

Research Article

INCLUSIVITY, DIVERSITY, AND JOB SATISFACTION OF EMPLOYEES IN THE AIRLINE INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Diversity and inclusivity are vital for job satisfaction as they enhance employee performance and service quality. This study explores how these practices affect job satisfaction among airline industry employees, focusing on Thai Airways International. While previous research has emphasized the importance of diversity and inclusivity, there is limited data specific to the airline sector. This research fills that gap by analyzing data from 100 employees using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings indicate that the company's commitment to diversity and anti-discrimination policies significantly boosts job satisfaction and performance, leading to increased productivity, fewer distractions, and higher motivation for skill development and career advancement. Recommendations include prioritizing diversity through targeted recruitment, comprehensive training, and regular policy reviews, as well as fostering open communication and team bonding to mitigate job insecurity and enhance camaraderie.

Keywords: diversity, inclusivity, job performance, non-experimental quantitative design, Thai Airways, Thailand.

INTRODUCTION

Effective diversity management plays an important role in the success of organizations. Morfaki & Morfaki (2022) posit that managing and embracing a diverse workforce is now a focus for modern businesses. Consequently, diversity encompasses aspects like gender, race, age, ethnicity, and other personal traits while inclusion involves integrating employees into the organization's systems and processes (Downey et al., 2015). Meanwhile, countries like Europe and the United States widely acknowledged and practiced diversity and inclusivity along with their impact on employee performance and service quality. However, it must be noted that there is a lack of in-depth research on these topics in sectors like the airline industry. This gap is particularly evident in developing regions like Southeast Asia where Thailand is situated.

While there is a recognized importance of diversity and inclusion in the literature, there is limited research, however, addressing their effects on job satisfaction and performance within the airline sector in Southeast Asia, specifically in Thailand, probably also due to recent global disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic (Kılıç & Yanikoğlu, 2023). This gap highlights

the need for more detailed studies, particularly on organization practices relating to diversity and inclusivity influencing employee performance.

Therefore, this study addressed this gap by examining how organizational diversity and inclusivity practices affect employee job satisfaction in the airline industry, focusing on Thai Airways International. Using a non-experimental quantitative research design, the study analyzed data from 100 employees to identify patterns and relationships. The findings revealed that strong diversity and anti-discrimination policies significantly enhanced job satisfaction and employee performance. The paper is organized to first discuss the research objectives and methods, then present the main findings, and finally offer recommendations for enhancing diversity management practices in the airline industry.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study sought to examine how diversity and inclusivity impact the job satisfaction of Thai Airways International employees. Specifically, answers to the following queries were sought:

1. How do the participants assess the diversity practices within the company?
2. How do the participants assess the inclusivity practices within the company?
3. How satisfied are the participants with their respective jobs?
4. Is there a significant relationship between:
 - a. the company's level of diversity practices and the employees' job satisfaction; and
 - b. the company's level of inclusivity practices, and the employees' job satisfaction?

RESEARCH BENEFITS

This research endeavor presents significant benefits for the airline industry, boosting retention, performance, and customer service, fostering a culture of innovation, and improving the industry's reputation. Furthermore, this research endeavor will provide contribution to the rich literature in creating an inclusive and productive work environment through policy making.

RESEARCH SCOPE

The present study investigated the relationships between diversity and job satisfaction, as well as inclusivity and job satisfaction. The participants

consisted of employees from Thai Airways International, a full-service airline company operating at Suvarnabhumi International Airport in Bangkok, Thailand. These employees who are considered participants in this study have various direct interactions with passengers and guests. Meanwhile, in this research, diversity, and inclusivity were treated as independent variables, while job satisfaction was considered the dependent variable. The study was conducted from July to August of the calendar year 2023.

HYPOTHESES

H_0_1 : The level of diversity practices is not significantly related to employee job satisfaction.

H_0_2 : The level of inclusivity practices is not significantly related to employee job satisfaction.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study investigated how diversity and inclusivity are related to employee job satisfaction. Consequently, job satisfaction, which is considered a dependent variable in the present study, was measured in terms of the following aspects: (1) pay and benefits, (2) recognition and appreciation, (3) working conditions, (4) professional development,

(5) job security, (6) relationships with colleagues and supervisors, (7) autonomy and decision-making, (8) colleague behavior and discipline, and (9) guidelines of the company (Hartika, Fitridiani, & Asbari, 2023). More so, the independent variables: (1) diversity and (2) inclusivity were measured by considering several observable aspects.

enhance job satisfaction. Finally, Leader-Member Exchange Theory which focuses on the importance of building a good relationship between leaders and members. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive view of improving organizational practices and outcomes in the airline sector.

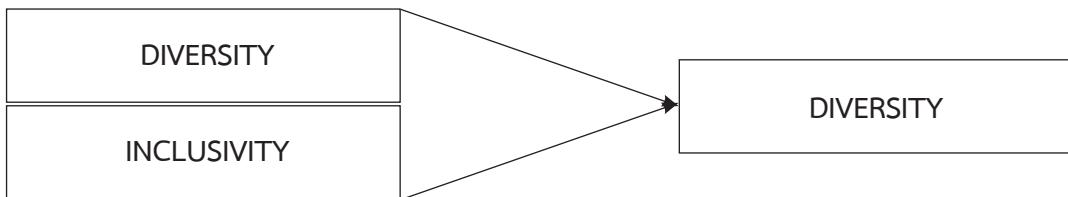


Figure 1 Schematic Diagram of the Study

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded on several interconnected theories that create a clear framework for understanding how diversity and inclusivity impact job satisfaction in the airline industry. It combines insights from Social Identity Theory, which looks at how individual identities shape workplace interactions, and the Inclusive Workplace Model, which focuses on fostering a supportive environment for all employees. Also, it incorporates aspects of Equity Theory, the framework also explores how fairness and equal treatment

SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

This theory looks at how people see themselves and others based on the social groups they belong to, like their gender, ethnicity, or job roles. In the workplace, this theory helps in understanding how these group identities influence how employees interact, feel about their jobs, and work together. When these social dynamics are recognized and addressed, a more supportive and inclusive work environment where everyone feels valued and engaged is formed (Hadley et al., 2022). Gusain &

Gujral (2024) added value and respect given to employees can maximize their full potential and create a successful and sustainable organization.

INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE MODEL

This model talks about making sure that every employee feels respected and included, no matter their background. It involves practices like fair hiring, inclusive policies, and regular training to create a workplace where everyone can thrive. Shore et al. (2018) expressed that inclusion must be integrated into the organizational practices, providing equal opportunity to all members. Additionally, Maj (2023) conveyed that employees boost their job performance when managers develop an inclusive and diverse workplace practices. By focusing on these practices, organizations can build a positive work environment where employees feel a strong sense of belonging and are motivated to contribute their best (Shore et al., 2018).

Equity Theory

The theory is concerned with how people perceive fairness in their work lives. According to this theory, employees compare their own efforts and rewards with those of their colleagues, and feelings of unfairness can lead to dissatisfaction

and lower motivation. To keep employees happy and motivated, organizations must ensure that rewards and recognition are fairly distributed and that employees feel their contributions are valued (Adams & Freedman, 1976). Özkan (2022) added that employees develop their own perception of fairness in an organization.

LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGE THEORY

The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory proposed by Dansereau et al. (1975) emphasized the importance of leaders building a relationship with subordinates, particularly the workforce becomes highly diverse such as the airline industry. This study is anchored in this theory providing a better understanding on the interaction of leaders with employees with different backgrounds and experiences, and whether these interactions contribute to their job satisfaction. For example, March et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of relationship quality between leaders and subordinates. In another study, Umrani et al. (2024) and Qi et al. (2019) illustrated how inclusive leadership drives employees to become innovative behavior towards their assignments. This theory supports that the relationship between leaders and subordinates can enhance job

satisfaction and innovation, particularly in inclusive and diverse work settings like the airline industry.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a non-experimental quantitative research design to explore the relationship between diversity, inclusivity, and job satisfaction within the airline industry. This approach involved collecting numerical data from a sample of 100 employees using surveys and statistical methods to analyze patterns and relationships (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The discussion centered on interpreting the statistical findings to understand how diversity and inclusivity practices impact job satisfaction.

In this study, the quantitative analysis focused on employees' perceptions of diversity and inclusivity practices and their effect on job satisfaction. Data were collected through survey questionnaires, floated via Google Forms, examining variables such as employee engagement and perceived inclusiveness. By analyzing these quantitative results, the study aims to provide evidence-based recommendations for enhancing diversity and inclusivity practices in the airline

sector, ultimately improving job satisfaction and overall workplace performance.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The study employed a direct data collection method using a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was adapted with modifications from Bhatti et al. (2019) and Hamaidi et al. (2019). Meanwhile, the reliability and validity of the questionnaire were ascertained through the conduct of pilot testing. The survey questionnaire consisted of closed-ended, checklist-type questions divided into three sections: the Overall Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Culture, the Level of Inclusivity Practices, and Employees' Job Satisfaction. Consequently, the questionnaire was floated using an online platform, Google Forms, accessible through a QR code provided to the respondents. Responses to the questionnaire were then organized, cleaned, and analyzed for insights.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The study considered the responses of 100 employees from Thai Airways International who were purposively sampled from those readily available and representative of the diverse workforce.

This method does not ensure random selection but offers a practical approach to data collection within the constraints of the airline industry. Etikan et al. (2016) stated that this approach is essential when the population is large and randomization is impossible. Future research is recommended to use probability sampling techniques to minimize biases and improve the generalizability of the results.

Data Description and Data Analytic Techniques

The study evaluated the impact of diversity and inclusivity on job satisfaction among employees at Thai Airways International through a self-administered survey questionnaire. The participants were asked to respond to certain indicators using a 5-point Likert scale as a measure for three specific aspects: (a) Overall Diversity and Inclusion Culture, (b) Level of Inclusivity Practices, and (c) Employee Job Satisfaction

Meanwhile, descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, and percentage, were used to analyze each aspect. To test the strength and direction of the relationships, the Pearson correlation was employed. The analysis aimed

to provide a comprehensive understanding of how diversity and inclusivity influence employee satisfaction and identify potential areas for improvement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Assessment of the diversity practices within the company

In today's globalized business environment, managing and promoting diversity within organizations has become increasingly important. Effective diversity practices are essential for fostering an inclusive workplace culture and enhancing overall organizational performance and employee satisfaction. The airline industry, with its diverse workforce and customer base, is particularly sensitive to the dynamics of diversity and inclusivity. Thus, this study examines the perceptions of employees at Thai Airways International regarding the company's diversity practices. Table 1 presents the results for each indicator related to diversity practices. The ratings are categorized on a scale ranging from "Always," indicating outstanding practice, to "Rarely," indicating fair practice.

Table 1 Perception of participants on the diversity practices within the company

(n=100)

Indicators	Mean	SD	Descriptive
1. This company respects individuals and values their differences.	4.42	0.890	Always
2. I believe that diversity is good.	4.35	0.925	Always
3. The leadership at this company treats all employees fairly.	4.28	0.792	Always
4. This company fosters a workplace that allows employees to be themselves at work without fear.	4.24	0.780	Always
5. The leadership at this company encourages diversity.	4.11	0.909	Often
6. I support diversity efforts in organizations.	4.05	1.009	Often
7. I believe that diversity is fair.	3.80	0.471	Often
8. I participate in organizational diversity efforts.	3.75	1.282	Often
9. I resist organizational diversity efforts.	3.46	0.968	Often
10. I feel hopeful about diversity.	3.34	0.966	Sometimes
11. This company is committed to improving the diversity of employees	3.16	0.581	Sometimes
12. I feel resentful about diversity.	3.11	0.709	Sometimes
13. At this company, employees appreciate others whose backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences are different from their own.	3.04	0.816	Sometimes
14. Diversity is enriching for me.	2.98	0.804	Sometimes
15. I feel enthusiastic about diversity.	2.96	0.710	Sometimes
16. Diversity is unprofitable for organizations.	2.91	0.954	Sometimes
17. Management shows that diversity is important through its actions.	2.84	0.849	Sometimes
18. Diversity is rewarding for me.	2.63	0.906	Sometimes
19. I believe that diversity is unjustified.	2.60	0.791	Sometimes
20. Diversity leads to harmony in organizations.	2.56	0.880	Rarely
21. Diversity leads me to make personal sacrifices.	2.56	0.891	Rarely
22. Diversity is an asset for organizations.	2.55	0.903	Rarely
23. I organizational diversity efforts withdraw from.	2.52	0.858	Rarely

Table 1 (to)

Indicators	Mean	SD	Descriptive
24. Diversity is stressful for me.	2.01	1.049	Rarely
25. I believe that diversity is hopeless.	2.00	1.341	Rarely
26. I feel frustrated with diversity.	1.96	1.363	Rarely
27. Diversity is expensive for organizations.	1.94	1.340	Rarely
Grand Mean	3.12	0.916	Good Level of Practice
Rating Scale: 4.20-5.00 (Always/Outstanding Practice)	3.40-4.19 (Often/Very Good Practice)		
2.60-3.39 /Good Practice)	1.80-2.59 (Rarely/Fair Practice)		
1.00-1.79	(Never/Poor Practice)		

Table 1 provides key insights into employee perceptions of diversity practices at Thai Airways International. The highest scores show that the company respects individual differences ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.89$), values diversity ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.93$), and treats all employees fairly ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.79$). This indicates a strong perception of an inclusive and fair workplace.

While there is general support for diversity efforts ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 1.01$) and participation in these efforts ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.28$), enthusiasm and personal benefit from diversity are lower, with scores below 3.00 for items like feeling enthusiastic about diversity ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 0.71$).

Lower scores on seeing diversity as beneficial

to organizational harmony ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 0.88$) suggest employees recognize diversity's importance but don't always experience its positive impacts directly.

The findings imply that Thai Airways International should enhance its diversity and inclusivity initiatives to ensure employees experience the benefits of a diverse workplace. This could involve more impactful programs, better communication about these initiatives, and demonstrating how diversity contributes to organizational success and employee well-being. Addressing these areas can foster a more motivated and cohesive workforce that fully appreciates diversity.

Assessment of the inclusivity practices within the company.

A detailed look into employees' perceptions of inclusivity practices at Thai Airways International was deemed vital in accomplishing the objectives of the present study. Such assessment outlines how participants view the company's efforts in fostering an inclusive environment, including aspects such as the handling of discrimination incidents, support for diversity policies, and equitable

treatment in promotions. The data are categorized into descriptive ratings from "Always" to "Rarely," reflecting employees' experiences and evaluations of the company's inclusivity measures. Table 2 provides valuable insights into how well the company meets its inclusivity goals and identifies areas where further improvements might be needed to enhance overall employee satisfaction and engagement.

Table 2 Perception of participants on the inclusivity practices within the company

(n=100)

Indicators	Mean	SD	Descriptive
1. I believe the company will take appropriate action in response to incidents of discrimination and/or bias.	4.42	0.867	Always
2. The company's policies or procedures encourage diversity, equity, and inclusion.	4.20	0.910	Always
3. Employees of different backgrounds interact well in this company.	4.06	0.962	Often
4. Employees of different backgrounds are treated fairly in the internal promotion process.	4.01	0.759	Often
5. There is diversity among the people a job candidate will meet/see on his/her first visit to the company.	3.74	0.774	Often
6. My supervisor handles matters related to diversity, equity, and inclusion matters satisfactorily.	3.70	0.847	Often
7. Management of this company demonstrates a commitment to meeting the needs of employees with disabilities.	3.70	0.927	Often

Table 2 (to)

(n=100)

Indicators	Mean	SD	Descriptive
8. My supervisor is committed to, and supports, diversity, equity, and inclusion.	3.68	1.246	Often
9. This company provides an environment for the free and open expression of ideas, opinions, and beliefs.	3.47	0.784	Often
10. Employees of different ages are valued equally by this organization.	3.45	1.158	Often
11. Getting to know people with backgrounds different from my own has been easy at this company.	3.44	0.592	Often
12. This company has done a good job of providing educational programs that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in our workplace.	3.27	0.617	Sometimes
13. I am aware of and understand the procedures for reporting incidents of discrimination and/or bias in the workplace.	3.26	0.906	Sometimes
14. Racial, ethnic, sexual, and gender-based jokes or slurs are not tolerated at this organization.	3.22	1.454	Sometimes
15. My experiences at this company have led me to become more understanding of differences among my coworkers.	3.19	0.884	Sometimes
16. This company takes active measures to seek a diverse candidate pool when hiring.	2.96	0.634	Sometimes
17. There is a career development path for all employees at this company.	2.88	1.217	Sometimes
18. Employees of different backgrounds are encouraged to apply for higher positions.	2.46	1.226	Rarely
Grand Mean	3.51	0.931	Very Good Level of Inclusivity Practice
Rating Scale: 4.20-5.00 (Always/Outstanding Practice)	3.40-4.19 (Often/Very Good Practice)		
2.60-3.39 (Sometimes/Good Practice)	1.80-2.59 (Rarely/Fair Practice)		
1.00-1.79 (Never/Poor Practice)			

Table 2 presents the participants' perceptions of inclusivity practices at Thai Airways International. Overall, the data reveal a strong appreciation for the company's efforts in fostering an inclusive environment, with the highest ratings in areas such as taking appropriate action in response to discrimination ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.87$) and having policies that encourage diversity ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.91$). These indicators were rated as "Always," suggesting that employees feel confident in the company's commitment to handling discrimination and promoting diversity. Other aspects, like fair treatment in promotions ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.76$) and positive interactions among employees of different backgrounds ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.96$), were rated "Often," reflecting general satisfaction with these inclusivity practices.

However, there are areas where the ratings are lower, indicating opportunities for improvement. For instance, the mean scores for practices related to career development ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 1.22$) and encouragement for employees from diverse backgrounds to apply for higher positions ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.23$) were notably lower and rated "Rarely." This suggests that while inclusivity efforts

are generally positive, there may be shortcomings in how inclusivity is applied to career advancement and support for diverse talent in senior roles.

The results indicate that while employees perceive the company's inclusivity practices positively overall, there are significant gaps in areas crucial for long-term inclusivity, particularly related to career progression and active support for diverse candidates. This implies that Thai Airways International is doing well in some aspects of inclusivity but needs to enhance efforts in specific areas to better support the professional growth of all employees and fully realize the benefits of a diverse workforce.

To address these gaps, Thai Airways International should consider implementing more robust initiatives aimed at promoting career advancement for employees from diverse backgrounds. Increasing visibility and support for these initiatives, along with strengthening policies around career development and advancement, could help improve perceptions and outcomes related to inclusivity. This would not only enhance employee satisfaction but also contribute to a more equitable and dynamic workplace environment.

Participants' self-assessment of their Job Satisfaction.

Job satisfaction is essential as it influences various aspects of the workplace, including productivity, employee retention, and overall morale. By evaluating different facets such as colleague behavior, working conditions, and job security, the results can shed light on how employees feel about their roles and work environment.

Addressing job satisfaction is vital for organizations to foster a positive work culture, enhance employee engagement, and reduce turnover rates, ultimately contributing to organizational success and employee happiness. Table 3 outlines the participants' self-assessments of job satisfaction, which is a crucial factor in understanding employee well-being and organizational health.

Table 3 Participants 'self-assessment of their Job Satisfaction (n=100)

Indicators	Mean	SD	Descriptive	(n=100)
1. Colleague Behavior and Discipline	3.55	0.847	Satisfied	
2. Working Conditions	3.34	0.698	Somewhat Satisfied	
3. Job Security	3.32	0.902	Somewhat Satisfied	
4. Recognition and Appreciation	3.31	0.846	Somewhat Satisfied	
5. Guidelines of the Company	3.26	0.837	Somewhat Satisfied	
6. Professional Development	3.25	0.810	Somewhat Satisfied	
7. Autonomy and Decision-Making	3.08	0.977	Somewhat Satisfied	
8. Relationships with Colleagues and Supervisors	2.98	1.142	Somewhat Satisfied	
9. Pay and Benefits	2.88	0.983	Somewhat Satisfied	
Grand Mean	3.22	0.894	Somewhat Satisfied	

Table 3 reveals a mixed picture of job satisfaction among participants, with the grand mean indicating a general level of "Somewhat Satisfied" ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 0.894$). Among the specific indicators, "Colleague Behavior and Discipline" received the highest satisfaction score ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 0.847$), reflecting a positive view of interpersonal relations and disciplinary measures. In contrast, "Pay and Benefits" received the lowest score ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 0.983$), suggesting dissatisfaction in this area. The majority of indicators, including "Working Conditions," "Job Security," and "Recognition and Appreciation," fell within the "Somewhat Satisfied" range, indicating areas where employees have neither strong satisfaction nor significant dissatisfaction.

The results suggest that while employees generally feel somewhat satisfied with their jobs, several areas require attention to improve overall satisfaction. The highest score for "Colleague Behavior and Discipline" points to relatively positive experiences with workplace interactions, whereas the lower satisfaction with "Pay and Benefits" indicates a potential gap in employee compensation and rewards. The consistent scores in the "Somewhat Satisfied" range across most indicators suggest a need for targeted improvements

to enhance satisfaction levels and address specific areas of concern.

To boost overall job satisfaction, the company should focus on areas where satisfaction is lower, particularly in pay and benefits. Enhancing compensation packages, offering more recognition and appreciation, and improving professional development opportunities could lead to higher overall satisfaction. Addressing these gaps can help the company foster a more engaged and motivated workforce, reduce turnover rates, and improve overall organizational performance.

Correlating Diversity and Inclusivity Practices and Job Satisfaction.

This section investigates the relationship between diversity and inclusivity practices and job satisfaction among employees. Specifically, it explores the correlations between employees' perceptions of diversity practices—such as respect for individual differences and the effectiveness of diversity policies—and their overall job satisfaction. In addition, the analysis extends to inclusivity practices, including organizational responses to discrimination and support for diverse employee needs, to determine their impact on job satisfaction. Table 4 presents the results of the Pearson Correlation.

Table 4 Correlation Matrix

Variables	r	p-value	Interpretation
1. Diversity Practices vs. Job Satisfaction	0.8580	0.000	Very Strong, significant correlation
2. Inclusivity Practices vs. Job Satisfaction	0.8610	0.011	Very Strong, significant correlation

Table 4 displays the correlation between diversity practices, inclusivity practices, and job satisfaction. The correlation coefficient for diversity practices and job satisfaction is $r=0.8580$, indicating a very strong and significant positive relationship. This suggests that as diversity practices within the company improve, employees' job satisfaction tends to increase significantly. Similarly, the correlation coefficient for inclusivity practices and job satisfaction is $r=0.8610$, also reflecting a very strong and significant positive relationship. This implies that enhancements in inclusivity practices are closely associated with higher levels of job satisfaction among employees.

The high correlation coefficients for both diversity practices ($r = 0.8580$) and inclusivity practices ($r = 0.8610$) with job satisfaction indicate that these factors are strongly related to employees' overall satisfaction with

their jobs. Specifically, the significant p-values (0.000 for diversity practices and 0.011 for inclusivity practices) confirm that these relationships are statistically significant, not due to random chance. This strong positive correlation suggests that improvements in diversity and inclusivity practices are likely to lead to higher job satisfaction, reinforcing the importance of these practices in fostering a positive work environment.

The very strong correlations between both diversity and inclusivity practices with job satisfaction underscore the critical role these factors play in employee well-being and organizational effectiveness. Companies should prioritize and invest in robust diversity and inclusivity programs to enhance job satisfaction, which, in turn, could lead to increased employee retention, productivity, and overall morale. By addressing and improving diversity

and inclusivity practices, organizations can create a more engaging and supportive work environment that aligns with employees' values and expectations, thereby promoting long-term success and stability.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, companies in the airline industry may enhance their diversity and inclusivity practices to improve job satisfaction among their employees. This could be achieved by implementing more robust and visible diversity and inclusion programs, ensuring

that these initiatives are communicated effectively throughout the organization. Regular assessment and refinement of these practices, coupled with comprehensive training for managers and staff, can also help foster a more inclusive work environment. In addition, increasing transparency around the benefits of diversity and inclusivity can contribute to higher employee engagement and satisfaction. By strengthening these practices, companies in the airline industry can better support their workforce, leading to improved morale and overall job satisfaction.

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