Perceived Inclusion in South Africa: Examining the Effect of Belonging and Value for Uniqueness on Behavioral Outcomes

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I declare that his work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature *Terousha Naicker*

Abstract

This study investigated the outcomes of inclusion in the call center of a large financial services organisation. Inclusion is driven by two of the most basic human social needs: the desire to belong (Maslow, 1943; Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and the desire to be unique (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). Both aspects of inclusion were examined to gain insight into the effect each has on employee engagement, burnout, and organisational citizenship behaviors. Quantitative survey data were obtained from call center agents (N = 113). In addition, ten interviews with call center managers and HR business partners (N = 10) were conducted to provide supplementary information and a rich understanding of the research context. Factor analysis supported the conceptualisation of inclusion as multidimensional, with two distinct dimensions: *inclusion-belonging* and *inclusion-uniqueness*. *Inclusion-belonging* explained more significant variance in employee engagement and burnout than *inclusion-uniqueness*, which explained more variance in organisational citizenship behavior than *inclusion-belonging* did.

Keywords: inclusion, belonging, uniqueness, employee engagement, burnout, organisational citizenship behaviors

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Perceived Inclusion in South Africa: Examining the Effect of Belonging and Value for Uniqueness on Behavioral Outcomes

Inclusion has received significant global attention (Adamson et al., 2021; Korkmaz et al., 2022). However, it remains an elusive measure to land in the workplace successfully (Romansky et al., 2021). Rather than seeking to foster homogeneity, inclusion views the differences that accompany diversity as a valued resource (Ferdman, 2017). Despite the global trend of inclusion, a legacy of "exclusion" is still prevalent in South Africa. Historically, organisations have adopted a compliance approach (diversity focus) rather than capitalising on inclusion as a strategic enabler (Deloitte, 2020).

Workforce diversity is not limited to anthropological differences but rather belonging to groups different from what is deemed "mainstream" in society. In essence, negative employment consequences, such as exclusion, arise from associations with or outside certain social groups (Mor Barak & Cherin, 1998; Mor Barak, 2015). This necessitates the importance of driving inclusion to benefit organisations and supports the shifts necessary to counteract the South African legacy of exclusion. In such environments, individuals from all backgrounds, not only the historically powerful, are treated fairly, valued, and included in core decision-making processes (Nishii, 2013).

Inclusion, based on optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT), is driven by two of the most basic human social needs (Brewer, 1991): the desire to belong (Maslow, 1943; Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and the desire to be unique (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). In Maslow's (1943) seminal theory on the hierarchy of needs, the desire to belong is fundamental to human functioning, motivation, and well-being. When individuals experience acceptance and support, this creates a sense of belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) that helps facilitate inclusion. In Snyder and Fromkin's (1980) Theory Of Uniqueness, similarity and uniqueness are viewed on a continuum. Essentially, this means that the degree of similarity and uniqueness that people perceive in others is influenced by various factors, such as the characteristics of the person being evaluated, the context in which the evaluation is taking place, and the characteristics of the perceiver. The Theory of Uniqueness suggests that people

constantly balance their desire for similarity and uniqueness when forming impressions of others (Ferdman, 2017).

Recent psychological research (Schnell et al., 2019; Downey et al., 2015; Chamorro-Premuzic & Berg, 2021; Gallup, 2021; Bersin, 2020) has shown that an employee who feels they belong; can bring their unique self to work; and are enabled to express important aspects of their identity, perform better and experience higher levels of well-being and engagement. Furthermore, inclusive organisations are up to 35% more likely to outperform their competitors (Krakewski, 2021). This is due to leveraging each person's unique talents to increase an organisation's productivity, profit, and performance (Gallup, 2021). However, despite the real-world benefits of inclusion, there is limited academic research in a South African context.

In South Africa, not exempt from the rest of the world, call centers experienced a staggering pace of economic growth (Deery & Kinnie, 2004), particularly in the financial services industry (Banks & Roodt, 2011). The increased visibility and interest in South African call centers stems from their ability to support job creation and foreign investment (Banks & Roodt, 2011), a national imperative to address structural unemployment aimed primarily at the youth and disadvantaged communities (Wayde & Rogerson, 2014). To support this agenda, capitalising on inclusion as a strategic enabler in the call center context can align economic growth with social progress (Deloitte, 2020).

Perceptions of inclusion are often referential to the experiences from the perspective of privilege and lesser so to the views of less common demographics of interest, such as the demographics within the call center (Geiger & Jordan, 2014). The benefit of cultivating inclusion in the workplace not only has a business benefit but a social benefit within the South African context. Organisational psychology literature has indicated inclusion to be a promising catalyst towards positive employee behavioral outcomes (Shore et al., 2011), a significant business benefit in a call center context when one considers the inherent job design (Bain & Taylor, 2000).

Call centers have a notorious reputation (Bain & Taylor, 2000). The Job Demands Resource Model (JD-R) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) attributes a combination of high job demands and low job resources as contributing factors to the stressful nature of the call center environment. This is supported by academic literature, which attributes various health impacts (e.g. depression, emotional

exhaustion, and anxiety) to the inherent job design of the role of the call center agent (Bakker, Demerouti & Shaufelli, 2003). Despite advances in industrialisation, the design of call centers is still comparable to Taylorism. This has contributed to the derogatory names, for example, “electronic sweatshop” and the metaphorical likening to an electronic panopticon (Bain & Taylor, 2000).

Limited attention has been paid to the behavioral outcomes of inclusion in a South African context. As such, a research study examining the effect perceptions of inclusion have on the behavioral outcomes of call center agents within a Financial Services Organisation in South Africa could lessen a gap in the literature. In addition, the value of a South African sample contributes to the existing research by identifying experiences and patterns of inclusion in a diverse and non-Western context. This study's specific aims were first to confirm the conceptualisation of inclusion within the South African call center and, secondly, to examine the effects of inclusion on behavioral outcomes. This will be explored by addressing the following research questions: What are the perceived inclusion behaviors identified by call center agents within a South African Financial Services Organisation? How do call center agents within a South African Financial Services Organisation respond to the identified behaviors? Which identified behavior explains a greater variance in behavioral outcomes?

Literature Review

This chapter will review the literature on inclusion in the workplace and positive behavioral outcomes. Examining relevant research, theories, and constructs under investigation will identify critical areas for exploration.

Theoretical Perspective: Social Exchange Theory

The origin of social exchange discourse can be traced to the ancient philosopher Aristotle and his early writings on Nicomachean Ethics (Book V). Aristotle denotes the idea of reciprocity, colloquially referred to as “an eye for an eye” (Aristotle et al., 2009). The norm of reciprocity features strongly in Social Exchange Theory (SET), which can be traced back to the 1950s, with early views of social behavior stating that the interaction between individuals is considered an exchange of resources (Homans, 1958).

Seminal research by scholars Homans (1958), Blau (1964), and Emerson (1962) contributed significantly to the development of SET. In line with the behavioral psychology works of B.F Skinner, Homans (1958) explained the relationships between people from the perspective of the reinforcement mechanisms of reward and punishment, which account for entailing behaviors. In addition, Homans addressed various social phenomena, such as power and authority, on the nature of the interpersonal relations involved in such by observing the interactions between members of small, informal groups. While theoretically similar to Homans, Blau (1964) focused on an economic perspective that relied on an anticipatory gain in social interactions employing a utilitarian lens. Blau progressed beyond the micro level to the institutional level, addressing authority and power, conflict, and change in the context of institutionalised systems of exchange. Inspired by the works of Homans and Blau, Emerson focused on the relational concept of power and dependence as a determinant of relationships. Using the power-dependence theory, Emerson argued relative dependencies of actors on one another for resources of value they obtain through the exchange, which can impact the exchange's likelihood, frequency, and outcome.

In essence, SET relies on voluntary actions, contrary to economic exchange, which relies on formal contracts. The theory presupposes human relations are built

on a subjective cost-benefit analysis, encouraging the repetition of previously rewarded behaviors (Chernyak-Hai, 2018). Each participant in the social exchange process offers the other certain social currencies (benefits or outcomes), forming the basis of the exchange relationship. The recipient judges these currencies' value and is unlikely to reciprocate in exchange for a currency of little value to them (Cole & Harris, 2002). Thus, the main difference between a social and economic exchange lies in governance. Social exchange is not governed by explicit agreements but rather by an obligation to maintain cooperative relationships due to the subsequent intangible rewards.

Employees develop exchange relationships with colleagues, supervisors, and the organisation itself. Relationships based on social exchange must see each party offer something the other sees as valuable and be perceived as equitable and/or fair (Eisenberger et al., 1990). This may include pay, benefits, recognition, and opportunities for growth and development. In exchange for this offering from the organisation, employees are expected to reciprocate more positive attitudes and behaviors than employees who have low-quality exchange relationships (Cole & Harris, 2002). As such, SET will be used as the theoretical base in this study that views inclusion as the offering from the organisation, with expected reciprocation of positive behavioral outcomes from employees.

Inclusion in the Workplace

Conceptual Definition. Mor Barak and Cherin (1998) were amongst the first researchers to systematically explore inclusion in an organisational context. Their study revealed an expression often heard during interviews, “we are colour and gender blind” (p.101). This highlighted a challenge for organisations to recognise and value differences rather than dismiss them.

Inclusion is defined as: “the degree to which an employee perceives that he or she is an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness” (Shore et al., 2011, p. 7). The conceptual definition of inclusion by Shore and colleagues (2011) is considered the most widely accepted in the academic world (Chung et al., 2020). The model (See Appendix A Figure A1 Conceptual Model of Workgroup Inclusion) proposed that contextual factors contribute to perceptions of inclusion and utilise

SET to explain the impact of inclusion on behavioral outcomes. The framework of inclusion (Figure 1) refers to the concept of inclusion as two-dimensional: the feeling of belonging; and acceptance of individual uniqueness (Shore et al., 2011; Nishii, 2013; Mor Barak, 2015).

The aspects of belonging and uniqueness stem from optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT) (Brewer, 1991; Shore et al., 2011; Sabharwal, 2014) where, according to Brewer (1991), the pioneer of ODT, in every society, there is tension among individuals to belong and have similarities with others, while simultaneously desiring a uniqueness and individuality. On the surface, the concepts of belonging and uniqueness appear paradoxical. Ferdman (2017) argues that this paradox can result in conflict, often within oneself. For example, when striving for belongingness, one may learn and adhere to group norms or consult with the group when making decisions. However, when striving for uniqueness, one may choose an independent approach at the expense of team input due to the salient preference for being unique.

The need to be seen as an insider, and the need to be seen as different, are not mutually exclusive. The balancing of these two needs forms the base argument for inclusion. The inclusion framework (Figure 1) encapsulates four quadrants: inclusion (high belongingness and high value in uniqueness); assimilation (high belongingness and low value in uniqueness); differentiation (low belongingness and high value in uniqueness); and exclusion: (low belongingness and low value in uniqueness).

Inclusion Framework

	Low Belongingness	High Belongingness
Low Value in Uniqueness	**Exclusion** Individual is not treated as an organizational insider with unique value in the work group but there are other employees or groups who are insiders.	**Assimilation** Individual is treated as an insider in the work group when they conform to organizational/dominant culture norms and downplay uniqueness.
High Value in Uniqueness	**Differentiation** Individual is not treated as an organizational insider in the work group but their unique characteristics are seen as valuable and required for group/ organization success.	**Inclusion** Individual is treated as an insider and also allowed/encouraged to retain uniqueness within the work group.

Figure 1 Inclusion Framework (Shore et al., 2011)

A singular focus on belonging (e.g. assimilation) holds the danger of encouraging individuals to suppress their unique offerings in deference to group norms. Hewlin (2009) argued that the risks of assimilation would negatively impact both the individual and the organisation. By suppressing individuality, and personal values, there is a significant impact on minorities, who often embrace a façade of conformity in favour of belonging. This diminishes the value of diversity (Shore et al., 2011), which encourages different perspectives and opinions (Mor Barak, 2015). On the other hand, a singular focus on individuals' uniqueness (e.g. differentiation) can result in subtle forms of prejudice and stereotyping (Ely & Thomas, 2001). This is despite the increased acknowledgement of diversity and unique capabilities as a source of competitive advantage resulting in increased organisational achievement (Shore et al., 2018). Based on this, the satisfaction of both components, belonging and uniqueness, are required to qualify the construct of inclusion.

Critics (Ortlieb et al., 2021) argue that scholars (for example, Shore et al., 2011 and Mor Barak, 2015) often underestimate marginalised groups and their ability to experience inclusion fully. Ortlieb and colleagues (2021) explored marginalised groups in this regard. They argued that employees who hold an inferior power position in organisations could be influenced in the display of their identities based on power dynamics and organisational expectations. Similarly, Dobusch and colleagues (2021) argued that organisational efforts might be complicated in

applying inclusion efforts with groups that experience an inherent power imbalance, often apparent in the uniqueness dimension of inclusion. Interestingly, the study further suggests that the devaluation of certain groups due to hierarchical constructions is often neglected when exploring inclusion in the workplace. This highlights the value of exploring inclusion in various contexts within organisations.

The Influence of Workplace Context on Perceived Inclusion. Shore et al. (2018) provide a comprehensive review of studies on organisational inclusion, subsequently identifying six main themes: authenticity; feeling respected and valued; psychological safety; involvement in the workgroup; influence on decision-making; and recognising, honouring and advancing diversity. These six themes represent the "core" of an(y) inclusive organisation. At an individual level, an individual's perception of inclusion is created by their experiences within the workplace. However, one must first consider the context within which these themes are able to be present. Shore and colleagues identified three contextual factors within the workplace that may influence individual experiences: inclusive climate, inclusive leadership, and inclusive human resources practices (Shore et al., 2011).

An inclusive climate refers to employees' perceptions of an organisation's participation in ensuring an employee feels valued, appreciated, and part of the group (Mor Barak, 2015; Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2011). Mor Barak (2000) and Panicker et al. (2018) describe an inclusive workplace as one that is guided by values that influence subsequent policies, procedures, and practices to inform inclusive behaviors. Enacting policies that facilitate the inclusion of all employees (e.g. diversity policies) can potentially overcome employment barriers often suffered by marginalised employees (Mor Barak, 2000). Another benefit of encouraging diverse practices, highlighted by Mor Barak and colleagues (2016), is the business benefit in human service organisations where diverse organisations are better equipped to serve diverse client populations.

In addition, Gonzalez and Denisi (2009) describe the inclusive climate from the perspective of organisational-level variables. This refers to justice being of primary importance in balancing power and relations across social groups. In context, this can be seen in perceptions employees share, for example, the organisation's effort to promote diversity. Similarly, Nishii (2013) described the

purpose of an inclusive climate as ensuring that identity group status is unrelated to access to resources. Inclusive environments see all employees treated fairly and valued for who they are, not only the historically powerful.

Inclusive practices have received less academic attention. However, several practices have emerged as likely to facilitate inclusion, including access to information; participation in decision-making; facilitated communication; and encouraging a lack of stereotyping (Shore et al., 2011). Belle, Burley and Long (2015) purport that an employee's need is not limited to perceived equity in the affordances of organisational policies but the additional psychological aspects of 'being considered a part of' the organisation. Inclusive practices include appreciating and leveraging distinctive talents to realise performance benefits, contrary to diversity practices, which are often about equal employment opportunities, fair treatment and the absence of discrimination (Dwertmann & Boehm, 2016).

A recent study by Chung et al. (2021) reported that an inclusive climate encourages the attainment of a diverse workforce. On the other hand, inclusive HR practices provide mechanisms to leverage the talents of diversity. HR practices (e.g. compensation/benefits, training/development, recruitment/selection, communication, performance management/appraisal, promotions and mentoring etc.) are intended to support perceptions of belonging and uniqueness. For example, orientation programs for new employees can assist employees in feeling connected and welcome to a new work environment (belonging). Or, recruitment strategies that prioritise diversity (e.g. different socioeconomic levels, different educational backgrounds etc.) enable the opportunity for unique perspectives in teams.

Similarly, Boehm and colleagues (2014) argued that inclusive HR practices should directly or indirectly influence employees' skills and knowledge bases, motivation and effort, and opportunities to contribute to organisational goals. Previous studies (Mor Barak, 2016; Sabharwal et al., 2019) have suggested that inclusive practices cultivate an open, fair, cooperative, supportive, and empowering environment. An example is organisations that consciously provide resources demonstrating concern for an employee's value and well-being. A critical step in achieving this is acknowledging the inseparability of an individual's personal and

work life, acknowledging and appreciating the concept of an interwoven identity, and essentially appreciating multiple facets of uniqueness.

Initially, Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) explained the concept of inclusive leadership as behaviors exhibited by leaders that invite and appreciate employees' contributions. This was later formalised to the extent to which leadership creates policies and practices that encourage full participation in formal and informal activities (Mor Barak, 2015; Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2011). Several leadership styles have components that facilitate organisational commitment; however, inclusive leadership incorporates both a facilitation for belonging and a value for individuality or uniqueness, components not fully addressed by other leadership styles (see Randel et al., 2016 for a comparison of the various leadership styles). Furthermore, Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) found inclusive leadership to be a key predictor of psychological safety. A sense of threat is a key determinant for employees' willingness to share their unique contributions. As a result, psychological safety is necessary to ensure employees are not constrained by potential negative consequences of expressing their uniqueness.

This is reiterated by Innstrand and Grødal (2022), who highlight the importance of leadership behaviors in cultivating an inclusive climate by promoting equitable, supportive and empowering practices. In a psychologically safe environment, individuals can be themselves (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Shore et al., 2018), with organisations reaping the subsequent benefits of behavioral and organisational outcomes. Furthermore, Randel and colleagues (2018) highlight the business benefit of inclusive leadership as that which considers uniqueness and supports belongingness to facilitate individual contributions rather than assimilation towards a collective need. This leadership style primarily encourages and enables individual perspectives to facilitate a diversity of thought, a significant performance benefit for organisations that warrants further exploration.

Inclusion as a Two-Dimensional Model: Belonging and Uniqueness

The value and importance of inclusion have been consistently supported by empirical research (e.g., Nishii, 2013; Dwertmann & Boehm, 2016; Chung et al., 2020) and meta-analyses (Mor Barak et al., 2016; Holmes et al., 2021). However, despite Shore's model of inclusion being the preferred academic source, there

appears to be a gap in the literature that adequately explores the sub-dimensions of belonging and uniqueness in perceptions of inclusion (Randel et al., 2018). Therefore, to address the limitations of the extant research, the specific scope of this study will focus on the two dimensions of inclusion (belonging and uniqueness), which will be discussed in further detail.

Belonging. Belonging is a subjective experience for interpersonal connections and positive regard (Rogers, 1951). This complex and dynamic process is unique to each individual, resulting from perceptions of various factors (e.g. personality, life events, technology) that influence social connections.

Belonging as a Psychological Need. Belonging has been described as a fundamental human motivation. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943; 1954) states that certain human needs dictate human behavior. Maslow ranks the human need to belong (social needs) slightly above fundamental physiological and safety needs. Per the hierarchy, the level of belonging must be established to satisfy subsequent ego needs and self-actualisation. Belongingness refers to an emotional need for interpersonal relationships, affiliation, connectedness, and being part of an ingroup. In essence, this refers to our desire to feel accepted by others and to feel a sense of belonging to a group. Shore et al. (2011) similarly defined the human need for belongingness as the need to form and maintain strong, stable interpersonal relationships. This definition asserts that people choose social identities within particular groups as a consequence of seeking ingroup acceptance.

Baumeister & Leary (1995) posit the concept of belonging as a fundamental human motivation due to the innate desire for interpersonal attachments, detailing the severe consequence that arises as a result of this need remaining unmet. The cognitive, emotional and physical aspects of the need to belong include:

- Cognitive activity: the need for social connection and interpersonal relationships is a pervasive concern. The cognitive aspects of this need involve various mental processes (e.g. social perception and motivation) required to shape social interactions and relationships;
- Emotional activity: social connections directly influence positive and negative emotions. In essence, positive affect (happiness, joy) should follow from forming

and solidifying social bonds, and negative affect (anxiety, jealousy) should ensue when relationships are broken, threatened, or refused; and

- Physical state: the need to belong can shape physical health. People have higher quality health and live longer when they feel part of supportive, caring relationships. The lack thereof can influence physiological responses, immune function, sleep quality, and physical health.

According to Maslow, behavioral patterns (e.g. anxiety and stress) likely result from the environment influencing their need to belong. This highlights the importance of workplace relationships from organisational effectiveness and individual health perspectives. Perry (2018) complements the works of Maslow with that of emerging neuroscience. Their research on “Belonging at Work” ascribes the social need to belong as that which uses the same neural networks required for primary survival needs (physiological and safety needs). The brain's neural networks can similarly experience a threat in the environment that restricts one's need to belong, to feelings experienced akin to physical pain, thirst and hunger. The presence of belonging, and feelings of acceptance, activate a reward response in the prefrontal cortex. This improves our intellectual achievement, immune function, well-being, and motivation.

Belonging and Work Group Membership. Baumeister & Leary (1995) argue that much of the research on forming group bonds can be explained through belongingness. This is evident in Reinforcement Theory which purports that the presence of others reduces distress and elicits a positive response once relationships are formed, whether due to proximity or purpose—on the other hand, relinquishing an attachment results in negative affect (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Skinner, 1958). As such, group conformity can be seen as a means to maintain group acceptance and meet belongingness needs. This can be achieved by changing one’s attitudes, actions, and behaviors to match the norms of others. Notably, an individual with a higher need to belong may show greater conformity to others' views or opinions to obtain social acceptance (Williams et al., 2000).

The resultant dynamics associated with the façade of conformity can impact individual and organisational health and effectiveness. For example, the study conducted by Hewlin (2009) found that organisations unreceptive to diverse contributions were likely to experience increased conformity. This was apparent in

the positive relationship between perceived minority positions within the organisation and the decision to conform. The study, however, cautioned about the emotional cost of the façade on employees, highlighting the increased emotional exhaustion from maintaining said façade.

Belle and colleagues (2015) explored the experiences of organisational belonging by encompassing three holistic themes: context, construct, and confidence concerning work experiences. The study reported that knowledge of self and their particular contribution to the workplace significantly impacted perceptions of belonging. This highlights the subjective nature of perceived belonging. Interestingly, however, experiences of not belonging led to higher instances of conformity, decreasing expressions of authenticity, thereby perpetuating the experience of not belonging.

Belonging in the Workplace. The need to belong is evident in the workplace, where individuals seek acceptance from their colleagues and leaders. As mentioned, to enable belonging, human beings must establish and maintain a minimum quantity of enduring relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Leary and Cox (2008) further explore the context as a set of motives within which belongingness is required. Building upon the works of Kirkpatrick and Ellis (2003), Leary and Cox provides five categories of context: macro-level groups, instrumental coalitions, intimate relationships, kin relationships, and supportive friendships. It is argued that individuals are motivated to maintain belongingness in all five domains. As such, the present study explores instrumental coalitions in the form of work groups and teams in the workplace.

According to Haines (2014), individuals seek a sense of belonging through acceptance as team members. This acceptance is an outcome of the earliest stage of group development. This is when members are at their most vulnerable and consider acceptance most important. Furthermore, a sense of belonging is required to build goal commitment linked with performance. This indicates that a high sense of belonging early in team development may contribute to future team effectiveness.

Similarly, Khan and Jabeen (2019) characterised inclusion as a sense of belonging, investigating its mediating role in enhanced efficiency. Inclusion,

specifically belonging, was deemed necessary within a diverse workforce to achieve positive behavioral outcomes. Furthermore, the study highlighted the need for an organisational culture that communicates with and recognises employees for their achievements to enhance experiences of belonging further.

Organisations play a large part in facilitating belonging (Randel et al., 2018). Firstly, creating a supportive work environment that encourages group acceptance, recognises achievements, encourages participation in a psychologically safe environment, and creates a sense of community. Secondly, ensuring justice and equity provide that all employees feel respected and treated fairly. By promoting policies that ensure non-bias and non-discrimination decisions, employees are considered equally for opportunities, increasing the perception of similarity amongst peers. Third, consultation and shared decision-making are essential components in facilitating belonging. This allows employees to offer differing perspectives, allowing employees to feel part of decision-making processes.

Additionally, researchers (Leary et al., 2013) have found that the motive for the need to belong can vary in their degree of importance and have subsequent repercussions. For example, employees who place a high value upon their need to belong are less likely to report discrimination due to the potential repercussion of being viewed or perceived as unaccepted (Carvallo and Pelham, 2006). This can result in assimilation, devaluing the benefits of a diverse workforce (Shore et al., 2011). This reiterates the benefit of exploring such concepts in marginalised demographics.

Value for Uniqueness. Uniqueness is defined as that which "distinguishes the individual from any other person in the social context" (Brewer, 1991, p. 477). A basic tenet of the theory is that “excessive” distinctiveness is detrimental to an individual since it can create stigma, a negative self-concept, and an undesirable social identity.

Concepts with distinct similarities to that of uniqueness are voice and self-verification. Voice refers to “non-required” behaviors that emphasise the expression of constructive challenge with an intent to improve rather than merely criticise (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998, p. 854, as cited in Shore et al., 2018). Examples of such

behaviors are reflected in employees' perceptions of being able to speak up and make suggestions for change, regardless of differing opinions, without being devalued or fear of reprisal. Self-verification is the tendency to "promote the survival of their self-conceptions, regardless of whether the self-conceptions happen to be positive or negative" (Swann, 1987 p. 1039 as cited in Shore et al., 2018).

In essence, people prefer others to see them as they see themselves. For example, those who see themselves as likeable want others to see them as such. Whilst both are valuable constructs in indicating a preference for individual differences, uniqueness reflects employees' perceptions that they are allowed to be different regardless of intent and hold different perspectives from the group yet still be valued.

Uniqueness as a Universal Need. Humans have a fundamental need for differentiation which influences the construction of an individual's social identity (Brewer, 1991). This motive is called *Need for Uniqueness,* which describes the human desire for differentiation. According to the theory, perceived differentiation from others will have emotional and behavioral effects. Therefore, to avoid unpleasant effects associated with extreme similarity or dissimilarity, individuals are motivated to maintain a level of uniqueness that achieves their desired level of self-distinctiveness.

To meet the need for differentiation, the Theory of Uniqueness (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980) explains the concept of uniqueness as a positive striving for moderate differentness relative to others. This is in response to individuals' emotional and behavioral reactions when perceived as too similar or dissimilar to others. Accordingly, a moderate level of similarity or dissimilarity to others is defined as a healthy point on this continuum. When individuals perceive themselves as too similar to others, they seek uniqueness. In contrast, when individuals perceive themselves as too different, the need is to be similar. This highlights the variability of the continuum and the individual's perception and needs. As a result, individuals experience an equilibrium that is dynamic and constantly corrects deviations from perceived optimality.

Snyder (1992) further expands upon this cognitive continuum to emphasise the varying levels of perceived similarity or uniqueness encoded by social acceptability. In other words, the strength of similarity is directly proportional to the level of acceptance of said behaviors in context. The general rule of thumb asserts that we are moderately different from others, translating into a maximal sense of acceptability when considering reality-based (cognitive consistency process) and motivation-based (ego enhancement process) factors. On the one hand (reality-based), we are moderately different from others naturally due to various genetic and environmental backgrounds. On the other hand (motivation-based), society rewards certain levels and instances of differentiation. For example, in competition cases, rewards are provided to those who excel relative to the group, rewarding increasingly acceptable differences, often to aid organisational effectiveness.

Snyder and Fromkin (1980) speculated upon the origins of the universal need for uniqueness, suggesting three explanations. Firstly, people are different from one another, and acknowledgement of such contributes to a stable self-concept. Secondly, environmental influences have dictated an individual's needs, notably in societies that encourage and reward independence and subsequent behaviors. Finally, as a means to achieve social acceptance, however, this is based on the degree of worth placed upon the importance of social acceptance.

The concept of deindividuation encompasses a lack of uniqueness, reducing an individual's identifiability relative to others by ensuring uniformity (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). For example, when applied to job design, uniformity within the assembly-line production method can have enhanced efficiency and organisational benefits. However, the resultant impact on employees can lead to self-dissatisfaction and boredom. In addition, due to the lack of a unique identity, individuals are more likely to treat others impersonally, increasing the risk of social problems (Bain & Taylor, 2000).

Uniqueness and Group Dynamics. To satisfy the socio-emotional needs of groups, there is a requirement for groups to achieve uniformity of certain beliefs, often to serve the function of defining group goals (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). This indicates some inherent similarity expected with specific teams with the same purpose. Furthermore, this highlights the relative importance of group-defining

attributes distinguishing the team from the larger population. In essence, one can be similar to the team-defining attributes of the reference group (e.g. the call center) and simultaneously different from other reference groups (e.g. other departments within the organisation, such as finance or marketing). For example, a call center agent may define their unique identity according to other call center agents who share many similarities and may perceive a sense of differentiation from other occupations or departments within the organisation.

Uniqueness in the Workplace. Diversity and inclusion studies often reference the benefits of unique employee contributions. This is evident in research conducted by Snyder and Lopez (2002), who reflect on societal benefits. For one, individuals who seek to be different often pursue different goals from the norm, reducing competition and conflict over resources. Furthermore, unique employee contributions allow for increased differing perspectives and skills, aiding organisations' problem-solving capabilities. This impacts overall organisational effectiveness, which has an economic benefit to society.

To achieve these benefits, organisations and leaders play an essential role in facilitating and acknowledging the value of individual uniqueness (Randel et al., 2018). Firstly, encouraging diverse contributions is fundamental to the perception that each contribution is valued; secondly, enabling diverse contributions by understanding employees and their individual needs. For example, employees who are new to the workplace, neurodiverse, or cultural minorities may require alternate methods to the norm to fully experience the benefits of their diverse contributions, which could otherwise be lost.

Similarly, Shore and colleagues (2018) highlight the behaviors that facilitate employees feeling valued for their uniqueness. Firstly, the importance of creating a psychologically safe work environment to enable and encourage diverse contributions without fear of repercussions. Secondly, displaying respect for different identity groups is a behavior that is particularly important in a diverse workforce. Finally, supporting displays of authenticity, including an exhibition by leaders of their own authentic behaviors. This is due to the role of leaders as role models, with said behaviors notably influential in cultivating a culture of inclusion that encourages uniqueness.

However, Shore and colleagues (2011) maintain that while the benefits of uniqueness in their associated perspectives and knowledge can prove helpful in organisations, social identity often becomes subsumed under the umbrella of their unique offering. Individuals with visible identities with a history of discrimination may fear they will not be valued for their identity. Individuals with unique capabilities (e.g. minorities) are often treated as outsiders, reflective of the access-and-legitimacy perspective (Ely and Thomas, 2001). When employees infer exclusionary practices are due to minority membership, there will likely be a breakdown in team cohesion and subsequent organisational effectiveness (Shore et al., 2011).

When unique characteristics are apparent (e.g. race, gender, age etc.), individuals may downplay their characteristics should this differ from the group. The need to assimilate to reduce the negative effect of perceived extreme differentiation would decrease the benefits associated with diversity. This is ubiquitous concerning environments with differences in status (Shore et al., 2011; Phillips et al., 2009). For example, cultural identities associated in the larger society with certain power positions, such as white men in South Africa, have greater power, prestige, and status than others. On the other hand, individuals who value and reflect their uniqueness, regardless of such barriers, may subsequently sacrifice their experiences of belonging in favour of differentiation. This indicates the value of exploring inclusion in marginalised groups, a problem for organisations to address through inclusion strategies (Shore et al. 2011).

Differences among team members are to be valued (Shore et al., 2011), and leaders can display their value for uniqueness by developing ways to reward unique employee offerings (Chung et al., 2020). Uniqueness-motivated behaviors can be seen in activities that utilise different approaches to achieve the same outcome (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). This allows for integrating unique styles into work performance with the same outcome. While differentiation from group performance norms may be desired and rewarded, there lies the risk of differentiation that may result in exclusion. Extreme deviations from group norms subsequently labelled as deviants, differ from mere differentiation due to the lack of social acceptance. The social acceptance of uniqueness rewards differentiation of unique and desired behaviors and rejects norm-deviant behaviors. Therefore, it is essential to explore

norms within the context of the present study that may influence perceptions of uniqueness and belonging.

Barriers to Inclusion in the Call Center

To achieve inclusion in the workplace, the assumption holds that employees can achieve and experience both dimensions of belonging and uniqueness (Shore et al., 2011). According to Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT) tenets (Brewer, 1991), the social self, resulting from congruent experiences of belonging and uniqueness, is context specific. For example, within the call centre context, group identity as a call center agent would be inclusive but not optimally distinctive. In comparison, when considering the call center as part of the greater organisation, group identity as an employee is inclusive but unique in the role of the call center agent as a sub-group.

Another significant tenet of ODT (Brewer, 1991) refers to the relative strength of the opposing motivations influenced by cultural norms and recent experience. For example, call center social and group norms may differ significantly from other teams associated with higher hierarchical power and status. This means the need for inclusion will vary according to the current experiences. Individuals in positions of power typically experience certain in-group privileges, whereas a call center agent, viewed through a minority lens, may experience exclusionary out-group experiences.

As per the job design within the call center, one could anticipate low perceptions of uniqueness due to possible deprivation caused by a lack of autonomy. However, it is essential to reiterate that individuals differ in their sensitivity to this type of deprivation. Prevailing research (Shore et al., 2018; Nembhard and Edmondson, 2006; Carmeli et al., 2010) has predominantly focused on traditional work organisations that are highly skilled, relatively autonomous, and primarily subjected to favourable working conditions. When considering the restrictive nature of the role, constructs of inclusion and subsequent themes, such as “authenticity” and “influence on decision-making", indicate the shortcomings of prevailing research that does not consider the structural conditions of certain contexts.

Call center agents are often confronted with low-intensive tasks with little input or autonomy. Process simplification measures in the call center are usually achieved through dialogue scripting. This can include dictated verbal and emotional

responses. This process standardisation reduces organic responses due to the lack of autonomy over task execution (Parker & Jeacle, 2019). This indicates a potential barrier to the ability of the environment to enable expressions of uniqueness (Dobusch et al., 2021). Randel and colleagues (2018) explored this challenge to balance the value of uniqueness with homogenising forces. Their findings highlight the business benefit of shared mental models that dictate processes that offer performance advantages. However, despite the business benefit, this way of working decreases the opportunity for inclusion due to the lack of autonomy (Randel et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, Sprigg and Jackson (2006) describe a call center agent's primary role as an individual role, prioritising the engagement between the call center agent and the client. As a result, team interdependence is not typical. This can impact the quality and quantity of relationships within the call center, potentially impacting the strength of perceptions of belonging. This rationale formed the basis of the present study to deviate from Shore et al.'s (2011) initial focus on direct "workgroups". Instead, the present study explores inclusion from a broader workplace perspective to incorporate the a-typical experiences of the call center.

The present study will investigate inclusion within a South African call centre to confirm the two-dimensional conceptualisation of inclusion and its applicability in alternative contexts. To establish whether Shore et al.'s (2011) two-dimension model of belonging and uniqueness is applicable within a South African call center, the following proposition was formulated:

Proposition 1: The perception of inclusion is conceptualised by two dimensions: *inclusion-belonging* and *inclusion-uniqueness*.

Organisational Benefits of Inclusion: Behavioral Outcomes

Perceived inclusion in the workplace can result in positive behavioral outcomes (Randel et al., 2018). To explore behaviors that have a business benefit to the call center, employee engagement, burnout, and organisational citizenship behaviors will be examined. From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, employees who experience a strong sense of social exchange through perceived

inclusion will experience a greater obligation to reciprocate the benefits and support received by engaging in positive behaviors.

Inclusion and Employee Engagement. Employee engagement is the relentless affective-cognitive state that produces “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli et al., 2002 p.74; Downey et al., 2014):

- Vigor: This refers to high energy levels and mental resilience while working. Employees with high levels of vigor are more willing and dedicated to work, are not easily fatigued, and are highly persistent in the face of adversity;
- Dedication: This refers to the sense of significance employees derive from their work, resulting in increased loyalty and dedication. The enthusiasm, pride, and inspiration derived from work is likely to result in longer periods of tenure in organisations; and
- Absorption: This refers to the state of immersion, and total involvement employees have in their work tasks. This method of task performance requires and results in high levels of concentration and satisfaction.

In general, employees present high levels of engagement when they identify with a work environment which promotes (Kahn, 1990):

- A sense of safety and comfort that is manifested from interpersonal relationships; dynamics between groups and intergroup; leadership styles; and the organisations’ norms;
- Meaningfulness that is derived through the value and appreciation of employees; and
- Availability of physical and psychological resources associated with work.

Prior research (Choi et al., 2015) suggests that employees who receive socio-emotional resources from organisations (e.g. an organisation that exhibits openness, accessibility, availability, or provides beneficial resources) subsequently feel obligated to repay the organisation. This is in line with the expectations of Social Exchange Theory, where engagement can be viewed as a method of such repayment. Similarly, Korkmaz and colleagues (2022) conclude that receiving

resources from the organisation, such as appreciation or recognition from leaders, motivates employees to reciprocate through higher levels of performance, satisfaction and engagement. This is achieved by applying themselves more fully to their work roles and devoting more cognitive, emotional, and physical resources to the organisation.

A series of empirical studies support a positive relationship between inclusion and employee engagement (Downey et al., 2014; Choi et al., 2015; Innstrand & Grødal, 2022; Qu & Wang, 2022). Choi et al. (2015) examined 246 employees across six companies and attributed the positive relationship to a work environment that provides support, maintains open communication, and invites employee input. Authors Innstrand & Grødal (2022) have uniquely contributed to inclusion research through a service delivery lens, which differs from most empirical studies. By surveying 18 500 employees in higher education in Norway, the study confirmed a significant positive relationship between perceived inclusion and employee engagement. However, the relationship was weaker than expected. The authors proposed an explanation for the result as the by-product of the academic environmental context. This reiterates the need to examine the phenomenon in various environmental contexts to gain a more profound understanding of inclusion in the workplace.

Qu and Wang (2022) corroborate the extant findings in a non-Western context. Their study in China provided an alternate perspective to predominantly Western studies. China is considered less diverse, with a high collectivism and conformity culture. Consistent with Western findings, Qu and Wang reported a correlation between inclusion and increased employee engagement. Coincidentally, the findings of the study explored the consequences of geographical inequality. High levels of inclusion were found to correlate with high levels of education, a highly prosperous industry, and developed areas. Moderate inclusion levels were correlated with the service industry and moderately developed areas. Low inclusion was correlated with low education and less developed areas. This differentiation was significant due to the proposed impact of status and equality on perceptions of inclusion.

Exploring potential antecedents of employee engagement, such as inclusion, is particularly useful in encouraging positive attitudes among call center agents to counteract the inherently stressful nature of the role. Therefore, based on the review of inclusion literature, specifically with a nuanced focus on belonging and uniqueness, and employee engagement studies, the following proposition was formulated to investigate if a similar relationship exists within a South African call center context:

Proposition 2: *Inclusion-Belonging* is associated with a significant variance in Employee Engagement: (a) dedication, (b) vigor and (c) absorption.

Proposition 3: *Inclusion-Uniqueness* is associated with a significant variance in Employee Engagement: (a) dedication, (b) vigor and (c) absorption.

Inclusion and Burnout. Maslach and Jackson (1986) provide the most widely used definitions of burnout that can occur among individuals who do “people work” of some kind (Maslach et al., 1996; Maslach et al., 2001):

- Exhaustion: Exhaustion prompts one to distance oneself emotionally and cognitively from work. Presumably, this is to cope with the role, impacting a service provider's capacity to be involved with and responsive to the needs of service recipients;
- Cynicism: Cognitive distancing develops due to exhaustion, attempting to create a distance between themselves and high demands. Depersonalisation as such has been found to make the workload more manageable, at the risk of decreased engagement quality with service recipients; and
- Low Personal Efficacy: Reduced personal accomplishment results from exhaustion, cynicism, or a combination of the two, which erodes one’s sense of accomplishment.

Subsequently, Maslach and Schaufeli (1993) expanded upon mere symptomatic definitions to include the dynamic nature of the syndrome. Firstly the authors analysed various symptomatic conceptualisations of burnout, summarising five common elements:

1. Dysphoric symptoms are predominant (e.g. mental or emotional exhaustion, fatigue, and depression);
2. There is a primary consideration or presence of mental and behavioral symptoms with a lesser consideration of physical symptoms;
3. Burnout symptoms are work-related;
4. The symptoms manifest in "normal" individuals; and
5. There is decreased effectiveness and work performance due to negative attitudes and behaviors.

Maslach and Schaufeli (1993) proceeded to explain the dynamic nature of burnout as a developing process. First, stress arises due to the discrepancy between individual expectations and occupational realities. Gradually, the emotional strain increases, as do their attitudes, culminating in burnout. Thus, how individuals cope with the initial stressors is paramount to whether or not burnout occurs.

In contrast to individual variables, various organisational risk factors have been identified, summarising six key domains of the workplace environment: workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values (Maslach & Leiter, 2005; 2008; Maslach et al., 2001):

1. Workload: Excessive job demands and increasing workload are more likely to result in burnout. The problem arises when one is unable to recover from these stressors. When the job demands become chronic, there is little opportunity to rest, recover, and restore balance to mitigate burnout.
2. Control: Research has confirmed a strong relationship between role conflict and the exhaustion dimension of burnout. Consequently, research has indicated that participation in organisational decision-making can alleviate this type of exhaustion.
3. Reward: Insufficient reward (whether financial, institutional, or social) can increase a vulnerability to burnout. A lack of recognition from service recipients, colleagues, managers, and external stakeholders leaves employees feeling their work is not valued. This, in turn, is associated with feelings of inefficacy.
4. Community: The quality of social interaction between supervisors and co-workers, both formal and informal, positively impacts exhaustion and efficacy. Burnout is less likely to occur within a positive and supportive environment.

Furthermore, a sense of community has been found to mitigate feelings of inequity.

5. Fairness: Fairness, central to equity theory, is the extent to which work decisions are perceived between input (e.g. effort, time, skills) and outcome (e.g. pay, recognition, benefits) is perceived as balanced. An imbalanced social exchange, or inequity, can result in negative emotions and is predictive of burnout. On the other hand, fairness, or a balanced social exchange, results in positive emotions and employees being less susceptible to burnout.
6. Values: The cognitive–emotional power of job goals and expectations sees values as the motivating connection between employee and employer. Considering that values are deeply held beliefs, they shape an individual's priorities, preferences and behaviors. When there is a values conflict on the job, employees will make a trade-off between work they want to do and work they have to do; this internal conflict can result in burnout.

The final conceptual definition to be discussed uses the metaphor of “the flat battery” as a foundation for their conceptualisation. Kristensen et al. (2005) expand the concept of burnout to accentuate the contributing factors of three specific domains that can result in depletion or the metaphorical “flat battery”:

1. Personal Burnout: “Personal burnout is the degree of physical and psychological fatigue and exhaustion experienced by the person’’ (p.197). This generic domain allows for a generic measurement of burnout, regardless of occupation status. Furthermore, there is no differentiation between physical and psychological experiences, ensuring both are equally important.
2. Work Burnout: “The degree of physical and psychological fatigue and exhaustion that the person perceives as related to his/her work’’ (p.197). While this differentiating domain does not assess causality attributed to work, it does stress the focus of the person’s attribution of their symptoms to work rather than non-work factors, e.g. family demands.
3. Client Burnout: “The degree of physical and psychological fatigue and exhaustion that is perceived by the person as related to his/her work with clients’’ (p.197). Similar to the work domain, the interest in the differentiated domains see its value

in the person's connection between their symptoms and their "client" related work.

According to Social Exchange Theory, burnout occurs when the employee perceives a lack of equity between their efforts and contributions and that which are subsequently received (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011). This implies burnout can be triggered by the significant interpersonal demands that become emotionally consuming without organisational efforts to buffer such demands. However, research by Adams et al. (2020) reported that social support (such as encouraging inclusion) could mitigate the adverse effects of work demands, relieving the continued exposure to stressors that result in burnout.

Ayyala and colleagues (2022) explored the importance of leveraging inclusivity to reduce the effect of burnout by enabling belonging and individual success. Treating employees as outsiders (exclusionary practices) can result in an individual's perceived lack of personal accomplishment. For example, hindering advancements or promotions can decrease an employee's perceptions of personal accomplishment, a key dimension of burnout. On the other hand, through equal access to opportunities and resources, inclusion can enable a sense of accomplishment, potentially mitigating the susceptibility to burnout.

Furthermore, according to Ayyala and colleagues (2022), the dimension of emotional exhaustion revealed that a lack of social connection had been linked to detrimental effects on both mental and physical health. By removing barriers to connect, studies (Leiter & Maslach, 2014) suggest social support and belonging reduce the fear-related physiological responses experienced from exclusion. To achieve this, Southwick and Southwick (2020) highlight the importance of effective teams in combatting burnout. A shared purpose and mental model fosters belonging and social connectedness, reducing burnout. This is congruent with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which purported social connectedness, particularly teamwork, addresses the psychological need for friendship and esteem, a fundamental biological requirement.

Call centers are notoriously demanding, with multiple environmental influences of burnout (Ashill & Rod, 2011; D'Alleo & Santangelo, 2011; Healy &

Bramble, 2003; Visser & Rothmann, 2008). A lack of task autonomy, a key contributor to burnout, is often experienced by call center agents through scripting, a job characteristic used to dictate client interactions. Furthermore, the role identity of a call center agent places them in a subservient position, resulting in emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment, further contributing to burnout. Steyn and de Klerk (2015) highlight the contention of reliance on clients for business, resulting in an imbalance of power. As a result, there can be an increased susceptibility to client aggression, abuse, and harassment. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model suggests that job demands can turn into stressors resulting in burnout. Subsequently, job resources (through inclusion) can potentially buffer this relationship.

To explore a more profound understanding of the phenomenon in a call center context, exploring the various domains provided by Kristensen and colleagues (2005) could provide an interesting lens in this under-researched field. Therefore, based on the review of inclusion, specifically with a nuanced focus on belonging and uniqueness, and burnout studies, the following proposition was formulated to investigate if a similar relationship exists within a South African call center context:

Proposition 4: *Inclusion-Belonging* is associated with a significant variance in Burnout: (a) personal, (b) work and (c) client

Proposition 5: *Inclusion-Uniqueness* is associated with a significant variance in Burnout: (a) personal, (b) work and (c) client

Inclusion and Organisational Citizenship Behaviors. Bateman and Organ (1983) first coined the term “Organisational Citizenship Behavior” (OCB) as gestures that lubricate the social machinery in an organisation but do not adhere to regular task performance. Alternatively, Smith and colleagues (1983) conceptualised OCB in two dimensions: altruism (behavior targeted specifically at helping individuals); and generalised compliance (behavior reflecting compliance with general rules, norms and expectations. Examples of such can range from helping co-workers to tolerating impositions without complaints, often referred to as extra-role behaviors. OCB, referred to as “good soldier syndrome, " is necessary for an organisation's prosperity.

In subsequent research, Organ (1988) defined and identified five OCB dimensions, which were categorised by Williams and Anderson (1991) into two types based on whom the behaviors were directed:

1. Organisational citizenship behavior individuals (OCB-I): includes behaviors directed at other individuals in the workplace. This includes altruism (e.g. helping others with a heavy workload) and courtesy (e. g. respecting others or consulting with others before taking action).
2. Organisational citizenship behavior organisational (OCB-O): includes behaviors directed at the organisation as a whole. This includes civic virtue (e.g. keeping up with matters that affect the organisation), conscientiousness (e.g. following rules, attendance) and sportsmanship (e.g. not complaining unnecessarily).

The business value of citizenship behaviors can be seen in delivery through maximum performance efficiency in achieving business goals (Panicker et al., 2018). Previous studies (Pless & Maak, 2004; Wayne et al., 1997; Paolillo et al., 2021; Cottrill et al., 2014; Martinescu et al., 2021; Kyei-Poku, 2014; Khan and Jabeen, 2019; Panicker et al., 2018) have confirmed a significant positive relationship between inclusion and OCB. The findings propose that organisations should ensure employees feel appreciated and valued, have well-articulated inclusive workplace practices, and exhibit strong displays of inclusive leadership to receive increased citizenship behaviors that benefit organisations. This is consistent with Social Exchange Theory, whereby employees reciprocate long-term trusting and loyal interpersonal relationships with their organisations, with a willingness to go above and beyond normal job expectations (Lam & Lau, 2012; Gould-Williams & Davies, 2005).

Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2004) highlight the value of the distinction between OCB-I (organisational citizenship behaviors - individual) and OCB-O (organisational citizenship behaviors – organisation) when conducting research. By examining this multidimensional nature of OCB, one can ascertain linkages between inclusion with various targets within the organisation (individual or organisational level).

OCB-I, typically viewed as a form of prosocial behavior, is consistent with Social Exchange Theory due to the continuous attempts to maintain forged social bonds (Dachner et al., 2017). In addition to positive social interactions, OCB-I can foster tacit knowledge sharing amongst co-workers improving task quality and productivity (Huang et al., 2014). This is evident in the study by Chung et al. (2020), with reported findings indicating that inclusion significantly predicted helping behaviors (OCBs). This study, similar to the findings of Dachner et al. (2017), indicated that employees' lack of knowledge and skills could be supplemented by encouraging cooperative behaviors found in OCB as a reciprocal exchange.

On the other hand, OCB-O can be viewed as a more complex exchange, which conflates organisational achievement with personal achievement (Dachner et al., 2017). When the employees align with the organisation's objectives through organisational identification, behaviors that improve the organisation benefit an employee’s work effectiveness and achievement.

Studies (Twenge et al., 2007; Buckley et al., 2004) argue that while prosocial behaviors are supposedly primarily a benefit to others, there are often reciprocal benefits to the employee. Initially, the concept of OCB endeavours behaviors that help others, often at a cost to self—for example, sacrificing personal time to help the organisation. However, the benefits of belonging to the group enable the subsequent rewards of increased perceptions of belonging experienced by the employee.

Despite the narrowly defined in-role performance measures in the call center, the influence of leadership behaviors can encourage, but not enforce, OCBs (Podsakoff et al., 2000). For example, leaders who define performance metrics broadly to include OCBs subtly influence subsequent rewards that may directly impact the advent of OCBs. Alternatively, supportive leadership behaviors may be reciprocated through OCBs. For example, leaders who support their employees personally, reflective of inclusive behaviors (Hollander, 2009), may receive support in kind, despite the extra-role implications.

To explore the extra-role implications, Bolino and colleagues (2004) challenged prevailing OCB research which has predominantly focused on the positive outcomes of OCB. In line with SET, the cyclical nature implies that by

bettering the organisation as a whole, it, in turn, promotes career success, a significant benefit to an employee (Wei, 2014). However, Bolino cautions against potential negative health outcomes due to performing at a level constantly exceeding expectations.

Notably, when considering a work environment context, employees must not only be willing to, but they must also be able to engage in citizenship behaviors. Therefore, job design and role expectations will affect the degree of OCBs that call center agents can display, regardless of a clear client benefit. Service delivery and quality have been carefully managed in many call centers by developing scripts to guide client engagement dictating role-required performance (Rafaeli et al., 2008). Scripts are particularly useful in driving performance by reducing differences in skill, ability, and attitude in client interactions. On the other hand, scripts can jeopardise service quality as rigid adherence and subsequent lack of autonomy can demotivate call center agents. This has a significant influence considering OCBs have primarily motivational underpinnings (Hoffman et al., 2007).

As such, the differentiation between helping colleagues and helping the organisation holds an interesting lens due to the complex nature of the call center environment. Examining this relationship will generate a broader understanding of the behavioral outcome of inclusion in the call center. Based on the review of inclusion, specifically with a nuanced focus on belonging and uniqueness, and OCB studies, the following proposition was formulated to investigate if a similar relationship exists within a South African call center context:

Proposition 6: *Inclusion-Belonging* is associated with a significant variance in Organisational Citizenship Behaviors: (a) individual and (b) organisational

Proposition 7: *Inclusion-Uniqueness* is associated with a significant variance in Organisational Citizenship Behaviors: (a) individual and (b) organisational

Summary of Literature Review

Belonging and uniqueness are important aspects of a positive workplace culture. Belonging refers to feeling accepted and valued as a group member. On the other hand, uniqueness refers to recognising and appreciating individual differences,

skills, and perspectives. Together, belonging and uniqueness culminate in "inclusion". The study aims to confirm this conceptualisation of inclusion in a non-Western context and examine the effects of *inclusion-belonging* and *inclusion-uniqueness* on behavioral outcomes. The behavioral outcomes of employee engagement, burnout, and organisational citizenship behaviors were explored based on previous empirical studies and behaviors that benefit the call centre. The present study will examine the degree of influence *inclusion-belonging* and *inclusion-uniqueness* on these behavioral outcomes.

Summary of Propositions

Propositions	
Proposition 1	The perception of inclusion is conceptualized by two dimensions: inclusion-belonging and *inclusion-uniqueness*.
Proposition 2	Inclusion-Belonging is associated with a significant variance in Employee Engagement: (a) dedication, (b) vigor and (c) absorption.
Proposition 3	Inclusion-Uniqueness is associated with a significant variance in Employee Engagement: (a) dedication, (b) vigor and (c) absorption.
Proposition 4	Inclusion-Belonging is associated with a significant variance in Burnout: (a) personal, (b) work and (c) client
Proposition 5	Inclusion-Uniqueness is associated with a significant variance in Burnout: (a) personal, (b) work and (c) client
Proposition 6	Inclusion-Belonging is associated with a significant variance in Organisational Citizenship Behaviors: (a) individual and (b) organisational
Proposition 7	Inclusion-Uniqueness is associated with a significant variance in Organisational Citizenship Behaviors: (a) individual and (b) organisational

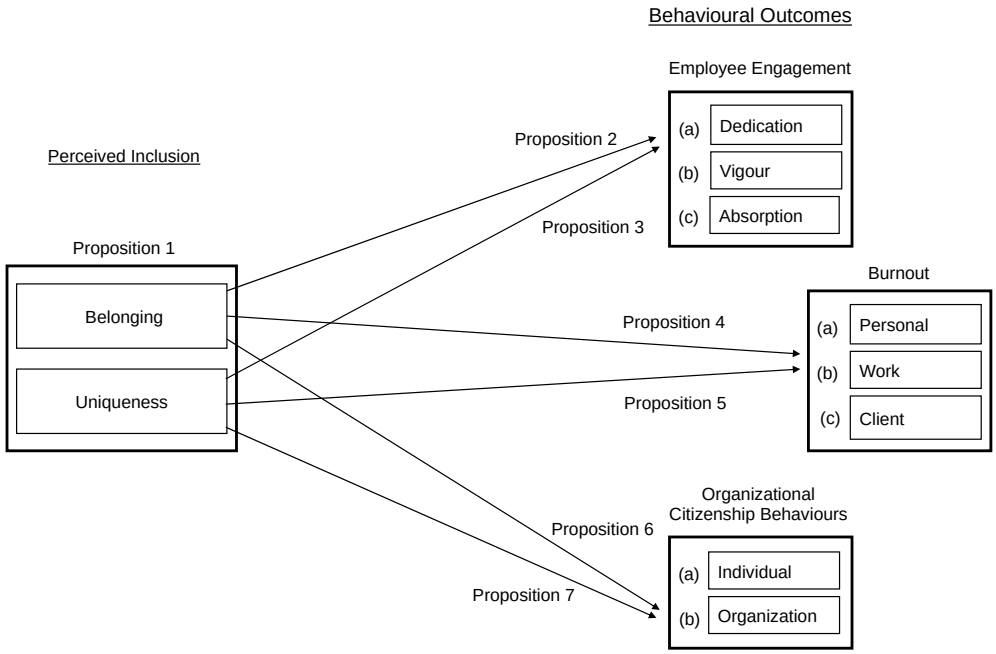


Figure 2 Propositions Diagram

Method

This study aimed to examine the relationship between perceived inclusion and the behavioral outcomes of employee engagement, burnout and organisational citizenship behaviors. The study further aimed to confirm the underlying structure of inclusion as a combination of two dimensions *inclusion-belonging* and *inclusion-uniqueness*, in the call center context. This chapter presents the method that was used and is presented in eight sub-sections: (1) research context, (2) research design, (3) sampling approach, (4) sampling frame, (5) participants, (6) procedure, (7) measures and (8) data analysis procedures.

Research Context

Group membership may be defined within gender, race, ethnicity, social class, etc., wherein each national culture determines the context of social exchange and reward allocation (Lind & Earley, 1992; Hofstede, 1993). Colloquially referred to as the “rainbow nation”, South Africa is a prime example of a diverse population. However, given South Africa’s history, myriad past imbalances impact certain groups' work experiences.

Historically, apartheid created inequality in access to education, skills, and professional and managerial work for Black (including African, Coloured and Indian) individuals (Horwitz & Jain, 2011). Subsequently, workplace diversity became mandated by law to address these past imbalances. The Department of Trade and Industry developed the B-BBEE Codes of Good Practice to regulate and promote transformation across South African industries. Furthermore, legislation was enacted to address diversity and inclusion imperatives through the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, individual industry policies (e.g. Financial Charter), the King Report on Governance of South Africa (King IV), and the Employment Equity Act.

South Africa has the anomaly of an oversupply of unskilled and semi-skilled labour, with disproportionate numbers of Black individuals primarily recruited at lower occupational levels. The extreme demographic-role misrepresentation within organisations is a key business and societal issue in post-Apartheid South Africa. Overcoming the historical legacy of labour market discrimination are critical underpinning assumptions of the previously discussed legislation. However, critics

argue that mandated compliance has enriched a few but failed to empower the majority in the labour market successfully.

A key driver for the expansion of the call centre industry in South Africa over the past decade has been the national government imperative, which seeks to lever the sector to address the country's chronic unemployment problems and, more significantly, the youth unemployment crisis. The concept of impact sourcing refers to the employment of people who are most disadvantaged, with limited alternative opportunities for employment, and are to be the principal source of workers (Wayde & Rogerson, 2014). As such, the exploration of inclusion in a South African call center is subjected to two primary forms of disadvantage: economic (marginalisation) and cultural disadvantage (non-dominant groups) (Kabeer, 2000).

The current research was conducted at a premium financial services institution established in Cape Town, South Africa, and operates in 14 countries. The organisation provides financial solutions to individuals, small and medium-sized businesses and corporates in South Africa, the rest of Africa and certain other emerging markets. As reported in their 2021 Sustainability Report, the organisation is a level 1 BBBEE contributor, with 84% of their workforce classified as *black* and 61% of the workforce comprising women. The organisation has six core values that form the basis of the organisation's desired culture, a culture that is adhered to by the Board and all employees. The *Power of Diversity and Inclusion* is one of the core organisational values.

The call center under study is positioned within a central business unit that services various business divisions. The call center comprises predominantly female employees (67%) and coloured (60%). The average salary is approximately R15 000 per month.

This context provides a valuable lens to view the findings, in light of the organisation's increasing efforts towards Diversity and Inclusion, in conjunction with the call center dynamics reflected in the literature.

Research Design

This study applied a quantitative research strategy with a less dominant qualitative strand (Creswell & Clark, 2011; 2018). A study that combines both a quantitative and qualitative form of data can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research question that is being investigated. However, a mixed-

method study was not selected for this research for several reasons. Firstly, the quantitative study with a lesser qualitative strand allows the analysis to maintain a clear focus on the quantitative data while simultaneously obtaining additional context to understand the yielded quantitative results. Secondly, the selected method of a quantitative study with a qualitative strand is more time-effective than a mixed-method study while producing a similar benefit to a mixed-method study. Finally, the addition of the qualitative strand allows for a deeper understanding of the participant's experiences which increases the data quality of the primary quantitative study.

Quantitative research describes, explains, and makes predictions to generalise results to other populations (Creswell & Clark, 2011; 2018). The qualitative strategy, influenced by previous research, emerged as a means to further explore the phenomenon, accounting for contextual influences experienced by the quantitative sample to explore the “why” and “how”. The pacing and implementation of the two strands occurred concurrently as both quantitative and qualitative strands were collected during a single phase (Creswell & Clark, 2011; 2018).

The quantitative study utilised a descriptive, cross-sectional design to examine the relationship between multiple variables using a survey. The qualitative strand utilised virtual semi-structured interviews conducted on Microsoft Teams, using the transcription feature to record and transcribe the interviews.

A limitation when using a self-administered quantitative measure such as a survey is that it does not permit the exploration of the topic typically required in under-researched areas (Creswell & Clark, 2011; 2018). To minimise this limitation, the secondary qualitative component was used to explore the meaning and understanding of constructs and the phenomenon's essence by analysing large amounts of data, such as interview transcripts, to identify patterns, themes and trends. As a result, the content analysis results can provide valuable insights into the perspectives, beliefs, and experiences of individuals or groups.

It is critical to emphasise that in a quantitative study with a qualitative strand, the qualitative data is not used to make generalisations or draw conclusions about the population. Instead, it is used to provide additional insights into the quantitative data. This pragmatic approach appreciates knowledge as a constantly revised product of experience (Biddle and Schafft, 2015), with objective and subjective data collection holding significant value in knowledge creation and contribution (Creswell

& Clark, 2011; 2018). Creswell and Clark unpack the pragmatic worldview as one that arises as a solution to problems by utilising whichever means necessary to understand the problem. This worldview's key component is the importance of context, often reflective of social justice aims. The flexibility of the pragmatic approach encouraged the design of a quantitative method with a less dominant qualitative strand. Furthermore, the pragmatic approach influenced the decision to utilise research propositions rather than hypotheses due to the exploratory nature of this quantitative study.

Sampling Approach

Survey. A purposive non-probability sampling strategy was used in line with the study requiring call center staff. The primary quantitative sample was composed of call-centre agents in a premium African Financial Services Institution. To ensure that only call center staff formed part of the sample, a qualifying question was used to confirm their role as call center agents.

Interviews. A purposive non-probability sampling strategy was deemed most appropriate as the study aimed to depict important aspects of the investigated phenomenon. In addition, this approach selected certain individuals due to their familiarity and direct involvement with the quantitative sample.

Sampling Frame

Survey. The call center primarily reports to a single executive due to a centralised model. This implies a certain degree of consistency across the call centres that are split across the various businesses they serve, such as Wealth & Investment, Personal Finance, Corporate etc. While one executive leads the servicing business, the multiple sub-divisions are governed by their Business Unit leader, who influences additional business-specific cultural norms. The call centers consist of approximately 485 call center agents; however, not all agents were sent the links due to business priority (e.g. excessively high call volumes), high stressors (e.g. cloud migration), or general unavailability (e.g. capacity constraints).

Interviews. The sample was compiled of call center managers and HR business partners with in-depth knowledge and experience of the call center environment, having worked in the environment directly.

Participants

Quantitative: Survey Study. The sample was composed of (n = 189) respondents; 52 were removed due to incomplete responses, ranging from 3% to 63% completion. In addition, 24 respondents were removed due to disqualification (i.e. not answering “yes” to the qualifying question). After cleaning the dataset, the final sample comprised (n = 113) respondents.

The majority of the sample was 35 years of age or younger (65.49%), with a mean age of 33 years (SD = 9.23, Range = 18 – 57). The call center agents worked an average of 18.25 overtime hours a month (SD = 18.70, Range = 0 – 85 hours). The servicing models of the respondents were split as follows: 23% outbound model (primarily conducts outbound calls), 38.90% inbound model (primarily receives inbound calls), 38.10% dual model (conducts calls and receives calls). Most staff have a tenure of fewer than five years (53%). The demographic statistics of the sample comprised a large percentage of coloured (68.14%) and female (70.80%) respondents (see Table B1: Quantitative Demographic Composition of Participants).

***Qualitative: Interview Study*.** The sample comprised eight call center managers and two Human Capital representatives (N=10) (see Table B2: Qualitative Demographic Composition of Participants). The varied samples contributed to the credibility of the responses by exploring various perspectives. The suggested minimum sample size is contingent on epistemological, methodological and practical issues (Baker & Edwards, 2012). The determination of sample size was selected based on pragmatic considerations by taking into account the parameters of the study, including the scope of the study, the nature of the topic (i.e. complexity, accessibility), the quality of data, and the study design, which is primarily a quantitative study. As such, the sample size of 10 was deemed adequate by the researcher. This rationale is supported by Smith et al. (2009), who declares that small-scale studies allow for an in-depth analysis, which pragmatically may be impractical in larger samples.

Procedure

Approval was obtained from the Commerce Faculty’s Ethics in Research Committee at the University of Cape Town (Ref: REC 2021/08/003 See Appendix C Ethics Approval). Subsequently, permission was granted from the organisation to conduct the research. Once both parties gave ethical clearance, the survey was

created using Qualtrics (Qualtrics, 2014), and interviews were scheduled using Microsoft Teams to enable virtual video calling.

Pilot. A brief pilot study was conducted to identify any challenges with the survey or interview guide. The pilot participants included two staff members for the survey, one via an email link and one via scanning a QR code on their mobile devices. The interview pilot had one staff member subjected to the interview guide. The pilot participants were comfortable with the instructions, flow, and content of the survey and interview. A suggestion was made to complete the demographical questions first in the survey. However, it was explained that the decision to have the demographics section at the end reduced distraction and fatigue for the essential constructs.

Quantitative: Survey Study. The researcher liaised with various team leaders to disseminate the survey link via email or instant messaging (see Appendix A: *Figure A2 Research Participation Invitation*). Both methods provided respondents with the context of the study and requested voluntary participation. Data was gathered over a period of six weeks. To encourage participation, the researcher included an incentive through lucky draws of R200 and allowed the opportunity to select one of two charities in the area (the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals and Christine Revell Children's Home) to which the researcher donated per respondent.

Qualitative: Interview Study. The researcher utilised a schedule-based interview guide consisting of open-ended questions aligned to the constructs under investigation. In addition, participants were sent an electronic cover letter and consent form before the interview. Virtual interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams, and the researcher utilised the transcription application to record the interviews successfully. The researcher had previously worked with all the interview participants and had a pre-established relationship with all interviewees. Based on this, the virtual interview method did not significantly impact the interview's success and information gained, particularly the element of building rapport with participants. All interviews took place during working hours and lasted, on average, 45-60 minutes.

Measures

Several validated scales were used to collect data: Workgroup Inclusion Scale, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, Copenhagen Burnout Inventory, and the

Organisational Citizenship Scale. The measurement instruments were self-reported surveys, and the response format differed across scales. A list of questions was constructed for the demographic questions, and the semi-structured interviews were based on the constructs under investigation (See Appendix D: Measurement Tools).

Inclusion. Inclusion was measured using the Chung et al. (2020) workgroup inclusion scale. The original inclusion scale demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha of .94. The 10-item scale assessed two dimensions: belonging (α = .91) and uniqueness (α = .91). Belonging refers to employees' perceptions that supportive and caring relationships have been formed and maintained with their work group members (e.g. "I am treated as a valued member of my work group"). Uniqueness refers to employees' perceptions that they can be different from others in their work group, that they can have different views, and that those differences are valued and respected by other workgroup members (e.g. "I can share a perspective on work issues that is different from my group members."). The scale employed a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("never") to 5 ("always"), with higher scores indicative of higher levels of perceived inclusion.

Employee Engagement. Employee engagement was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9; Schaufeli, Schaufeli et al., 2006; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2010). The scale assessed three sub-scales: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Cronbach's alpha for the three sub-scales of the UWES-17 varies between .80 and .90 across several studies (Demerouti et al., 2001, Schaufeli et al., 2002). Vigor refers to high energy levels and mental resilience (e.g. "At my work, I always persevere, even when things do not go well"). Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one's work (e.g. "I am proud of the work that I do"). Finally, absorption refers to being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in work (e.g. "I feel happy when I am working intensely"). The scale employed a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("never") to 7 ("always"), with higher scores indicative of higher levels of engagement.

Burnout. Burnout was measured using the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (Kristensen et al., 2005). The scale includes three different sub-scales, which initially demonstrated the following Cronbach's alphas: personal burnout α = 0.87; work-related burnout α = .87; and client-related burnout α = .85. Personal burnout refers to the individual physical and psychological fatigue that accumulates during the day (e.g. 'How often do you think: ''I can't take it anymore''?''). Work burnout describes

fatigue directly resulting from work (e.g. “Are you exhausted in the morning at the thought of another day at work?”). Finally, client-related burnout depicts burnout as a consequence of interpersonal relationships with the clients (e.g. “Do you find it frustrating to work with clients?’’). The scale was measured on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (“never”) to 5 (“always”), with higher scores indicative of higher levels of burnout.

Organisational Citizenship Behaviors*.* Using Lee and Allen’s (2002) organisational citizenship behaviors (OCB) scale, OCBs were measured. The original OCB scale demonstrated a Cronbach’s alpha of .90. The scale measured two dimensions: individual (OCB-I) and organisational (OCB-O) intended behaviors. OCB-I refers to behavior directed towards other individuals, including OCBs helping and courtesy dimensions. (e.g. “Assist others with their duties”). OCB-O refers to behavior directed towards the organisation, including the conscientiousness, civic virtue, and sportsmanship dimensions of OCB (e.g. “Offer ideas to improve the functioning of the organisation”). The scale employed a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (“never”) to 7 (“always”), with higher scores indicative of higher levels of perceived organisational citizenship behaviors.

Demographic Characteristics*.* The biographical questionnaire requested participants' information: age, race, gender, marital status, number of dependents, tenure, call center type (inbound, outbound or both), and average overtime hours a month.

Interview Guide*.* The literature review and the research questions influenced the formulation of the semi-structured interviews. The interviews were designed to explore the nature of the phenomena under investigation. By use of open-ended questions, this strategy enabled participants to elaborate on their responses. This flexible approach will see variable levels of distinctiveness in the individual’s responses.

Data Analysis Procedure

Quantitative: Survey Study*.* All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26. In preparation for statistical analysis, the data was cleaned and coded in line with the contemporary statistical conventions by Tabachnick and Fidell (2014) and Pallant (2016). Mean scores were created for all measures. Cronbach’s Alpha was used to measure the instrument’s internal reliability of the multi-item

scales to ensure the scale measured the same underlying constructs (Field, 2014). Factor analysis was conducted to ensure scale validity by assessing the dimensionality of the recently developed Workgroup Inclusion Scale (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014; Chung et al., 2020). Previous research considered the remaining scales sufficiently validated; therefore, further statistical validation using factor analysis was not considered meaningful. Descriptive statistics were conducted to describe the sample's composition and indicate the variables' strength. A correlation analysis explored the strength of the relationship between variables, providing an indication of direction and the strength of the relationships. Finally, as an extension of correlation analysis, multiple regression was conducted to explore the predictive ability of the independent variable on the dependent variables under investigation (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014).

Qualitative: Interview Study. Content analysis was used to interpret the interview data using a modest interpretation of the phenomenological research approach (Krippendorff, 1989; Creswell, 1998). The content analysis seeks to analyse data within a specific context given the meanings individuals, groups, or cultures attribute to them. The interpretation described the experiences of different respondents and reduced these to a composite description of the essence of the various experiences and views. This was achieved by following a systematic procedure (Krippendorff, 1989) of identifying significant statements, creating broad clusters of meaning, and finally providing detailed descriptions that encapsulate the “what” and “how”.

Results

This chapter presents the results of the research in two separate sections. First, the primary quantitative study will examine the following results: data cleaning, exploratory factor analysis, reliability analysis, descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. Next, section two presents the secondary qualitative component using content analysis to interpret the interview data.

Quantitative: Survey Results

Results from the study's quantitative strand are the primary data source in the present study. As inclusion is an under-researched field, the quantitative study allows for statistical testing to ascertain the presence and strengths of relationships that have been proposed by theorists. This can provide objective data to support, or refute proposed relationships that have been suggested to exist.

Data Screening

Data screening, preliminary analysis, and descriptive analysis were executed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26. Normality testing, skewness and kurtosis were assessed. All indicators reflected satisfactory skewness and kurtosis. There was minimal skewness outside the accepted parameters (|>3.0|), with the largest value for skewness reflecting -1.02. In addition, the were no indicators of problematic kurtosis (|>10.0|) (Kline, 2016), with the largest value for kurtosis identified at 2.05.

Factor Analysis

The inclusion measure (n = 113) was subjected to exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal axis factoring. When conducting EFA, various assumptions are required to be successfully upheld.

The ideal sample size should be 150+, with at least five cases per variable (Pallant, 2016). However, Hair et al. (2010) recommend a minimum of 100 to proceed with factor analysis. Therefore, the sample size (n = 113) was considered acceptable.

The correlation matrix should reflect correlations of r = .3 or greater, Bartlett's test of sphericity should be statistically significant at $p < .05$, and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value should be .6 or above. As such, these assumptions were met, and linear relationships were confirmed by examining the P-Plots (Pallant, 2016).

Finally, factor analysis can be sensitive to outliers, therefore, the data-cleaning process was executed (Pallant, 2016). Factor loadings between .5 and .55 were considered acceptable in line with the guidelines for identifying significant factor loadings based on sample size (Hair et al., 2010). Kaiser's criterion, or the eigenvalue rule, informed the retention of factors with an eigenvalue of 1.0 or more, indicative of the total variance explained by the factor (Pallant, 2016). To assist the interpretation of the factors, a direct oblimin rotation was used. Literature indicated a possible relationship between the constructs under investigation, in addition to the small sample size, indicating direct oblimin rotation was a more suitable approach to orthogonal rotation (which assumes a lack of correlation) (Field, 2009; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Having successfully met all assumptions, an EFA was conducted to analyse shared variance, revealing latent factors (Pallant, 2016). In line with the research aim of the study, EFA was conducted on the Inclusion scale only, as the scale was developed relatively recently (see Chung et al., 2020). The remaining scales did not require further cross-validation due to various studies confirming the validity of the measures in a South African cultural context (See: Storm & Rothmann, 2003; Asiwe et al., 2014; Joubert & Roodt, 2019).

The Dimensionality of Inclusion

To reduce the dimensionality of the data, patterns of correlations between the question's perceptions of inclusion were examined by subjecting the set of items to principal axis factoring with direct oblimin rotation on the ten-item workgroup inclusion scale (n = 113). The suitability of data for factor analysis was assessed with the correlation matrix indicating the presence of multiple sufficient correlations. Furthermore, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .908, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($X^2 45 = 690.78$, $p < .001$) was statistically significant.

In line with expectations (Shore et al., 2011; Shore et al., 2018; Chung et al., 2020), the initial factor analysis extracted two significant factors (See Appendix B Table 1 Exploratory Factor Analysis: Inclusion). However, two of the ten items, Q5 ("I feel that people really care about me in my work group") and Q6 ("I can bring aspects of myself to this workgroup that others in the group don't have in common with me"), were subsequently excluded in the final analysis due to cross-loading. A rule of thumb when interpreting the factors dictates that variables that cross-load are usually deleted unless theoretically justified that the objective is strictly data

reduction (Hair et al., 2010). Regardless of the criteria for significance proposed by Hair et al. (2010) that indicate a factor loading of .5 requires a sample size of 120, while a factor loading of .55 requires a sample size of 100, Hair concedes that factor interpretation involves objective and subjective judgement. As such, Q3 was retained based on the researcher's subjective judgement in defining the overall best structure of the set of variables.

Subsequently, the revised KMO value of .867 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (X^2 28 = 515.12, $p < .001$) was statistically significant.

Table 1
Exploratory Factor Analysis: Inclusion Revised

Label	Item	Factors	
		1	2
I1	I am treated as a valued member of my work group.	.292	**.572**
I2	I belong in my work group.	-.101	**.897**
I3	I am connected to my work group.	.324	**.529**
I4	I believe that my work group is where I am meant to be.	-.017	**.817**
I7	People in my work group listen to me even when my views are dissimilar.	**.744**	.027
I8	While at work, I am comfortable expressing opinions that diverge from my group.	**.758**	.035
I9	I can share a perspective on work issues that is different from my group members.	**.833**	-.017
I10	When my group's perspective becomes too narrow, I am able to bring up a new point of view.	**.872**	-.025
Eigenvalues		4.706	1.150
Individual total variance (percent)		58.82%	14.38%
Cumulative total variance (percent)		58.82%	73.20%

Notes: N = 113 after listwise deletion of missing data. Principal axis factoring with direct oblimin rotation. Significant loadings are presented in boldface. I = Inclusion.

Two distinct factors emerged with eigenvalues exceeding 1. Factor 1 measured *inclusion-uniqueness* and obtained an eigenvalue of 4.706 accounting for 58.82% of the variance. Factor 2 measured *inclusion-belonging* and obtained an

eigenvalue of 1.150 accounting for 14.38% of the variance. As a result, a two-factor structure was retained which explained a cumulative shared variance of 73.20%. The factor correlation matrix reflected .62 indicating a moderate relationship. This pattern of results supports Proposition 1 in that call center agents perceive that inclusion is conceptualized by two dimensions: *inclusion-belonging* and *inclusion-uniqueness*.

Reliability Analysis

Scale reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α) to determine the internal consistency of each scale. Nunnally's (1967; 1978) guidelines for interpreting Cronbach's alpha were adopted, whereby α < .50 = unacceptable internal consistency, .50 > α > .60 = questionable internal consistency, .60 > α > .70 = acceptable internal consistency, .70 > α > .80 = good internal consistency, α > .90 = excellent internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each scale was above 0.86 (See Table 2), indicating that all scales demonstrated high internal consistency reliability (Field, 2014). Despite suggestions, no items were deleted to improve reliability (Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted), as the reliability analysis indicated sufficiently high Alpha scores indicating good internal consistency. Further analysis, including confirmatory factor analysis, was decided to be beyond the scope of this study. As such, reliability was confirmed sufficient to proceed with further data analysis.

Table 2

Scale Item-total Statistics

Scale	α	*n*	N of Items	Corrected Item-Total Correlations	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
			Inclusion		
Belonging	.86	113	4	.68 < r < .73	.81 < r < .83
Uniqueness	.88	113	4	.70 < r < .79	.83 < r < .86
			Employee Engagement		
Vigor	.90	113	6	.42 < r < .82	.87 < r < .92
Dedication	.89	113	5	.44 < r < .87	.83< r < .93
Absorption	.89	113	6	.58 < r < .79	.87< r < .90

			Burnout		
Personal	.90	113	5	.65 < r < .82	.86 < r < .90
Work	.89	113	7	.36 < r < .84	.87 < r < .92
Client	.90	113	5	.67 < r < .83	.86 < r < .90
			OCB		
OCB-I	.91	113	8	.60 < r < .83	.89 < r < .92
OCB-O	.91	113	8	.54 < r < .80	.89 < r < .92

Notes: n = 113

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics provide insights into the perceptions of inclusion, engagement, burnout and organisational citizenship behavior (OCB). This is achieved through the calculations of descriptive measures, and the subsequent graphical representations (See Table 4 Descriptive Statistics: Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis).

Skewness and kurtosis were analysed to establish the normality of the distribution. Skewness indicates the symmetry of the distributed data, with kurtosis indicating where the peak of the distribution lies (Field, 2013; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014; Pallant, 2016). Normality is required for parametric analyses to provide reliable results. However, Pallant (2016) advocates for robust SPSS statistical techniques that adequately account for data sets that are not normally distributed.

Assessing the normality of inclusion, engagement, and citizenship revealed negative skewness indicating employees responded reasonably positively to these measures. On the other hand, burnout was positively skewed at .177. Finally, the Kurtosis values ranged from -.439 to 2.046, with a standard normal distribution having a kurtosis of 3, indicating the measures were moderately more leptokurtic than the Gaussian curve.

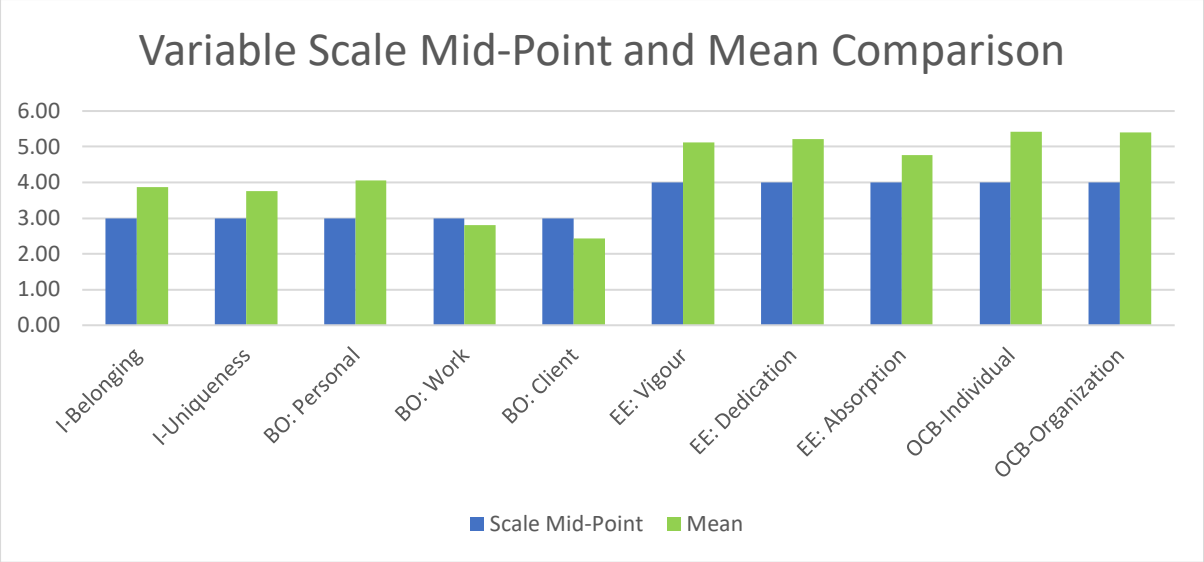
Table 3

Descriptive Statistics: Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
		Inclusion		
Belonging	3.88	.88	-.48	-.12
Uniqueness	3.76	.79	-.88	1.74
		Engagement		
Vigor	5.11	1.16	-.88	1.75
Dedication	5.21	1.35	-.63	-.10
Absorption	4.76	1.31	-.34	.11
		Burnout		
Personal	4.06	1.01	-.54	.80
Work	2.80	.93	.33	-.44
Client	2.43	1.04	.62	-.19
		OCB		
OCB-I	5.41	1.16	-.96	1.64
OCB-O	5.39	1.17	-1.02	2.05

Notes: n = 113

A composite variable was created per scale and sub-scale by computing the mean of all scale items. Each scale's mean (reaction to variables) was examined relative to the scale midpoint of each rating scale. A mean score higher than the mid-point indicates that the data reveals a higher variable of interest (See Figure 3 Variable Scale Mid-Point and Mean Comparison).



Notes: I = Inclusion, BO = Burnout, EE = Employee Engagement, and OCB = Organisational Citizenship Behaviors

Figure 3 Variable Scale Mid-Point and Mean Comparison

Both dimensions of inclusion, *inclusion-belonging* and *inclusion-uniqueness*, surpassed the mid-point of 3. This indicates higher-than-average perceptions of inclusion. The mean scores of the two dimensions reflected minimal differences. The lower score, *inclusion-uniqueness*, revealed the construct as the weaker dimension experienced between the two. However, the mean difference was approximately a .2 difference indicating that perceptions of *inclusion-belonging* did, on average, feature more strongly than *inclusion-uniqueness*, albeit minimally so.

The dimensions of employee engagement (vigor, dedication and absorption) all surpassed the mid-point of 4. This indicates above-average experiences of employee engagement. The mean difference between the various dimension did not differ significantly.

Within the three dimensions of burnout, personal burnout reflected higher than average scores, with a mean score of 4.06. On the contrary, work and client burnout reflected below-average levels of burnout.

Finally, both dimensions of OCB significantly surpassed the mid-point of 4. This indicated higher-than-average perceptions of OCB-I and OCB-O. Both sub-scales indicated similar levels of OCB.

Correlation Analysis

A correlation analysis was conducted using Pearson product-moment correlation (see Table 4 Correlation Analysis: Mean, Standard Deviation, Inter-Correlations and Reliability of Composite Variables). The coefficient reflects the value range of -1 (as one variable changes, the other variable changes in the opposite direction) to +1 (as one variable changes, the other variable changes in the same direction) (Field, 2013). The interpretation of the relationship's strength (negative or positive direction) was followed according to Cohen's (1988) guideline: a correlation coefficient of .01 – .29 represents a weak relationship, .30 – .45 represents a moderate relationship, and .50 – 1.0 represents a strong relationship. The correlation was used to determine the extent to which perceived inclusion is linearly related to the variables under investigation.

Table 4

Correlation Analysis: Mean, Standard Deviation, Inter-Correlations and Reliability of Composite Variables

Variable		*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	I: Belonging	3.88	.88	(.86)									
2	I: Uniqueness	3.75	.79	.62**	(.88)								
3	EE: Vigor	5.11	1.16	.62**	.59**	(.90)							
4	EE: Dedication	5.21	1.35	.66**	.43**	.69**	(.89)						
5	EE: EE: Absorption	4.76	1.31	.58**	.46**	.76**	.72**	(.89)					
6	BO: Personal	4.06	1.01	-.28**	-.24**	-.29**	-.20*	-.10	(.90)				
7	BO: Work	2.80	.93	-.42**	-.34**	-.51**	-.42**	-.27**	.78**	(.89)			
8	BO: Client	2.43	1.04	-.40**	-.25**	-.42**	-.56**	-.25**	.36**	.58**	(.90)		
9	OCB: Individual	5.41	1.16	.25**	.31**	.46**	.31**	.38**	.12	.03	-.11	(.91)	
10	OCB: Organisation	5.39	1.17	.36**	.40**	.50**	.45**	.35**	-.01	-.16	-.27**	.74**	(.91)

Notes:
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
I = Inclusion. EE = Employee Engagement. BO = Burnout. OCB = Organisational Citizenship Behavior

Correlation between inclusion and employee engagement.

Inclusion-Belonging shared strong positive relationships with vigor (r = . 618, p = < 0.01), dedication (r = 0. 658, p = < 0.01), and absorption (r = 0. 582, p = < 0.01). Similarly, *inclusion-uniqueness* shared a strong positive relationship with vigor (r = . 618, p = < 0.01) and absorption (r = 0. 456, p = < 0.01) and a moderate positive relationship with dedication (r = 0. 431, p = < 0.01).

The correlation coefficient was statistically significant among all dimensions. Thus, the correlation findings indicate that as perceptions of inclusion increase, employee engagement tends to increase.

Correlation between inclusion and burnout.

Inclusion-Belonging shared a weak negative relationship with personal (r = -.275, p = < 0.01), and moderate negative relationships with work (r = -.420, p = < 0.01) and client (r = -.404, p = < 0.01) related dimensions of burnout. *inclusion-uniqueness* shared similar relationships, albeit lower on all dimensions, reflecting a weak relationship with personal (r = -.243, p = < 0.01), a moderate relationship with work (r = -.335, p = < 0.01), and a weak relationship with client (r = -.247, p = < 0.01) related dimensions of burnout.

The correlation coefficient was statistically significant among all dimensions. Furthermore, the moderate and weak negative relationships indicate that burnout tends to decrease as perceived inclusion increases.

Correlation between inclusion and OCB.

Inclusion-Belonging reflected a weak positive relationship with OCB-I (r = .254, p = < 0.01) and a moderate positive relationship with OCB-O (r = .359, p = < 0.01). In comparison, *inclusion-uniqueness* shared moderate positive relationships with both OCB-I (r = .310, p = < 0.01) and OCB-O (r = .399, p = < 0.01).

The correlation coefficient was statistically significant among all dimensions. The positive relationships indicate that OCB tends to increase as perceived inclusion increases.

Correlation between inclusion and age, tenure, and overtime.

There was a lack of statistical evidence to support a relationship between inclusion and age (r =-.13, p = 0.158); or tenure (r =-.06, p = 0.514). However, a moderate positive relationship was reflected between inclusion and overtime (r =.30, p = < 0.01). This indicated that inclusion is likely related to overtime, which increased as perceptions of inclusion increased.

Regression Analysis.

Multiple regression analyses were performed to assess the total variance in employee engagement, burnout, and organisational citizenship behaviors that can be explained by inclusion (*inclusion-belonging* and *inclusion-uniqueness*). In addition, the model explored the two-dimension model to decipher where the largest unique contribution occurred.

Model 1 Inclusion and Engagement.

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to predict the influence of the two-dimension model of inclusion, *inclusion-belonging* and *inclusion-uniqueness* on the three-dimension engagement model (See table 6).

The model predicted Absorption to the least extent accounting for only 34% of the variance (R^2 = .34, $F2, 110, t = 1.909$, p = .059). Vigor had the greatest amount of variance explained by the model (R^2 = .45, $F2, 110, t = 2.708$, p = .008) as 44% of the variance was a result of the predictors. Finally, the model explained 42% (R^2 = .42, F2, 110, t = 2.351, p = .021) of the variance in dedication.

Inclusion-Belonging explained significant variance in all three dimensions of employee engagement: Dedication (β = .637, t = 6.942, p < .001), Vigor (β = .41, t = 4.532, p < .001) and Absorption (β = .486, t = 4.956, p < .001). Whereas *inclusion-uniqueness* explained significant variance in one component of employee engagement: Vigor (β = .334, t = 3.692, p < .001), however not in Dedication (β = .034, t = .373, p < .710) nor Absorption (β = .154, t = 4.1566, p = .120). This indicates that *inclusion-belonging* makes the largest unique contribution in predicting engagement.

Table 5

Multiple Regression Analysis: Employee Engagement Variable Sets

	Dedication		Vigor		Absorption	
	β	95% CI	*β*	95% CI	*β*	95% CI
Belonging	.64***	[.70; 1.26]	.41***	[.30; .78]	.49***	[.44; 1.0]
Uniqueness	.03	[-.25; .37]	.33***	.23; .76]	.15	[-.07; .58]

R^2	.43	.45	.35
Adjusted R^2	.42	.44	.34

Note: β = standardised beta coefficient; CI = confidence interval for unstandardised beta coefficient; *N* = 113 after pairwise deletion of missing data; *$p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$.

Model 2 Inclusion and Burnout.

Multiple regression was conducted to predict the influence of the two-dimension model of inclusion, *inclusion-belonging* and *inclusion-uniqueness*, on the three dimensions of burnout (see table 7).

The model predicted personal burnout to the least extent as only 7% of the variance ($R^2 = .067$, $F_{2, 110, t} = 11.471$, $p < .001$) was explained. Work burnout had the greatest variance explained by the model ($R^2 = .17$, $F_{2, 110, t} = 11.388$, $p < .001$), as 17% of the variance resulted from the predictors. Finally, the model explained 15% ($R^2 = .148$, F2, 110, t = 9.057, p < .001) of the variance in Client burnout.

Inclusion-Belonging explained significant variance in the two components of burnout: work burnout ($\beta = -.346$, $t = -3.147$, $p = .002$) and client burnout ($\beta = 0.409$, $t = -3.666$, $p < .001$), however, did not explain significant variance in personal burnout ($\beta = -.202$, $t = -1.732$, $p = .086$). *Inclusion-Uniqueness* did not predict significant variance in all three components of BO: personal burnout ($\beta = .-.117$, $t = -1.002$, $p = .319$) , work burnout ($\beta = -.119$, $t = -1.084$, $p = .281$) and client burnout ($\beta = .007$, $t = .067$, $p = .947$). This indicates that *inclusion-belonging* makes the largest unique contribution to predicting burnout.

Table 6

Multiple Regression Analysis: Burnout Variable Sets

	Personal		Work		Client	
	β	95% CI	β	95% CI	β	95% CI
Belonging	-.20	[-.50; .03]	-.35**	[-.60; -.14]	-.41***	[-.75; -.22]
Uniqueness	-.12	[-.45; .15]	-.12	[-.40; .12]	.01	[-.28; .30]

R^2	.08	.19	.16
Adjusted R^2	.07	.17	.15

Note: β = standardised beta coefficient; CI = confidence interval for unstandardised beta coefficient; *N* = 113 after pairwise deletion of missing data; *$p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$.

Model 3 Inclusion and OCB.

Multiple regression was conducted to predict the influence of the two-dimension model of inclusion, *inclusion-belonging* and *inclusion-uniqueness*, on the two-dimensions of organisational citizenship behaviors (see table 8).

OCB-I was predicted to the least extent by the model as only 9% of the variance ($R^2 = .086$, $F_{2, 110, t} = 6.458$, $p < .001$) was explained. In comparison, OCB-O had the greatest amount of variance explained by the model ($R^2 = .164$, $F_{2, 110, t} = 5.402$, $p < .001$), as 16% of the variance was a result of the predictors.

Inclusion-Belonging did not explain a significant variance in either OCB-I ($\beta = .100$, $t = .865$, $p = .389$) nor OCB-O ($\beta = .181$, $t = 1.637$, $p = 104$). However, *inclusion-uniqueness* explained significant variance in both OCB-I ($\beta = .248$, $t = 2.147$, $p = .034$), and OCB-O ($\beta = .286$, $t = 2.593$, $p = .011$). This indicates that *inclusion-uniqueness* makes the largest unique contributions in predicting organisational citizenship behaviors.

Table 7

Multiple Regression Analysis: OCB Variable Sets

	OCB-I		**OCB-O**	
	β	**95% CI**	***β***	**95% CI**
Belonging	.10	[-.17; .44]	.18	[-.05; -.54]
Uniqueness	.25*	[.03; .70]	.29*	[.10; . 75]
R^2	.10		.18	
Adjusted R^2	.09		.16	

Note: β = standardised beta coefficient; CI = confidence interval for unstandardised beta coefficient; *N* = 113 after pairwise deletion of missing data; *$p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$.

Assumptions of Multiple Regression Analysis.

The required assumptions (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007; Field, 2018; Pallant, 2016) were assessed to determine the model fit for multiple regression analysis. Careful attention was made to ensure all the assumptions were met in the following way to ensure the integrity of the results.

An adequate sample size (N = 113) was used (N > 50 + 8m, where "m" represents the number of independent variables to require 58 participants. The independent variables used in the regression model, *inclusion-belonging* and *inclusion-uniqueness*, correlated at .63 indicating a lack of multicollinearity.

Outliers, normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and independence of residuals were assessed, and no curvilinear relationships were detected. This was examined by means of the scatter plots (See Appendix A: Figure A3 – Figure A10) and by inspecting the Normal Probability Plot (P-Plot) of the Regression Standardised Residual (See Appendix A: Figure A11 – Figure A18). The data was assumed normal as data points fell close to the diagonal line on the normal P-P plot, and showed no funnelling/cone-shaped data points suggesting no major deviations from normality. The predictor variables, *inclusion-belonging* and *inclusion-uniqueness*, appeared to be related to the outcome variables (EE, BO, OCB) in a straight-line pattern in the partial regression plots indicating linearity. Cook's distances for each model were below one, indicating influential cases were unlikely to be present. Mahalanobis Distance and Centered Leverage values indicated no cause for concern. Outliers were identified by the presence of standardized residuals above 3.30 or below -3.30, the majority of which fell within range. Any outliers found were ascertained to have minimal influence. Based on the aforementioned, the assumptions were deemed met.

Qualitative: Secondary Interview Study

Results from the qualitative strand of the study complement the quantitative findings and allow the present study to explore, more broadly, the context of inclusion and the variables under study. The qualitative strand can help to explain why certain results were obtained in the quantitative study. This can provide valuable insight into the underlying processes and mechanisms that led to the results and can also help to identify any potential limitations or biases in the quantitative data.

Content Analysis

Creating a psychologically safe and trusting climate through a culture of fairness and transparency was a driver of the efforts to create an inclusive culture. Diversity was highlighted as a priority within recruitment practices, with various respondents acknowledging the benefit of unique voices in teams. Finally, leadership understands the value of ensuring staff feel included, represented, and have a voice. However, meetings that are held with leaders to enable this inclusion are not accessible but the call center due to the role requirements that restricts their attendance during working hours.

The acceptance of uniqueness is overshadowed by the role, which requires creating a *character* persona. However, when not on call, uniqueness is actively encouraged, as indicated by events that support diversity. Belonging is created by building support structures to ensure employees feel they are valued. Managers acknowledge that their active role is required to achieve this by building a relationship with the employees.

Within the call centers engagement is driven by ensuring the environment fun workplace, competitive, and recognizes achievements. However, many factors can impact the sample's level of engagement negatively, such as the current economic climate and the role expectations and performance monitoring.

Burnout in the call center could be present due to various reasons, e.g. client behaviors, performance monitoring, role requirements and expectations, capacity constraints, and skills shortages. The presence of burnout is noticeable in staff absenteeism trends monitored to support and drive a culture of well-being. This is being driven by leaders taking an active role in recognising burnout symptoms and encouraging staff to rest accordingly. Contrary to expectations, some views suggested that call center agents should *not* be experiencing burnout due to the strict working hours and that call audits revealed relaxed-sounding agents.

The call centre feedback provided mixed views on the potential presence of organisational citizenship behaviors (OCB). The call center is highly production-driven, with a preference for standard operating procedures in order to meet daily targets. While OCB-type behaviors are encouraged by some managers, there are limitations within the role to allow for much flexibility. Due to capacity constraints, call quantity takes preference over call quality, decreasing opportunities for OCBs with clients. Furthermore, a large component of client engagement is scripted to ensure a

consistent level of service delivery. Furthermore, a lack of psychological safety was mentioned as a possible deterrent for call center agents deviating from the standard procedures.

Overall, the participants shared both negative and positive influences of inclusion in the workplace. The analysis resulted in quotes (see Appendix E: Content Analysis) taken verbatim from the data used to illustrate and reflect the selected themes based on the research topic and aims. Findings are presented through a narrative that encapsulates the “what” and “how”. In summary, incorporating a qualitative strand in a quantitative study can provide additional depth and understanding to the findings, and can help to increase the validity and reliability of the results.

Table 8

Summary of Results

Propositions		Results
Proposition 1	The perception of inclusion is conceptualized by two dimensions: inclusion-belonging and inclusion-uniqueness.	Accepted
Proposition 2	Inclusion-Belonging is associated with a significant variance in Employee Engagement: (a) dedication (b) vigor and (c) absorption.	(a) Accepted (b) Accepted (c) Accepted
Proposition 3	Inclusion-Uniqueness is associated with a significant variance in Employee Engagement: (a) dedication (b) vigor and (c) absorption.	(a) Rejected (b) Accepted (c) Rejected
Proposition 4	Inclusion-Belonging is associated with a significant variance in Burnout: (a) personal (b) work and (c) client	(a) Rejected (b) Accepted (c) Accepted
Proposition 5	Inclusion-Uniqueness is associated with a significant variance in Burnout: (a) personal (b) work and (c) client	(a) Rejected (b) Rejected (c) Rejected
Proposition 6	Inclusion-Belonging is associated with a significant variance in Organisational Citizenship Behaviors: (a) individual and (b) organisational	(a) Rejected (b) Rejected
Proposition 7	Inclusion-Uniqueness is associated with a significant variance in Organisational Citizenship Behaviors: (a) individual and (b) organisational	(a) Accepted (b) Accepted

Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the extent that inclusion, specifically belonging and uniqueness (referred to as *inclusion-belonging* and *inclusion-uniqueness* in the context of this study's variables), contributes to employee engagement, burnout and organisational citizenship behavior in a South African call center. The context of the study provided a unique contribution to the extant literature, which has a predominant Western focus. The findings provide a more nuanced understanding of inclusion by utilizing quantitative data, with supplementary qualitative data to provide contextual perspectives. A specific contribution of the study was the support of the two-dimensional conceptualisation of inclusion in a South African context. Finally, *inclusion-belonging* was determined to make the largest unique contribution in predicting engagement and burnout. In contrast, inclusion-uniqueness was determined to make the largest unique contribution in predicting organisational citizenship behavior (OCB). This chapter will review and discuss the main findings concerning the propositions previously presented. Practical implications and suggestions for future research will follow.

Perceptions of Inclusion in a South African Call Center

The present study's findings reflect a specific work environment within a South African organisation. The demographic composition of the call center sample is largely coloured (68%) and female (71%) employees. This is consistent with the full demographic composition of the call center population, which is similarly coloured (60%) and female (67%) employees. Furthermore, this is similar to the organisational demographic composition whereby 84% of their workforce is classified as *black*, and 61% comprise women. Based on the history of Apartheid in South Africa, the sample in the present study is considered to be predominantly previously disadvantaged. In relation to the literature on inclusion, perceptions of inclusion are often referential to the experiences from the perspective of privilege rather than less common demographic groups (Geiger & Jordan, 2014). This contributes to inclusion research by exploring minority (marginalised) populations in a non-Western country. However, Ortlieb et al. (2021) identified a potential limitation within marginalised groups. According to their argument, employees who hold an inferior power position in

organisations can be influenced in the display of their identities based on power dynamics and organisational expectations. This could impact the priority call center agents attribute to the dimensions of inclusion. To address this limitation, Dobusch and colleagues (2021) cautioned organisational efforts in applying inclusionary efforts that do not consider groups that experience an inherent power imbalance. Organisations need to be aware of a power imbalance to effectively address and enable individual experiences of inclusion.

To establish differences in perception of inclusion, the present study did not find age or race to influence perceptions of *inclusion-belonging* or *inclusion-uniqueness*. However, the study did find gender to reflect statistically significant differences in perceptions of *inclusion-belonging* and *inclusion-uniqueness*; however, the mean differences between the groups were minimal and therefore considered practically insignificant.

Consequently, according to Shore et al. (2011), an inclusive workplace should reflect minimal differences across demographics. Both minority and majority members should equally experience a sense of belonging and value for their uniqueness. Cotrill et al. (2014) expressed the importance placed upon leaders to cultivate organisations that model a comfort for diversity. In the present study, it is reasonable to assume that the lack of differences in perceptions of inclusion across demographics indicates progressive inclusive practices in the call center. This is congruent with the organisation's public declaration that prioritizes diversity and inclusion as a core value. Furthermore, in a South African context governed by the various legislation previously discussed, the promotion of equality and equal opportunity to redress past inequalities could contribute to the results.

Within the present study, a structural factor considered was the occupational level of the call center agents within the sample. The call center agents were categorized as “semi-skilled”, in line with the coded occupational system that the Department of Higher Education and Training uses to identify, report, and monitor skills demand and Supply in the South African labour market. This indicates a potential hierarchical power imbalance that call center agents could experience within the workplace. Feedback provided in the qualitative strand of the study was consistent with prevailing call center literature (Bain & Taylor, 2000) which describes

the environment as highly demanding with minimal autonomy. This is contrary to the prevailing participants in research on inclusion (Shore et al., 2018; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Carmeli et al., 2010) which has predominantly focused on traditional work organisations that are highly skilled, relatively autonomous, and primarily subjected to positive working conditions.

Based on this, one could have assumed below-average perceptions of inclusion. However, the present study revealed contrary results. Descriptive statistics (M = 3.81, SD = .75), indicated an above-average perception of inclusion. This was consistent with the results of scale developers Chung et al., (2020) (M = 3.79, SD = 1.05). The comparison of the two samples is useful, as Chung also surveyed staff employed in a service industry role. Qu and Wang (2022) argue that employees in the service industry generally experience *moderate* levels of perceived inclusion. Employees who experience *high* levels of inclusion are likely to be highly educated and part of a more prosperous industry, a useful consideration when interpreting the results of the present study conducted in the Financial Services industry. However, the present study's findings reflected an above-average perception of inclusion, with a mean score of 3.81 which could be considered "*high*". This suggests that despite the shortcomings of a call center job design, reflective of the service industry, the financial services industry could be considered one of the more prosperous industries, a potential contributor to the overall experiences of inclusion.

Inclusion Scale Validity in a South African Context

The scale employed in the present study to explore the concept of inclusion was recently developed and validated in 2020 (Chung et al., 2020). The present study supported the scale's quality, content, and applicability in a South African context. Firstly, reliability analysis of the present study ((*inclusion-belonging* (α = . 86) and *inclusion-uniqueness* (α = . 88)) revealed similar findings to that of the scale developer Chung et al. (2020) ((*inclusion-belonging* (α = . 91) and inclusion-uniqueness (α = . 91)). This indicated a high level of reliability of the scale, and its appropriateness to be applied in a South African context.

This finding is consistent with Brewer's (1991) ODT, which argues that humans congruently have a need for assimilation and differentiation. To balance this need, Brewer advocates optimal levels of inclusion assist in balancing these needs

to enable a sense of belonging. However, it is important to note, that Brewer further asserts the importance of contextual conditions which can influence assimilation and differentiation needs. This highlights the necessity to examine the concept of inclusion in various contexts advocating the benefit of the present study.

Conceptualisation of Inclusion

Consistent with expectations, an exploratory factor analysis retained two factors, *inclusion-belonging* and *inclusion-uniqueness*, within the inclusion measure. Therefore, proposition 1 is supported, in that call center agents will perceive inclusion as separate dimensions of *inclusion-belonging* and *inclusion-uniqueness*. This indicates the likelihood that respondents differentiate *inclusion-belonging* and *inclusion-uniqueness* as distinct dimensions. This finding is similar to the initial proposition by Shore et al., (2011). In addition, the present results confirm the two-dimension conceptualisation in a South African context.

Belonging. *Inclusion-Belonging* (M = 3.87, SD = .88) emerged as a distinct dimension of inclusion and was perceived to be experienced at a similar level to *inclusion-uniqueness* (M = 3.75, SD = .79). Feedback obtained during interviews provided mixed reviews on the attempts by the organisation that enable belonging, calling into questions which aspects of an inclusive workplace are important to employees.

There are active efforts reported by management to drive an inclusive workplace. This is through encouraging fun, competitions, and celebrating achievements and individuals. In addition, a sense of community is encouraged by instituting inclusive practices, for example: daily team check-ins, weekly interactive sessions, creating micro teams, and by driving recognition initiatives, all of which can help propagate perceptions of belonging. Diversity and culture were highlighted as key priorities in appreciating differences and creating cultural norms, in addition to recruiting a more diverse workforce. As evident in the feedback provided, the importance of inclusive leadership behaviors is advocated by multiple scholars (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Mor Barak, 2015; Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2011; Shore et al., 2018), supporting the idea that facilitating a psychologically safe environment encourages individuals to be themselves, strengthens team belongingness, and supports organisational efforts.

On the other hand, as reported by management, strong work relationships are deprioritized due to the nature of the call center, requiring a preference for client engagement to take precedence over all other engagements and meetings. As a result, opportunities for staff to engage with leadership are overshadowed by scheduled call times. Staff engagement sessions, known as “town halls”, facilitate communication and engagement between staff and senior leaders. Unable to attend these sessions, staff can be alienated and disconnected from the leaders.

This could indicate a lack of opportunity for shared decision-making, particularly due to the inability of call center agents to attend townhalls where the platform for this very mechanism is made available. Studies relating to inclusive practices (Mor Barak & Cherin, 1998; Nishii, 2013; Roberson, 2016; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007) have indicated the importance of access to information, participation in decision-making, conflict resolution procedures, and communication facilitation. Similarly, Shore et al., (2018) advocate for specific behaviors that facilitate feelings of belonging in team members, providing support and opportunities for shared decision-making on relevant issues. To enable shared decision-making, there should be an emphasis on sharing power, broadening consultation to allow various perspectives, and requesting input on tasks and responsibilities. By embedding shared decision-making practices into cultural norms, infiltrating inclusion into the makeup of the work environment can create a greater sense of belonging (Shore et al., 2018). Without the ability of call center agents to attend these sessions, their participation in shared decision-making is limited.

However, interview feedback indicated that consultation opportunities occur at an individual level, through one-on-one engagements, and call center specific town halls. No mention was made by any of the respondents as to why the executive leadership town hall takes place during a time slot most call center agents cannot attend. Despite the acknowledgement that this results in alienation, a disconnect from the strategy, and complaints when messages or suggestions are not landed or received by call center agents from management who do attend. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that individual engagement with employees may hold greater value in fostering feelings of belonging, alternatively enough value based on their individual needs.

***Uniqueness*.** *Inclusion-Uniqueness* emerged as a distinct dimension of inclusion and was perceived to be experienced at a similar level to *inclusion-belonging*. Whilst autonomy can reduce the demands' stress, the call center environment is largely process driven, with both *scripted* engagements and *character* personas predicting behaviors and actions. The application of scientific management in the role of the CCA removes autonomy and judgement which enables call center agents to carry out routine tasks predictably and repetitively (Parker & Jeacle, 2019). As such, the scientific management of the call center in the present study is evident in the standard operating procedures and scripting that inform task execution, as reported in the interview feedback. This can erode an employee's sense of knowledge and power, including control over task type and pace of execution. The role favours process adherence, scheduling, and quantity and quality monitoring in task execution.

As a result, feedback provided during the interviews indicated that the character's goal is to display a persona of professionality and appeal to the client, regardless of a call center agents unique identity or conscious behavioral preference. Furthermore, adopting a character persona mitigates offending the client, and requires them to maintain and exhibit empathy and sympathy-type behaviors, regardless of their true feelings.

This significant role limitation impacting uniqueness could be assumed to be influential from the slightly *lower* reported indicator of *inclusion-uniqueness* (M = 3.75, SD = .74), compared to the reported indicator of *inclusion-belonging* (M = 3.87, SD = .73). The role expectations could overshadow the concept of uniqueness to maintain a character that informs their behaviors, limiting the ability to express their individual identities during the majority of their workday.

The Effect of Inclusion-Belonging and Inclusion-Uniqueness on Behavioral Outcomes

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine whether the dimensions of *inclusion-belonging* and *inclusion-uniqueness* introduced variance into the sub-dimensions of employee engagement, burnout, and OCB.

The Effect of Inclusion-Belonging and Inclusion-Uniqueness *on Employee Engagement*

The results of the present study found that *inclusion-belonging* explained significant variance in all three dimensions of employee engagement: dedication (β = .637, t = 6.942, p < .001), vigor (β = .41, t = 4.532, p < .001) and absorption (β = .486, t = 4.956, p < .001). This finding supports Propositions 2a-c, which proposed that *inclusion-belonging* explained significant variance in employee engagement.

Inclusion-Uniqueness explained significant variance in one component of employee engagement: vigor (β = .334, t = 3.692, p < .001), however, was not a statistically significant predictor of dedication (β = .034, t = .373, p < .710) nor absorption (β = .154, t = 4.1566, p = .120). Therefore, this finding supports Proposition 3b but does not support Proposition 3a or 3c. This indicates that *inclusion-belonging* makes the largest unique contribution in predicting engagement.

To better understand the context of the present study, the feedback provided in the qualitative interviews suggests an engaged workforce. The high reported engagement scores were therefore consistent with the attempts by the organisation to cultivate an environment that prioritizes employee engagement. In addition, leaders and HR take an active role in ensuring the environment is a fun place to work by creating competition and driving recognition initiatives. This helps to mitigate the negativity caused by the current economic climate, role requirements, chasing performance targets and close monitoring.

The findings can be explained by Social Exchange Theory (SET), whereby receiving resources motivates employees to reciprocate by applying themselves more fully to their work roles and devoting more cognitive, emotional, and physical resources to the organisation. The qualitative findings refer to the socio-emotional resources provided such as: recognizing staff for achievements, staff appreciation, valuing staff, embracing individuality, and creating a fun and competitive environment. This environment is one where leaders are supportive, but staff are equally supportive and encouraging of each other, a key indicator of belonging. This is consistent with the works of Blau (1964) which suggests that employees who experience a strong sense of social exchange will experience a greater obligation to reciprocate the benefits received by engaging behaviors, such as increased

engagement, that are beneficial to the organisation. In addition, this is supported by Korkmaz et al., (2022) who similarly attribute SET as the most widely utilised theory in the domain of inclusion where reciprocity has been particularly apparent when appreciation of staff has been found to be related to employees' engagement.

As an antecedent of inclusion, a key priority of inclusion within the department is through diversity efforts that counteract practices that perpetuate marginalization. Adams et al. (2020) highlighted that discrimination (or exclusion) can diminish the pride, joy, and inspiration that people derive from their work and negatively affect their engagement. As a result, the inclusion and diversity efforts within the call center could be a plausible driver of employee engagement.

Furthermore, the purpose of the Townhall aligns with the works of Carmeli et al. (2010) who described inclusive leadership behaviors as that which exhibit openness, accessibility, and availability in their interactions with their employees. The Townhall allows staff to engage with Executive Leaders, ensuring staff feel included, represented, and have a voice. Theoretically, this should increase the likelihood that employees feel they are being respected and that the organisation will appreciate their ideas and efforts. As such, this could contribute to both dimensions of *inclusion-belonging* and *inclusion-uniqueness*. However, when considering the relatively high perceptions of inclusion and engagement, the interaction between leaders and employees at an individual level could supplement the lack of group interaction opportunities. This is evident in the interview feedback which indicated leaders' attempts to vary their approach to individuals based on their different personalities, demographic groups and needs. This suggests that leaders are able to adjust their approaches to business and employee needs, without sacrificing the overall perceptions of inclusion.

The Effect of Inclusion-Belonging and Inclusion-Uniqueness on Burnout

The results of the present study found that *inclusion-belonging* explained significant variance in two dimensions of burnout: work burnout ($\beta = -.346$, $t = -3.147$, $p = .002$) and client burnout ($\beta = 0.409$, $t = -3.666$, $p < .001$), however, did not explain significant variance in personal burnout ($\beta = -.202$, $t = -1.732$, $p = .086$). This finding supports Proposition b-c, which proposed that *inclusion-belonging* explained significant variance in burnout, however did not support proposition 4a.

Inclusion-Uniqueness did not predict significant variance in all three components of BO: personal burnout (β = -.117, t = -1.002, p = .319) , work burnout (β = -.119, t = -1.084, p = .281) and client burnout (β = .007, t = .067, p = .947). As such, Propositions 5a-c were unsupported. This indicates that within the concept of inclusion, *inclusion-belonging* makes the largest unique contribution in mitigating burnout.

To mitigate burnout, perceived inclusion can be considered a job resource, with the potential to decrease the psychological costs of work demands (Shore et al., 2011; Mor Barak & Levin, 2002), a job demand strain that has been supported in call center literature (Zapf et al., 1999; Ashill and Rod, 2011; Choi et al., 2012). Within the three-dimension model of burnout, personal burnout reflected higher than average levels of burnout. On the contrary, work and client burnout indicated below-average levels of burnout. Based on the regression results, one could assume that inclusion, primarily through fostering belonging, could contribute to the below-average burnout levels within the work and client domains.

This could be attributed to the behaviors of managers that provide support and appreciation for employees, strengthening the interpersonal relationships between the organisation and the employees. This is consistent with Baumeister & Leary (1995) who attribute belonging as a fundamental human motivation with severe consequences resulting from this unmet need. This was further supported by Perry (2018) in their works on “Belonging at Work”. The presence of belonging, and feelings of acceptance, activates a reward response in the prefrontal cortex which improves our health and well-being, potentially reducing the susceptibility to burnout.

Consistent with call center literature, the quantity of the workload was often referenced during the interviews. Capacity constraints were indicated to be a key driver of the current workload pressures, resulting in client complaints and escalations. An incomplete staff complement was linked to a mass staff exit during a voluntary severance process, whereby the exited staff were not replaced. As a result, feedback indicated that roughly half of the client calls were being missed, resulting in increased pressure and complaints. As a result of the capacity issues, the monitoring required in the call center has become more deliberate. For example, a manager mentioned, “*we've implemented where after every two minutes you have*

to go available and they kind of have to struggle to get through the call and update the information to take the next call". Another comment regarding the capacity issues made was: "*I mean we sitting with one or with people between 30 to 40 days annual leave on record. But I can't give them leave because we have a protocol or directive to say, you know, no people on leave at this moment in time".* This indicates that the workload is excessive and chronic as staff cannot take breaks through annual leave to restore their health. However, as indicated by the below-average levels of burnout, one could argue that mitigators are alleviating the effects of the present work environment. In line with the Job Demands-Resources model, it can be argued that the socio-emotional support provided by fostering belongingness in an inclusive environment could potentially reduce the negative impact of the reported work demands. This is evident as leaders further reported that they prioritise wellness by monitoring staff health and attempting to drive a culture of well-being through HR initiatives. Communication campaigns aim to influence healthy behaviors, for example reminding staff to take breaks, despite the high call volumes. In addition, staff are aware of the current recruitment drives that aim to alleviate the capacity constraints, being constantly assured that leaders actively try to help the current circumstances and have their best interests in mind. This is reflective of SET, whereby the interpersonal employer-employee relationship is likely to influence the current levels of burnout, making it increasingly important to enable belonging within the organisation.

However, the interviews revealed that the key majority of a call center agent's day is dedicated to client engagement, at the expense of organisational engagements. This suggests the influence of the SET is not only from the perspective of the organisational-employee perspective, but the relationship between the client and the call center agent. Call center agents are likely to perceive relationships as equitable if the effort they put into the client relationships is reciprocated (Bakker et al., 2000). However, the repercussions of capacity constraints have resulted in inequitable social exchanges, with qualitative feedback indicating: "*You'll see that there's a lot of complaints, a lot of escalations. So even though you only working your normal hours, you're being shouted at for seven hours of the day".* Despite this evidence, client burnout indicated below-average levels of

burnout, suggesting the presence of resources mitigating call center agents susceptibility to burnout.

A possible explanation could be explained by Belle and colleagues (2015) who explored the experiences of organisational belonging which encompassed three holistic themes: context; construct; and confidence, in relation to their work experiences. The study found that knowledge of self and their particular contribution to the workplace significantly impacted their perception of belonging. As such, there appears to be a general understanding of capacity constraints, which is causing the poor service and complaints, as there has been no indication of service complaints linked to the call center agents capabilities. Therefore, when one considers the environmental influences, and the support provided by the organisation, the social exchange with the client is more likely not regarded as an important determinant in a call center agents level of confidence in their abilities. Furthermore, one could argue that relationships with clients could be deemed less important due to their fleeting nature. Baumeister & Leary (1995) detail the cognitive, emotional and physical aspects of the need to belong; however, the nature of the client-CCA exchange is unlikely to result in a relationship that requires this need to be met due to the transactional nature.

Nevertheless, managers referenced strict working hours in the call center as an industry norm, alluding to a potential burnout mitigator. For example, "*"But in a normal call center, there's not supposed to be burnout, because with the call center you know you start from 8:00 until 5:00 and then you log out. But because of the type of business that we're in, which is an investment business and we need to make sure that all our transactions that we get that our financials are concluded same day".* However, demographic data obtained from the call center agents indicted that approximately 70% of respondents work overtime per month, with an average of 18.25 overtime hours per month. This indicates a potential disconnect between the expectations and the current reality within the call center, reflecting additional pressures that potentially contribute to the current burnout levels. In this regard, inclusion is impacted in various ways.

On the one hand, there could be a perceived lack of support in the denial of excessive work hours. This is despite repeated acknowledgements of the role's

capacity constraints and undue pressures. This can potentially influence call center agents perceptions of how management values their effort, a driver of belongingness. On the other hand, management reported that there could be a lack of feedback from staff indicating stress and/or burnout, further suggesting management could be unaware of certain issues contributing to burnout. This could be explained by SET, as reward and recognition can shape behavior (Maslach & Leiter, 2016); therefore the lack of acknowledgement could be contributing to the current levels of burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

In contrast, regression analysis revealed that *inclusion-uniqueness* did not predict significant variance in all three dimensions of burnout. According to the literature, there is a clear link between a lack of control and burnout. Notably the ability to influence decisions and exercise autonomy can largely influence susceptibility to burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). The inherent restrictions of the role of the CCA during client engagement influences the ability to fully encompass the uniqueness dimension of inclusion, which one could have assumed to be a possible contributor to an increased susceptibility to burnout in this context. Holman (2002) suggested the toll of scripting and character behaviors can be seen in increased emotional exhaustion, considering the effort it takes to maintain the façade, at the expense of true feelings or beliefs. However, this was not supported in the present study.

Coincidentally, a comment in the interviews was potentially a cause for concern: "*But I've listened to the calls and the way they handled our clients. It's so amazing. I can hear that they not stressed out".* The results of the present study reflect average levels of burnout. However, the inherent requirement of the role is to portray certain behaviors knowns as a *character*. This indicates the importance for managers to recognize symptoms of burnout in individuals who cannot portray their feelings or behaviors due to the nature of the job design. Not only are call center agents required to work on tasks requiring mental and physical effort, but they are also equally expected to display rules, which dictate norms and standards of publicly displayed emotions and behaviors towards clients. Emotional dissonance, or faking emotions, can be considered a job demand (Zapf, 2002), resulting in increased role conflict and ambiguity levels. This has been found to be predictors of burnout (Lee &

Ashforth, 1996). As such, one could presume that this lack of opportunity for uniqueness could contribute to burnout susceptibility.

In spite of the role requirements, when not actively on calls, opportunities for expressing uniqueness are encouraged within the call center. The call center in the present study participates in many social engagement initiatives, such as heritage celebrations, to celebrate individual backgrounds that promote acceptance of individual differences. Unique personalities, talents and skills are acknowledged, and individual input is requested and valued by management, whether it be during formal or informal engagements. There is appreciation and acknowledgement of the diversity of thought as the benefit can be seen in problem-solving, highlighting the importance of creating a psychologically safe environment. By celebrating achievements, and interacting socially with colleagues, the environment does not limit unique behaviors, albeit when no clients are present. One could have assumed that the presence of these relationships and social support mechanisms within the present study that indicate value for individual uniqueness could plausibly mitigate the susceptibility to burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). However, the regression analysis could not support this assumption in the context of the present study.

The Effect of Inclusion-Belonging and Inclusion-Uniqueness on OCB

The results of the present study found that *inclusion-belonging* did not explain significant variance in the dimensions of OCB-I (β = .100, t = .865, p = .389), and OCB-O (β = .181, t = 1.637, p = 104). However, *inclusion-uniqueness* explained significant variance in both dimensions of OCB-I (β = .248, t = 2.147, p = .034), and OCB-O (β = .286, t = 2.593, p = .011). This indicates that *inclusion-uniqueness* makes the largest unique contribution in predicting OCB.

As stated, *inclusion-belonging* did not explain a significant variance in the dimensions of OCB. This was unexpected considering studies have revealed that employees reciprocate long-term trusting and loyal interpersonal relationships with their organisations, with a willingness to go above and beyond normal job expectations (Lam and Lau, 2012; Gould-Williams, & Davies, 2005). However, the present study did not support this theory.

However, *inclusion-uniqueness* explained significant variance in both dimensions of OCB. This finding was equally unexpected considering the complex

nature of the call center. Hoffman et al. (2007) argues that scripts, while useful, result in a lack of autonomy which can become demotivating. Feedback obtained in the present study confirmed the presence of scripts and the required character personas necessary in the role.

To better understand these relationships between inclusion and OCB in the present study, it is useful to understand the nature of OCB's presence in the call center. Managers, call center agents, and customers often display opposing viewpoints on service quality and priority. For example, Chicu et al. (2016) argues from the customer point of view, service quality depends on the ability of the call centre agent to adapt their approach to each caller. On the other hand, managers generally disregard customer orientation and prioritize operational metrics, such as speed of answers and number of calls attended. Findings reported by the qualitative interviews are consistent with the latter prioritisation, as a result, the reported levels of OCB by the call center agents were stronger than expected (M = 5.40; SD = 1.09).

This finding is unexpected due to the supposed lack of opportunities or necessity to engage in OCB's. However, this finding could be explained by the argument of Bolino and colleagues (2004) who challenged prevailing OCB research with three assumptions:

***Assumption one*:** OCBs result from non-self-serving motives. OCBs were initially defined and accepted as behaviors not formally rewarded by organisations. However, studies (Allen et al., 2000) indicate that supervisors consider OCBs when conducting performance appraisals, and reward such behaviors accordingly. Therefore the reciprocal gains is a plausible motivation for engaging in such behaviors. Feedback obtained during the qualitative strand revealed the various recognition and reward systems that encourage extra-role behaviors. For example, improving process efficiencies that "resulted in time saving, reputation saving" in the call center are financially rewarded. With a prize of R80 000, it is a plausible motive that drives OCB's in this context. Another finding indicated that teams "try to encourage people to give a little bit extra by putting little competitions in place". Based on this, the reported OCB results by call center agents cannot entirely be attributed to non-self-serving motives.

***Assumption two*:** OCBs facilitate the effective functioning of organisations. Often organisations would prefer that their employees refrain from engaging in citizenship behaviors especially when under intense pressure to produce, it may be undesirable to focus on inessential activities. This seems plausible in the call center. In line with this assumption, feedback from the participants indicated a reliance on standard operating procedures with a focus on call quantity rather than call quality. The feedback acknowledged the hesitancy of staff to deviate from the SOP, and prefer permission in writing, indicating a sense of fear to deviate from standard processes. Based on this, the culture may not be conducive to promoting OCB behaviors. Thus, this begs the question of why staff perceive higher than average levels of OCB in an environment largely restrictive of the ability to execute such.

***Assumption three*:** Promoting citizenship in the workplace creates a positive working environment for employees. However, the need for a high level of OCBs may also be an indicator of significant organisational problems, for example consistent overtime suggests that the organisation is experiencing staffing difficulties or other problems. According to the survey feedback, call center agents reported an average of 18.25 overtime hours worked a month, which may indicate staffing difficulties. In line with the feedback from the qualitative strand indicating capacity issues as a key concern in the environment, the OCBs reported may be due to necessity rather than individual willingness.

Despite a supposed lack of reasoning to engage in OCB's, organisational culture is a significant determinant of OCB. Organ et al. (2006) argued that "to feel like a citizen, one must feel that one is treated like a citizen and accorded rights, privileges, and respect". A key by-product of culture are norms, which provide information of acceptable forms of behaviors. These behaviors often have an element of social acceptance that govern behaviors and perceptions (Agarwal, 2016). Similar to the findings of Den Hartog et al. (2007), Shore et al., (2011) postulated perceived inclusion facilitated feelings of obligation, which encouraged reciprocation, consistent with SET. Self-reports of OCB are an important consideration, rather than external indicators such as 360 feedback. A *positive intention* to go above and beyond is and was the main focus of this study, particularly if employees feel included and want to reciprocate positive treatment in future

behaviors. As per the tenet of SET, this will result in employees behaving in ways that will likely demonstrate citizenship behaviors in an ongoing capacity, which is a possible rationale for the unexpectedly high levels of OCB.

Limitations & Suggestions for Future Research

The study could suffer from a social desirability bias, as it is based on perceptions. Future research could explore additional measures of antecedents to inclusion, such as inclusive practices, leadership, and climate, for a triangulated view on perceptions of inclusion.

As a sub-dimension, Baumeister & Leary (1995) indicate that individuals may vary in their need to belong. An implication of this may be that belonging is not important to some employees, and would therefore not influence behavioral outcomes. However, further research incorporating the degree of the need for belonging may be useful.

Regarding the second sub-dimension, a challenge for organisations, particularly a call center, is to balance the value of uniqueness with other values that might serve as homogenizing forces. For example, standard operating procedures and scripting offer performance advantages. Homogenizing approaches are also beneficial for call centers to achieve the minimum business requirements in addressing client queries. Future research could consider how leaders balance uniqueness in groups where every dimension of difference may not be possible, and how to compensate accordingly.

Contributions of the Study

Shore et al. (2018) caution that while the interest in inclusion is increasing amongst scholars, the literature is still in the early stages. The present study contributes to the existing literature by confirming empirical relationships between the dimensions of inclusion and employee engagement, burnout, and OCB. This study also adds to the small body of literature that supports the conceptualization of inclusion as requiring both belongingness and uniqueness (Chung et al., 2020; Randel et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011). Furthermore, most studies regarding inclusion are conducted in the US and European contexts, with little known about

other cultural milieus (Shore et al., 2018). South Africa, a country abundant in cultural diversity, is a useful contribution to the work on inclusion literature.

The study empirically supports the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), insofar as the results demonstrate that employees who feel included in the workplace, will reproduce positive exchanges through positive engagement and citizenship behaviors, and reduced susceptibility to burnout.

From a macro perspective, achieving a more inclusive working environment would benefit the country. South Africa needs workplaces that do not have a restricted view of inclusion but promote and drive an inclusive culture. Practically, the results open pathways for organisations to promote engagement, citizenship, and decrease the risks of burnout by facilitating an inclusive work environment. For example, as suggested by the present study, organisations should prioritize the role of leaders in shaping a climate of inclusion by means of both preventions (compliance with practices and policies) and promotional (psychological safety, involvement in the workgroup, feeling respected and valued, influence on decision-making, authenticity, and recognizing, honouring, and advancing diversity) strategies.

Finally, call center agents impact both organisational effectiveness and brand reputation. Research on this particular sample provides beneficial insights on an environment with a notoriously poor reputation. The findings could provide managers with insights into the experiences of the current workforce, particularly where the focus on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is a business strategy in the organisation. The present findings could assist organisations improve their inclusive practises, climate, and leadership, in a way that is congruent with the business strategy and operational requirements of the call center. Such practices will not only improve the work environment through improved work well-being, but benefit employees overall health in deference to work-life integration.

Conclusion

The human aspect needs to be addressed in call centers, with literature suggesting the performance management in call centers missed the evolution from Taylorism that was naturally followed in the field of business. When considering the primary performance measures in call centers, dominated by stopwatches, it is understandable that call centers are referred to as “sweatshops of the Western world”. Hardly glamourous, and inherently stressful, one cannot ignore the importance placed upon call centers to maintain the relationship between the organisation and the customer.

The present study's findings support Shore et al.’s (2011) original conceptualisation of inclusion and support the relationship with positive behavioral outcomes. Although a causal relationship cannot be inferred, the findings suggest an empirical relationship between inclusion, comprising the sub-dimensions of *inclusion-belonging* and *inclusion-uniqueness*, and positive behavioral outcomes. This study's findings further provided evidence of the unique contributions of these two sub-dimensions of inclusion and their differing individual influence on behavioral outcomes.

The present study's findings provide a useful contribution to the field of inclusion with a non-Western sample. Research conducted by Adams et al. (2020) reported that all countries within the study found Inclusion to mitigate burnout, except Iceland. As Iceland is a culturally homogenous country compared to South Africa, the active social support component in the form of felt inclusion may not be as needed to protect the employee’s energetic resources and avoid burnout, as may be needed in a culturally diverse country, such as South Africa. Therefore, the current research chose to add to the body of research by examining a South African sample.

In conclusion, the present study conceptualized thought based on social exchange theory to explain predicting the impact of perceived inclusion’s bi-dimensional model on behavioral outcomes. Employees who feel they belong and are able to express important aspects of their unique identity are more likely to respond in kind through an increase in engagement, citizenship behaviors, and a decreased susceptibility to burnout. Therefore, organisations should consider

embedding belonging and uniqueness as cultural norms to encourage reciprocal positive behaviors effectively.

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List of Appendices

Appendix A

Figures

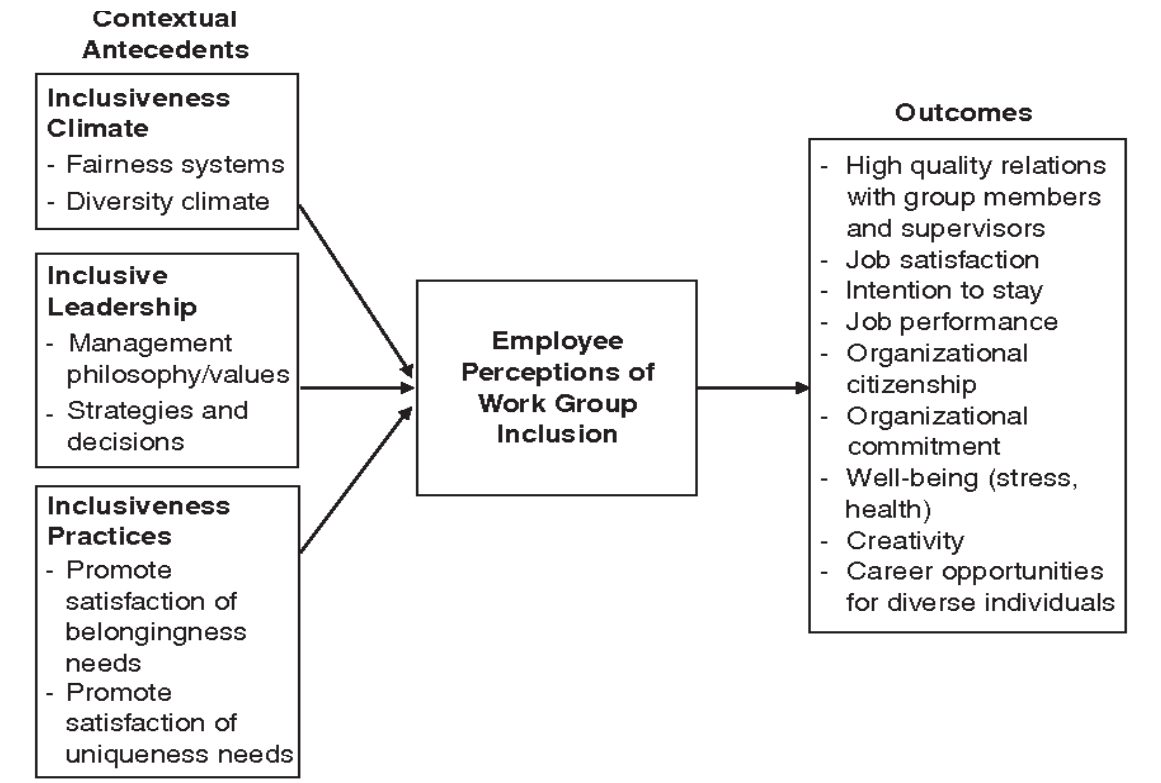

Figure A 1 Conceptual Model of Workgroup Inclusion: Outcomes

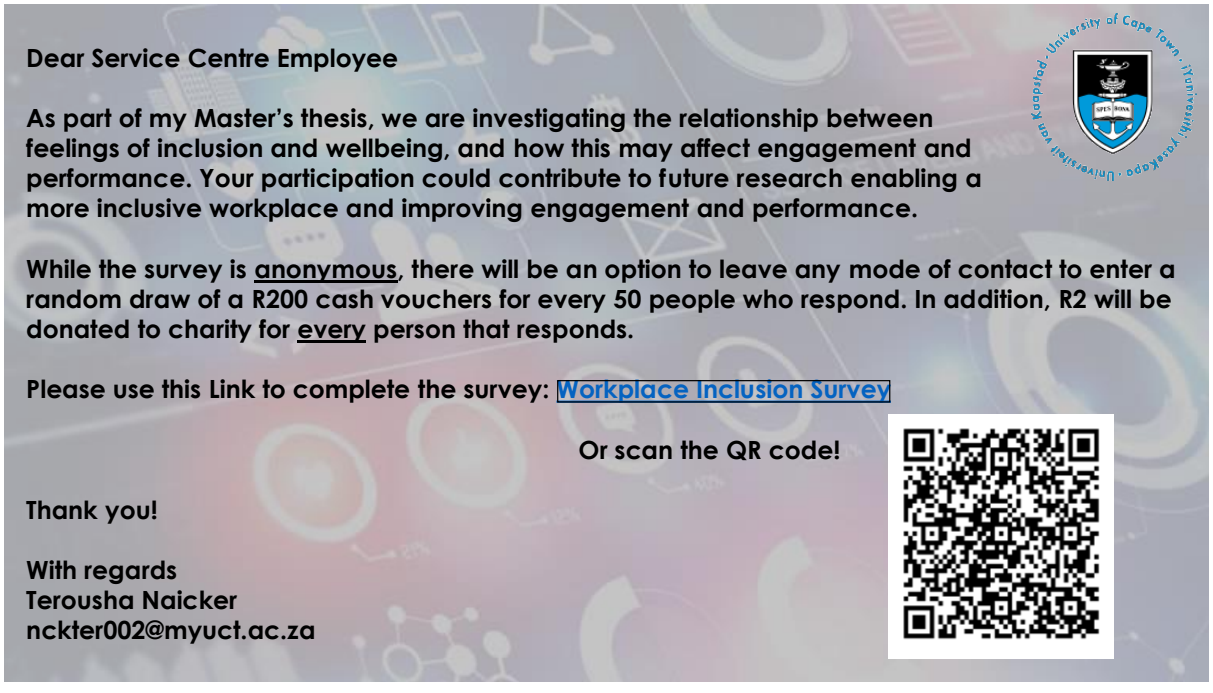

Figure A 2 Research Participation Invitation

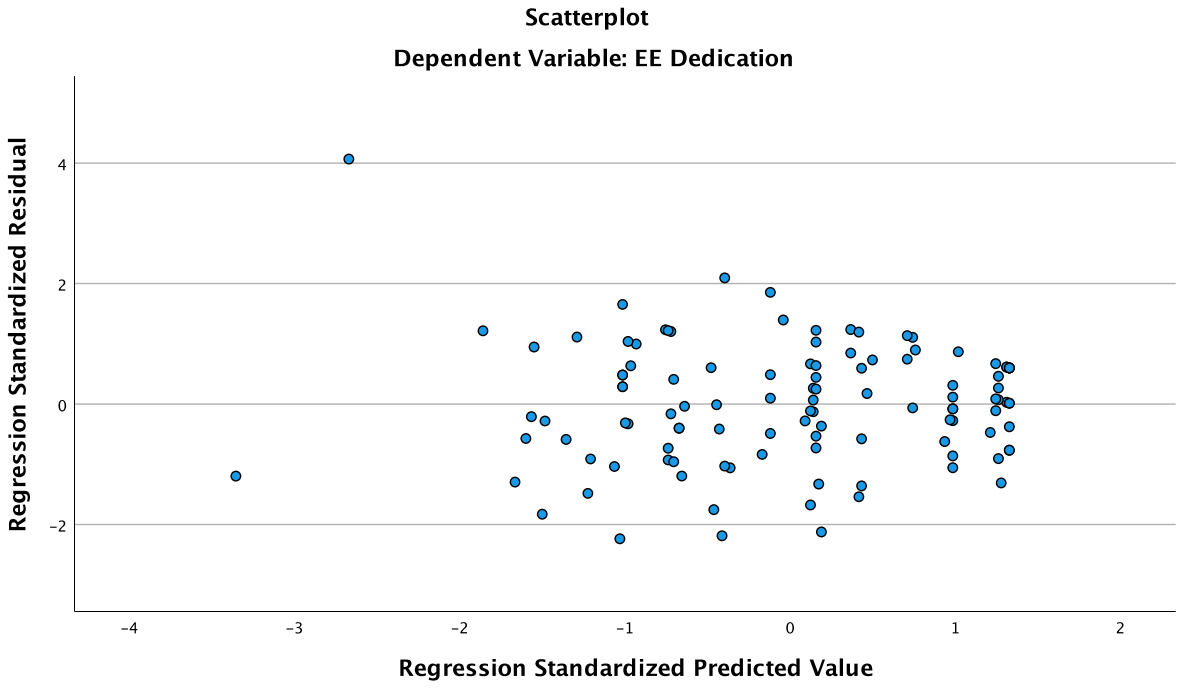

Figure A 3 Regression Analysis: Scatterplot of standardised residuals of belonging and uniqueness predicting Employee Engagement: Dedication.

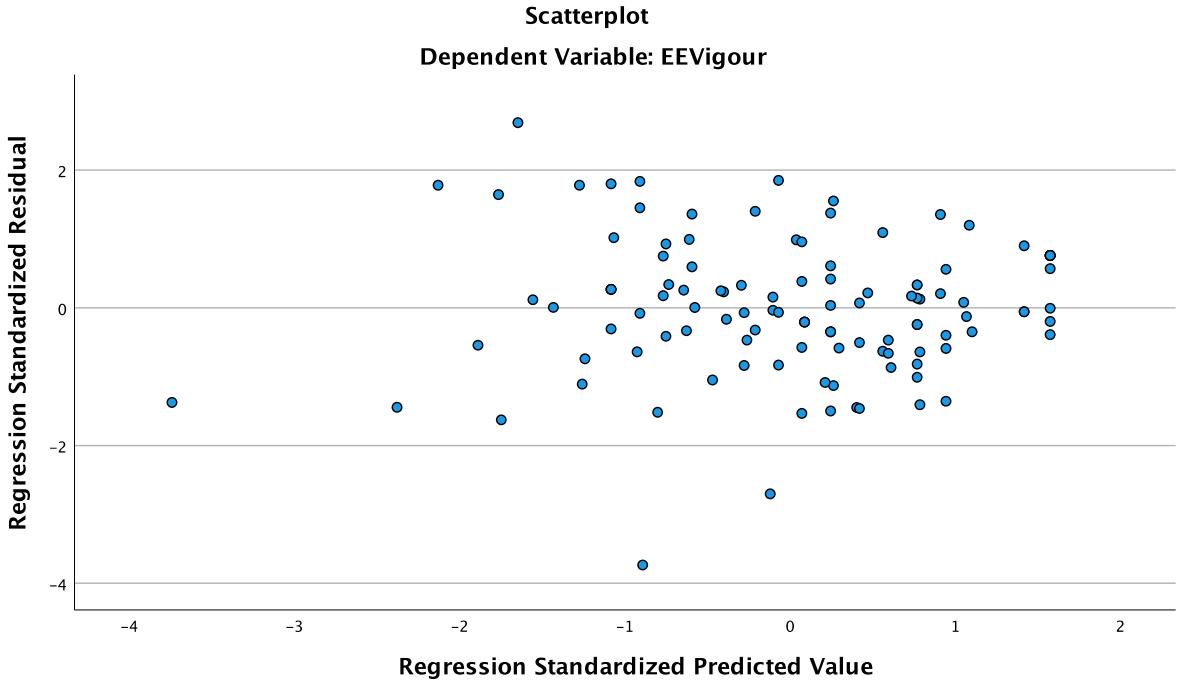

Figure A 4 Regression analysis: Scatterplot of standardised residuals of belonging and uniqueness predicting Employee Engagement: Vigor

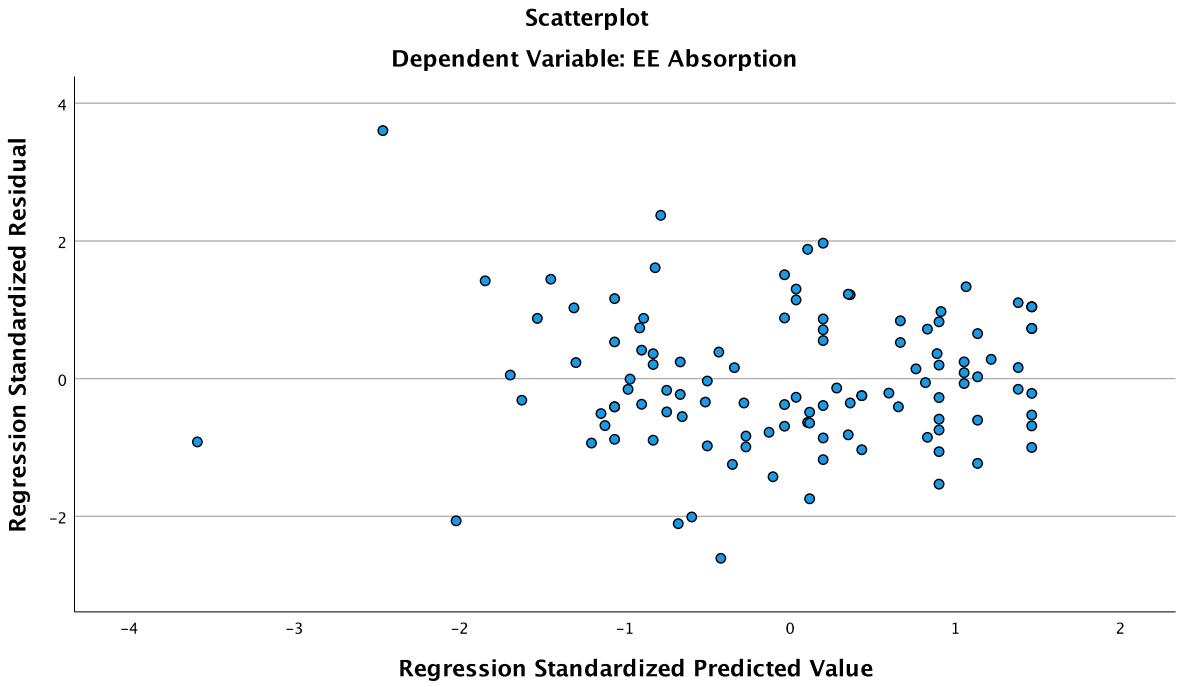

Figure A 5 Regression analysis: Scatterplot of standardised residuals of belonging and uniqueness predicting Employee Engagement: Absorption

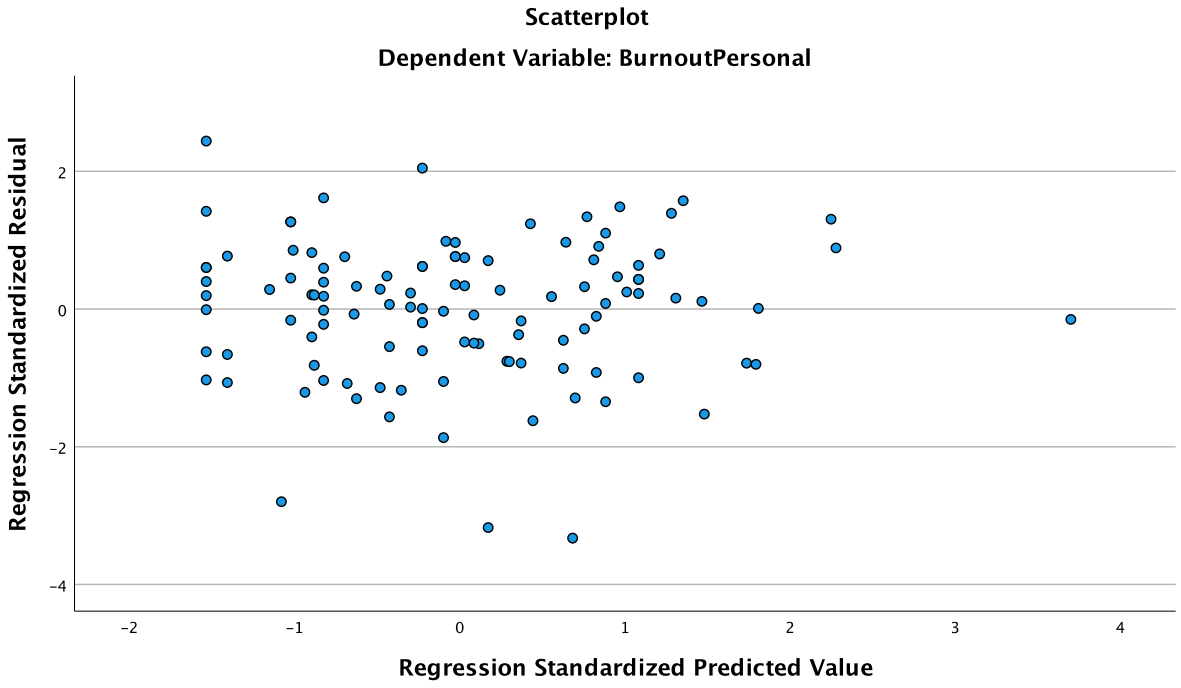

Figure A 6 Regression analysis: Scatterplot of standardised residuals of belonging and uniqueness predicting Burnout: Personal

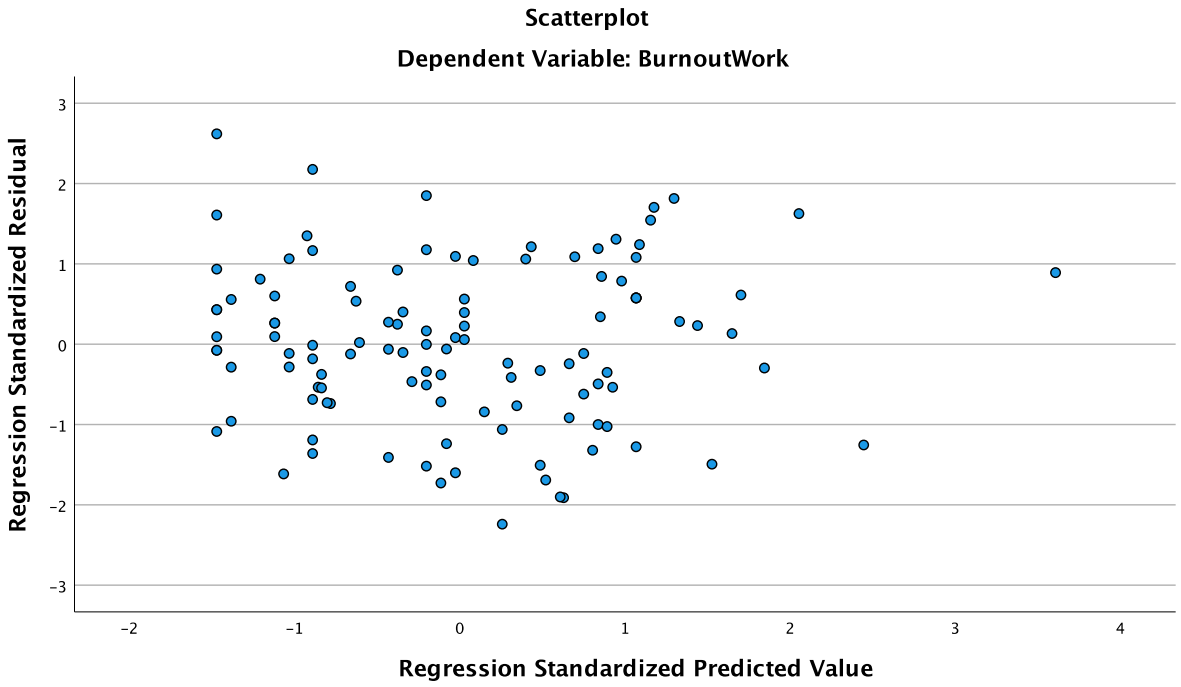

Figure A 7 Regression analysis: Scatterplot of standardised residuals of belonging and uniqueness predicting Burnout: Work

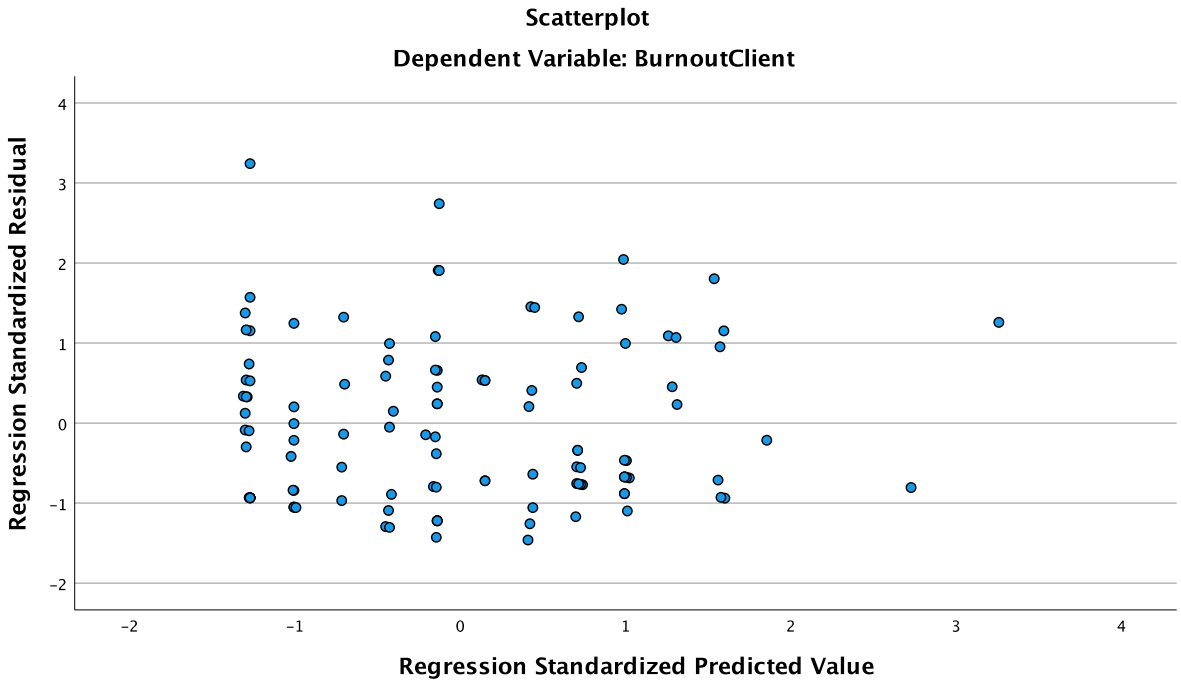

Figure A 8 Regression analysis: Scatterplot of standardised residuals of belonging and uniqueness predicting Burnout: Client

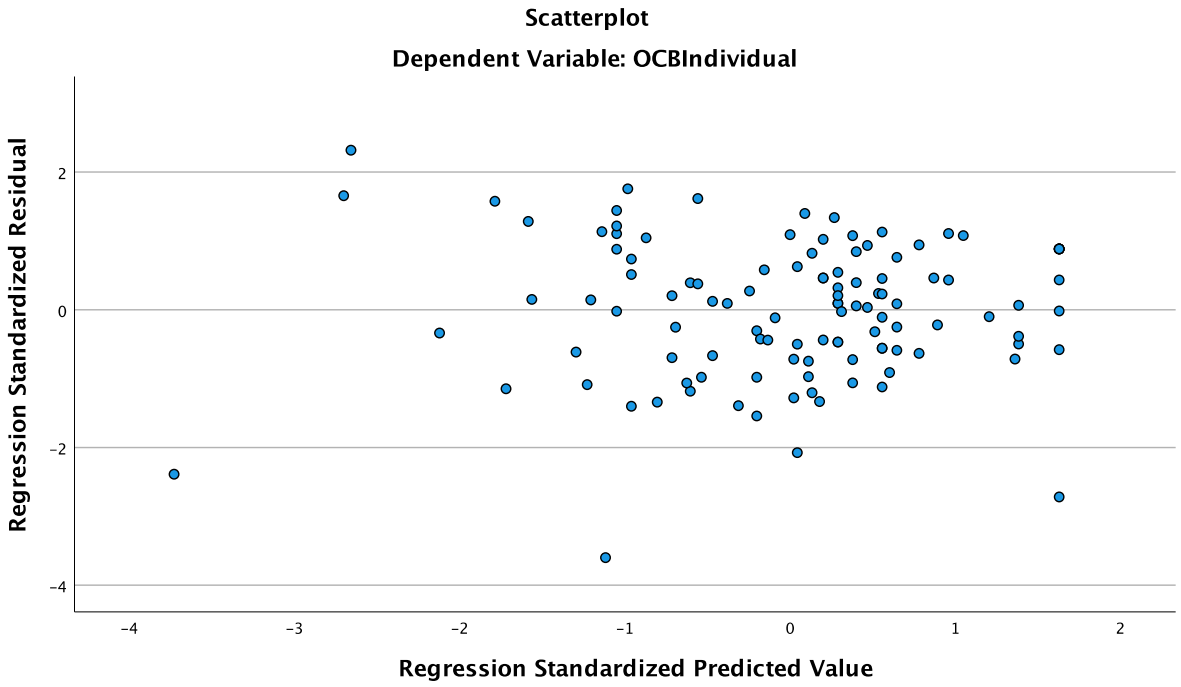

Figure A 9 Regression analysis: Scatterplot of standardised residuals of belonging and uniqueness predicting OCB: Individual

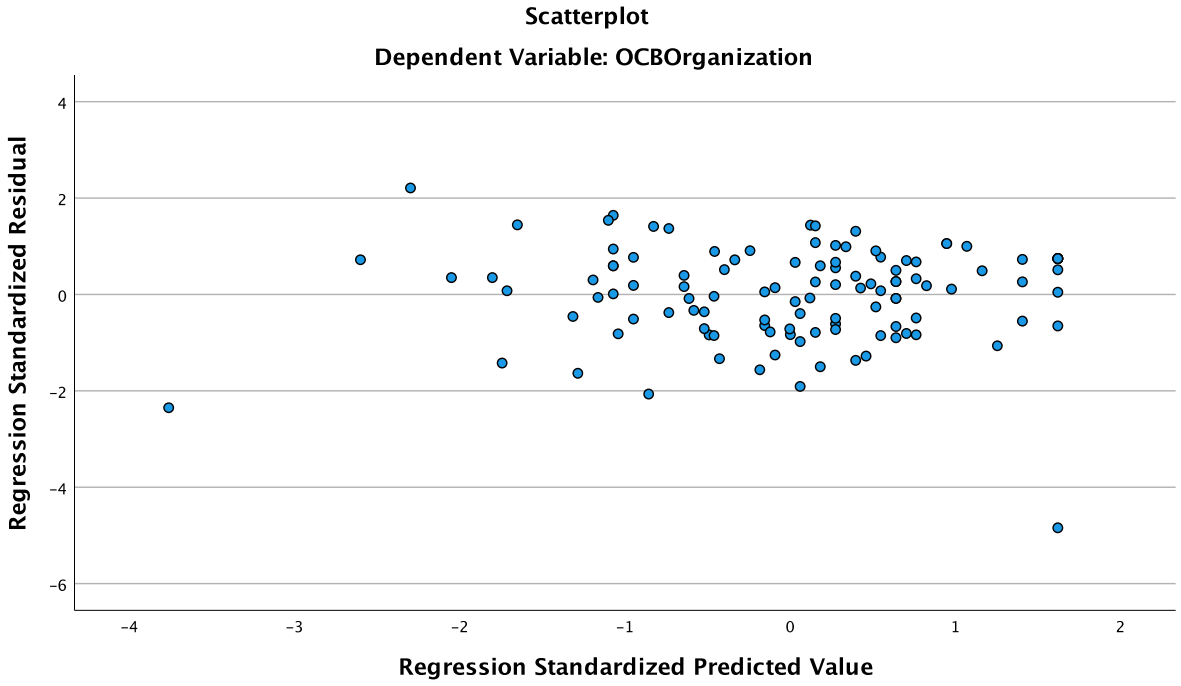

Figure A 10 Regression analysis: Scatterplot of standardised residuals of belonging and uniqueness predicting OCB: Organisation

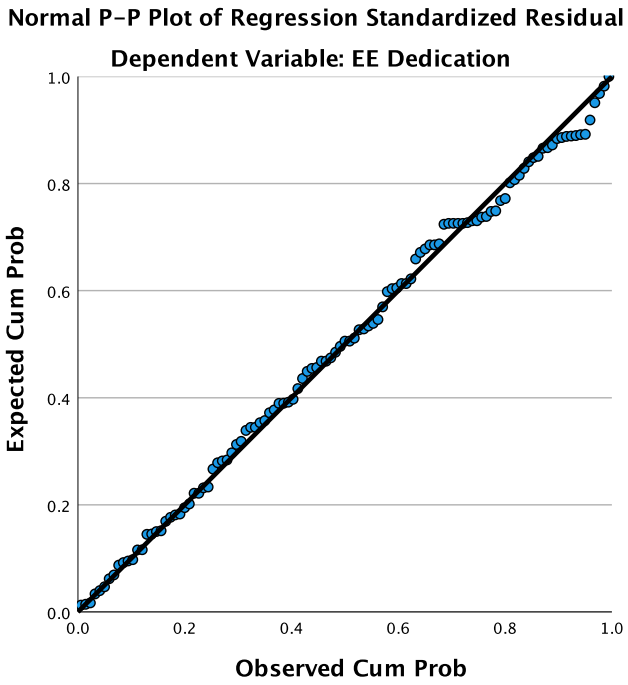

Figure A 11 Regression analysis: Normal P-P Plot of belonging and uniqueness predicting Employee Engagement: Dedication

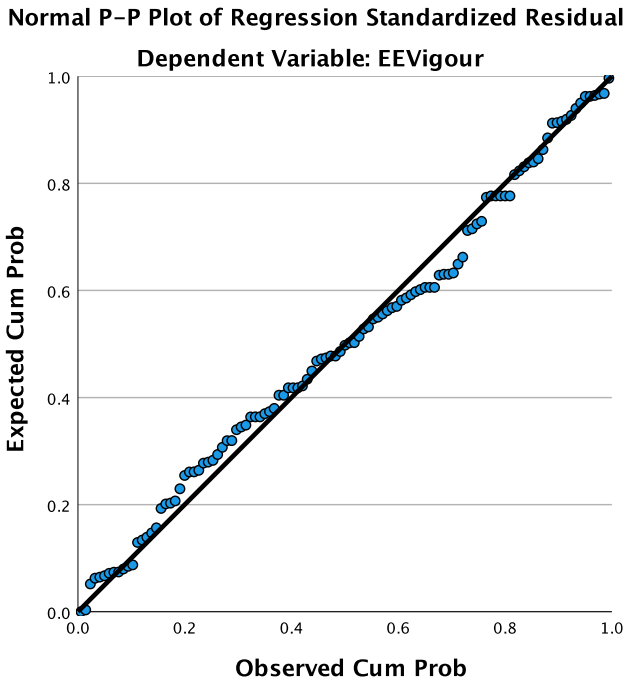

Figure A 12 Regression analysis: Normal P-P Plot of belonging and uniqueness predicting Employee Engagement: Vigor

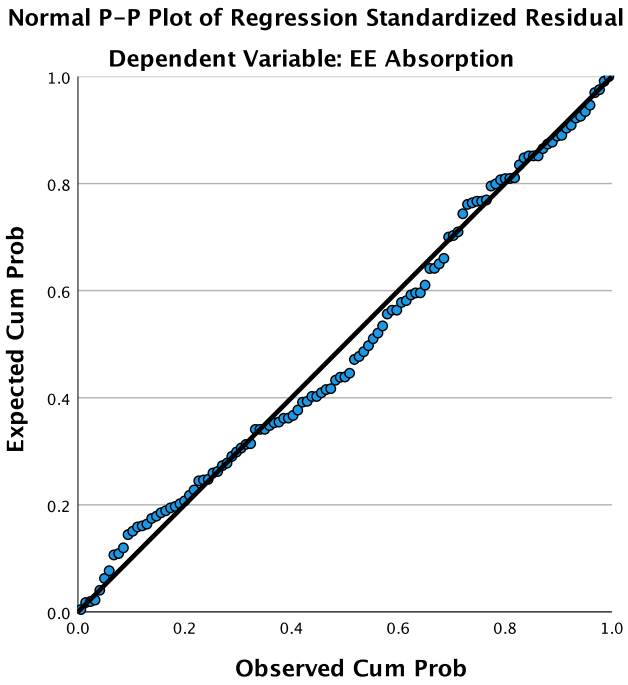

Figure A 13 Regression analysis: Normal P-P Plot of belonging and uniqueness predicting Employee Engagement: Absorption

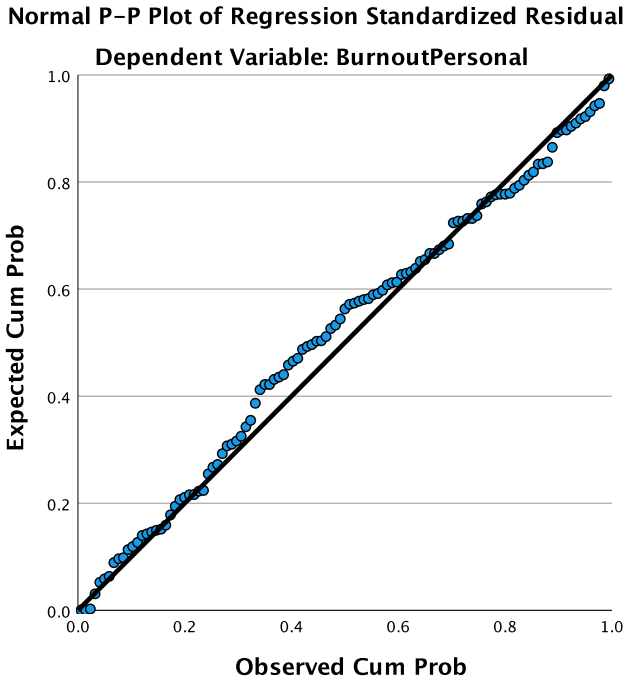

Figure A 14 Regression analysis: Normal P-P Plot of belonging and uniqueness predicting Burnout: Personal

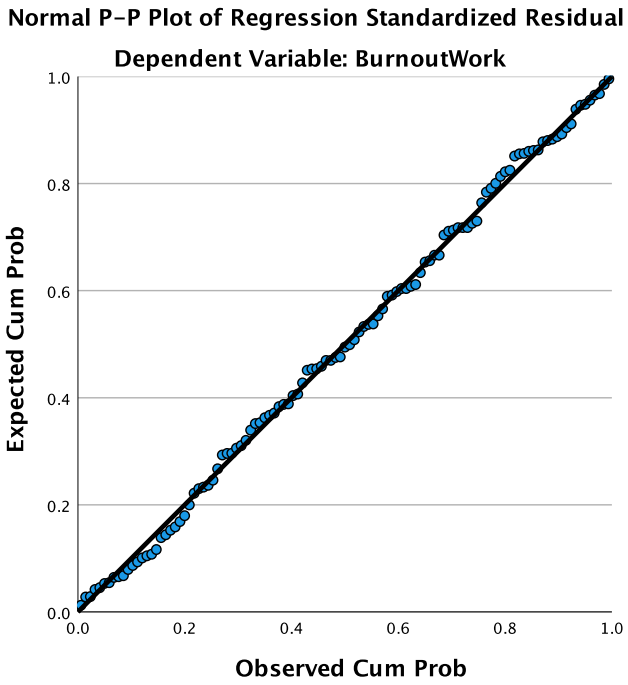

Figure A 15 Regression analysis: Normal P-P Plot of belonging and uniqueness predicting Burnout: Work

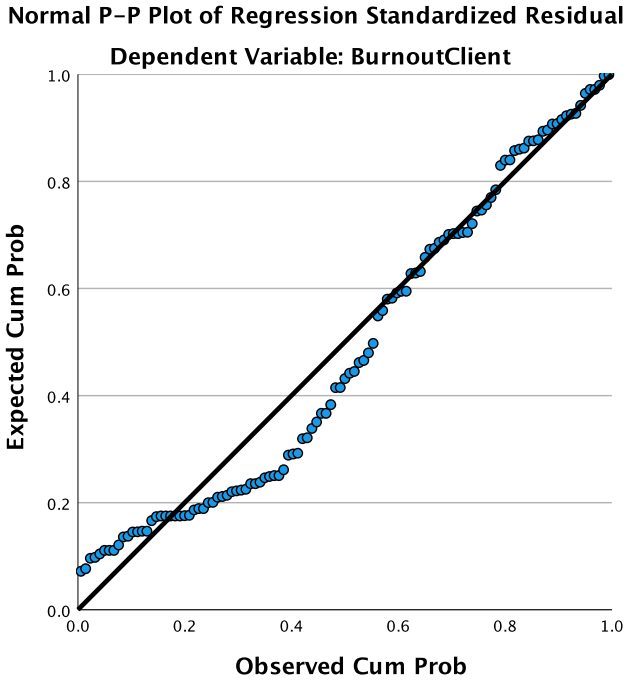

Figure A 16 Regression analysis: Normal P-P Plot of belonging and uniqueness predicting Burnout: Client

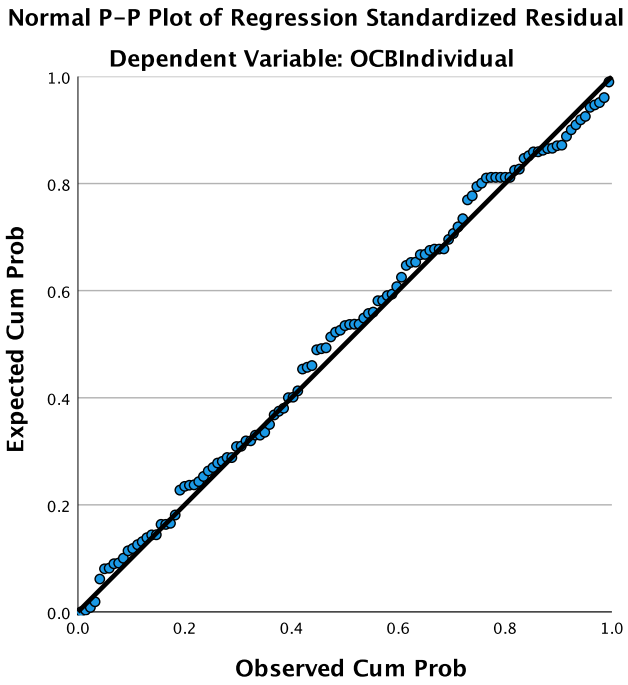

Figure A 17 Regression analysis: Normal P-P Plot of belonging and uniqueness predicting OCB: Individual

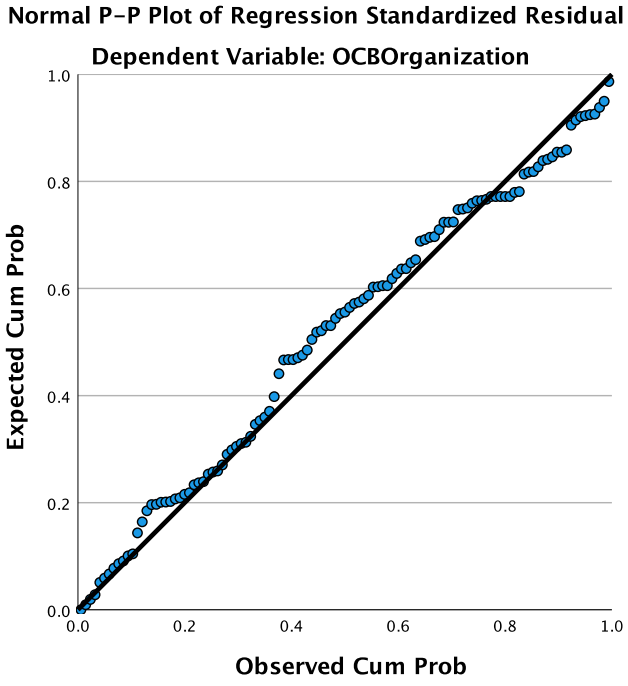

Figure A 18 Regression analysis: Normal P-P Plot of belonging and uniqueness predicting OCB: Organisation

Appendix B

Tables

Table B 1 *Exploratory Factor Analysis: Inclusion*

Item Number	Item Description	Factor	
		1	2
I1	I am treated as a valued member of my work group.	.279	**.572**
I2	I belong in my work group.	-.090	**.876**
I3	I am connected to my work group.	.331	**.523**
I4	I believe that my work group is where I am meant to be.	-.038	**.850**
I5	I feel that people really care about me in my work group.	.444	.423
I6	I can bring aspects of myself to this work group that others in the group don't have in common with me.	.478	.279
I7	People in my work group listen to me even when my views are dissimilar.	**.777**	-.002
I8	While at work, I am comfortable expressing opinions that diverge from my group.	**.764**	.022
I9	I can share a perspective on work issues that is different from my group members.	**.849**	-.041
I10	When my group's perspective becomes too narrow, I am able to bring up a new point of view.	**.880**	-.050
Eigenvalue		5.825	1.154
Eigenvalue %		58.25%	11.54%
Cumulative Variance		58.25%	69.80%

Notes: N = 113 after listwise deletion of missing data. Principal axis factoring with direct oblimin rotation. Significant loadings are presented in boldface. I = Inclusion.

Table B 2 *Quantitative Demographic Composition of Participants*

Demographic	Total (N = 113)	Percentage of Total
Age, M (SD)	33 (SD = 9.23, Range = 18 – 57)	
Overtime, M (SD)	18.25 (SD = 18.70, Range = 0 – 85)	
	Race	

Coloured	77	68%
African	27	24%
White	5	4%
Prefer not to say	3	3%
Indian	1	1%
	Gender	
Female	80	71%
Male	30	27%
Prefer not to say	2	2%
Non-binary / third gender	1	1%
	Type of Call Center	
Dual	44	39%
Inbound	43	38%
Outbound	26	23%

Table B 3 *Qualitative Demographic Composition of Participants*

Characteristic	Total (N = 10)	Percentage of Total
	Race	
Coloured	8	80%
African	2	20%
	Gender	
Female	8	80%
Male	2	20%
	Role	
Team Leader	6	60%
Human Capital	2	20%
Operations Manager	2	20%

Appendix C

Ethics Approval

Faculty of Commerce
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@Commerce UCT **UCT Commerce Faculty Office**

06 08 2021

Terousha Naicker

School of Management Studies

University of Cape Town

REF: REC 2021/08/003

Effect of Perceived Workplace Inclusion on Employee Wellbeing and Performance

We are pleased to inform you that your ethics application has been approved. Unless otherwise specified this ethical clearance is valid until 31-Dec-2022 .

Your clearance may be renewed upon application.

Please be aware that you need to notify the Ethics Committee immediately should any aspect of your study regarding the engagement with participants as approved in this application, change. This may include aspects such as changes to the research design, questionnaires, or choice of participants.

The ongoing ethical conduct throughout the duration of the study remains the responsibility of the principal investigator.

We wish you well for your research.

2021.08.06
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Appendix D

Measurement Tools

Appendix D 1

Inclusion Scale

Belonging

1. I am treated as a valued member of my work group.
2. I belong in my work group.
3. I am connected to my work group.
4. I believe that my work group is where I am meant to be.
5. I feel that people really care about me in my work group.

Uniqueness

1. I can bring aspects of myself to this work group that others in the group don't have in common with me.
2. People in my work group listen to me even when my views are dissimilar.
3. While at work, I am comfortable expressing opinions that diverge from my group.
4. I can share a perspective on work issues that is different from my group members.
5. When my group's perspective becomes too narrow, I am able to bring up a new point of view.

Appendix D 2

Employee Engagement Scale

Vigor

1. At my work, I feel bursting with energy
2. At my job, I feel strong and vigorous
3. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work
4. I can continue working for very long periods at a time
5. At my job, I am very resilient, mentally
6. At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well*

Dedication

1. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose
2. I am enthusiastic about my job
3. My job inspires me
4. I am proud on the work that I do
5. To me, my job is challenging

Absorption

1. Time flies when I'm working
2. When I am working, I forget everything else around me
3. I feel happy when I am working intensely
4. I am immersed in my work
5. I get carried away when I’m working
6. It is difficult to detach myself from my job*

Appendix D 3

Burnout Scale

Personal burnout

1. How often are you physically exhausted?
2. How often are you emotionally exhausted?
3. How often do you think: ’’I can’t take it anymore’’?
4. How often do you feel worn out?
5. How often do you feel weak and susceptible to illness?

Work-related burnout

1. Do you feel worn out at the end of the working day?a
2. Are you exhausted in the morning at the thought of another day at work?
3. Do you feel that every working hour is tiring for you?
4. Do you have enough energy for family and friends during leisure time? (inverse scoring)
5. Is your work emotionally exhausting?b
6. Does your work frustrate you?b

7. Do you feel burnt out because of your work?b

Client-related burnout

1. Does it drain your energy to work with clients?b
2. Do you find it frustrating to work with clients?b
3. Do you feel that you give more than you get back when you work with clients?
4. Are you tired of working with clients?a
5. Do you sometimes wonder how long you will be able to continue working with clients?

Appendix D 4

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour Scale

OCB-I

1. Help others who have been absent.
2. Willingly give your time to help others who have work-related problems.
3. Adjust your work schedule to accommodate other employees' requests for time off.
4. Go out of the way to make newer employees feel welcome in the work group.
5. Show genuine concern and courtesy toward coworkers, even under the most trying business or personal situations.
6. Give up time to help others who have work or nonwork problems.
7. Assist others with their duties.
8. Share personal property with others to help their work.

OCB-O

1. Attend functions that are not required but that help the organisational image.
2. Keep up with developments in the organisation.
3. Defend the organisation when other employees criticize it.
4. Show pride when representing the organisation in public.
5. Offer ideas to improve the functioning of the organisation.
6. Express loyalty toward the organisation.
7. Take action to protect the organisation from potential problems.
8. Demonstrate concern about the image of the organisation.

Appendix D 5

Interview Guide

1. How would you describe the HR practices and the impact on staff
2. How would you describe your Leadership style and the impact on staff
3. How would you describe your corporate climate and the impact on staff
4. How can you tell that your staff feel included in the workplace?
5. How engaged do you think your staff are? What contributes to this?
6. How would you describe the levels of burnout in the call center? What contributes to this? How do you try to mitigate this?
7. How is performance measured in the call center?
8. Are call center agents able to go over and above in their roles?
9. Can you describe the role expectations of the CCA

Appendix E

Content Analysis

Inclusion	Supporting Quotes
Uniqueness	*"I'm not sure what the word I'm looking for, but they are given that platform to celebrate who they are. When we were in the office we used to do things like heritage."* *"Well it's not about age or how long you've been in the business is kind of like what you bring to the table, which is highlighted more these days than what it has in the past."* *"So as long as they don't discuss religion and not express their political views on calls and show respect. So, if you are getting someone that says I don't want to speak English or I want to speak to someone that speaks Afrikaans, respect that and find that person that will help them in Afrikaans. Because at the end of the day you don't want to come back and get convinced that there was a racial comment at this time or gender discrimination comment that was done by this person that I was talking to. So, there is those guidance and limitations."* *"So I think most of the time from speaking to a client or someone higher up is kind of when I would be, you know, a character. But even speaking to anyone on the general floor my management team are happy to be myself. I feel like sometimes you can't do your job to the best of its ability, because you are being a certain character, you feel that pressure."*

	"To celebrate the uniqueness of people and us realizing that there's no one size fits all. Yeah, we are all individuals with our own unique needs circumstances." *"Very little. I'm not going to lie because it's such a process driven environment. Everything is predetermined, predefined, prescribed in terms of how, what, when and how things need to be done. So if you wanted to bring your personality to the how we do it, it would only be in the form of process improvements."* *"It's a tough in the sense. I think they were able to be themselves and show their individuality and also as in the business to assist them in terms of workshopping certain things to ensure that they still their own person having those one on one sessions we identify with the strongest and then assist those people to get where they want to be."* *"Diversity at the moment in terms of when we say diversity is that you know they can be themselves, but when they on the goals they have to be a certain character."* *"You know when you're fun person? You will have to change that character 'cause you have to be a professional at all times because the people that you speak to on the other side is not the same. So you might joke with one person, but the other person might take on offense when you joke with that person because you want to find a level of understanding and agreement between you and the caller. And if you not on par with what that person is, for instance, if you phone in we telling you that you must be sympathetic and empathetic, we all are in our own way."* *"How can I say, they're not extraverted people, that want to speak to people? Some of them are here because there's no other vacant job."*
Belonging	*"If you are happy to be here, you still appreciate your job. You see that, but there are those people that are here to just get the salary, they're not interested and they don't have any other option but to be here. So those are like we don't even want to be part of it. I mean, I take the clothes and I go home, but you get those people that want to make that difference daily and want to be part of what we are driving as a team, always focusing putting the client in the center of everything."* *"This year we have had found some challenges, so I would understand or know exactly where my team is not feeling that they belong, but in terms of providing the support to them, yes we are."* *"I believe that it is important to have relationships with everybody. All levels of staff. So as a senior leader, I might ask:*

	What are some of the things that they are doing that excites them? Is there anything that they are doing that they are not currently happy with or they feel that's not? *"So obviously I think before you trust it takes a bit of time and getting to know the team and it requires a lot of engagement with the team to get to know them. Also allowing them to get to know you."*
Climate Culture/Psychological Safety	*"Because I think understanding is an important part of ensuring that you at least create a sense of inclusion in your in your team. So whether it is a specific religious holiday that is celebrated. To include some sort of messaging around it."* *"Trust is earned. It is also lost quite easily. I well, I do that by sharing of myself. And in order for my staff to feel that they are coming to a job when environment where they can actually be themselves and not be judged because of it."* *"I think as a business we as a business, we celebrate culture, but in terms of the actual processing and work that we do, not necessarily so."* *"I felt in our team that there was a little bit of favouritism."* *"We are taken through how we need to obviously make sure that our employees are feeling safe in a work environment. So come from my perspective, there's a lot of those type of training and initiatives being put in place by HC to ensure that we meet employee wellbeing.* *"There's things that need input from the staff, and I think we try to clarify that we thinking of changing this, give us your thoughts. Do you think to work? Do you think it won't work? So we do have that inclusion, but also like coming back to the office, for example, it's not something that is up for discussion."* *"Where we want to change how we greet our customers will involve them. And something that involves a brand where they can contribute will involve them and engage them. So there is that inclusiveness."* *"Transparency with my team making sure they know exactly what's happening exactly."*
HR Practices	*"I think, well, (the organisation) has a long way to go in managing within these parameters to fit into this box. I mean recruitment is a big one, as in entryway, that's how we drive in inclusion and diversity. As an interview way into the organisation. And that is obviously helps us too."* *Your brain is wired. You approach problems differently and there's not one right way of doing something. There's a lot of*

	different ways of doing something right. And by having a variety of voices in the room, you can come to a solution more easily. So that's I think for me, that's the main benefit."
Leadership	*"As a leader, I believe that it is important for everybody to have a voice and for that voice to be heard."* *"I feel that they can speak freely. And the reason I say that is not all of them, but the reason I'm saying that is we are getting some cases from the Union."* *"I have a session with my team once a week which is called the interactive session and it will be us speaking about if there's issues and addressing those issues."* *"We try to push to ensure we will go to like the town halls and all those things so that they know what's happening. Any call and we would kind of dress things. I'll make them feel like they're part of how the department should look."* *"OK, so I think the way that I do it is that I have come as as far as possible. I'm going to say 90% of the time I have a daily meeting with my team where I literally talk about what they do."* *"But the problem is that they themselves are not heard in terms of like talking to the manager, and the manager must talk on their behalf. But their feelings are not always taken into account because he's no sessions for them because all the sessions, that is in the middle of the day, which they cannot attend. Find is like the town hall sessions. All of those things that (COO) have. And all of these things. Now the manager must act in and we must not give feedback by and they say, yeah, but did you ask them this?"* *"We are, uh, what they call it a real live environment in terms of a call center all hands on deck. I mean, it's always an hour. We cannot afford for them to be an hour away. They don't want to use their lunch break to do that because they also need a break from work. So they need to step out of the office in order to get that break. And that's where they don't get opportunity to listen to (COO) directly or the you know, the business unit leaders and things like that until our business unit leader comes and they have a session which is effectively I think it's every two or three months. They have a session with them."* *"Are they telling them what we are feeling on the ground? You've implemented certain things, the strategy which my managers told me, but I don't get understanding because you didn't tell it to me directly."*

Sub theme: Employee Engagement	Supporting Quotes
High/Low	*"I think that my workforce is engaged to an extent, not as engaged as I would like them to be."* *"70% is engaged."* *"Staff are not engaged at all."* *"Low."* *"80%."* *"Low."* *"High."* *"40%."* *"So if I'm to be honest, I can't say that I'm going to have 100% commitment and dedication. I'm going say I probably got a, uh, a 70/30 split 70 being really on the bus and there for the team and the 30 being there we need to pull you along on the journey."* *"The commitment has truly improved and increased because of the stability of how they are now. Working from home and how the business is also tried to help them settle down in working from a work from home environment. So I do believe that it has increased drastically."*
Enabling Engagement	*"One way of keeping the team and the staff the guys on the floor engaged is to have fun with it. Is dressing up in a funny way, coming to work in your pajamas."* *"Recognition So if maybe someone has got a target and you will say that a mutual target for so long, you will get a R300 check. We try to drive the behaviour that we want."* *"So I do think that once we go to this hybrid system that will make them become more engaged, it'll bring back that competitiveness like I know in the office previously, they kinda like would rub off each other or they would feel each others energies and then there will be like shouting across to see OK how much how far you on your stats and all that good positivity."* *"What I did need to do is learn how they each engaged differently, because what I did realize that the personalities were overwhelming some yet very strong personalities. Then I needed to learn how each of them engaged and give them their platform."*

	"Today to use platforms like Ms teams like we're currently using to have interactive sites, whereas before we would have to walk over to somebody's desk. So now what they have is an open platform where they can post a question and have a colleague answer them or have your manager posted on so for you. Then you're not so alone sitting in your home not knowing the answer and having no one to ask." *"Individual performances that recognizing our staff and I think that also helped us a lot 'cause that's where we pick up or you hear from them. They're sharing their ideas."* *"And, UM, appreciating the business, acknowledging their input. And yeah, so I think having those town halls just to check in with staff and here and give feedback and acknowledge them."* *"So we have a weekly meeting that we had. We call a flow meeting. We everybody goes online. During that time we have a few Ice Breakers. We play a few games with him and I think as a team leader. I also tried during the week to set up different types of competitions to be able to keep my guys engaged and continue working as a team opposed to working in little silos because we find that with us not seeing each other, people would."* *"So the one of the initiatives that the product business is also been bought into is the mini teams that we are currently running. So I for example manage a specific team and in my team I have mini teams also running where I've been assigned a mini captain and they would then run very few staff members and they would put little competitions in place amongst themselves."*
Contributing to high/low Engagament	*"They give their own, they participate with, they come up with ideas in ways of working differently just to assist the business."* *"I think what is contributing to the lower level of engagement is the meaningful interaction. That we have at the moment compared to previous times."* *"I'm going into a. inbound call center with irate customers and systems hanging and all of those things."* *"Targets not being made people not having sufficient."* *"I think right now they would be low levels of engagement that depends on the current business reality that they are facing. So going into a outbound call center engagement levels might be different, not sky high but not low."* *"It is it's highly pressurized call center you could hold now there's*

	20 calls holding while you are busy wrapping up. People are asking you what are you doing? Where are you, why you not answering? So it is highly pressurized, and if there's no calls you expect it to take an email or two in between so that you try and close the gap on this slide while it's quiet on their side. So it is kind of challenge and I will say that it's not for everyone to be honest." *"You're either motivated or not. I always say it's still the guys. I always use the boat philosophy that there's people in the boat. There's people in the front that driving hard to get the ball sailing because people in the middle that they're just doing what they need to do. And there's those at the back that are sinking the ship. So it depends in your state of mind and but I would say that."* *"And since we've been at home maybe once kind of disconnected unless you send a WhatsApp message."* *"There was always healthy competitions happening. People celebrated each other, pushed each other, motivated each other."* *recognition may be sharing playing virtual games just interacting with your colleagues in that way. Having Uber eats deliver chair and a meal together, sharing a coffee together virtually. But definitely it takes a lot more effort. You have to be deliberate when you in a virtual model,* *"But currently they are not being engaged at the bottom."* *"Manage the young people of today, they don't have barriers. They don't have restrictions. They believe that I can do whatever I want to because it's my right. Where the older folk like myself, we came out of where you were told one is one. But these people are different youngsters are completely different. And I mean we fighting with terms of the, you know, the generation gap because we have staff that's older and stuff that's younger. The older stuff. Will they really submissive?* *"Our turnover from a day staff perspective is not that high and I think it's because of the culture that we have. It's because of the engagement of ourselves between team leader and staff up, and I think the environment is of such a nature that people just want to be the people want to work."* *"OK, so I think about 30 or 40% or they might truly engaged. Or you know what I'm just doing. This is a tick box exercise for me, so I'm still I'm having regular conversations with those guys were just doing it for the sake of doing it. You know, trying to get their buy in? What more can I do for you to get you more on board?*

	Because even if I ask them to work so the guys don't want to.
Sub theme: Burnout	Supporting Quotes
Presence of Burnout	*"I think in a call center environment...Would not be as much burn out. As a call center agent, I come in at a certain time. This is what I do. Uh, they switch off so there's not necessarily that having to work or a sense of oh, I need to be finishing this late in the evening."* *"But in a normal call center, there's not supposed to be burnout, because with the call center you know you start from 8:00 until 5:00 and then you log out. But because of the type of business that we're in, which is an investment business and we need to make sure that all our transactions that we get that our financials are concluded same day. So it's like a different world."* *"100%. I feel like the teams feels the pressure the most, they feel that pressure on a daily basis or I'm not making my targets. I'm not making my ratings I need to put in more. When I'm telling them guys your leave's going a bit higher."* *"Yes because our code volumes are so high that we're not getting enough calls in the day we lose 60 or 50% of our call that come. You answer only 400 because you got calls. You'll see that there's a lot of complaints, a lot of escalations. So even though you only working your normal hours, if you're being shouted at for seven hours of the day."* *"Severe burnout. I'll see capacity constraints. Because in last year we had VSO's where most of the people left the business. Not having enough people with the skills to action certain processes. So capacity as being a bigger role in that because of the amount of people that left the business."* *"Yes."* *"Sure. At this moment in time, it's if you look just go into the (business unt) calls into statistics. We having continuous people on sick leave, family members at on sick leave."* *"How do I force a client to stop talking? It's 20 minutes already. They telling me the whole life story. I'm feeling tired. My manager tells me for the next two months nobody can get leave, but I needed one or two days. The management side here because he's manager told him so. I need to take that break and I'm tired. You know I'm sitting with the headset on my head not like a back office. Personnel can relax and whatever and put the hits it in whenever they feel like it. It's 8 hours a day on my head. It's pressing against my ear, it's pushing against the side of my head. The clients are shouting directly into my ear. It becomes*

	part of my soul. And you're being monitored on a daily basis. I mean, we've implemented where after every two minutes you have to go available and they kind of have to struggle to get through the call and update the information in order to take the next call. And there's no breather at 15 minutes, they get for their tea it is like I walk 5 minutes to where we need to fix the cup and come back another five minutes. And then I only have 5 minutes to drink my tea and then I'm back on the calls again lunch times as well. It's like when do I break? Yes, I mean we sitting with one or with people between 30 to 40 days annual leave on record. But I can't give them leave because we have a protocol or directive to say, you know, no people on leave at this moment in time." *"High, I would probably think a very high level of burnout, and then it could be particularly because of people not being able to manage themselves and actually just cut off from a work day perspective. With the guys on dialling so we can only work till about 7 at night because of the customer contact ability. You could have people being able to log off at 7 every night but then you also have those people who are maybe in an admin environment that never switches off. That just feels that you know what we can just go on and on and on."* *"But I've listened to the calls and the way they handled our clients. It's so amazing. I can hear that they not stressed out. I mean even my new people. They handle it so well.* *I don't think it's stressful. No one has ever said to me like I'm so stressed out. I can't do this the score it's and I mean I've got newbies now I've got like 8 new consultants and they say to me no it's easy and I'm like OK?"*
Mitigating Business Practices	*"So I think what we're currently doing now, we have recruited more people. We are also trying to change the single skill that we have in the business. We have a plan now to multi skill. So we're trying to share the load."* *"I mean at this moment in time, one of the things that people are asking here in the call centers at the moment when somebody leaves, nobody comes back in to replace that person."* *"So we are encouraging people to take breaks."* *"We constantly get communication regarding employee well-being."* *"If you feel that they're becoming a little bit more agitated, or even just go quiet in meetings, so you as a leader needs to be very involved and very alert to vet type of behaviors that are being displayed in your teams."*

Sub theme: OCB	Supporting Quotes
Importance of High Performance	*"Whatever experience you are leaving them worth has an impact on the brand."* *"More than likely if it's a negative experience, everybody will hear about it, and that will negatively impact the brand. So from a performance point of view, high performance linking to absolutely high customer interaction."* *"At certain times of the day we check in with the teams where you are, what is expected of you because at the end of the day we have a target that we obviously need to teach. So we also try to encourage people to give a little bit extra by putting little competitions in place."* *"In a call center environment it is difficult to delight the customer if you're kind of your colleagues in the processing area doesn't do their job."*
What does good look like	*"Must be fully productive. Quality, good quality and no complaints. Add great NPS. Those are the key metrics for the call center."* *"So if you say in an 8-hour day, it means I start at 8:00 and I I finish at 4:30 and I'm allowed the opportunity to meet my production targets to give valuable input in terms of a day in terms of learning. But we don't have that balance."*
Ways of Working	*"For the colleagues in terms of picking up a load, sharing information, assisting in upscaling them."* *"So the majority of the stuff right now from a mindset point of view, they are doing the bare minimum."* *"Someone saying, hey can you assist me in your quickly and you've got the undivided attention immediately, so I think on the technology basis when working from home, the ease that boundary which of fix the client experience of assisting them with first time resolution through in through compared to being at the office where you can immediately get someone's a team churn who can initially assist you. Which means you would be able to."* *"So from a performance point of view I am not expecting to see anything that sort of shoots the light out."*
Opportunity for OCB	*"Highly production driven environment. Very little appetite for deviation from process and for free thinking to be perfectly honest. They are highly risk averse area."* *"There's a standard. You need to greet and we need to introduce yourself. You need to validate and authenticate that you are speaking. Mostly you get to the query and this is how you close your call."* *"If there's a need where they need to go and offer exceptional service, by all means they need to do that, but they mustn't*

	promise what they cannot deliver. *“If you would like to stretch your productivity and performance outside of your limits, absolutely. There's room for that and you will be rated according to that in terms of encouraging or rewarding behavior. That said if it doesn't fit in the SOP, but it's still a good decision, please go ahead and make it, that one is not very well done. Then they say put it on an email for me, so it's not their decision, it's still mine. So that speaks to me about the level of confidence and trust.”* *“It's the standard operating procedure. This is what they should be sticking to, and I mean it's included of process product and you know the scrip. They all moments we're client will come in and throw a spanner in the works where you know I'm looking for advice. They cannot give advice, they can only state facts. So we stick to that. I mean, I, I don't get complaints where client will say you your agent advised me to take out the funeral policy because they see or have you know I've got 7 family members. It's generally they don't do that. They adhere to the script. If there is one or two incidents where they deviate from the school, they go off the path. We address it.”* *“There's a script they need to stick to it. If they deviate outside of it, whether good or bad. So there's there's limited freedom, unfortunately.* *“You could then take the initiative and say team leader I've reached my target for the day, but I'd like to train on an additional process and use that initiative and upskill yourself to do something over and above.”* *“We are not in touch with our customer. We don't have enough people to to to cater for all customers.”* *“Yeah, so we have the number one program that's the recognition program across the capability clusters. Obviously touches on the call centers. Prizes or programs that we run two semesters per year, and that is big prizes. They can win 80,000 per year. So we do know that there are some people that they continuously get recognized, but they necessarily don't win either because. e.g Resulted in time saving, reputation saving brand.”*

Inclusion

Uniqueness: The concept of uniqueness appears to be acknowledged; however the role requires creating a character acceptable to their client. The character's goal is to

display a persona of professionality and appeal to the client regardless of their unique identity. Furthermore, adopting a character persona mitigates offending the client and requires them to maintain and exhibit empathy and sympathy portrayed behaviours, regardless of their true feelings. When not actively on calls, evidence supports the acceptance of uniqueness in their teams, as heritage and diversity are celebrated, and the business acknowledges individual talent. It is essential to note that most of their role is dedicated to calls with the client. Therefore, the opportunity to express their individuality would be outweighed by the necessity to maintain their character identity.

Belonging: The concept of belonging did not elicit much feedback from the participants, potentially indicating a lack of understanding. However, participants spoke about the building of support structures to ensure employees feel they are valued. Managers acknowledge their active role required to provide said support and to engage with their staff to get to know them on both a professional and a personal level.

Inclusive Climate: Participants reported that creating a psychologically safe and trusting climate is conducive to creating an inclusive workplace. A culture of fairness and transparency was reported to be an enabler of an inclusive culture. Staff are encouraged to provide input when management is considering changes; however, certain processes, such as the job design in a hybrid context, are an example of process requirements that are closed for discussion. While participants acknowledge that the staff are encouraged to provide input, they also acknowledge the lack of this behavior in staff, which could be due to their mindset, capacity issues, or fear.

Inclusive HR Practices: Participants highlighted recruitment as a critical driver for promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Managers have acknowledged the value of having unique voices as a benefit to problem-solving. However, recruitment was the only means mentioned as they acknowledge the organisation needs improvement in this area to identify ways to promote diversity inclusion.

Inclusive Leadership: Participants identified the importance of leadership as a critical driver in creating and ensuring staff feel included, represented, and have a voice. To enable this, meetings are held, and staff are invited to listen and have their say. Known as Town Halls, executive leaders share important updates and trending issues. It is worth noting that these town halls are not accessible by many in the call center due to these meetings taking place in the middle of the workday and staff

being required for client engagement. Based on this, there can be a disconnect between the larger strategy from the Executive Leaders directly communicating with the staff. Leaders attempt to have their engagements with staff and to share the messages from the town halls. However, acknowledge the negative impact of the staff not having direct engagements and being able to share their concerns.

Engagement

Engagement levels: Participants reported mixed views on the expectations of staff engagement levels. However, the comments are slightly more indicative of an expected engaged workforce. Engagement is driven by ensuring the environment is a fun workplace, creating competition, and driving recognition initiatives. Low levels of engagement can be linked to the current economic climate, the role expectations in the call center, and, specifically, the role requirement of chasing targets, a key performance indicator closely monitored by management.

Enabling Engagement: Participants reported that creating a fun and competitive environment enables engagement in the call center and creates a culture of recognition. Appreciation of staff, and their value, was an important morale booster enabled in a public platform by executives in the Town Halls. Participants reflected on leaders' attempts to vary their approach to individuals based on their different personalities and expectations. They further elaborated on different requirements for demographic groups, such as what is valued by younger staff compared to older staff.

Burnout

Burnout levels: Most participants acknowledged the presence of burnout attributed to multiple reasons e.g. the role requirements and expectations, the capacity constraints, and skills shortages. Clients are reported as a key contributor to burnout, as staff have no control over client behaviours but are expected to act professionally to assist them, regardless of rude behaviours or excessive demands out of their control. The role itself was identified as stressful, ranging from the physical aspects of wearing the headset for 8 hours to the draining nature of being constantly available to clients with minimal breaks or control over when they can take a break should one be needed. Monitoring of staff was also indicated as a stressor. The presence of burnout is noticeable in the lack of leave being taken and the increase in sick cases. Contrary to expectations, a few participants commented that call center agents should not be experiencing burnout due to the strict working hours, as staff

are only required to work a typical 8-hour day. In addition, when managers listen to calls when auditing quality, call center agents appear to sound relaxed. It was acknowledged, however, that there could be a need for more feedback from staff indicating stress and/or burnout. Thus managers may need to be made aware of this problem.

Business Practices: Participants reported adequate capacity planning is being prioritized to ensure a full staff complement and a fair workload, which should act as a mitigator for burnout. Leaders prioritise wellness by monitoring staff health and driving a culture of well-being through HR Practices. Leaders are taking a more active role in recognizing burnout symptoms and encouraging staff to take breaks when necessary.

OCB

Ways of Working: Participants indicated that performance impacts the overall brand reputation. Performance is measured according to production, quality and positive Net Promoter Scores. The managers encourage OCB-type behaviours; however, they acknowledge the limitations within the role in their environments to allow for flexibility.

Managers do not expect OCB behaviours as they believe the staff currently do not have the correct mindset to execute behaviours over and above what is expected. There is a priority on call quantity rather than call quality due to the volume of calls received. The script mandates call quality to ensure a consistent level of service delivery. Without first-point resolution capabilities, there is a reliance on colleagues in the value chain to execute actions a CCA cannot, thus impacting the client's experience and their ability to assist the client fully.

Opportunity for OCB: The call center is highly production-driven, with the department having little appetite for the staff to engage in OCB-type behaviours. Some managers indicated there might be an opportunity for this behaviour; however, staff generally stick to the standard operating procedures to get through the number of calls required for their daily targets. Due to the lack of staff, and the volumes required, the opportunities to exhibit the “delight factor” are unlikely. A suggestion for extra-role behaviours was provided in terms of upskilling and assisting with multiple products from a quantity perspective, as opposed to extra-role behaviours to assist the customer from a quality perspective. The presence of fear, or lack of

psychological safety, has been indicated as a reason for staff being unwilling to go over and above expectations.