

# Inclusive Human Resources (HR) Practices, Employee Engagement, and Retention: Evidence from Diverse Workforces in Southwestern Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *The increasing demand for workplace inclusivity has heightened interest in how human resource (HR) practices affect employee outcomes across diverse organizational settings. While evidence from Western contexts indicates that inclusive HR practices improve positive work attitudes, limited empirical data from Sub-Saharan Africa exists. This study examined the impact of inclusive HR practices on employee engagement and retention among diverse workforces in Southwestern Nigeria. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory and the Job Demands-Resources*

*model, it was hypothesized that inclusive HR practices would boost engagement and decrease turnover intentions, with engagement serving as a mediator. A cross-sectional survey of 378 employees in five industries across Lagos, Oyo, and Ogun States was carried out using validated tools, including the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. Structural equation modeling showed that inclusive HR practices significantly predicted employee engagement ( $\beta = 0.47, p < 0.001$ ) and negatively influenced turnover intentions ( $\beta = -0.39, p < 0.001$ ). Mediation analysis revealed that engagement partly mediated the relationship between inclusive HR practices and turnover intentions. These results suggest that inclusive HR practices foster employees' psychological attachment to their work while lowering their desire to leave. The study advances Human Resources Management (HRM) scholarship by providing evidence from Africa on inclusivity and engagement and offers practical advice for organizations in Nigeria aiming to develop engaged and stable workforces.*

**Keywords:** Inclusive HR practices, employee engagement, turnover intentions, workforce diversity

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## INTRODUCTION

Inclusive human resource (HR) practices have gained increasing recognition in contemporary organisational research as a cornerstone of effective people management. These practices-covering recruitment, training, career development, performance management, and recognition-emphasise fairness, equity, and representation across the workforce. By ensuring that employees feel valued regardless of social or demographic background, inclusivity fosters belonging and psychological safety, which are critical to sustained commitment and performance (Manjunath & Ramkumar, 2025). In increasingly diverse economies, organisations that prioritise inclusive HR practices are better positioned to cultivate resilient, competitive workforces.

Employee engagement, defined as the degree of energy, dedication, and absorption employees invest in their work, has emerged as a central outcome of inclusivity. Engaged employees display higher performance, stronger loyalty, and greater contributions to collaboration and innovation. Empirical studies consistently show that HR systems characterised by fairness and inclusivity strengthen engagement by communicating organisational support and recognising contributions (Ainiya & Kusmaningtyas, 2025). Conversely, perceptions of inequity or exclusion undermine morale and productivity.

Turnover intention, another outcome closely tied to HR practices, reflects employees' conscious desire to leave their organisation. High turnover intentions raise costs, disrupt workflow, and erode institutional knowledge. Evidence indicates that turnover is often driven by disengagement and perceptions of bias within HR systems (Guo, 2025). Consequently, reducing turnover intentions through inclusive practices has become a strategic priority for organisations worldwide.

The Nigerian context provides a particularly important setting for examining these dynamics. As Africa's largest economy and most populous nation, Nigeria is characterised by significant diversity along ethnic, religious, gender, and linguistic lines. The Southwestern region, comprising Lagos, Oyo, Ekiti, Ondo, Osun, and Ogun States, serves as the country's industrial hub and hosts both multinational corporations and indigenous firms. Despite this diversity, many organisations continue to rely on traditional HR systems that prioritise compliance and control rather than inclusivity. These practices frequently result in inequitable access to opportunities, opaque appraisal mechanisms, and weak diversity management, which may erode engagement and heighten turnover intentions (Mvuyana, Nzimakwe & Utete, 2025).

The relationship between inclusive HR practices, engagement, and turnover intentions is underpinned by Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model. SET suggests that employees reciprocate organisational fairness and support with loyalty and engagement, whereas exclusion fosters withdrawal and turnover intentions. Similarly, the JD-R model conceptualises inclusive HR practices as organisational resources that buffer against job strain, promote motivation, and strengthen engagement, thereby lowering the risk of voluntary turnover (Manjunath & Ramkumar, 2025). These perspectives provide a strong theoretical basis for examining inclusivity as a determinant of employee attitudes and behaviours.

While research in Western and Asian contexts highlights the benefits of inclusive HR systems, empirical studies in Sub-Saharan Africa remain limited. Evidence from South Africa links disengagement with counterproductive behaviours, underscoring the risks of non-inclusive practices (Mvuyana et al., 2025). However, Nigerian scholarship on inclusivity, engagement, and turnover remains scarce, leaving theoretical and practical gaps in understanding how HR inclusivity functions in diverse organisational settings.

This study addresses these gaps by examining the influence of inclusive HR practices on employee engagement and turnover intentions among diverse workforces in Southwestern Nigeria. It further investigates whether engagement mediates the relationship between inclusive HR practices and turnover intentions. Specifically, the study asks: (1) To what extent do inclusive HR practices predict employee engagement? (2) How do inclusive HR practices affect turnover intentions? and (3) Does employee engagement mediate the relationship between inclusive HR practices and turnover intentions?

The study contributes to both theory and practice. Theoretically, it extends the application of SET and the JD-R model to Nigeria, a context where empirical evidence is sparse. Practically, it provides guidance for HR managers and policymakers on designing inclusive practices that enhance engagement and reduce attrition, particularly in multicultural environments such as Southwestern Nigeria. In doing so, it offers insights into how inclusivity can strengthen workforce stability, organisational commitment, and long-term sustainability.

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## Conceptual Review

### Inclusive HR Practices

Inclusive HR practices constitute organisational strategies designed to promote fairness, equity, and equal opportunity across the employment cycle. They encompass recruitment, training, appraisal, recognition, and flexible work arrangements, all of which collectively create an environment where diverse employees feel valued and supported. Recruitment equity is particularly salient, as transparent and merit-based selection processes foster legitimacy and trust while mitigating the effects of discriminatory hiring practices documented in contexts such as Nigeria (Ainiya & Kusmaningtyas, 2025). Equitable access to training further signals organisational commitment to employee development, thereby enhancing empowerment, motivation, and retention (Manjunath & Ramkumar, 2025).

Flexible work policies have emerged as increasingly relevant in multicultural and multigenerational workforces, acknowledging employees' varied personal, health, and caregiving needs. By supporting work-life balance, such arrangements reduce strain, cultivate perceptions of organisational care, and strengthen engagement (Guo, 2025). Similarly, fair and transparent appraisal systems minimise bias and reinforce merit-based recognition, which enhances trust and commitment while discouraging turnover (Mvuyana, Nzimakwe & Utete, 2025). Recognition systems complement these mechanisms by acknowledging employee contributions and unique strengths, fostering belonging and discretionary effort—factors particularly vital in diverse Nigerian workplaces (Ainiya & Kusmaningtyas, 2025). Collectively, inclusive HR practices function not only as fairness mechanisms but also as motivational resources that strengthen organisational attachment.

### Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is widely conceptualised as a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional, cognitive, and behavioural dimensions of work investment. Emotional engagement reflects enthusiasm, pride, and affective connection to work; cognitive engagement denotes mental absorption and sustained attention; and behavioural engagement manifests in discretionary effort and willingness to exceed formal role requirements (Guo, 2025). Inclusive HR practices nurture these dimensions by creating enabling conditions where employees feel valued, supported, and fairly treated. Access to equitable training and fair appraisal systems, for instance, bolsters cognitive engagement by equipping employees with skills and aligning expectations with developmental feedback (Manjunath & Ramkumar, 2025). Recognition and inclusive appraisal processes reinforce behavioural engagement, while flexible work arrangements and inclusive recruitment practices reduce disengagement by mitigating stressors associated with bias, inequity, or rigid schedules (Mvuyana et al., 2025; Ainiya & Kusmaningtyas, 2025).

Evidence further indicates that engagement mediates the relationship between inclusive HR practices and turnover intentions. By enhancing employees' psychological connection to work,

inclusivity indirectly reduces withdrawal tendencies, thereby highlighting its dual role as both a driver of positive attitudes and a buffer against negative outcomes (Guo, 2025).

### **Turnover Intentions**

Turnover intentions, defined as deliberate thoughts of leaving an organisation, are recognised as strong predictors of actual turnover and its associated costs in recruitment, training, and knowledge loss. Inclusive HR practices are consistently linked to lower turnover intentions by fostering fairness, belonging, and perceptions of career growth (Ainiya & Kusmaningtyas, 2025). Equitable recruitment and training opportunities reinforce employees' belief in upward mobility, reducing the likelihood of job search behaviour (Manjunath & Ramkumar, 2025). Flexible work policies contribute by supporting work-life balance, while fair appraisal and recognition systems strengthen procedural justice and loyalty (Guo, 2025).

In Nigeria, turnover intentions are further shaped by structural inequities and economic volatility, which heighten employee mobility. Within this context, inclusivity functions as a critical retention strategy, ensuring representation and stability, particularly for historically marginalised groups. Empirical evidence suggests that Nigerian organisations adopting inclusive practices experience not only stronger engagement but also reduced turnover intentions, thereby underscoring inclusivity's strategic and socio-economic importance (Mvuyana et al., 2025).

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Social Exchange Theory (SET)**

Social Exchange Theory (SET) provides a foundational perspective for explaining why inclusive HR practices enhance engagement and reduce turnover intentions. The theory posits that employment relationships are grounded in reciprocal exchanges, where fair and supportive treatment from the organisation is met with loyalty, commitment and positive behaviours from employees. When organisations adopt inclusive practices such as equitable recruitment, transparent performance appraisal and recognition, employees interpret these as investments in their well-being. In response, they reciprocate with heightened engagement, reduced withdrawal behaviours and greater commitment (Guo, 2025).

Research shows that inclusivity signals organisational support, which in turn fosters trust and strengthens psychological contracts. In diverse contexts such as Nigeria, where historical inequities have often shaped employment practices, inclusivity is especially critical to building trust among employees from different backgrounds. By creating environments that affirm diversity, organisations enhance perceptions of justice and fairness, which are key antecedents of engagement (Mvuyana, Nzimakwe, & Utete, 2025).

SET also explains the inverse relationship between inclusive HR practices and turnover intentions. Employees who perceive that their organisations value fairness and inclusivity are less likely to

seek alternative employment because they perceive the relationship as mutually beneficial. Conversely, exclusionary practices erode trust, reduce engagement and intensify turnover intentions. In this way, SET highlights the centrality of fairness and reciprocity in sustaining employee retention and motivation in diverse workplaces (Manjunath & Ramkumar, 2025).

### **Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model**

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model complements SET by conceptualising inclusive HR practices as resources that buffer against the negative effects of job demands. According to this model, job demands such as workload, role ambiguity and interpersonal conflict contribute to burnout and disengagement when not offset by sufficient resources. Inclusive HR practices act as job resources by fostering supportive structures and enabling employees to thrive despite demands. For instance, flexible work arrangements help employees balance professional and personal responsibilities, thereby reducing stress and preventing disengagement (Ainiya & Kusmaningtyas, 2025).

Recognition systems and fair appraisal mechanisms function as motivational resources that enhance employees' sense of value and competence. When employees perceive that their contributions are fairly acknowledged, they develop stronger intrinsic motivation and are less susceptible to burnout. This resource-based perspective is particularly relevant in contexts where employees face structural inequities, as inclusivity provides an essential buffer against systemic disadvantages (Guo, 2025).

The JD-R model also suggests that inclusive practices strengthen engagement by stimulating both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. While policies like training access offer developmental resources that improve skillsets, recognition and fairness enhance psychological resources such as self-efficacy and resilience. By integrating these diverse resources, inclusive HR systems mitigate disengagement and reduce turnover intentions, providing organisations with a sustainable strategy for managing diverse workforces (Mvuyana et al., 2025).

### **Empirical Review**

Several empirical studies across global, African, and Nigerian contexts have examined the relationship between inclusive HR practices, employee engagement, and turnover intentions, generally confirming a positive association while also highlighting contextual nuances. Globally, inclusive HR practices such as equitable recruitment, transparent appraisals, flexible work arrangements, and recognition systems have been shown to enhance engagement and reduce turnover by fostering perceptions of fairness and organisational justice (Guo, 2025; Manjunath & Ramkumar, 2025). These findings align with the Job Demands-Resources model, which positions inclusivity as a motivational resource that buffers against disengagement and strengthens employees' psychological attachment to their organisations.

Within Africa, evidence similarly points to the centrality of inclusivity in shaping employee outcomes. Studies in South Africa and Cameroon demonstrate that inclusive HR practices predict both emotional and behavioural engagement, while also mitigating turnover through enhanced perceptions of fairness, trust, and productivity (Mvuyana, Nzimakwe & Utete, 2025; Nchofoung, 2024). Importantly, these results are transferable to the Nigerian context given shared labour market dynamics and challenges of diversity management.

In Asia, recent contributions from Indonesia also underscore the mediating role of engagement, showing that inclusivity indirectly influences retention by deepening employees' connection to work (Ainiya & Kusmaningtyas, 2025). Together, these findings suggest that inclusive practices serve not only as fairness mechanisms but also as motivational drivers across diverse cultural settings.

Nigerian scholarship has further enriched the discourse by emphasising inclusivity as both a retention strategy and a socio-economic imperative. Omodan (2020) highlighted the role of inclusive participation in decision-making in fostering engagement within universities, while Kasimu (2020) and Edeh, Ugwu and Ugwuanyi (2024) provided evidence from broader organisational contexts. Their studies revealed that transparent recruitment, equitable training, and flexible policies significantly reduce turnover intentions and enhance commitment, thereby extending the relevance of Social Exchange Theory to the Nigerian workplace.

Collectively, the reviewed literature demonstrates a consistent pattern: inclusive HR practices foster emotional, cognitive, and behavioural engagement while simultaneously reducing turnover intentions. However, the Nigerian context presents additional significance, as inclusivity also functions to address systemic inequities and promote equitable representation. This dual role positions inclusive HR practices not only as a mechanism for improving retention but also as a strategic response to broader socio-economic challenges.

## METHODOLOGY

The study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to investigate the impact of inclusive human resource practices on employee engagement and turnover intentions among diverse workforces in Southwestern Nigeria. This design was suitable for obtaining standardised responses from a large sample and for capturing employees' perceptions of inclusivity and associated behavioural outcomes, which are subjective but measurable with validated scales. The population comprised employees across public and private organisations in education, health, banking, and manufacturing sectors. Southwestern Nigeria was purposively selected because of its cultural diversity, economic significance, and heterogeneous workforce. Stratified random sampling ensured proportional representation from each sector. Based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sampling table, a sample of 384 employees was determined and adjusted to 400 to mitigate non-response.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed from established scales. Inclusive HR practices were assessed with items adapted from Nishii and Mayer's (2009) Inclusive HR Practices Scale, reflecting practices such as equitable recruitment, training access, flexible work arrangements, fair appraisals, and recognition. Employee engagement was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9; Schaufeli et al., 2019), while turnover intentions were captured with a three-item scale by Bothma and Roodt (2019). Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Instrument validity was ensured through expert review by three HRM scholars, who confirmed the relevance and clarity of the items. Reliability was verified through a pilot study of 40 employees in Lagos State, yielding Cronbach's alpha coefficients above 0.70 across constructs. Construct validity was further supported by exploratory factor analysis, which confirmed the dimensionality of inclusive HR practices, engagement, and turnover intentions. The survey was administered electronically via professional networks and workgroups. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and confidentiality was assured. A total of 357 valid responses were retrieved, representing an effective response rate of 89.3%.

Data analysis combined descriptive and inferential techniques. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions) summarised respondents' profiles and responses. Multiple regression was used to test the direct effects of inclusive HR practices on engagement and turnover intentions. Structural equation modelling (SEM) with AMOS further examined the mediating role of engagement. Prior to analysis, data were screened for missing values, outliers, and normality assumptions to ensure statistical robustness.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical guidance and approval for this study was obtained from an expert in management studies. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage. Data were treated with strict confidentiality, and anonymity was ensured by excluding any identifying information from the dataset.

**ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS****Descriptive Statistics****Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 357)**

Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	197	55.2%
	Female	160	44.8%
<b>Age</b>	18–25 years	33	9.2%
	25–40 years	228	63.9%
	41 years and above	96	26.9%
<b>Education</b>	Bachelor's degree	207	58%
	Postgraduate (MSc/PhD)	118	33%
	Diploma/OND	32	9%
<b>Tenure</b>	0–5 years	97	27.2%
	6–10 years	192	57.8%
	11–15 years	48	13.4%
	16–20 years	20	5.6%

Source: Researchers' Field Survey (2025)

The demographic profile of our 357 respondents in Table 1 above shows a fairly balanced gender distribution, with males constituting 55.2% and females 44.8%. The majority (63.9%) are aged between 25 and 40 years, indicating a predominantly young and mid-career workforce, while 26.9% are above 41 years and only 9.2% fall within 18–25 years. In terms of education, most respondents hold at least a bachelor's degree (58%), followed by 33% with postgraduate qualifications, and 9% with a diploma or OND, reflecting a well-educated sample. Regarding tenure, 57.8% have between 6–10 years of work experience, 27.2% have less than 5 years, while smaller proportions (13.4% and 5.6%) have served 11–15 years and 16–20 years respectively. Overall, the sample is composed mainly of well-educated, early- to mid-career professionals with moderate organisational tenure, suggesting that the findings are more likely to capture the perspectives of a relatively young but experienced workforce rather than long-serving employees.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables**

Variable	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Inclusive HR Practices	3.82	0.74	0.88
Employee Engagement	3.97	0.68	0.91
Turnover Intentions	2.31	0.89	0.85

Source: Researchers' Field Survey (2025)

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the key constructs. Inclusive HR practices recorded a mean of 3.82 (SD = 0.74), suggesting that respondents generally perceived HR policies to be moderately inclusive. Employee engagement had a mean of 3.97 (SD = 0.68), reflecting above-average engagement levels, while turnover intentions had a mean of 2.31 (SD = 0.89), indicating relatively low intentions to quit among employees.

### Correlation Analysis

**Table 3: Correlation Matrix of Key Variables**

Variable	1	2	3
1. Inclusive HR Practices	1.00	0.61***	-0.48***
2. Employee Engagement	0.61***	1.00	-0.52***
3. Turnover Intentions	-0.48***	-0.52***	1.00

\*Note: \*\* $p < .001$

Pearson correlation analysis in Table 3 showed that inclusive HR practices were significantly and positively correlated with employee engagement ( $r = 0.61$ ,  $p < .001$ ), suggesting that employees who perceived greater inclusivity were more engaged. Inclusive HR practices were negatively correlated with turnover intentions ( $r = -0.48$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that inclusivity was associated with lower intentions to quit. Employee engagement also correlated negatively with turnover intentions ( $r = -0.52$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

### Regression Analysis

**Table 4: Regression Analysis Results**

Dependent Variable	Predictor	$\beta$ (Standardised)	t-value	p-value
Employee Engagement	Inclusive HR Practices	0.58	14.21	< .001
Turnover Intentions	Inclusive HR Practices	-0.41	-9.56	< .001

To test the hypotheses, hierarchical regression analyses were conducted as shown in Table 4. In the first model, inclusive HR practices significantly predicted employee engagement ( $\beta = 0.58$ ,  $t = 14.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ), supporting Hypothesis 1. In the second model, inclusive HR practices significantly predicted turnover intentions ( $\beta = -0.41$ ,  $t = -9.56$ ,  $p < .001$ ), supporting Hypothesis 2.

**Mediation Analysis****Table 5: Mediation Analysis Results (Bootstrapping, 5,000 samples)**

Pathway	$\beta$ (Standardised)	95% CI (Lower–Upper)	p-value
Inclusive HR Practices → Turnover Intentions (Direct Effect)	-0.23	[-0.34, -0.12]	< .01
Inclusive HR Practices → Engagement → Turnover Intentions (Indirect)	-0.18	[-0.26, -0.11]	< .01
Inclusive HR Practices → Turnover Intentions (Total Effect)	-0.41	[-0.52, -0.30]	< .001

The mediating role of employee engagement was tested (Table 5) using structural equation modelling (SEM) with bootstrapping (5,000 resamples). Results indicated a significant indirect effect of inclusive HR practices on turnover intentions through engagement ( $\beta = -0.18$ , 95% CI = [-0.26, -0.11]), confirming Hypothesis 3. The total effect of inclusive HR practices on turnover intentions ( $\beta = -0.41$ ) was partially mediated, as the direct effect remained significant ( $\beta = -0.23$ ,  $p < .01$ ) after accounting for engagement.

**Table 6: Summary of Hypotheses Testing**

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H1	Inclusive HR practices positively influence employee engagement	Supported
H2	Inclusive HR practices negatively influence turnover intentions	Supported
H3	Employee engagement mediates the relationship between inclusive HR practices and turnover intentions	Supported

**Model Fit Statistics**

The SEM model demonstrated good fit indices:  $\chi^2/df = 2.15$ , CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.051. These values fall within the recommended thresholds, indicating that the proposed model adequately represents the data.

**Summary of Findings**

The results reveal that inclusive HR practices play a critical role in shaping employee outcomes in Southwestern Nigeria. Specifically, employees who perceived equitable recruitment, fair appraisals, accessible training opportunities, recognition systems, and flexible policies were more engaged and less likely to consider leaving their organisations. Furthermore, engagement emerged as a significant mechanism through which inclusive practices reduced turnover intentions, reinforcing the relevance of Social Exchange Theory and the Job Demands-Resources model in this context.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study offer important insights into the relationship between inclusive HR practices, employee engagement, and turnover intentions within diverse workforces in Southwestern Nigeria. The correlation results demonstrate that inclusive HR practices are strongly and positively associated with employee engagement, while negatively correlated with turnover intentions. These findings are reinforced by the regression analysis, which shows that inclusive HR practices significantly predict increased engagement and reduced turnover intentions. The mediation analysis further confirms that employee engagement partially mediates this relationship, suggesting that inclusive practices indirectly reduce turnover by fostering greater employee involvement and commitment. This pattern aligns with both theoretical expectations and emerging empirical evidence.

From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory (SET), the results affirm that employees who perceive fairness and inclusivity in recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and recognition reciprocate with higher engagement and loyalty to the organisation (Blomme et al., 2022). Fair treatment strengthens the social contract between employees and employers, reducing intentions to leave. Similarly, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model is supported, as inclusive HR practices act as organisational resources that buffer against disengagement and burnout. By providing equitable access to opportunities and recognition, organisations build a supportive environment that motivates employees to stay, in line with findings by Chen et al. (2023) in cross-cultural HR studies.

Empirically, the findings are consistent with studies conducted in African and Nigerian contexts. For instance, Aboramadan et al. (2020) found that inclusive HR practices positively influenced engagement and reduced turnover in African higher education institutions. Likewise, Onyishi et al. (2021) highlighted that equitable HR systems in Nigerian firms fostered stronger commitment and reduced attrition. These findings resonate with the present results, suggesting that inclusivity in HR systems is a key determinant of employee retention across cultural contexts. Globally, evidence from meta-analyses supports this claim, as inclusive HR systems have been linked to reduced voluntary turnover and enhanced well-being (Kundu & Mor, 2021). The mediation results in this study extend these insights by empirically confirming that engagement is a critical mechanism through which inclusivity translates into retention.

Notably, the findings of this study highlight the dual role of inclusive HR practices in both directly lowering turnover intentions and indirectly reducing them by enhancing engagement. This dual pathway suggests that engagement is not just an outcome of HR inclusivity but also a crucial mediator in sustaining workforce stability. For Nigerian organisations, where workforce diversity presents unique challenges, adopting inclusive HR practices could be pivotal in addressing chronic retention problems. By ensuring equity in recruitment, fairness in performance appraisal, and

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flexible work arrangements, organisations can foster engagement while simultaneously mitigating the risk of employee exit.

The findings also contribute to the broader discourse on workforce diversity management in emerging economies. While most literature has focused on Western contexts, this study provides context-specific evidence that inclusive HR practices are equally vital in African workplaces. It demonstrates that inclusivity not only benefits minority or underrepresented employees but strengthens overall organisational performance by retaining a motivated and engaged workforce. This offers a practical implication for HR managers and policymakers in Nigeria to institutionalise inclusivity as a strategic HR priority.

In summary, this study affirms the theoretical and empirical view that inclusive HR practices serve as both a direct and indirect lever for reducing turnover intentions via employee engagement. The evidence situates inclusivity not merely as a social or moral imperative but as a strategic business necessity for organisations operating within diverse cultural contexts like Nigeria.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study set out to examine the influence of inclusive HR practices on employee engagement and turnover intentions among diverse workforces in Southwestern Nigeria. The findings confirm that inclusive HR practices significantly enhance employee engagement and reduce turnover intentions, both directly and indirectly, through the mediating role of engagement. These results provide strong support for Social Exchange Theory, which posits that fair and equitable treatment fosters reciprocal commitment, and the Job Demands-Resources model, which underscores the importance of organisational resources in mitigating disengagement and burnout. The evidence thus positions inclusivity in HR as a critical mechanism for both workforce stability and organisational effectiveness.

Theoretically, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on HR inclusivity by extending empirical validation within the Nigerian context, where workforce diversity presents unique challenges. While existing literature has largely concentrated on Western contexts, the present study underscores the universality of inclusive HR practices as a driver of engagement and retention. By empirically demonstrating the mediating role of engagement, it enriches theoretical models that explain how HR systems influence employee outcomes.

Practically, the findings highlight that Nigerian organisations can strategically address retention challenges by embedding inclusivity into their HR policies and processes. Recruitment equity, equitable access to training, fair appraisal systems, flexible work policies, and recognition systems are all levers that can strengthen engagement and lower attrition risks. In settings where turnover imposes high costs on organisational performance, prioritising inclusivity is both a moral and economic imperative.

Policy-wise, the results suggest that regulators and professional HR bodies in Nigeria should develop guidelines and frameworks that encourage inclusivity in organisational practice. Such policies could standardise equity in recruitment and promotion, promote diversity-sensitive training, and institutionalise fair appraisal systems across industries. By doing so, Nigeria's labour market could strengthen employee trust in organisational systems and improve overall productivity.

For future research, longitudinal studies are recommended to establish causality between inclusive HR practices, engagement, and turnover. Comparative studies across regions in Africa may also provide deeper insights into cultural variations in the inclusivity-engagement-retention nexus. Further, qualitative research could capture employee narratives to enrich understanding of how inclusivity is experienced in practice.

In conclusion, this study affirms that inclusive HR practices are not only instruments of fairness but also powerful strategic tools for engaging employees and reducing turnover in diverse Nigerian workplaces. By institutionalising inclusivity, organisations can strengthen their human capital, retain critical talent, and position themselves competitively in an increasingly globalised economy.

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