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Impact of LGBTQ+ Inclusive Policies on Organisational Performance and Employee Productivity in the Indian Corporate Sector

Dr. Shreya Panwar¹, Meeta Chaudhary²

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¹Associate Professor, Faculty of Management and Commerce, Swami Vivekanand Subharti University, Meerut, UP, India.

Email: geet.shreya10@gmail.com

²Research Scholar, Faculty of Management and Commerce, Swami Vivekanand Subharti University, Meerut, UP, India.

Email: meeta.chaudhary10@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of LGBTQIA+-inclusive policies and workplace climates on acceptability, employee wellbeing, and organisational-performance indicators in the Indian corporate sector. Using a mixed-methods convergent parallel design, the research combines qualitative in-depth interviews with 27 LGBTQIA+ employees and 13 HR/Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) managers with a quantitative survey of 384 employees, of whom 62 identified as LGBTQIA+ and 322 as non-LGBTQIA+, drawn from IT, banking, manufacturing, and service-sector firms. Thematic analysis of qualitative data reveals key experiences of “closeted existence and fear of disclosure,” “microaggression and everyday exclusion,” and “value of visible allies and supportive managers,” highlighting the gap between formal inclusion policies and lived reality. Quantitative analysis shows that higher perceived inclusion is positively associated with job satisfaction ($r = 0.48, p < 0.01$) and negatively associated with turnover intention ($r = -0.42, p < 0.01$), with a weaker but notable relationship to perceived productivity ($r = 0.31, p < 0.01$). Descriptive statistics indicate mean inclusion scores of approximately 3.21 ($SD = 0.78$), suggesting only moderate levels of perceived inclusion overall. The findings suggest that LGBTQIA+-inclusive workplaces are linked to better HR-related outcomes, which in turn can contribute to organisational performance in the Indian corporate context. For commerce-oriented stakeholders, the paper underscores that genuine inclusion—backed by implementation, training, and accountability—is a strategic priority, not merely a symbolic or social-justice issue.

1. INTRODUCTION

LGBTQIA+ individuals constitute a socially and economically significant group whose treatment in the workplace is increasingly viewed as a business and policy-relevant issue, especially in emerging economies like India (Government of India, 2024). Despite growing legal recognition of LGBTQIA+ rights, including the decriminalisation of same sex intimacy and the acknowledgement of transgender rights, deeply rooted social stigma continues to shape workplace experiences (Government of India, 2024), (Rajput, 2023). In the Indian corporate sector, many LGBTQIA+

employees remain closeted or semi closeted, fearing discrimination, harassment, or loss of opportunities, which can impair both psychological wellbeing and work performance (The George Institute for Global Health, 2023).

Existing research on diversity and inclusion in India highlights that while organisations publicly espouse gender and social equity commitments, practices toward LGBTQIA+ employees often lag behind formal pronouncements (Yadav & Singh, 2025) (Amancherla, Balasundaram, & Basavaraj, 2025). Several studies based on workplace climate surveys and interviews report that LGBTQIA+

employees frequently encounter microaggressions, exclusion, and absence of effective grievance mechanisms, even in large, reputed firms (Mingle, 2016) (The Qualitative Report, 2023). Such experiences not only harm individual wellbeing but may also affect organisational outcomes such as turnover intention, job satisfaction, and perceived productivity, which are of direct interest to commerce and trade researchers (Amancerla, Balasundaram, & Basavaraj, 2025) (Rajput, 2023). From a theoretical standpoint, inclusion of LGBTQIA+ employees can be understood through social identity and minority stress frameworks, which posit that stigmatisation and concealment of identity increase psychological strain and reduce engagement (The Qualitative Report, 2023). At the same time, organisational justice and resource based view perspectives suggest that inclusive workplaces act as sources of strategic advantage by attracting talent, reducing attrition, and enhancing innovation and firm performance (Amancerla, Balasundaram, & Basavaraj, 2025) (Rajput, 2023). However, in the Indian context, there remains a gap between these global theoretical expectations and empirical evidence directly linking LGBTQIA+ inclusion to organisational performance in Indian corporate settings (Yadav & Singh, 2025).

The present study therefore aims to examine how LGBTQIA+ inclusive policies and workplace climates translate into acceptability, employee productivity indicators, and perceived organisational performance within Indian corporate organisations (Amancerla, Balasundaram, & Basavaraj, 2025). It adopts a mixed methods design, combining qualitative in-depth interviews with LGBTQIA+ employees and HR/D&I managers and a quantitative survey of employees across selected sectors (Mingle, 2016) (The Qualitative Report, 2023). By doing so, the paper seeks to contribute both to the literature on diversity and inclusion in India and to the broader commerce-oriented discourse on how inclusive human resource practices influence organisational competitiveness and performance (Government of India, 2024) (Rajput, 2023).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Over the past two decades, scholarly work on LGBTQIA+ inclusion in the workplace has shifted from a purely social justice frame toward a “business case” perspective, in which diversity and inclusion are linked to organisational performance (Amancerla, Balasundaram, & Basavaraj, 2025) (Rajput, 2023). In global contexts, firms that adopt explicit LGBTQIA+ inclusive policies, such as non-discrimination clauses, partner benefit schemes, and employee resource groups, tend to report higher levels of innovation, employer branding and employee retention. These findings suggest that inclusion is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic variable affecting competitiveness resonating with the commerce-oriented focus of the present study (Amancerla, Balasundaram et.al., 2025).

In India, research on workplace diversity has increasingly incorporated LGBTQIA+ employees, though the evidence base remains relatively thin compared with global literature (Yadav & Singh, 2025). Several qualitative inquiries emphasise the lived experiences of discrimination, fear, and concealment among LGBTQIA+ workers, particularly in formal sector organisations (The Qualitative Report, 2023). These studies highlight microaggressions—such as exclusion from social groups, jokes about sexual orientation and subtle policing of gender expression—that undermine psychological safety and organisational commitment.

Large-scale workplace climate surveys in India further indicate that a significant proportion of LGBTQIA+ employees do not feel safe being open about their identities at work, even in firms that publicly support diversity initiatives (Yadav & Singh, 2025). In one national-level survey, many respondents reported that policies on paper were not consistently enforced, and that managers often lacked training on how to respond to harassment or discrimination concerning sexual orientation and gender identity (Mingle, 2016) (The George Institute for Global Health, 2023). Such gaps between policy and practice challenge the notion that symbolic inclusion is equivalent to genuine organisational change (Yadav & Singh, 2025) (Amancerla, Balasundaram, & Basavaraj,

2025).

Parallel research on social support and allyship in Indian workplaces shows that supportive colleagues and visible ally networks can mitigate some of the negative effects of stigma and discrimination (Amancerla, Balasundaram, & Basavaraj, 2025). Employees who perceive the presence of allies and access to informal support systems report higher job satisfaction and lower levels of stress, even when formal policies are weak (The Qualitative Report, 2023). These findings underscore the importance of interpersonal climates and managerial behaviour, not only formal HR documents, in shaping LGBTQIA+ acceptability (Amancerla, Balasundaram, & Basavaraj, 2025) (Yadav & Singh, 2025).

From a theoretical standpoint, minority stress and social identity theories help explain why stigmatisation and identity concealment reduce engagement and productivity among LGBTQIA+ employees (The Qualitative Report, 2023). When individuals feel compelled to hide aspects of their identity, they expend emotional energy on self-monitoring, which can drain attention and reduce work performance (Rajput, 2023). At the same time, organisational justice and resource-based view perspectives frame inclusive workplaces as environments where diversity becomes a strategic asset rather than a liability (Amancerla, Balasundaram, & Basavaraj, 2025). In this light, LGBTQIA+ inclusion can be seen as a dimension of human capital management that affects recruitment, retention, and overall firm performance (Rajput, 2023).

Despite these insights, relatively few studies in India directly connect LGBTQIA+ inclusion to quantifiable organisational performance indicators such as productivity, turnover intention, or perceived firm competitiveness (Yadav & Singh, 2025). Most work remains either qualitative, focusing on narratives and experiences, or descriptive, reporting climate survey results without robust association with performance metrics (The Qualitative Report, 2023) (Mingle, 2016). The present study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by integrating a qualitative understanding of lived experiences

with a quantitative assessment of how inclusion influences key HR related outcomes in the Indian corporate sector (Amancerla, Balasundaram, & Basavaraj, 2025).

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study is guided by a combination of social psychological and organisational theoretical perspectives that help explain how LGBTQIA+ inclusion affects workplace acceptability and organisational outcomes. Three core frameworks are employed: minority stress and social identity theory, organisational justice theory and the resource-based view of the firm (Amancerla, Balasundaram, & Basavaraj, 2025) (Rajput, 2023). Minority stress and social identity theory conceptualise LGBTQIA+ individuals as members of a stigmatised social group whose identities are often devalued in broader society and in many workplaces (The Qualitative Report, 2023). According to this perspective, experiences of discrimination, harassment, and identity concealment generate chronic stress that can impair mental health, reduce work engagement and lower productivity (Rajput, 2023). For LGBTQIA+ employees in India, where social stigma remains strong despite legal progress, these stressors are particularly salient and may shape how they experience acceptability and safety at work (Yadav & Singh, 2025).

Organisational justice theory extends this understanding by focusing on employees' perceptions of fairness in treatment, procedures and information transparency (Amancerla, Balasundaram, & Basavaraj, 2025). When LGBTQIA+ employees perceive that rules are applied consistently that grievance mechanisms are accessible and that management responds impartially to incidents of harassment, they are more likely to feel treated with dignity and respect (Mingle, 2016). In contrast, perceived unfairness or lack of support from leadership increases feelings of alienation and turnover intention, affecting HR related outcomes relevant to commerce and trade.

The resource-based view (RBV) of the firm provides a complementary, performance-

oriented lens, framing talented and diverse human resources as strategic assets that can yield competitive advantage when properly managed (Amancherla, Balasundaram, & Basavaraj, 2025). From this perspective, inclusive workplaces that effectively recruit, retain, and support LGBTQIA+ employees can enhance innovation, agility, and employer branding, all of which contribute to organisational performance (Rajput, 2023). In the Indian corporate sector, where talent competition is intense, this lens underscores why LGBTQIA+ inclusion should be treated not only as an ethical concern but also as a business strategy variable (Yadav & Singh, 2025).

Synthesising these frameworks, the study proposes a conceptual model in which LGBTQIA+ inclusive policies and supportive workplace climates reduce minority stress and enhance perceptions of organisational justice, leading to higher job satisfaction, reduced turnover intention, and improved perceived productivity, which in turn contribute to organisational performance (Amancherla, Balasundaram, & Basavaraj, 2025). This model allows the mixed methods design to connect qualitative narratives of lived experience with quantitative patterns in HR related outcomes (The Qualitative Report, 2023) (Mingle, 2016).

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a mixed methods, convergent parallel design to examine how LGBTQIA+ inclusive policies and workplace climates influence acceptability, employee productivity indicators, and perceived organisational performance in the Indian corporate sector. The design integrated qualitative in depth interviews with LGBTQIA+ employees and HR/Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) managers with a quantitative survey of employees across selected firms. This approach enabled the study to capture rich lived experiences while also generating generalisable patterns regarding inclusion and performance related outcomes.

4.1 Research Design and Rationale

The convergent parallel design allowed

qualitative and quantitative components to be conducted concurrently and analysed separately, with findings integrated during the discussion. The rationale for this mixed methods approach was twofold: first, qualitative data revealed the meanings, emotions, and contextual nuances associated with LGBTQIA+ inclusion that could not be fully captured by numerical scales alone; second, quantitative data provided a broader picture of how inclusion related perceptions correlated with job satisfaction, productivity, and turnover intention across a larger sample.

This design was consistent with ethical practice guidelines for social research in India, which emphasise minimising harm, protecting vulnerable groups, and using methods appropriate to the research question (Srivastava, 2020). Given the sensitivity of LGBTQIA+ topics in the Indian context, the mixed methods approach also allowed the researcher to cross check interpretations: qualitative narratives helped explain why certain quantitative patterns emerged, and the survey data indicated the extent and distribution of these patterns across the sample (Mingle, 2016).

4.2 Qualitative Component

The qualitative component comprised semi structured, in depth interviews with 27 LGBTQIA+ employees and 13 HR/Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) managers or senior leaders in selected Indian corporate organisations. The sample was purposively drawn from sectors such as information technology, banking/financial services, manufacturing, and education to ensure representation across gender identities (cis and trans), sexual orientations, and organisational levels. Interviews were conducted in a private, secure setting (face to face or virtual), with prior written or electronic informed consent obtained. An interview guide included open ended questions on:

- How accepted the participant felt at work,
- Experiences of discrimination, microaggression, or support,
- Awareness and implementation of LGBTQIA+ inclusive policies, and
- Perceived impact of inclusion on personal well

being and work performance.

All data were recorded (with consent), transcribed verbatim, and subjected to thematic analysis using an inductive coding approach. The coding process produced a set of core themes such as “policy on paper versus lived practice,” “microaggression and concealment,” “value of allies,” and “managerial support,” which were later linked back to the theoretical framework.

4.3 Quantitative Component

The quantitative component involved a structured questionnaire administered to 384 employees across selected Indian corporates (of whom 62 identified as LGBTQIA+ and 322 as non LGBTQIA+). The target population comprised employees working in organisations that either had formal LGBTQIA+ inclusive policies (e.g., non discrimination statements, partner benefit schemes, or diversity and inclusion initiatives) or were considering them. A sample size of 384 employees was achieved through stratified and convenience sampling across firms and sectors, closely aligning with the initial design range of 300–500 respondents.

The questionnaire included Likert scale items measuring:

- Perceived LGBTQIA+ inclusive policies (e.g., clarity, implementation, and consistency),
- Workplace climate indicators such as acceptability, safety, and allyship,
- Job satisfaction, perceived productivity, and turnover intention.

Internal reliability of the scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and the data were analysed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations), Pearson correlation analysis, and hierarchical multiple regression models to examine the relationships between inclusion related variables and HR related outcomes.

4.4 Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Findings

Following the convergent parallel design, findings from both components were integrated through side by side comparison and joint displays. Common qualitative themes (e.g., “fear of being outed” or “value of visible allies”) were

juxtaposed with corresponding survey patterns (e.g., low mean inclusion scores in certain sectors or roles). A small table was included in the results section listing qualitative themes alongside matching quantitative patterns and merged interpretations, thereby strengthening the argument that LGBTQIA+ inclusion is linked to HR and performance related outcomes.

4.5 Ethical Considerations in Data Collection

The study adhered to ethical research guidelines for vulnerable populations, including protections for confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent. Participants' identities were anonymised using codes, and no personally identifying information (such as full names, exact workplace names, or family details) was reported. Interviewers were trained in LGBTQIA+ sensitivity and were instructed to avoid pathologising or stigmatising language, in line with Indian judicial and professional guidance.

Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. Where emotional distress was observed during interviews, researchers offered breaks, changed the topic, or provided information about support services or counselling options. Data were stored on password protected devices, and identifying records (if any) were stored separately from qualitative and quantitative datasets, in accordance with Indian ethical research norms.

5. DATA COLLECTION AND ITS INTERPRETATION

Data were collected using a mixed methods, convergent parallel design combining qualitative in depth interviews and a quantitative survey in Indian corporate organisations. The qualitative component involved semi structured interviews with 27 LGBTQIA+ employees and 13 HR/Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) managers or senior leaders, focusing on experiences of acceptability, discrimination, support, and the implementation of LGBTQIA+ inclusive policies. Interviews were audio recorded (with consent), transcribed verbatim, and analysed thematically using an inductive coding approach conducted in two

cycles: open coding and axial coding. This process yielded 17 core codes, later grouped into four higher order themes: “closeted existence and fear of disclosure”, “microaggression and everyday exclusion”, “value of visible allies and supportive managers”, and “policy on paper versus lived practice”.

The quantitative component consisted of a structured Likert scaled questionnaire administered to 384 employees across IT, banking/financial services, manufacturing, and education related service firms, of whom 62 identified as LGBTQIA+ and 322 as non LGBTQIA+. The instrument included 18 items on perceived LGBTQIA+ inclusive policies, 12 items on workplace climate (acceptability, safety, and allyship), and 10 items on job satisfaction, perceived productivity, and turnover intention, all measured on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Internal reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha: inclusivity scales attained $\alpha = 0.87$, workplace climate scales $\alpha = 0.82$, and job satisfaction scales $\alpha = 0.84$, indicating good reliability.

Descriptive statistics revealed that the mean score on perceived LGBTQIA+ inclusion scales was 3.21 (SD = 0.78), and the corresponding mean for workplace climate scales was 3.04 (SD = 0.81), suggesting only moderate levels of perceived inclusion overall. Bivariate Pearson correlation analysis showed that perceived inclusion significantly correlated with job satisfaction ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$) and negatively with turnover intention ($r = -0.42$, $p < 0.01$). Hierarchical multiple regression models further indicated that inclusion policy and climate scores remained significant predictors of job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$) and turnover intention ($\beta = -0.33$, $p < 0.01$) even after controlling for tenure, sector, and organisational level. These quantitative patterns were then interpreted in the light of the qualitative themes, with interview narratives helping to contextualise why certain scores and correlations emerged, while the survey data provided a broader, generalisable view of how inclusion relates to HR related outcomes in the Indian corporate sector.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The mixed methods findings show that many LGBTQIA+ employees in Indian corporate organisations report moderate to low levels of felt acceptability, despite the presence of formal inclusion oriented policies in some firms. In the qualitative interviews, participants frequently described a gap between “policy on paper” and everyday workplace practices, noting that non discrimination statements and diversity slogans rarely translated into visible support or consistent enforcement of rights. This disjuncture suggests that organisational rhetoric about inclusion often outpaces genuine cultural change in the Indian corporate context.

6.1 Qualitative findings: lived experiences of inclusion and exclusion

Thematic analysis of the interviews revealed several recurring themes related to acceptability and inclusion. One dominant theme was “closeted existence and fear of disclosure”, in which LGBTQIA+ employees described deliberate concealment of identity to avoid gossip, jokes, or adverse career consequences. Nearly two thirds of interviewed LGBTQIA+ employees (approximately 18 out of 27) reported that they had not disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity to their immediate manager, and most described “coming out” at work as a high risk decision, especially in conservative departments or smaller offices. Social support, when present, was often confined to a small circle of trusted colleagues, reinforcing the emotional burden of stigma and identity management among LGBTQIA+ workers.

Another key theme was “microaggression and everyday exclusion”, where respondents recounted subtle forms of hostility such as teasing about gender nonconforming behaviour, exclusion from informal social groups, or intrusive questions about personal life. Over half of the LGBTQIA+ participants (around 15 out of 27) reported experiencing at least one form of microaggression in the past 12 months, and several described how management often dismissed such incidents as “casual banter,” which normalised discriminatory behaviour and

weakened the perceived effectiveness of formal policies. These accounts mirror earlier climate survey findings in India, which show that many employees perceive organisational responses to harassment as weak or inconsistent, despite the presence of written guidelines.

In contrast, several participants highlighted the importance of “visible allies and supportive managers”, which emerged as a third major theme. About a third of LGBTQIA+ employees (roughly 9 out of 27) reported having at least one openly supportive supervisor or colleague, and these individuals consistently described feeling safer, more engaged, and more willing to contribute to team tasks. Such narratives align with literature on allyship and social support, which suggests that interpersonal support buffers some of the negative effects of stigma and discrimination. However, these positive experiences were described as relatively rare and highly dependent on individual leadership style rather than systematic organisational practice, underscoring the uneven implementation of inclusive norms.

6.2 Quantitative findings: inclusion, satisfaction, and performance indicators

The quantitative survey data largely corroborated the qualitative patterns. Descriptive statistics indicated that the mean score on perceived LGBTQIA+ inclusion scales was 3.21 (SD = 0.78) and the mean for workplace climate scales was 3.04 (SD = 0.81), with notable variation across sectors and organisational levels. Employees in smaller firms or traditional sectors such as manufacturing and certain government linked organisations reported lower inclusion scores (approximately 2.68–2.89, depending on sector) compared with those in large IT or multinational firms (around 3.52–3.68).

Bivariate Pearson correlation analysis showed that perceived inclusion was positively associated with job satisfaction ($r = 0.48, p < 0.01$) and negatively associated with turnover intention ($r = -0.42, p < 0.01$). The correlation between perceived inclusion and perceived productivity was moderate and positive ($r = 0.31, p < 0.01$), suggesting that employees who felt more

included also tended to rate their productivity more favourably, although the association was weaker than for satisfaction and turnover. In hierarchical multiple regression models, inclusion policy and climate scores remained significant predictors of job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.39, p < 0.001$) and turnover intention ($\beta = -0.33, p < 0.01$) even after controlling for tenure, sector, and organisational level, indicating that inclusion has an independent effect on HR related outcomes beyond demographic and structural factors.

These quantitative patterns support the idea that LGBTQIA+ inclusion is linked to better HR outcomes, which in turn can contribute to organisational performance in the Indian corporate sector. The mixed methods synthesis therefore shows that the qualitative experience of fear, microaggression, and limited support is mirrored in quantitative data on moderate inclusion scores (around 3.2 on a 5 point scale), higher turnover intention among those with low inclusion, and only moderate productivity perceptions. This convergence of evidence underscores that inclusion is not merely a symbolic gesture but a variable that shapes key HR related indicators in the workplace.

6.3 Discussion: connecting experiences to organisational performance

The combined findings indicate that while many Indian corporates have adopted symbolic diversity and inclusion commitments, LGBTQIA+ employees still experience significant gaps between policy and practice. From a minority stress and social identity standpoint, this gap increases psychological strain and reduces work engagement, as employees expend emotional energy on concealment and vigilance. The resource based view perspective, in turn, frames these losses of engagement and increased turnover as missed opportunities for leveraging diversity as a strategic asset. In other words, inclusion gaps identified in both interview narratives and survey scores correspond to measurable HR related detriments that can affect organisational performance indirectly.

Moreover, when LGBTQIA+ employees perceive rules and grievance mechanisms as fair

and impartial, they report higher satisfaction and lower turnover intention, even if overall inclusion scores are only moderate. This suggests that procedural fairness and managerial responsiveness may be as important as formal non discrimination policies in shaping outcomes. The qualitative emphasis on “visible allies and supportive managers” and the quantitative findings of strong correlations with satisfaction and turnover further reinforce literature on allyship as a practical lever for improving workplace climates. For Indian corporates, it implies that investing in visible allyship training, consistent enforcement of policies, and transparent grievance mechanisms can yield tangible benefits in retention and engagement, which are relevant to both organisational performance and commerce oriented indicators.

7. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study carry several implications for corporate level practice as well as broader policy and trade related discourse in India. First, organisations must move beyond symbolic diversity statements and actively translate LGBTQIA+ inclusive policies into concrete, everyday practices that are reflected in both qualitative narratives and quantitative

scores. The study's mixed methods evidence shows that perceived inclusion averages only around 3.2 out of 5 and that higher inclusion scores are significantly associated with higher job satisfaction ($r = 0.48$) and lower turnover intention ($r = -0.42$), even after controlling for tenure and sector. This suggests that genuine inclusion is not only a social justice imperative but also a strategic factor affecting HR related outcomes.

Second, the qualitative narratives of “closeted existence,” “microaggression,” and “value of visible allies” highlight the need for HR departments to invest in training, clear non discrimination guidelines, and visible allyship programs, as these are directly linked to better employee experience and HR related indicators. Third, policymakers and industry associations can use these findings to promote inclusive labour practice standards and voluntary inclusion certification frameworks that recognise firms going beyond tokenistic diversity. In sum, the study demonstrates that LGBTQIA+ inclusion in the Indian corporate sector is associated with measurably better HR outcomes, and that integrating qualitative and quantitative evidence strengthens the business case argument for sustained investment in inclusive workplaces. ■

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