Championing Inclusion : Understanding LGBT Diversity and Social Support in the Workplace

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Abstract

Purpose : This study investigated the impact of LGBT diversity management practices on the acceptance of LGBT employees by non-LGBT peers in Indian organizations. Based on classical social support theory and signaling theory, the study focused on how social support from co-workers and supervisors influenced this relationship.

Methodology : Data were collected by surveying 546 employees across nine tech parks in the Indian IT/ITES sector. Partial Least Square (PLS) predictions and structural equation modeling (SEM) were conducted using Smart PLS version 4. Mediation and moderation analyses were also performed.

Findings : The results exhibited that LGBT diversity management positively affected the acceptance of LGBT peers in the workplace ($\beta = 0.298$; $t = 6.314$; $p = 0.00$). Supervisor support was a complementary mediator (VAF = 0.33), while co-worker support moderated the association ($\beta = 0.514$; $t = 15.916$; $p = 0.00$).

Practical Implications : The study presented managerial acumen regarding how social support from supervisors and co-workers enriched the efficacy of diversity management approaches. These outcomes were predominantly pertinent for organizations considering adopting an all-encompassing place of work for LGBT employees.

Originality : This investigation delivered a distinctive offering by inspecting the role of social support in LGBT diversity management among the Indian IT segment. While based in Bengaluru, the study encouraged further investigation into additional businesses and geographies.

Keywords : diversity management, LGBT, acceptance, social support, inclusion, supervisors, co-workers

JEL Classifications Codes : J71, J78, M12, M14

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Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) for the LGBT+ collective in India has garnered impetus over the previous two decades, ensuing legal landmarks such as the 2014 National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) decree and the 2018 legalization of homosexuality with the revoke of Section 377. These legal triumphs

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are vital because they epitomize the commencement of comprehensive efforts to nurture inclusivity, career mentorship, and economic safety for LGBTQ+ persons. As organizations recognize diversity's moral and business imperatives, LGBT-inclusive workplaces are critical drivers of innovation, employee retention, and productivity.

Despite the implementation of pro-LGBT policies, workplace discrimination based on gender and sexual identities persists, affecting LGBT employees' mental health, sense of belonging, and career advancement (Patwardhan et al., 2018). Workplace bullying in India leads to significant emotional and psychological stress among employees, often resulting in reduced productivity and job satisfaction (Misra & Sharma, 2022). Acts such as verbal abuse, exclusion, and intimidation can foster a toxic work environment, affecting both individuals and organizational morals. To control workplace bullying, organizations must enforce strict anti-harassment policies and create awareness about its consequences, which is essential for fostering a healthier, more inclusive workspace (Munshi, 2018).

This study aims to understand the relationship between LGBT diversity management and acceptance of LGBT peers, whether social support by supervisors and co-workers has any role to play in their relationship, and how the varying effect of such social support impact their relationship. This research would be essential for both theory and practice in assimilating the knowledge around diversity management, social support, and acceptance of LGBT peers. This study could help develop a new workplace social support model, boosting employee well-being and holistic inclusion.

Literature Review

LGBT Diversity Management (LDM)

LGBT diversity management is the strategies taken up by the organization, such as policies, practices, and cultural change centered around employees' dignity and a feeling of being valued, thereby facilitating inclusion in the workplace (Hossain et al., 2020). Research shows that inclusive workplaces enhance innovation, job satisfaction, and retention, benefiting overall business outcomes (Fine et al., 2020). However, despite these policies, workplace discrimination against LGBT employees persists, affecting their mental health and career advancement opportunities (McCandless & Elias, 2021). Bottlenecks like cultural differences, resistance to mingling, and lack of awareness create a sense of non-inclusion among LGBT employees (Jones, 2020). Therefore, the HR/diversity managers at organizations must emphasize establishing sensitivity training, employee resource groups, and strong leadership support to reduce these challenges and amplify a sense of acceptance among employees (Davis et al., 2020; Singh & Ramdeo, 2023).

Acceptance of LGBT Peers (ALP)

Many organizations promote LGBT inclusion in workplaces (Munshi & Pandey, 2017). A lot of progressive organizations are adopting pro-LGBT policies and customized benefits for their LGBTQ employees to promote inclusion and a sense of acceptance among their non-LGBT employees. However, there still exists a considerable number of biases, preconceived notions, and prejudices among non-LGBT employees toward their LGBT counterparts, which is creating a significant barrier to their inclusion in workspaces (Harley, 2023; Ho et al., 2023). Research highlights that despite the presence of policies, many LGBT employees face hostile environments, impacting their mental health, sense of belonging, and career progression (McLaren & Castillo, 2021). HR managers struggle to foster environments where LGBT employees feel entirely accepted without reinforcing tokenism or stereotypes. Comprehensive anti-discrimination policies, diversity training, and

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are essential but often fail due to inconsistent implementation, limiting their effectiveness (Divine & Ash, 2022). Therefore, organizations must prioritize genuine efforts to integrate and support LGBT employees to improve well-being, engagement, and organizational performance (Singh & Ramdeo, 2023).

Social Support

The classical social support theory emphasizes the positive influence of feeling valued and connected on an individual's well-being, categorizing support into emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal (Xiao et al., 2021). Social support is a buffer against stress, improving mental health and coping (Flett & Heisel, 2021; James & Sudha, 2017). In modern workplaces, co-worker support fosters a sense of belonging, teamwork, and professional growth, aiding stress relief and collaboration (Callahan, 2023; Pelin & Osoian, 2021). Through emotional empathy, guidance, and tangible resources, supervisor support enhances employee motivation, commitment, and accomplishments (Gabriel & Aguinis, 2022; Uddin et al., 2023).

Theoretical Development of Hypotheses

LDM and ALP

Sivananthajothy et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of robust LGBT diversity management in building a culture of acceptance at the workplace by instilling a sense of belongingness and being valued. Talley et al. (2023) also discussed that non-discriminatory policies and customized benefits for LGBT employees promote safety, thereby inducing a culture of acceptance among the employees. Kaur and Bedi (2017) pointed out that effective diversity initiatives instill a feeling of fairness in procedures and fortify employee trust, inculcating a sense of acceptance. Diversity initiatives like LGBT sensitivity training help reduce bias and promote a sense of inclusivity (Di Marco et al., 2021). Support from leadership, a vital diversity strategy, also reinforces the organization's support toward an inclusive culture and instills a sense of acceptance among employees (April et al., 2023).

↳ **H1 :** LDM influences the behavior of employees toward ALP.

LDM, SSC, and ALP

While LGBTQ diversity management is essential to instill a sense of acceptance among employees, social support from co-workers enhances this relationship by making the employees feel included and giving emotional support (Cohen & McKay, 2020; Vuong et al., 2023). Sethi et al. (2021) also highlighted the combined efforts of organization policies and co-worker support in reinforcing an inclusive culture. Studies have also revealed that social support by co-workers instills belongingness, encourages solidarity, and helps them bring their authentic selves to work (Liu et al., 2021; Toh et al., 2023).

↳ **H3 :** SSC influences employees' behavior toward ALP.

↳ **H5 :** SSC mediates association among LDM and ALP.

↳ **H7 :** SSC moderates association amid LDM and ALP.

LDM, SSS, and ALP

Supervisor support is important in enhancing the relationship between LGBT diversity management and their acceptance from non-LGBT peers (Ho et al., 2023). Mallozzi and Drewery (2019) accentuated the importance of inclusion and highlighted that supervisor support is vital in bridging employees to diversity policies, thereby facilitating their acceptance. Gabriel and Aguinis (2022) also reiterated that social support creates a feeling of emotional safety and brings about a cultural shift by instilling positive opinions toward diversity initiatives by organizations. Therefore, it has become a necessity for organizations to embrace social support to reinforce workplace inclusion (Min & Hong, 2023).

✎ **H2 :** SSS influences employees' behavior toward ALP.

✎ **H4 :** SSC mediates the relationship between LDM and ALP.

✎ **H6 :** SSS mediates the relationship between LDM and ALP.

In this study, we used social support variables to examine both mediation and moderation effects. Through this process, we can explain why and in what way the variables impact the relationship between the independent and dependent variables through mediation, and it also observes when this effect varies through moderation analysis. By integrating these analyses, this research helps increase a deeper understanding of the variable's complex role, elevating our understanding of its impact and operational mechanisms within the model.

A conceptual model was developed based on a literature review and hypothesis formulation. Figure 1 represents a depiction of the hypothesized research model.

Figure 1. *Conceptual Model of Acceptance of LGBTQ Peers*
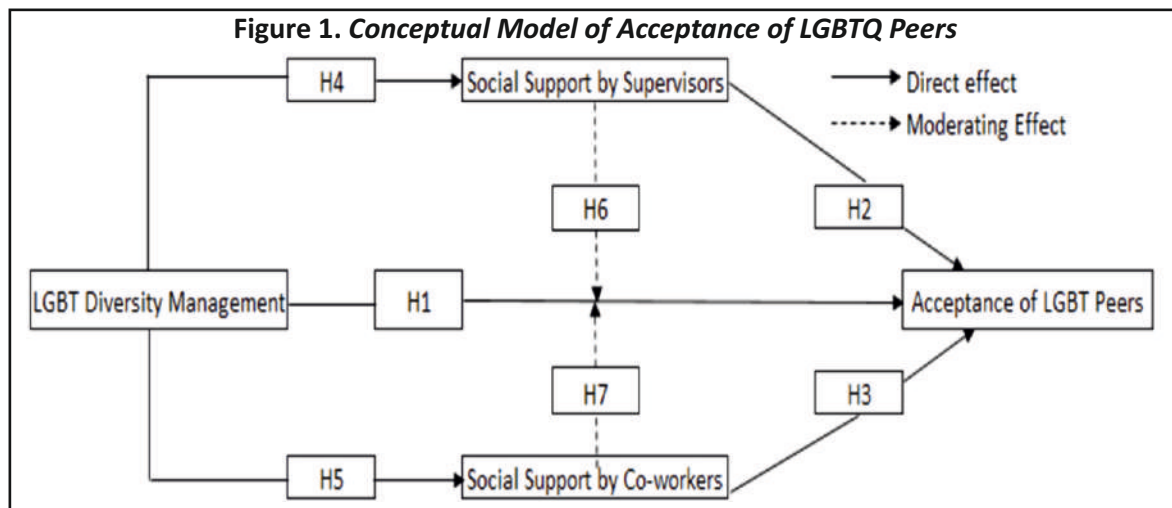
Research Methodology

Smart PLS software (version 4) was used to analyze the primary data obtained through the questionnaire. The proposed "acceptance" framework was subjected to assessing measurement, structural, and predictive models. Also, the effects of moderation and mediation were examined.

Sampling Method

Primary data were obtained through a survey involving IT employees working in Bengaluru between July 2022

and April 2023. The IT sector in Bengaluru plays a substantial role in India's white-collar workforce, constituting approximately 25–30% of the nation's total white-collared workforce. This sector bolsters India's economy, generating considerable export revenue and enticing foreign investments. Additionally, it is a significant source of employment, attracting highly skilled professionals from India and worldwide.

Around 2,000 offline questionnaires were circulated to the target population, and 546 were deemed helpful for further data analysis. Absolute anonymity and confidentiality were adhered to while collecting data from respondents, and the respondents also signed a consent form. Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method, was used, as data was obtained from the top nine tech parks in Bengaluru, representing the majority of the IT population in the city. This way, we could address the challenges posed by the city's vastness. Gathering data from every IT employee across the city was impractical due to Bengaluru's numerous tech parks and a sizable workforce. Focusing on these essential tech parks simplified data collection logistics, ensuring a more efficient and targeted approach to access a representative sample of the IT workforce within feasible limits.

Nature of Sampling

Respondents comprised 50.7% females, 48.2% males, and 1.2% others. "Others" refers to anyone who identified their gender as genderqueer, transgender, gender fluid, or any other category other than male or female. Sexual orientation profiles were 45.8% heterosexuals, 17.6% homosexuals, 31.3% bisexuals, and 5% others. Others in this context could refer to asexual, pansexual, or any other than the mentioned categories.

Measurements

The LGBT diversity management scale, derived from the gender diversity management scale by Rao and Bagali (2014), comprises ten adapted items. For instance, a question assesses whether the organization conducts LGBT diversity training sessions. Similarly, accepting LGBT peers, adapted from the gender diversity scale by Rao and Bagali (2014), included nine items, such as valuing individuals regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation. Modifications were made to suit the diversity of the LGBT population, expanding beyond the original focus on gender diversity concerning women. Responses for these items ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Additionally, social support from supervisors (e.g., reliability during challenging work situations) and co-workers (e.g., ease of communication) was measured using a 5-point extent scale developed by Lim (1996), with responses ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much).

Common Method Bias

Harman's one-factor method checks for common method bias using Principal Axis Factoring, where one factor is loaded with all variables, and exploratory factor analysis is administered on statistical software for social sciences (SPSS). The result displayed a single factor with 25.90% of the total variance explained, which is less than the threshold value of 50%, negating the presence of a general factor and rejecting common method bias in our study.

Analysis and Results

Assessment of the Measurement Model

Our study used a measurement model to check for the constructs' reliability and validity. Also, model fit indices are measured as a part of the measurement model. Standard Root Mean Square Residuals (SRMR) are used to

gauge these model fit indices. A value of 0.079 was obtained for SRMR, which is well below the permissible threshold of 0.08, indicating a good model fit (Hair Jr. et al., 2017). Also, the item's factor loading is higher than the minimum permissible value of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2019). Evaluation of the confidence interval of the loadings revealed non-zero values. Hence, no items were eliminated. The primary data was tested for construct reliability using Cronbach's alpha, rho_a, and composite reliability (CR), and the values were found to be greater than 0.70, the acceptable threshold indicating good construct reliability (Henseler et al., 2015). Data was tested for construct validity through convergent and discriminant validity assessment. The values of average variance extracted (AVE) for all constructs were greater than 0.500, establishing convergent validity. Table 1 represents the construct reliability, convergent validity, and variance inflation factor (VIF) values.

Table 1. *Results of the Measurement Model*

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Rho_A	CR	AVE	VIF	Items	Factor Loadings
Permissible Range	> 0.70 and < 0.95	> 0.80	> 0.80	> 0.05	< 5		> 0.70
ALP	0.909	0.912	0.925	0.579	NA	*ALP1*	0.777
						ALP2	0.809
						ALP3	0.732
						ALP4	0.728
						ALP5	0.828
						ALP6	0.72
						ALP7	0.787
						ALP8	0.75
						ALP9	0.708
LDM	0.932	0.938	0.943	0.624	1.627	*LDM1*	0.724
						LDM2	0.726
						LDM3	0.719
						LDM4	0.866
						LDM5	0.839
						LDM6	0.843
						LDM7	0.743
						LDM8	0.835
						LDM9	0.767
						LDM10	0.816
SSC	0.859	0.878	0.903	0.699	1.556	*SSC1*	0.87
						SSC2	0.79
						SSC3	0.801
						SSC4	0.879
SSS	0.899	0.902	0.929	0.766	1.535	*SSS1*	0.863
						SSS2	0.856
						SSS3	0.883
						SSS4	0.899

Source : Primary data from the questionnaire. Please see the Appendix for the Item statements.

Table 2. *Fornell-Larcker and HTMT Ratio Method of Discriminant Validity*

Constructs	LDM	ALP	SSC	SSS
ALP	**0.761**	0.532	0.593	0.458
LDM	0.496	**0.79**	0.546	0.562
SSC	0.545	0.514	**0.836**	0.503
SSS	0.416	0.521	0.465	**0.875**

Note. Italics and bold numbers represent the square root of AVE of latent variables. The diagonal highlighted values are correlations between the constructs' values. Above the diagonal are HTMT values.

Source : Primary data from the questionnaire.

Discriminate validity was examined using the Fornell-Larcker and HTMT ratio methods. The Fornell-Larcker method was used to compare correlations of constructs with the square root of AVE (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio method (HTMT) was also used, and the values were below 0.85, establishing discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). Table 2 represents the discriminant validity values of the study.

Assessment of the Structural Model

The structural model is assessed by evaluating path coefficients (relationships among study constructs) and their statistical significance. Data is checked for multi-collinearity through variance inflation factor (VIF). Values of VIF presented in Table 2 are less than the recommended value of 5, indicating no multi-collinearity issues (Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016).

In partial least square-structure equation modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis, assessing explanatory power, effect size, and in-sample predictive power is critical. Explanatory power shows how well the model describes observed variance, while effect size measures relationship strength between variables. In-sample predictive power assesses the model's accuracy in predicting outcomes, collectively ensuring its robustness and relevance for practical use. Figure 2 depicts a conclusive structural model with t - statistic values, path coefficients, and p values of
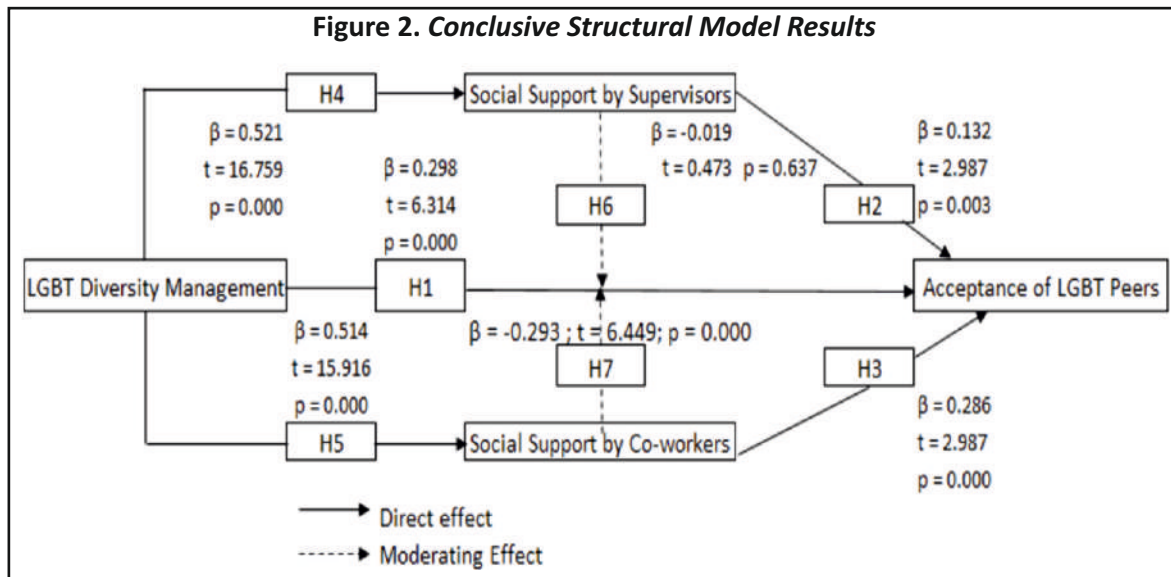

Figure 2. *Conclusive Structural Model Results*

Table 3. *Explanatory Power, Effect Size, and In-Sample Predictive Power*

Constructs	R-Square	F-Square	Q-Square
ALP	0.439	NA	0.223
SSS	0.264	0.097	0.26
SSC	0.272	0.094	0.268
LDM	NA	0.02	NA

Note. "NA" refers to not applicable.

endogenous variables as ALP with LDM ($\beta = 0.298$, $t = 6.314$, $p = 0.000$), SSS ($\beta = 0.132$, $t = 2.987$, $p = 0.003$), SSC ($\beta = 0.286$, $t = 2.987$, $p = 0.000$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) of constructs ALP ($R^2 = 0.439$, $p = 0.000$), SSS ($R^2 = 0.264$, $p = 0.000$), and SSC ($R^2 = 0.272$, $p = 0.000$) is observed to be within the permissible range of path coefficients and coefficients of determination.

F^2 values for exogenous constructs are observed to be LDM ($F^2 = 0.02$), SSS ($F^2 = 0.097$), and SSC ($F^2 = 0.094$), indicating a small and large effect size, respectively, on ALP as per the specified threshold (Khan et al., 2021). The in-sample model's predictive analysis (Q^2) is conducted using the bootstrapping method with 5,000 re-samples (Hair Jr. et al., 2017). In-sample predictive power refers to the model's ability to predict or explain the observed variance in the data used for model estimation. It quantifies how well the model fits the observed data utilized to build the structural equation model. Q^2 values for all constructs are above zero, indicating the predictive relevance of the model. Q^2 values for LDM on ALP ($Q^2 = 0.223$), SSS ($Q^2 = 0.26$), and SSC ($Q^2 = 0.268$) indicate a medium predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2019). Table 3 represents the model's explanatory power (R^2 and F^2) and in-sample predictive power (Q^2).

Out-of-Sample Predictive Power

Out-of-sample predictive relevance is assessed using PLS prediction on SmartPLS 4, using the training and holdout samples (Shmueli et al., 2019). When evaluating the predictions, the root mean squared error (RMSE) and mean absolute error (MAE) are considered. The normality of data was assessed based on PLS-SEM-based residuals. Non-symmetric distribution is observed from PLS-SEM manifest variable error histograms. A left tail distribution is observed, representing an over-prediction in the model. Since data is non-symmetric, it compared MAE values of the PLS-SEM and linear models (LM), respectively. MAE values are less for the PLS-SEM model than LM values for most indicators, reflecting a medium predictive power in the out-of-sample model (Danks & Ray, 2018; Shmueli et al., 2019).

Table 4 represents a model comparison analysis of various proposed models. It is observed that the Q^2 predicted values of Model 3 are the highest compared to other models. Q^2 predict values are more significant than zero, a recommended threshold value implying that the third model has high predictive power and better fits the model. Hence, Model 3 comprises a mediator and moderator (Shmueli et al., 2019).

Table 4. *Model Comparison with Partial Least Square Predict*

Model	Latent Variables	RMSE	MAE	Q^2_Predict
1ˢᵗ Model: Parallel Mediation	*ALP*	0.873	0.713	0.241
	SSS	0.859	0.694	0.268
	SSC	0.863	0.685	0.26
2ⁿᵈ Model: Serial Mediation	*ALP*	0.873	0.713	0.241
	SSS	0.859	0.694	0.268

	SSC	0.862	0.684	0.261
3rd Model: Combination of Mediation	ALP	0.871	0.705	0.244
and Moderation	SSS	0.859	0.694	0.268
	SSC	0.863	0.685	0.26
4th Model: Mediation with a Combination	ALP	0.884	0.711	0.223
of Two Moderators	SSS	0.859	0.694	0.268
	SSC	0.863	0.685	0.26

Assessing Mediation and Moderation Effects

The variance accounted for (VAF) value for the hypothesized path among LDM, SSC, and ALP is found to be 0.185, which is less than 0.2 (Helm et al., 2010). Also, their specific indirect effect ($\beta = 0.069$, $t = 2.921$, $p = 0.00$) indicates that the path is insignificant as the path coefficient ($\beta = 0.069$) is less than 0.1 threshold (Hair et al., 2014). Therefore, these thresholds indicate that SSC has no significant mediating effect on the relationship between LDM and ALP. Hence, social support from co-workers does not mediate the relationship between LGBT diversity management and acceptance of LGBT peers.

The VAF values for the path LDM, SSS, and ALP are computed to be 0.330, and the specific indirect effect values ($\beta = 0.147$, $t = 5.982$, $p = 0.00$) fall within the threshold, indicating a significant partial mediation. In addition, as the path co-efficient between LDM, SSC, and ALP are all positive, SSS is deemed to have a complementary partial mediation effect on the relationship between LDM and ALP (Zhao et al., 2010). VAF values from Table 5 indicate that SSC has no significant mediation effect, while SSS has a partial mediation effect (Helm et al., 2010).

Figure 3 depicts the slope of the interacting effect values ($\beta = -0.293$, $t = 6.449$, $p = 0.00$); it is inferred that SSC has a significant negative moderating effect on ALP. The slope analysis (see Figure 4) shows that at lower SSC (−1 standard deviation), the ALP values increase steeply with increased LDM. At SSC at mean, an increase in LDM increases ALP moderately. At higher SSC (+1 standard deviation), even with the rise in LDM, the ALP remains constant and moves toward a negative relationship at higher values of LDM. This explains that social support from co-workers helps in moderating the acceptance of LGBT peers to an extent only. Higher social support does not contribute toward enhancing the acceptance of gender and sexual minorities, indicating that other factors also need to contribute to strengthening inclusion.

Figure 4 represents the slope analysis of the moderating effect of SSS. Through the values of the interacting

Table 5. *Evaluating Mediation Effect*

	Paths	Path Coefficient (β)	*t*-Statistics	*P*	VAF	Types of Mediation
Direct Effect (P1)	LDM –> ALP	0.298	6.314	0		Not applicable (as no mediation in direct effect)
Total Effect (P3)	LDM –> ALP	0.514	15.414	0		Not applicable (as no mediation in direct effect)
Hypothesized Mediation Effect of SSC						
Specific Indirect Effect (P2)	LDM –> SSC –> ALP	0.069	2.921	0.004	0.185	No significant mediation
Hypothesized Mediation Effect of SSS						
Specific Indirect Effect (P2)	LDM –> SSS –> ALP	0.147	0.148	0.025	0.33	Partial Mediation (Complementary)

Figure 3. *Moderating Roles of Social Support from Co-Workers*

Social Support by Co-Workers x LGBT Diversity Management
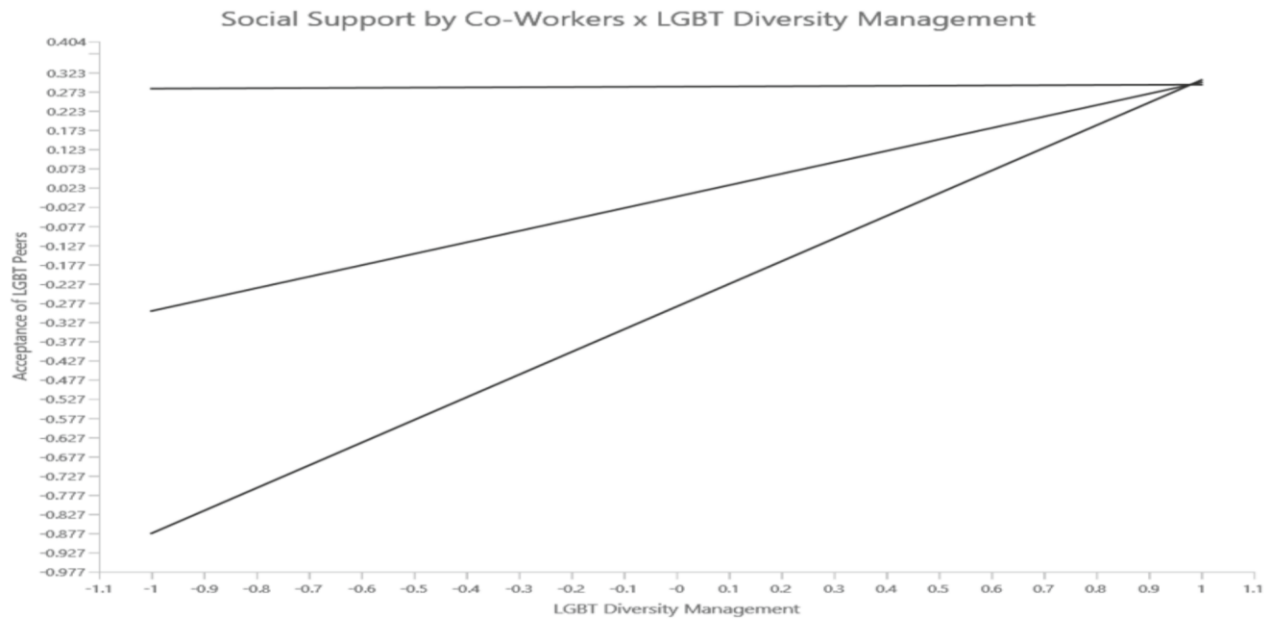
Note. The top, middle, and bottom lines represent social support by co-workers at +1 standard deviation, mean, and −1 standard deviation, respectively.

Figure 4. *Moderating Roles of Social Support from Supervisors*

Social Support by Supervisors x LGBT Diversity Management
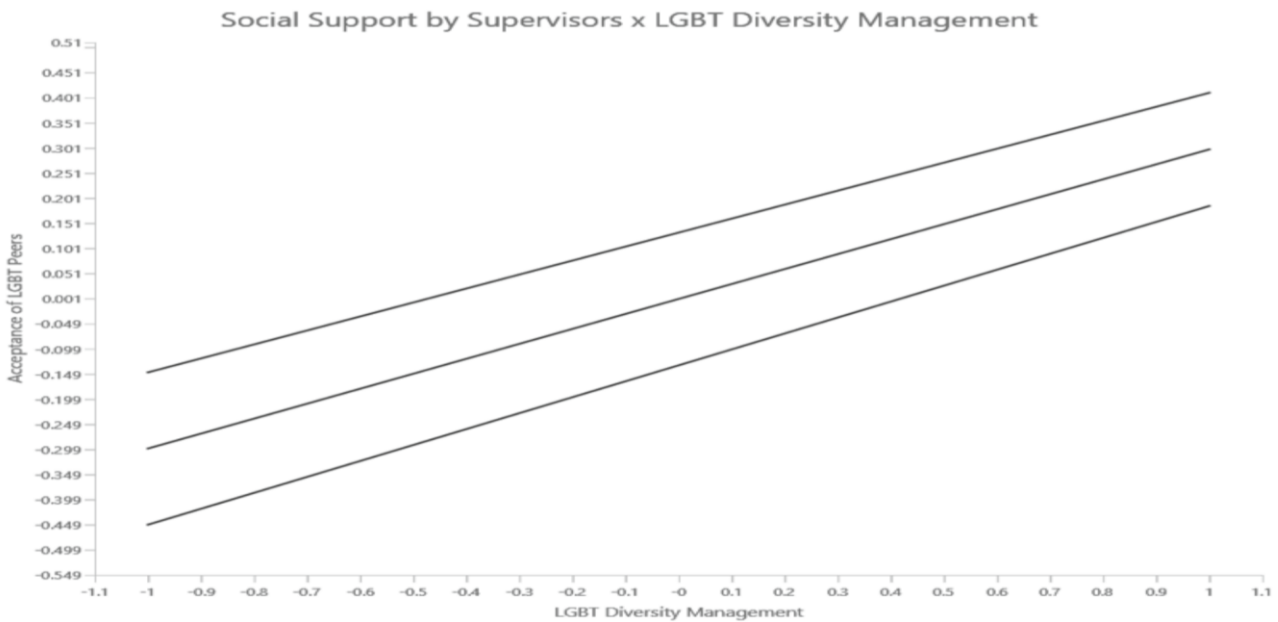
Note. The top, middle, and bottom lines represent social support by supervisors at +1 standard deviation, mean, and −1 standard deviation, respectively.

effect ($\beta = -0.293 < 0.1$, $t = 0.473 < 1.96$, $p = 0.637 > 0.05$), it can be inferred that none of the parameters fall within the threshold. Based on the slope analysis of Figure 4, it can be observed that the interacting effect of SSS at mean, +1, and −1 standard deviation do not converge at any point. Therefore, it can be concluded that social support from supervisors has no moderating effect on the acceptance of LGBT peers.

Table 6. *Hypothesis Results*

Hypothesis	Original Sample (*O*)	Sample Mean (*M*)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	*t*-Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P	Hypothesis Result*
LDM –> ALP	0.298	0.298	0.047	6.314	0	A
SSS –> ALP	0.132	0.133	0.044	2.987	0.003	A
SSC –> ALP	0.286	0.288	0.047	6.144	0	A
Mediation						
LDM –> SSC –> ALP	0.069	0.07	0.024	2.921	0.004	R
LDM –> SSS –> ALP	0.147	0.148	0.025	5.982	0	A
Moderation						
SSS x *LDM –> ALP*	–0.019	–0.02	0.041	0.473	0.637	R
SSC x *LDM –> ALP*	–0.293	–0.293	0.045	6.449	0	A

Note. Abbreviations : A, accepted ; R, rejected.

The findings represented in Table 6 corroborate H1 as LDM significantly affects ALP ($t = 6.314$, $p = 0.00$) (see Table 5). SSS ($t = 2.987$, $p = 0.00$) and SSC ($t = 6.144$, $p = 0.00$) significantly affect ALP, supporting hypotheses H2 and H3 represented in Table 6. The study also exhibits a positive and significant indirect effect of LDM and ALP via SSS, supporting the H4 hypothesis has an insignificant impact via SSC, rejecting the H5 hypothesis. Figures 3 and 4 corroborate SSC's moderating effect and decline SSS's moderating effect on the relationship between LDM and ALP, supporting the H7 hypothesis and rejecting the H6 hypothesis.

Discussion

Centered on the cardinal tenets of the Classical Social Support (CSS) theory and signaling theory, the research postulated the ALP framework by evaluating the influence of LGBT policies, programs, and practices in the form of LDM and the mediating role of SSC and SSS. The results indicate LGBT diversity management significantly influences the acceptance of LGBT peers, and social support by supervisors mediates while social support by co-workers moderates their relationship. The findings of this research have their support from earlier research works on similar constructs in establishing a positive influence of diversity management over acceptance of diverse employees (Di Marco et al., 2021; Ho et al., 2023; Rao & Bagali, 2014). Big consulting firms such as Mercer, Delloite, and McKinsey have also generated reports on the significance of LGBT diversity management and its influence on inclusion.

Diversity management has moved from being a government or a legal mandate to a strategic prominence in organizations worldwide. Organizations embrace diversity to achieve sustainable competitive advantage and become employers of choice. Diversity could reap success only if adopted by valuing, celebrating, proactive, and encouragingly diverse workforce. Organizations can foster a workplace where every employee, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, feels appreciated and empowered by establishing clear guidelines and supportive measures. Reassuring workplace relationships nurtures employees' work experiences, which is even more critical for LGBT employees, who face problems including isolation, social alienation, and occupational stress. Occupational stress creates a hostile work environment where employees feel overwhelmed and disengaged, which increases turnover intentions. High stress levels can lead to burnout, reduced job satisfaction, and a desire to seek healthier work environments. Addressing stress through support systems and work-life balance initiatives is essential to retaining talent and reducing turnover (Rai & Tripathi, 2017). Moreover, healthy relationships foster a sense of belonging, companionship, trust, and self-worth, which can facilitate establishing an inclusive workplace culture.

Fostering LGBT inclusivity within organizations necessitates robust strategies. Through the responses garnered via the LGBT diversity management construct, it is evident that diversity training, non-discriminative policies, and inclusive benefits for LGBT personnel and spouses are a must to enhance inclusion. This mission is further fortified by establishing employee resource groups (ERGs), promoting open dialogue and feedback mechanisms, and strengthening a confidential reporting channel. An open leadership visibility and sturdy collaboration with community business units/external LGBT organizations will invigorate this mission of comprehensive inclusion.

Implications

The implications of this study comprehensively contribute to both theory and practice. For human resource professionals/diversity officers/independent diversity experts, the results of the study emphasize the need for non-discriminative employment policies, employee resource groups, sustainable work-life balance, supportive leadership, and appreciation to reinforce LGBT inclusion and employee acceptance in the workplace (Chandel et al., 2023; Ramaprasad et al., 2017). Through the profound literature review in this paper, the managers are drawn to the benefits a sustainable LGBT inclusion can offer, such as proper talent acquisition, retention, reduced burnout, higher employee commitment, and eventually accelerated business performance. This study also enlightens diversity officers on designing customized programs that suit their diverse employees, dismissing the "one-size-fits-all" approach (Joshi et al., 2017). On the theory front, the study's results elevate the social support theory by including the aspect of the LGBT workforce and how social support from supervisors and co-workers can amplify the acceptance of the LGBT workforce. This study also augments the existing diversity management and acceptance scales to encompass the varied gender identities and sexual orientation. These bespoke scales help gauge more specific outcomes and obtain more nuanced perspectives from the study (Dutta & Srinivasan, 2024). Overall, the study proposed a comprehensive workplace support model encompassing robust diversity management strategies, social support, and peer acceptance, which can spearhead the inclusion of sexual and gender diversities in the workplace (Webster et al., 2018).

Conclusion

The study's findings culminate in certain definite conclusions that add value to the existing research on LGBT inclusion. Our research assessed the influence of LGBT diversity management on the acceptance of LGBT peers. It evaluated the mediating and moderating roles of social support by supervisors and co-workers in this relationship. This study propounded a conceptual acceptance framework and used the Partial Least Square technique to evaluate the proposed relationships emphatically and empirically. The findings revealed that LGBT diversity management positively impacted the acceptance of LGBT peers. Results also indicate that social support by supervisors mediates while social support by co-workers moderates the relationship. HR managers must properly strategize and formulate policies to establish a positive work environment, instilling a sense of belongingness and psychological well-being. It urges to espouse the cause for including gender and sexual minorities, which can be achieved through a two-pronged approach: The organization and the employees. Policies and practices must be strategized at the organizational level, while inclusive thoughts should be anchored at the individual level. Such individual-level metamorphosis can transform the organization's culture and effectuate tolerance and camaraderie. Indicatively, this study is a unique attempt to investigate and advocate the pre-eminent role of organizations and employees in fortifying workplace inclusion.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Although many implications have been discussed in this research work, specific perspectives can add impetus to

future research. Current research is cross-sectional; however, a longitudinal study can facilitate gauging the varying acceptance levels over time. Second, the research encompassed only respondents from Bengaluru, India; future research can extend this research to other countries to obtain a global perspective. Third, the current study was quantitative; a qualitative perspective will add finer insights and a more detailed perspective. Fourth, the study revolved around the "LGBT" from the acronym "LGBTQIAA+"; future research can delve into individual categories and develop customized recommendations.

Authors' Contribution

In this study, Sowmya Amancherla, the primary author, played a pivotal role in conceptualizing the research idea and designing the study framework. She was responsible for developing the research hypothesis, data collection, and initial analysis. Dr. Sathiyaseelan Balasundaram, the second author, contributed significantly by refining the research design, assisting with data interpretation, and conducting advanced statistical analysis, including structural equation modeling (SEM). Dr. Santosh Basavaraj, the third author, provided critical theoretical insights, helped in the literature review, and contributed to the discussion and conclusion sections of the paper. The authors collaborated to ensure the research findings' accuracy, relevance, and clarity.

Conflict of Interest

The authors confirm that they have no affiliations or associations with any organization or entity that holds financial or non-financial interests in the subject matter or materials presented in this manuscript.

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Appendix. *List of Questionnaire Items*

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Items	Factor Loadings	Source
Acceptance of LGBT Peers [*ALP*]	0.909	In my organization, I am comfortable working in a group where there are LGBT persons [*ALP1*].	0.777	Rao & Bagali (2014)
		In my organization, I value others regardless of their gender identity, sexual orientation, dress, and mannerisms [*ALP2*].	0.809	
		In my organization, I communicate effectively regardless of differences in gender identity or sexual orientation [*ALP3*].	0.732	
		In my organization, I can learn new skills and values by working with LGBT persons [*ALP4*].	0.728	
		In my organization, the LGBT quota policy is necessary from recruitment to retention [*ALP5*].	0.828	
		In my organization, I value and respect fundamental differences with respect to gender identity or sexual orientation [*ALP6*].	0.72	
		In my organization, I am comfortable working with my boss regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation consideration [*ALP7*].	0.787	
		In my organization, LGBT diversity is very important to the organization [*ALP8*].	0.75	
		In my organization, there is no difference in work performance between LGBT and non-LGBT peers [*ALP9*].	0.708	
LGBT Diversity Management [*LDM*]	0.932	My organization has LGBT diversity training sessions to enhance awareness and remove any bias [*LDM1*].	0.724	Rao & Bagali (2014)
		My organization has mentoring, coaching, and counseling sessions for the career development of LGBT employees [*LDM2*].	0.726	
		My organization has options for flexible working hours for LGBT employees (e.g., work from home, part-time work, flexible timings) [*LDM3*].	0.719	
		My organization has LGBT networking forums and affinity groups [*LDM4*].	0.866	
		My organization has LGBT-specific diversity workshops and seminars [*LDM5*].	0.839	
		My organization has policies about smooth transition before, during, and after parental leave at the time of childbirth and childcare for LGBT employees [*LDM6*].	0.843	
		My organization has protection against mobbing and sexual harassment for LGBT employees in my organization [*LDM7*].	0.743	
		My organization has policies that favor LGBT quota in hiring, promoting, retaining, and career development [*LDM8*].	0.835	
		My organization has protection against gender discrimination for LGBT employees [*LDM9*].	0.767	
		My organization has funding, involvement, and commitment from top leaders for LGBT-specific diversity programs [*LDM10*].	0.816	
Social Support by Co-Workers [*SSC*]	0.859	How much do your co-workers go out of their way to do things to make your work life easier for you? [*SSC1*]	0.87	Lim (1996)
		How easy is it to talk to your co-workers? [*SSC2*]	0.79	
		How much can your co-workers be relied on when things get tough at work? [*SSC3*]	0.801	
		How much are your co-workers willing to listen to your personal problems? [*SSC4*]	0.879	

Social Support by Supervisors [*SSS*]	0.899	How much does your supervisor go out of their way to do things to make your work life easier for you? [*SSS1*]	0.863	Lim (1996)
		How easy is it to talk to your supervisor? [*SSS2*]	0.856	
		How much can your supervisor be relied on when things get tough at work? [*SSS3*]	0.883	
		How much is your supervisor willing to listen to your personal problems? [*SSS4*]	0.899	

About the Authors

Ms. Sowmya Amancherla is a dedicated researcher focused on LGBTQ+ inclusion in the workplace. She has spoken at international conferences and led webinars educating others about LGBTQ+ rights. In addition to her academic work, she collaborates with NGOs in Bengaluru, India, advocating for greater LGBTQ+ representation. Previously, she worked as an HR manager at Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages and Ericsson India Global Pvt. Ltd. and interned at Sony India Center. Beyond research, Sowmya is a respected occultist specializing in tarot and angel card reading, using her spiritual gifts to help others.

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