

Diversity and Inclusion of Human Resources: A Path to University Reputation through Faculty Engagement

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Abstract

The article intends to examine how diversity and inclusion affect the reputation of Jordanian universities and to explore if employee engagement acts as a mediator variable. Data was gathered from a sample of 509 faculty members in managerial academic roles (i.e. deans, vice/assistant deans, department heads, and HRM unit administrative staff) in public and private universities in northern and central regions of Jordan using a questionnaire. This study is based on the premise that diversity and inclusion practices enhance universities' reputation. This study examines how employee engagement may act as a mediator variable. The study hypotheses were subsequently examined using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS SEM). The results indicated that diversity and inclusivity had a beneficial and noteworthy effect on universities' reputation. Diversity and inclusion were discovered to have a beneficial effect on employee engagement. Furthermore, the findings showed that employee engagement plays a partially mediating role in the connection between diversity, inclusion, and universities' reputation. This study's results expand existing research by presenting evidence from a non-western country like Jordan. The study discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the findings, along with limitations and recommendations for future research.

Keywords: Diversity and inclusion; Reputation; Employee engagement; Universities; Jordan.

Introduction

A unique blend of challenges and opportunities characterizes the current higher education environment. In the context of continually changing technology and evolving political situations, universities around the world have a critical role in creating future leaders, specialists, and engaged members of society. In addition to their primary function, colleges play an important role in supporting economic growth and societal progress through research and innovation. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA, 2021) has acknowledged the significant contribution of this function in attaining sustainable development goals.

Organizational reputation management has become a fundamental concern for prominent university administrators in an ever-changing context (Bustos, 2021; Taamneh et al., 2022). Previous studies have confirmed the importance of reputation as a valuable commodity that is essential for the long-term survival and prosperity of an organization (Su, 2021; Wei & Su, 2021). University reputation is a complex notion that includes the overall views, attitudes, and esteem that exist among the academic and social communities. An institution's reputation is determined by its academic excellence, research productivity, faculty competence, student satisfaction, alumni accomplishments, and services to society (Del-Castillo-Feito, 2020; Taamneh et al., 2021).

Universities are increasingly prioritizing the promotion of diversity and inclusion (D&I). An optimal work atmosphere cultivates a feeling of worth and admiration for every employee, irrespective of their background or identity (Nair & Vohra, 2015). Universities that prioritize and promote diversity and inclusion practices tend to attract highly skilled individuals, resulting in a significant increase in innovative research, outstanding teaching, and meaningful community involvement. These factors all contribute to a positive reputation for the university (Naidoo & James, 2017). This indicates a robust association between diversity and inclusion (D&I) and the reputation of a university. Institutions that actively advocate for diversity and inclusion experience advantages such as an increased reputation, improved educational quality,

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and a more extensive pool of talented individuals, ultimately resulting in a stronger institutional image (Bennett & Moore, 2015).

Diversity and inclusion (D&I) are extremely important for universities and require ongoing and dedicated efforts. Diversity encompasses a wide range of human distinctions, including personal attributes, cultural backgrounds, and social settings. In contrast, inclusion emphasizes the establishment of a hospitable and encouraging atmosphere that accepts and supports all individuals, regardless of their differences (Brigitte, 2017). Nurturing a varied and open university atmosphere promotes a more comprehensive educational encounter for students, equipping them with the multiple skillsets required by the labor market (Shakeel & Ur Rahman, 2019). This inclusive setting not only promotes acceptance and equality but also improves the university's standing on both a local and worldwide level (Khan et al., 2012; 2019).

The importance of diversity is in its capacity to infuse novel ideas and viewpoints into the educational ecosystem. It promotes a more profound comprehension of the community's needs and enables the provision of more efficient services (Shakeel & Ur Rahman, 2019). In essence, inclusion is establishing an environment that fosters a sense of acceptance, appreciation, and consideration for all individuals, irrespective of their diverse backgrounds or capabilities. It guarantees equitable opportunities for everyone to engage and make significant contributions (Brigitte, 2017). Universities may harness the combined strength of their diverse workforce through inclusion. When individuals experience a sense of belonging, it fosters an environment conducive to collaborative learning, the development of new solutions, and the effective resolution of problems (Ohunakin et al., 2021). However, in order for diversity to flourish, inclusion is of utmost importance. A heterogeneous workforce that lacks a feeling of inclusion is less inclined to utilize their maximum capabilities. Research has shown that employees who perceive themselves as being respected and valued are noticeably more involved and content, resulting in enhanced cooperation, efficiency, and ultimately, a positive public image (Kalliath et al., 2017).

Universities with a highly engaged workforce benefit from individuals who demonstrate exceptional dedication to their students and the institution as a whole. Engaged employees naturally become advocates for the university, actively promoting its quality both within and beyond the organization's boundaries (Taamneh et al., 2021). The advocacy has a substantial influence on the university's reputation (Udomsak & Kanchanasut, 2021). Hence, it is imperative to cultivate a constructive and encouraging work atmosphere, create avenues for personal and professional advancement, and acknowledge and incentivize accomplishments in order to sustain a highly motivated staff and uphold a solid standing (Veiga et al., 2020; Schaubroeck & Guest, 2020).

This under-researched study looks at the relationship between diversity and inclusion (D&I) and university reputation, specifically in Jordanian institutions. It expands on prior research by looking at employee engagement as a potential link between these components, concentrating on its underexplored emotional aspects instead of just cognitive outcomes. This approach provides fresh insights into the impact of diversity and inclusion on reputation. The findings provide universities with practical solutions for using diversity and inclusion to create a more positive and productive work environment while recruiting top talent and students. Policymakers and administrators obtain crucial information to help shape D&I regulations and their impact on reputation and employee engagement (Li et al., 2022; Kuo et al., 2022).

Conceptual Background and Hypotheses Development

Diversity, Inclusion, and University Reputation

Organizational reputation can be defined as a cumulative representation of an organization's previous work practices and outcomes that characterize its potential to give high-value outputs to service customers (Carpenter, 2010). Tong (2015) explains that organizational reputation is formed by individuals' assessments and opinions about the institution, reflecting their perspectives on the results of its activities. Organizational reputation is defined as the level of approval customers have towards their interactions with the business and the products or services it offers (Zavyalova et al., 2015). Organizational reputation is the perception of an organization formed via its interactions with stakeholders, which helps to establish strong

relationships with key societal actors (Taamneh et al., 2022). Universities value reputation as a vital factor in attracting and keeping students, particularly in the current dynamic and competitive environment (Plew et al., 2016). Universities need to understand the importance of reputation and the strategies necessary to achieve their goals. Universities are currently more interconnected with society than ever before, leading to increased interaction with customers in external settings (Christensen et al., 2020). Reputation is regarded as an intangible asset in universities, allowing them to provide outstanding services, enhance their capacity to respond to students or clients in a timely manner, improve decision-making processes, and minimize uncertainty as well as complexity (Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2020; Ahmad et al., 2020). The university's strong organizational reputation is crucial for achieving customer satisfaction, raising awareness of its goals, and fostering a positive image. Various linked elements play a crucial role in shaping business reputation. Daft (2009) identified administrative leadership and work ethics as significant elements that enhance an organization's reputation. Researchers in this context view diversity and inclusion management practices as essential for attracting outstanding people without gender bias, valuing, and respecting them, fostering trust in the university, and ultimately enhancing the organization's reputation.

The globalization of business and the changing demography of labor markets around the world have aroused the interest of management researchers and practitioners in the domains of diversity and diversity management (Olsen & Martins, 2012:1). Human resource diversity refers to considering the characteristics that make up an individual, such as culture, color, nationality, age, religion, handicap, gender, education, beliefs, and all workforce differences (Ardakani et al., 2016: 408). Diversity and inclusion (D&I) are notions that are closely related yet different in their emphasis. While the terms diversity and inclusion are frequently used interchangeably, inclusion has been established as a technique for managing diversity. (Akanksha et al., 2020). Diversity, according to Roberson (2006), is concentrated on varied demographic representations in the business, whereas inclusion is the presence of a culture that recognizes such distinctions and finds value-in-diversity. They are concerned with identifying, appreciating, and embracing the diversity that people bring, both regarding traits and viewpoints, to foster an environment in which everyone feels appreciated and can succeed (Akanksha et al., 2020). Diversity refers to rapid access to a diverse set of knowledge, skills, and talents needed to achieve corporate goals and objectives (Ewoh, 2013:107). However, from the standpoint of diversity management, which is central to our research, it can be defined as a management process based on certain values that accepts differences between individuals and identities as a source of strength, but it is also aimed at achieving organizational outcomes. As a result, diversity management has become a broad term that refers to administrative approaches used in businesses to improve the effectiveness of human resource management (Erwee, 2003:1). A number of scholars have agreed on a set of dimensions that comprise the concept of diversity, such as: (a) internal dimension, which includes variations in personality characteristics as well as cognitive diversity; (b) external dimension, which includes variations in tradition and background, such as ethnicity and nationality, as well as gender identity; and (c) organizational dimension, which includes regulations, procedures, and programs within an organization to promote D & I (Barrick et al., 2019; Eagly & Wood, 2020; Kusmin et al., 2020).

Inclusion in universities is an important part of creating diverse and fair educational environments. Universities have a critical role in developing tomorrow's workforce and the community; thus, inclusiveness must be prioritized. Inclusion in universities requires the development of diverse and representative academic groups. This involves guaranteeing that people of all colors, backgrounds, races, skills, and perspectives are represented and supported inside the institution. Inclusion in universities requires the development of diverse and representative academic groups. This includes ensuring that people of all colors, backgrounds, races, skills, and perspectives are represented and supported inside the institution. Universities are progressively implementing inclusive recruiting processes with the goal of attracting a variety of candidates. Universities are embracing inclusive guidelines and procedures, such as work schedules that are flexible, as part of organizational diversity to suit the different demands of its staff candidates. Blind recruiting and diverse selection committees are examples of such practices. In universities, workplace inclusion entails offering support and assets to underrepresented professors and staff. This might involve mentoring programs, interest clubs, and inclusion, equity, and diversity training.

Previous research has demonstrated the value of diversity and inclusion in increasing and maintaining organizational reputation, the most important of which promoting excellence in education (Gurin et al., 2022). Many firms are looking for service excellence and quality improvement. According to a study by Balke et al. (2009), service institutions can enhance their competitive position and organizational reputation by prioritizing service quality improvement, which in turn increases customer satisfaction (Amanfinr, 2012). Employee diversity and inclusion promote the creation and carrying out of innovative and scientifically sound solutions. The study conducted by Ou and Hsu (2013) provided confirmation in this regard that creativity plays a significant role in fostering economic development and attaining a competitive edge, thereby strengthening the reputation of institutions. Diversity and inclusion (D&I) and university reputation have a complicated and developing relationship. There is a positive association between a university's commitment to D&I and its reputation, according to research in this field, but it's important to highlight that the relationship is complicated and depends on a variety of circumstances (Jamsbed Khalid, 2017). Academic institutions that proactively advocate for diversity and inclusion generally enjoy improved standing. An environment that is inclusive and diverse has the potential to draw in faculty and students with a wide range of perspectives and life experiences. (Capraro, et al., 2019). This has the potential to foster a more dynamic intellectual community and enhance the university's overall reputation. Academic excellence may be encouraged by inclusive environments. The convergence of students and faculty with varied backgrounds frequently yields novel research findings, instructional methodologies, and resolutions to complex issues (Ou and Hsu, 2013). The previously mentioned academic distinction possesses the capacity to bolster the reputation of the university. It has come to light that universities that place a greater emphasis on D&I frequently observe increased levels of student satisfaction and achievement. Thus, favorable referrals endorsements could result in strengthening the reputation of the institution.

The research conducted by Parm Cohan (2017) suggests that D&I possesses the capacity to influence the perceptions of various stakeholders, including potential employees, internal clients and consumers, and the broader public, regarding the reputation of the organization. Effective D&I has the potential to influence the perceptions of an organization's internal staff and external audiences alike. A favorable reputation can result when both perspectives show a moderate degree of positivity. Accordingly, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: Diversity positively influences the university reputation in Jordan.

H2: Inclusion positively influences the university reputation in Jordan.

The Mediating Role of Employee Engagement

Employee engagement quantifies the degree to which personnel are invested in and connected to their jobs and the organization. Increased levels of motivation, commitment, and job satisfaction define this phenomenon. People who are more inclined to go beyond the call of duty, be productive, and remain with the organization for the long term are employees who are engaged (Parasuram et al., 2021).

Prior studies have examined the elements that influence employee engagement, such as the sense of purpose and significance of the job, prospects for professional advancement and progress, a nurturing workplace atmosphere, and recognition and incentives (Anchal Gupta, S. Gomathi, 2022; Parasuram et al., 2021). *Job engagement provides the organization with two advantages: first, it improves the likelihood of effective planning, decision-making, and improvement. Through the participation of those who must implement the decision, job engagement enhances the participants' sense of ownership and accountability in the decision-making process, which is the second advantage (Pranitasari et al., 2022).*

Job satisfaction is an affective psychological state of mind that is positive in nature and is associated with work. It motivates employees to actively engage in their responsibilities. An employee can be considered content when they demonstrate consistent and voluntary engagement in their work (Gamage and Jayatilake, 2019). While various studies have been conducted to investigate the relationship between job satisfaction and employee attrition, there is a scarcity of information about the effect it has on corporate reputation. Concepts of job satisfaction and corporate reputation are deeply connected. Job satisfaction encompasses

all aspects of an employee's employment, such as compensation, benefits, balance between work and personal life, interpersonal connections with colleagues, and prospects for progress. In recent scholarly investigations, the notion of job satisfaction has been defined as a dynamic and evaluative condition (Ritzenhofer et al., 2019; Wolter et al., 2019). The dimensions used to describe the concept of job engagement were defined differently by researchers, and the models that have been developed since the 1990s differ. Nevertheless, the researchers selected both the Bruce (2010) and Khan (1990) models based on the same criterion—the exhaustiveness for the dimensions included in each model.

The following dimensions, as proposed by Khan (1990) and Bruce (2010), will constitute the job engagement model utilized in this study: (1) Physical engagement refers to the degree to which employees dedicate their physical efforts to accomplishing their designated duties and obligations. (2) Emotional engagement signifies the existence of an interpersonal bond. A profound correlation exists between the work of an individual and his emotions, thoughts, and feelings; this correlation is characterized by feelings of connection, pleasure, and attachment; (3) cognitive engagement; it is a psychological condition in which people actively consider and absorb information. It is distinguished by a high level of concentration, motivation, and effort. Cognitively engaged individuals are more likely to absorb and retain new information, solve issues creatively, and make wise decisions (Bruce Louis, 2010; *Parasuram A., et al., 2021*).

Several studies have found a connection between diversity, inclusiveness, and job engagement. Increased employee engagement happens when people feel connected in the organization and there is a positive perception of diversity management, according to studies conducted by (Gupta, 2022; Ayman et al., 2022). According to Mohammad and Abdul Qayyum's (2022) research, if employees are given the freedom to participate, appreciate, and respect, we will see increased motivation and a willingness to exert physical, emotional, and cognitive energy to the point of integration. It is worth emphasizing that the methods and philosophy of social exchange theory (SET) are employed in this study. As per the tenets of social exchange theory, individuals are inclined to participate in social interactions in which they perceive potential benefits. They determine whether or not to pursue a relationship on the basis of a calculation in which the prospective benefits and costs are weighed. Accordingly, we propose the following hypotheses:

H3: Diversity positively influences employee engagement.

H4: Inclusion positively influences the employee engagement.

Employees that are engaged in their work have a greater likelihood to be content with their jobs, which may result in improved client service, better quality goods, and more positive relationships with customers and clients (Helm & Schmidt, 2022). All these elements lead to a good corporate reputation. Employees that are engaged are more likely to spread positive words about their organization to their relatives, close associates, and social networks. The use of word of mouth can have a big impact on how the company is seen in the community. Employees that are engaged frequently believe that their values fit the ones of their firm. When a company's values match those of its people, it can contribute to a better corporate reputation (Fombrun & Gaardberg, 2020). Lower turnover rates are related to higher work engagement. Companies with reduced turnover are more secure and can retain a good corporate reputation. Nevertheless, a multitude of studies offer supplementary support for the notion that job engagement is a pivotal element in the establishment and sustenance of a favorable corporate reputation (Ferreira et al., 2017; Helm, 2019; Fombrun et al., 2021). Employee engagement mediates the connection between D&I and corporate reputation, according to research. Consequently, the favorable influence of D&I on corporate reputation can be primarily attributed to its favorable effect on employee engagement. The study by Madera and Hebl (2012) examines the relationship between hiring discrimination and diversity, with an indirect effect on the reputation of businesses. The potential mediating effect of employee engagement on the perception of an organization's reputation in relation to inclusive and equitable hiring practices is worth considering. Gotsis and Kortezi (2018) study how Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs, which commonly include D&I initiatives, might increase employee engagement. A highly engaged workforce can be beneficial to the company's reputation. Following the preceding, the following hypotheses may be developed:

H5: Job engagement mediates the relationship between diversity and inclusion and university reputation.

Methodology

This quantitative study investigates many correlations between independent, dependent, and mediating variables. Jordan is divided into three regions: north, center, and south, each comprising four governorates (Taamneh, 2007). Jordan has a total of 27 universities, with 10 being public and 17 being private. Private universities are in the northern and central areas, whereas the southern region lacks any private universities (Taamneh et al., 2021). The study sample consists of academic and HRM personnel employed at seven private and governmental universities in the northern and central regions of Jordan. The population comprises 715 academics, including deans, vice/assistant deans, heads of departments, and administrative staff members working in HRM units at the targeted universities. We employ a census sampling technique, in which data is gathered from everyone within the identified population. This approach yields precise, representative, and generalizable results (Hair et al., 2021). The primary reason for selecting this sample (population) is that they represent the most significant segments who can react to the study instrument's questions and are acquainted with the level of practice for the study variables.

To collect data from the sample, a questionnaire based on previous research was used. The questionnaire was divided into five sections, the first of which inquired about the respondents' demographic information. The second section is a measure composed of twelve questions developed by (Elias, 2021) to evaluate diversity management practices. In the third section, we used a scale of eight questions developed by Patricia et al. (2022) and Person et al. (2022) to measure inclusion practices. In the fourth section, we evaluated the University's reputation using a 9-item checklist created by Repenning and LaRue (2004). The final portion includes an eight-item scale for measuring staff job engagement developed by Schaufeli and Salanova (2002). The items were measured using a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree=5, agree=4, neutral=3, disagree=2, and strongly disagree=1). The data collection approach began with the selection of a Google Forms platform; the link to the forms was then delivered directly to the desired respondents via deans and directors of HRM units with formal approval from the respective university presidents. We distributed 715 questionnaires to the whole targeted population at the seven universities, and we received 509 questionnaires with a return rate of 71.2%. We removed all insufficient responses and those with numerous missing data. We deleted all insufficient responses and those with many missing data points. We developed and completed an Arabic version of the online questionnaire. A panel of reviewers evaluated the questionnaire based on its content, measuring scale, clarity and flow, and relevance to the target group.

To test the hypotheses, we employed variance-based structural equation modeling with partial least squares (PLS SEM) and other descriptive statistical tools to investigate respondents' demographic and positional characteristics. We employ PLS-SEM to examine the direct and indirect effects of D&I on the university's reputation and staff engagement.

Results

Before examining the hypotheses of this study, it is necessary to explore the validity of the instrument and multiple regression assumption. These tests are deliberated below. We have used Cronbach's alpha to assess the reliability of the instrument, Sekaran (2021) claimed this test must be more than 0.70 to be reliable. The result indicates that the reliability test of all variables was 89.1, 91.1, 82.9 and 93.1 for inclusion, diversity, reputation, and job engagement respectively. Tabachnick (2019) argued that the normality can be evaluated by using skewness and kurtosis test, in doing so, the results of these test must be between $2.58 \pm$ for kurtosis and $1.96 \pm$ for skewness, in this case the results of the current study's variables were ranged between -0.20 and 1.31 for skewness and -1.23 and 2.09 for kurtosis. We have used VIF to evaluate the presence of multicollinearity among study's variables, the results of VIF showed no existence of multicollinearity where the results became less than 4, in general, a VIF above 4 indicating that multicollinearity might exist. (Hair et al, 2021)

Table (1): Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Inclusion	2.834	3.00	0.0089043	1.00	4.00	.192811	2.232111
Reputation	3.331	4.00	0.1110314	1.00	5.00	.213121	2.323121
Job	3.408	4.00	0.0879519	1.00	5.00	.423211	1.128128
Diversity	3.473	4.00	0.1339036	1.00	5.00	-.101021	2.372711

Demographic profile

The demographic profile of respondents shows that 392 of them were males and 117 were females. Those with bachelor’s degree were 58, 116 with master’s degree, while the rest either have PhD 327 or other degrees 8. For functional positions 23 of them were deans or vice deans 56, the dean assistants were 105. 187 of respondents are working in HR departments while the rest (138) are working in other related jobs. In relation to the experience, most of respondents 324 have experience for 15 to 20 years, while others 88 even have experience between 11 to 14 years or 10 years or less (62). Only 35 respondents have experience more than 20 years. Those with full professor rank were 102, associate professors were 158, the lecturers were 67 while the rest 182 have other positions. Regarding the nationality, most of respondents 388 have Jordanian nationality while the rest (121) have different nationalities. The majority of the respondents 297 were aged between 40 and 50, and the others either aged between 30 and 40(88) or above 50 (113), only 11 respondents were 30 years old.

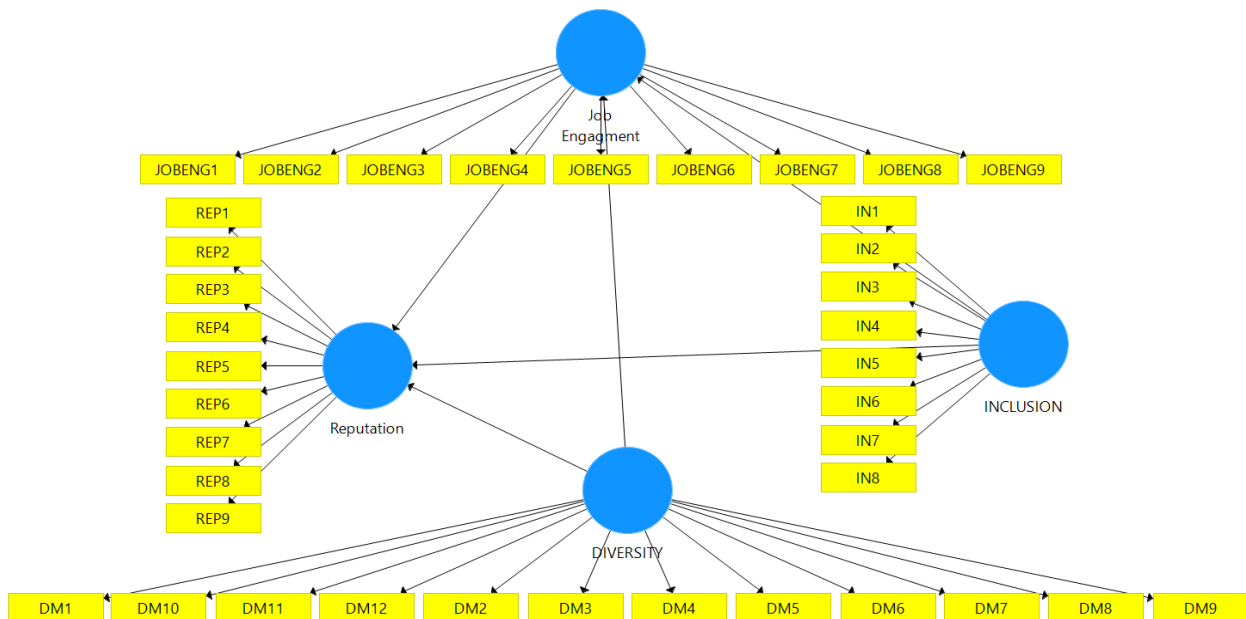


Table 2: Model Fit

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.082	0.082
d_ULS	5.001	5.001
d_G	1.663	1.663
Chi-Square	1358.434	1358.434
NFI	0.625	0.625

To explore the model fit, we used SRMR and NFI as shown in the above table, Hu and Bentler, (1999) argued that the SRMR value less than .10 to be considered as a good fit. Lohmöller and Lohmöller (1989)

claimed that the NFI values closer to 1 is the better fit. Table 2 shows that the SRMR value = .082 and NFI = .0625.

Hypotheses testing

To test the hypotheses of this study we used a sample consisted of 509 responses to examine the relationship between inclusion, diversity, and reputation in addition to examine the mediation role of job engagement, the results came as follows:

Table 3: Path Coefficients

	Original Sample (O)	Mean (M)	STDEV	T Statistics	P Values
Diversity -> Job Engagement	0.286	0.299	0.080	3.592	0.000
Diversity -> Reputation	0.115	0.124	0.075	2.531	0.026
Inclusion -> Job Engagement	0.398	0.392	0.086	4.603	0.000
Inclusion -> Reputation	0.447	0.446	0.090	4.989	0.000
Job Engagement -> Reputation	0.356	0.350	0.078	4.550	0.000

Table 3 indicates that Diversity and Inclusion positively impact the university's reputation, with t values of 2.531 and 4.989, respectively. Consequently, the first and second hypotheses are accepted. The study found a substantial influence for diversity and inclusion on job engagement, with t values of 3.592 and 4.603 respectively. Hence, the third and fourth hypotheses are supported.

Table 4: Total Indirect Effects

	Original Sample (O)	Mean (M)	STDEV	T Statistics	P Values
Diversity -> Job Engagement					
Diversity -> Reputation	0.102	0.104	0.035	2.911	0.004
inclusion -> Job Engagement					
inclusion -> Reputation	0.141	0.138	0.045	3.116	0.002
Job Engagement -> Reputation					

To test the mediation role of job engagement, table 4 shows the results of indirect effects of job engagement on the relationship between diversity, inclusion, and reputation. The results show a positive effect for job engagement as mediator. which means the job engagement partially mediates the relationship between diversity, inclusion, and reputation, consequently, the fifth hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study assumed that organizations' efforts to promote diversity and inclusion had a beneficial effect on improving their reputation. Furthermore, the study framework model incorporates the indirect positive impact of employee engagement on the correlation between diversity, inclusion, and institution reputation. The study revealed that diversity and inclusion had a favorable and significant impact on university reputation. The finding of the first hypothesis (diversity positively impacts university reputation) can be explained that university commitment to diversity will lead to intellectual enrichment and research innovation. More clearly, we can claim that a diverse academic community unites people with varied viewpoints, backgrounds, and specialized knowledge. This diversity of intelligence promotes a stimulating academic setting, facilitating the sharing of ideas and creative methods for study and instruction. Collaboration among academic members with diverse backgrounds improves research efforts by bringing in new perspectives and methods. This diversity has the potential to improve the university's reputation.

The second hypothesis's findings can be attributed to the fact that an inclusive university usually invests in a diverse and competent faculty. The inclusion of diverse faculty members improves the academic environment by attracting faculty staff that adhere to efficiency, justice, and equal opportunity criteria that do not discriminate against women (Taamneh et al., 2021). If we add that the university management is eager to respect and appreciate faculty members, the university's reputation can improve. In this regard, our research findings provide support to the current research on the impact of diversity and inclusion on university reputation (Curin et al., 2022; Ou & Hsu, 2013; Cohen, 2017).

Both diversity and inclusion have proved to have favorable and significant connections with employee engagement (H3 and H4 supported). These findings can be attributed to the fact that when a university promotes diversity and inclusion, employees from various backgrounds feel respected and valued. This increases a sense of belonging, encouraging dedication and engagement. Findings are in consistency with previous studies (Gupta, 2022; Ayman et al., 2022). The findings highlight the importance and impact of diversity and inclusion in motivating and retaining employees. Findings also suggest that when employees feel valued and included due to diversity and inclusion efforts, they are more likely to take pleasure in their work and view it as important and worthwhile. The study showed that job engagement plays a mediating role in the connection between diversity, inclusion, and reputation (H5 partially confirmed). Diversity and inclusion indirectly enhance a positive reputation through promoting employee engagement. The mediation effect was found to be partial, suggesting that additional factors have a role in influencing the relationship. This result meets with previous studies (Gotsis and Kortezi 2018).

To sum up, this study adds to current knowledge by presenting concrete proof of how diversity and inclusion positively affect university reputation, emphasizing the role of job engagement as a mediator in this connection. The results highlight the importance of organizational efforts in establishing inclusive diverse settings, which can improve reputation and promote employee engagement and well-being.

Practical Implications

Organizations, particularly universities, can strategically use initiatives that promote inclusion and diversity to enhance their reputation. The study proposes that embracing diversity can result in cognitive enrichment and scientific creativity, ultimately improving the institution's reputation. The results highlight the significance of inclusive strategies in hiring and keeping diverse and skilled faculty. Universities that prioritize fostering an inclusive learning community may gain from having a faculty that upholds efficiency, fairness, and equal opportunity standards, thereby enhancing their reputation. Promoting diversity and inclusion can boost employee engagement, leading to a favorable business reputation, as indicated by the study. The study suggests that staff who see value and inclusion because of diversity and inclusion initiatives are more inclined to have satisfaction with their jobs and well-being. All this data may shed light on human resource policies and procedures designed to enhance both staff satisfaction and university reputation. Finally, universities can incorporate the positive effects of diversity and inclusion on reputation into their marketing and communication efforts. Demonstrating a dedication to diversity and inclusion may have a favorable impact on how the organization is seen externally.

Theoretical Implications

The research offers a framework that combines diversity, inclusion, employee engagement, and reputation. This comprehensive model improves understanding of the subtle relationships between all of these variables, providing valuable insights for future investigations in organizational studies. Employee engagement is identified as a partial mediator in the link between diversity, inclusion, and reputation, indicating that other variables may also be involved. This emphasizes the necessity for more research to discover additional characteristics that impact the connection between diversity, inclusion, and corporate reputation.

Limitations and future research

The research was conducted on a sample of public and private universities in the North and Central areas only, excluding universities in the South region. To enhance the generalizability of the study results, researchers are recommended to conduct a more extensive study involving universities in the southern region. The study focused solely on the academic faculty of the universities under investigation, encouraging researchers to consider incorporating the administrative staff in future studies. Jordan has a competitive advantage in the Arab world and the Middle East in higher education and health sectors. It is advisable to conduct a study that targets the health sector.

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