70**	–.59
Self-concern		.04		.09	.05
Other-orientation		–.04		.58*	.64
Perceived supervisor support					.47***
ICC	.00		.24***		
–2 Log Likelihood	257.64	253.38	185.58	174.26	148.68
Δ –2 Log Likelihood	1.67	4.27	6.57	11.32*	25.58***
R ² level 1	.02	.06	–.07	.05	.36
ΔR ² level 1		.04		.12	.31

Notes: Standardised regression coefficients are shown; $n = 91$ (level 1), $n = 11$ (level 2); * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

^a Gender: We coded female as “1” and male as “2”.

^b Age: We assessed age on an interval scale where 18–29 years was coded as “1”, 30–39 years was coded as “2”, 40–49 years was coded as “3”, 50–59 years was coded as “4”, and 60 years and above was coded as “5”.

^c Tenure: We assessed organisational tenure on an interval scale where 0–2 years was coded as “1”, 3–5 years was coded as “2”, 6–9 years was coded as “3”, and more than 9 years was coded as “4”.

^d Country of origin: We coded individuals born in Norway as “1” and individuals born in other countries as “2”.

Regarding the control variables, none were significantly related to the dependent variable. Accordingly, the model with the control variables showed no improvements in model fit, with $\Delta - 2LL = 6.57$, n.s. After entering the independent variables, contact quality was positively related to perceived inclusion ($\beta = .59$, $p < .05$) in support of Hypothesis 1. Moreover, diversity values were negatively related to perceived inclusion ($\beta = -.70$, $p < .01$), providing no support for Hypothesis 2. Further, self-concern was not related to perceived inclusion ($\beta = .09$, n.s.), not supporting Hypothesis 3. On the other hand, other-orientation was positively related to the employees’ perceived inclusion ($\beta = .58$, $p < .05$) in support of Hypothesis 4. The model fit improved by $\Delta - 2LL = 11.32$, $p < 0.5$.

In order to test the mediation hypotheses, PSS was introduced as the mediator variable and was positively related to perceived inclusion ($\beta = .47$, $p < .001$), with an improvement in model fit of $\Delta - 2LL = 25.58$, $p < .001$. While common method bias may raise concerns due to both mediator and outcome variable being obtained from the same source, factor structure supported that these were independent constructs. Moreover, LMs’ contact quality was the only independent variable related to PSS ($\beta = .55$, $p < .05$). The relationship between contact quality and perceived inclusion was reduced when PSS was included in the model ($\beta = .28$, n.s.) (Table 2). However, the model with PSS as a dependent variable did not reach the adequate goodness of fit thus not supporting the mediation effect. Hence, in line with this results and insignificant intraclass correlation for PSS, no support was provided for Hypothesis 5. Finally, PSS was significantly related to job embeddedness ($\beta = .23$, $p < .05$) and the relationship was diminished when perceived inclusion was entered in the model ($\beta = .07$, n.s.) (Table 3). A supplementary Sobel test (Sobel, 1982) was performed and indicated that the reduction was statistically significant ($z = 2.22$, $p < .05$). Accordingly, Hypothesis 6 was supported.

Table 3
Regression Analysis Predicting Employees’ Job Embeddedness

Variable	Job embeddedness		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Employee Gender ^a	.16	.17	.20*
Employee Age ^b	.26*	.27*	.22
Employee Tenure ^c	.02	.02	.10
Employee Country of Origin ^d	.16	.15	.20*
Perceived supervisor support	–	.23*	.07
Perceived inclusion	–	–	.35**
ΔR^2	.14	.05	.08
Total R^2	.14	.20	.28
ΔF	3.64**	5.75*	9.80**

Notes: Standardised regression coefficients are shown; $n = 91$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

^a Gender: We coded female as “1” and male as “2”.

^b Age: We assessed age on an interval scale where 18–29 years was coded as “1”, 30–39 years was coded as “2”, 40–49 years was coded as “3”, 50–59 years was coded as “4”, and 60 years and above was coded as “5”.

^c Tenure: We assessed organisational tenure on an interval scale where 0–2 years was coded as “1”, 3–5 years was coded as “2”, 6–9 years was coded as “3”, and more than 9 years was coded as “4”.

^d Country of origin: We coded individuals born in Norway as “1” and individuals born in other countries as “2”.

5. DISCUSSION

Successful management of an increasingly diverse workforce is one of the most important global challenges faced by corporate leaders, HR specialists and LMs. For successful management of workforce diversity, LMs are of crucial importance (Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Shen et al., 2009). Therefore, when organisations recruit or promote to LM positions and assign to these individuals the responsibility for DM, they ought to be aware of this fact (e.g., Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2012). On the other hand, many multicultural organisations still do not have specific diversity programmes, while their overall aim is to nurture equality and inclusion among employees and retain them. The results of this study indicate that LMs’ quality of contact with individuals from an immigrant background could play a pivotal role in their ability to foster inclusion.

However, and contrary to our expectations, we found a negative relationship between LMs’ diversity values and employees’ perceived inclusion. We believe that the diversity values measure applied in this study might have captured the instrumental value for diversity, as it emphasised the business case where diversity is viewed as instrumental in achieving business success. Thus, it would imply that the

more LMs believed diversity is “good for the business”, the less included their subordinates felt, since such interest in workforce diversity is business- and not people-oriented. On the other hand, LMs who reported low levels of diversity values may perceive instrumentality in diversity issues as negative, while their subordinates, in turn, feel highly included. In addition, we believe that the first item of the measure referring to the degree to which LMs believe that better knowledge of cultural norms of different groups would increase their effectiveness at work did not apply to the present context. In the organisation where data were collected, LMs are in very close contact with their multicultural subordinates throughout the day and may feel well-acquainted with their customs and lifestyle, thus seeing no value in additional knowledge about these cultures. However, several areas require further investigation in future studies.

Moreover, we found a positive relationship between LMs’ other-orientation and subordinates’ perceived inclusion. On the other hand, we found no relationship between LMs’ self-concern and perceived inclusion. Further, our results indicated that LMs’ contact quality and other-orientation had a direct effect on perceived inclusion, and were not mediated by supervisor support. Non-significant intraclass correlation for PSS, but significant for perceived inclusion, also showed that while perceptions of support may vary within the group, inclusion is a shared perception dependent on the supervisor. This may imply that positive experiences LMs had with individuals from an immigrant background and their orientation towards others’ interests may have a direct effect on their inclusive behaviour, as seen through acceptance of their multicultural subordinates and valuing their unique attributes. However, this requires further investigation. Finally, we found that the relationship between perceived support from the immediate supervisor and job embeddedness was mediated by perceived inclusion. The more support subordinates perceived from the closest leader, the more included they felt, which, in turn, led to a higher perception of attachment to their job.

Together, these findings suggest that LMs’ contact quality with individuals from an immigrant background and other-orientation are related to their ability to foster inclusion. More specifically, employees’ perceived inclusion in the workgroup is related to LMs’ previous experiences with individuals from an immigrant background and their orientation towards others’ interests. In addition, our study suggests that higher levels of perception of support from the immediate leader are related to higher levels of perceived inclusion, which, in turn, relates to higher levels of job embeddedness.

5.1. Theoretical and Practical Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

The present study adds to the research on effective DM by utilising and expanding contact theory to the field of DM and to the inclusion literature by investigating the antecedents of perceived inclusion in the workgroup in a highly multicultural setting. Building on the contact theory, we found that contact with individuals from an immigrant background does relate to LMs’ ability to foster inclusive work environment. While previous research focused mostly on the relationship between intergroup contact and prejudice (e.g., Barlow et al., 2012), our study tested the importance of intergroup contact in a labour-intensive organisational setting. Moreover, based on the other-orientation construct, we found that the degree to which LMs are prone to behave in others’ interest has implications for subordinates’ perceived inclusion. While other studies mostly looked at the effects of other-orientation on employees’ performance, behaviour and reactions to unfair events (e.g., Bobocel, 2013; De Dreu & Nauta, 2009), we investigated the importance of this orientation for LMs’ position in leading multicultural groups. Consequently, there are differences between LMs in their effectiveness regarding DM on the line, which implies that employees perceive inclusion in the workgroup to different degrees. This represents an initial step towards further understanding LMs’ engagement and effort in effectively managing diversity on the line.

Our study also highlights the importance of the supervisor-related perceptions in understanding employees’ perceived inclusion in their workgroup and job embeddedness. Looking at the outcomes of perceived inclusion, our results indicated that the degree to which employees perceive inclusion in their workgroup was related to the degree of attachment to their job. Several studies on the challenges of individuals from a minority background with regard to job embeddedness have focused on contextual and organisational factors (e.g., Halvorsen et al., 2015; Mallol et al., 2007). Our study contributes to this line of research by testing the importance of LMs, and to what extent perceived support from the immediate supervisor and perceived inclusion in the workgroup are related to job embeddedness in multicultural workgroups. The present findings indicated that supervisor’s support

related to perceived inclusion in the workgroup, which, in turn, was related to perceived attachment to one’s job. This is especially relevant in the context of multicultural organisations, since they have a tendency to more often experience voluntary turnover (Halvorsen et al., 2015).

For practitioners, our study highlights the importance of LMs’ previous experiences with individuals from an immigrant background and other-orientation in highly multicultural, labour-intense settings. It suggests that LMs have different experiences with ethnic diversity and that this variation may partly explain why perceived inclusion varies. In addition, it suggests that employees in multicultural workgroups are sensitive to the degree to which their supervisors are oriented toward others’ goals and ambitions, which also partly explains the variation in perceived inclusion. Third, these findings also emphasise the importance of perceptions of a supportive leader in highly diverse workgroups, which is strongly associated with perceived inclusion and may lead to job embeddedness in multicultural groups. Accordingly, organisations would benefit by providing adequate training, development and mentoring as tools for enhancing LMs’ DM skills.

Moreover, emphasizing the importance of positive experiences with different others for LMs to foster inclusive environments, it would be advantageous for organizations to encourage LMs to work with individuals from an immigrant background and, thus, cultivate positive out-group experiences for these individuals. In addition, creating social arenas where LMs and employees would have an opportunity to become better acquainted outside the formal job surroundings would likely generate positive intergroup experiences. On the instrumental side of prospering DM among LMs, organizations might benefit from introducing career opportunities and promotions for those LMs whose employees feel well included in their workgroups.

There are several possible avenues for further research. Firstly, an interesting direction would be to examine whether our findings can be replicated in other diversity dimensions in workgroups, such as gender. Specifically, the findings from this study may be applied to investigate how LMs’ contact quality experienced with female leaders and female co-workers in male-dominated settings and their other-orientation relate to the degree to which their female subordinates perceive inclusion in the workgroup. Secondly, since our study was conducted in a labour-intense setting, future research could explore whether these relationships also occur in a setting of high-skilled professionals and where employees from an immigrant background are by far a minority in both the organisation and workgroups. Finally, in order to increase generalisability of our findings, studies investigating these relationships in other national contexts would be valuable.

5.2. Limitations

The contributions of our study need to be viewed in light of several limitations that may constrain our conclusions. First, our research design was cross-sectional. Specifically, since the data were collected at a single time point, valid inferences of causality are prohibited and the possibility of reverse causality cannot be ruled out (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2003). We cannot be certain of having ruled out all alternative explanations in terms of spurious relationships, although we controlled for several variables regarding potential organisational and socio-demographic differences (e.g., De Dreu & Nauta, 2009). Moreover, all the LMs in our sample reported having more or less positive intergroup contact experiences with people from an immigrant background, thus we cannot draw any conclusions about the impact of negative contact. This is most likely context related, since all of these LMs are in daily contact with several subordinates from an immigrant background that make up the majority of most of the workgroups. Accordingly, it is only possible to examine the range of high quality contact from less to more positive, since this sample does not allow to determine whether negative contact might be related to employees’ perceived lack of supervisor support and exclusion in the workgroup. Therefore, in order to overcome these limitations and enrich our understanding of the underlying mechanism, experimental or longitudinal studies capturing LMs’ negative contact are needed in future research.

The second limitation is a moderate to high correlation among the independent variables from LMs. While these constructs are conceptually different, it might be that LMs do not perceive distinctions, causing their responses to be similar across the instruments. Another reason might be social desirability bias, leading LMs to answer in a politically correct manner, probably aware of the relatively low number of LMs in the study. However, implications for the study results might be that

the variables are capturing an overarching concept, rather than separate characteristics of LMs. Future studies with larger samples would need to test these constructs simultaneously in order to draw firm conclusions. Another limitation is, thus, the use of self-reported questionnaire data, raising concerns regarding the possibility of common method bias as well as percept-percept inflated measures among LMs and employees. Besides, both LMs and subordinates could have social desirability bias when answering the questionnaire (Wouters, Maesschalck, Peeters, & Roosen, 2014), and may, thus, have a tendency to answer in a manner that is socially desirable. However, we sought to undertake a procedural remedy by ensuring the anonymity of the respondents. Finally, the relatively small sample size employed in this study may pose a threat to the generalisability of our findings. While our sample size is appropriate for observing medium and large effects (Cohen, 1992), the robustness of our results should be explored in future research with a larger number of participants before solid conclusions can be drawn.

6. CONCLUSION

While companies are investing important resources aiming to make HR diversity practices more user-friendly, provide diversity trainings and various forms of diversity education for LMs, our study suggests that assigning LMs who experienced positive intergroup contact with diverse others and are other-oriented could be the solution. By examining the factors associated with employees’ perceived inclusion in highly multicultural workgroups and a labour-intense setting, our study shows that LMs’ personal experiences and orientation towards others’ interests matter in this context. Finally, this paper revealed that perceived inclusion mediates the relationship between PSS and job embeddedness, suggesting that LMs contribute to the perception of inclusion by providing support where their subordinates, in turn, are more attached to the organisation.

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