

# IMPACT OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS ON EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION: THE MODERATING ROLE OF WORKPLACE INCLUSION

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**Abstract: Purpose:** This research is aimed at exploring how career development programs affect the job satisfaction of employees in the information technology (IT) sector. It also focuses on training, performance appraisal, compensation and succession planning, and analyses the mediating importance of workplace inclusion in improving the linkage between the practices and job satisfaction.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The study is grounded in a quantitative methodology and will use primary data, which will consist of 400 IT professionals working in India. The structured google questionnaire was prepared to measure the variables of the career development programs, workplace inclusion and job satisfaction. The data was compared with the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and examined direct effects of career development practices on job satisfaction, and the moderating effect of workplace inclusion.

**Findings:** As per the findings, the career development programs contribute greatly to influencing job satisfaction of employees. The most powerful aspect was compensation, then training, performance appraisal and succession planning. As further disclosed in this paper, workplace inclusion has also emerged as a significant improver of career development practices and job satisfaction since it provides an inclusive and fair workplace within the organization.

**Practical Implications:** The study suggests that aligning career development programs with inclusive practices enhances job satisfaction. Fair opportunities, transparency, and equitable compensation build trust and belonging, improving engagement and retention. It also highlights the need for structured evaluation methods to assess and strengthen the effectiveness of career development initiatives.

**Originality:** The study is valuable to the literature because it incorporates career development programs and inclusion at the workplace to determine job satisfaction among Indian IT professionals. It confirms the significance of such an inclusive HR activity to increase the level of employee satisfaction and sustainable management of workforce.

**Keywords:** Career development programs, Job satisfaction, Workplace Inclusion, Training, Compensation, Employee Engagement, Human Resource Development, Succession Planning.

## 1. Introduction

Job satisfaction is the key to company success in the knowledge-based IT world. Job satisfaction is a determinant of market success because it affects staff retention, involvement and performance. In the meantime, in the contemporary business world of intense competition, companies are applying career development as a powerful employee motivational tool. They involve scheduled performance reviews, in-service training, workshops on skills upgrading and mentoring programs, which help one to synchronize his or her ideals with company objectives. As soon as the workers have a definite path up to professional development the motivation, the level of their loyalty, and

commitment are significantly increased. To know whether they are effective or not, we need to look at the context within an organization where such interventions occur. One aspect that tends to be ignored is workplace inclusion. Workplace inclusion should be fostered in every environment, ensuring every employee an equal chance to climb the career ladder, regardless of their background or identity. As employees can see a way ahead, their loyalty and enthusiasm grow. However, when we desire to know why they work and how them, we must also put into consideration the organisational context within which such interventions are practised. During work, one of the spheres that are easier to forget is workplace. The business in question might offer every employee an opportunity to be as far as he wishes regardless of his origin or who he is.

Nonetheless, the study also has certain shortcomings; it continues to have a significant gap in research particularly in the period between 2020 and 2025 and more thorough research connecting career development programs and employee satisfaction is required. First, most of the past research has employed quantitative approaches and examined the actual relationships, such as performance or turnover rates. (Smith and Jones, 2021). This focus has caused the research on human agency, the subjective, qualitative part of such programs to be overlooked, which is an important basis for examining the countless effects such development endeavours have. Second, the impact of inclusion in the workplace on the effectiveness of the career development programs has not received enough attention (Lee and Kim, 2022). Few studies consider inclusive practices as part of career development initiatives as integral to career development initiatives and their implications for employee satisfaction, although some studies refer to diversity initiatives. Furthermore, there are few longitudinal studies that track the programs' long-term effects, especially in the rapid-paced IT sector (Brown et al., 2023); because the industry is changing so quickly, it is crucial to comprehend long-term trends to create programs that remain effective despite organizational and technological changes occur. Finally, the findings from a large portion of current research have been restricted to national or cultural contexts, making them less broadly applicable (Garcia and Patel, 2024). To create more broadly applicable strategies, research that considers various organizational contexts is desperately needed.

This paper will bridge these significant gaps by examining the impacts of various career development interventions on employee satisfaction, considering the moderating role of inclusion in the workplace within the context of the IT industry. This study is rather comprehensive as it acknowledges inclusion as a main variable influencing outcomes and examines career progression both qualitatively and quantitatively. Hopefully, with such a method of incorporating inclusion into the study of the career development practices, it can be discovered how organizations can enhance equitable growth opportunities to all employees that, in turn, can smooth out employee satisfaction and assist in the creation of a diverse future-oriented employee base.

Some of the questions of the proposed research include: (1) do various types of career development programs influence job satisfaction from the perspective of the IT sector? (2) How do employees perceive their career development programs in the IT industry? (3) What is the moderating effect of workplace inclusion on the relationship between career development effort and employee satisfaction? (4) How do employees perceive career development opportunities regarding inclusiveness, and what is the correlation between the perception and employee engagement and career advancement? (5) How do inclusive career development programs affect the performance of the organization, employee retention, and innovation?

Lastly, this research is not limited to the IT sector; its implications can be applied across different industries by providing a broader approach to inclusive talent development. By addressing existing gaps, exploring how inclusion influences outcomes, and using a longitudinal mixed-methods approach, the study aims to contribute meaningfully to both HRD theory and practical application.

However, the true importance of workplace inclusion—ensuring equal opportunities for all, regardless of background—is still not fully understood. This leads to an important question: What steps can career development programs take to enhance employee satisfaction?

## **2. Theoretical background**

This study draws upon Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) as its underlying framework. The theory explains how individuals' career-related decisions are shaped by factors such as self-efficacy, personal goals, and expected outcomes (Lent et al., 1994), and is rooted in the broader principles of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986). A key strength of SCCT lies in its focus on the dynamic interplay between individual beliefs and contextual influences, including organizational support and perceived barriers. This perspective makes it particularly useful for examining how career development programs function within workplace environments, and how elements like inclusion can shape employee job satisfaction.

Over time, SCCT has been widely used in both career and organizational research. For example, (Ali et al., 2020) explored how educational interventions shape career choices, while (Byars et al., 2019) examined the role of workplace inclusion in building career self-efficacy among minority STEM professionals. Similarly, (Lent and Brown, 2006) extended SCCT to explain persistence across different cultures, and earlier work (Lent and Brown, 1994) highlighted how inclusive environments influence career pathways. More recent studies have also adapted SCCT to guide career development in modern contexts (Wang et al., 2022).

Building on this foundation, the present study extends SCCT in three meaningful ways. First, it looks at career development programs through structured learning activities. Second, it considers workplace inclusion as an important factor that can influence how these programs affect employee satisfaction. Third, it introduces a moderated mediation approach, where inclusion shapes the relationship while SCCT variables explain the underlying process. This approach offers a clearer and more practical understanding of employee outcomes in inclusive workplaces. Supporting this, the CBT perspective also highlights how career interests are shaped by cognitive factors like self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Damodar et al., 2024), and SCCT continues to guide the design and evaluation of career development initiatives (Brown et al., 2023).

### **3. Literature Review**

Research in HRM and organizational behaviour shows a strong link between key HR practices—training, development, succession planning, and fair compensation—and employee job satisfaction. Training builds skills and confidence, increasing engagement; succession planning supports career growth and retention; and fair compensation enhances motivation and perceived value. In today's dynamic business environment, employee satisfaction directly affects performance, retention, and engagement (Alzyoud and Bani Melhem, 2022). Organizations therefore emphasize practices such as training, performance reviews, succession planning, and equitable compensation. This study is based on SCCT, which explains the link between personal beliefs, contextual factors, and career outcomes (Lent and Brown, 2023; Ahmed and Rehman, 2023), and examines how HR practices influence satisfaction, with workplace inclusion acting as a key factor that can strengthen or weaken these effects.

However, the role of workplace inclusion remains underexplored. While often discussed, few studies assess how inclusive environments affect the success of career development programs in improving satisfaction. Inclusion refers to a workplace that ensures equal opportunities, values diversity, and fosters a sense of belonging. In inclusive settings, employees feel valued, strengthening the impact of HR practices on satisfaction, whereas in less inclusive environments, these effects may weaken due to feelings of exclusion. This highlights that HR practices alone are insufficient without a supportive culture and underscores the need for further research, encouraging organizations to integrate inclusive practices into talent management for better employee outcomes.

#### *Training and Development*

They are not only two official organizational initiatives, but these are the things that make the lives of the employees happier and contribute to their progress. When properly executed, such programs foster in employees the abilities and certainty that they can act when something in an occupational setting varies and not merely changes like in a reorganization but evolves with the corporate culture compared to what they were taught in orientation. According to SCCT, interventions that strengthen self-efficacy and provide a supportive career environment help individuals feel more confident in managing their career paths (Lent et al., 1994). In the IT world, it is, and it is indeed crucial to continually acquire new knowledge or skills. Continuous training to other coworkers as well makes them feel more trusted and committed since they would be perceived to be trusted by their company in the future (Alzyoud and Bani Melhem, 2022).

This model is distinctive in linking technological development and mental health; the latter through training as a structural and emotional base for job satisfaction (K and Chatterjee, 2025). Particularly in the new post-pandemic era of virtual work, it is important to evaluate the extent to which satisfaction with training format varies by mode of delivery (Gopal et al., 2021).

H1: Training and development positively influence employee job satisfaction.

#### *Job Performance*

Job performance is not only rewarded with recognition or rewards, but it also shapes how employees see themselves and position themselves within the organization. By and large, the high performers feel more competent and valuable, while deriving greater satisfaction from their performance. According to SCCT, successful performance

accomplishment may enhance an individual's self-efficacy in which one believes that one is able to achieve effective outcomes and could lead to motivational outcomes (Lent and Brown, 2006). In IT and other achievement and delivery-oriented environments, an approach to performance management that identifies and establishes baselines links personal success to company recognition. Moreover, high performers tend to have more autonomy, decision-making latitude and leadership opportunities, which further reinforce their job satisfaction (Rana et al., 2023). This hypothesis is so important because it is a complete shift in focus—not performance causes satisfaction, but satisfaction is the effect. This study offers value to motivation literature by positioning performance as a precursor to satisfaction. It further mirrors growing calls for more psychologically oriented performance models in technology-oriented workplace settings (Kundu and Gahlawat, 2020).

H2: Job performance positively influences employee satisfaction

### *Succession Planning*

Succession planning does not simply involve preparing leaders to work in the future; it gives all workers an indication that they are valuable to their development (Urme, 2023). In workforces, the feeling of inclusiveness and progress is created when succession plans are open, transparent, and widely communicated (Bano et al., 2022). SCCT assumes that increased self-efficacy and motivation are caused by a sense of future possibility and a visible support system (Lent et al., 1994). In a field such as IT that has been facing issues with maintaining its talent consistently, strategic planning will provide a sense of stability to employees and provide them with a vision of their future within the organization (Tiwari and Shrivastava, 2023). This theory is important as it considers succession as a developmental platform—not a leadership pipeline (Griffith et al., 2018). Even junior and mid-level employees gain a substantial psychological advantage from observing the progression of a career map (Ahsan, 2018). The research effectively demonstrates the ramifications of succession planning on the satisfaction of organizational hierarchy levels beyond top management, while also addressing a literature gap regarding perceptions of upward mobility and satisfaction (Rahim and Ahmed, 2021).

H3: Succession planning positively influences employee satisfaction.

### *Compensation*

Fair compensation, meaning employees are well remunerated, not simply to pay the bills but also worth its cost to an employee. SCCT suggests that rewards that are contingent on effort, reinforce self-efficacy as well as positive result beliefs (Lent et al., 1994). The perceived fairness (competitiveness) of pay may highly influence the degree of satisfaction in the highly competitive IT industry, where there are numerous job opportunities and constant wage comparisons (Sharma and Gupta, 2022). This speculation is vital, considering that satisfaction may be influenced primarily by financial factors rather than other aspects. This model of rewards and punishments appears inadequate, as cash seems to serve as a proxy for emotional and professional respect. This is particularly relevant to current remote work pay equity debates, as the outdated norms of salary comparison and equilibrium are being challenged. Within the scope of this view, it becomes easy to see the duality of compensation as inclusive and fair, but satisfying needs (Banerjee and Saini, 2024).

H4: Compensation positively influences employee satisfaction.

### *The Moderating Role of Workplace Inclusion in Key HR Functions*

Furthermore, in the workplace of the present day that is also more diverse and changing faster than ever before, inclusion can no longer be regarded as an add-on, but rather as an integral part of virtually everything - including how we mobilize and develop people and how we make them satisfied with their jobs. This paper aims to present an integrative framework by amalgamating four essential HR concepts—training and development, job performance, compensation and succession planning—into a singular superstructure model, with workplace inclusion serving as a moderating factor. The core assumption of this concept, derived from SCCT (Lent et al., 1994), is that workers receive specifically formulated programmatic incentives for their work performance and process and/or internalize experiences under those conditions.

Consider development and training, for example. Training programs must be suitable, encouraging, and culturally competent to be truly successful in a diverse workforce. Having them available is insufficient. Benefits that encourage greater employee engagement in development activities include increased self-assurance, psychological safety, and a sense of belonging (Narayanan and Menon, 2022; Ahmed and Rehman, 2023). Similar to work performance, the degree to which fairness and justice are fostered at work determines how emotionally meaningful

and motivating the incentives and accolades are (Rodríguez-Morales, 2013; Jo and Shin, 2025). Even those who contribute less visibly who feel disregarded during the acknowledgment process may become disinterested despite their contributions (Lent and Brown, 2006; Joshi et al., 2021; Kamble and Singh, 2023).

Succession can be confining if it is not accessible to everyone, even if it is frequently viewed as necessary. The augmentation movement (Caines Trade, 2026) Diverse leadership pools Reasonable expectations that can be quite clear (Srivastava and Dubey, 2023; Gupta and Jaiswal, 2024)

Transformation | A Management Journal Anticipated Volume Vol. In other words, without it, succession planning may begin to feel somewhat restricted or binary, which is detrimental if one aims to retain employees and their abilities for years to come. Fairness is just as important as money in the recruiting process, as it is in many other areas. Comprehensive and open pay plans that include independent third-party audits for pay fairness, openness, and equitable evaluation procedures show workers that the company values them more than just their salary (Vikasitha and Bhat, 2024).

There is a common thread that unites all these fields: inclusion lies at a very basic level, as people "make of"—give social meaning to—what an organization does. According to this study, "having policies is never enough" and HRM practices are not merely "treated in isolation, but rather superimposed on the ways that people live their lives." The effectiveness of such procedures is determined by how inclusive, equitable, and psychologically secure they feel. This is pertinent knowledge since, like in other fields, rapid growth and meritocracy can also be used to subtly maintain exclusion. On a broader scale, this endeavour seeks to transform the state of inclusion from something that is merely a checklist item to something that motivates businesses to grant people even greater personal autonomy.

H5a: Workplace inclusion positively moderates the relationship between training and development and employee satisfaction.

H5b: Workplace inclusion positively moderates the relationship between job performance and employee satisfaction.

H5c: Workplace inclusion positively moderates the relationship between succession planning and employee satisfaction

H5d: Workplace inclusion positively moderates the relationship between compensation and employee satisfaction

## **4. Research Methodology**

### *4.1 Rationale of the study and Research Design*

We employed a quantitative study design to evaluate hypotheses using survey data collected from 400 Indian IT professionals. We employed non-probability snowball sampling to find volunteers. We utilized validated Likert-scale tools for career growth, inclusiveness, and job satisfaction. A quantitative methodology is considered appropriate for this study, as it allows for the structured analysis of relationships and patterns among variables based on data obtained from a large sample. Further, it is consistent with the theoretical perspective of SCCT in which the interplay of individual, environmental and behavioural factors is emphasized (Lent et al., 1994; Wang et al., 2022). The objective approach also encourages replicability and generalizability necessary for studying HR practices in a dynamically driven sector such as IT.

### *4.2 Population and Sampling Method*

The target population consists of Indian IT professionals working in India-based Information Technology (IT) firms that are high on attrition and skills-based competition and rely heavily upon TDPs. Given the heterogeneity of organizational practices in the sector, we employed non-probability snowball sampling. This path allows people below c-level at a variety of IT companies to be reached through professional networks, with more focus on LinkedIn and employee referral. Nevertheless, purposive sampling is considered as applicable for studies where potential subjects possess a specialised knowledge or experience (Tiwari & Shrivastava, 2023). A size of the sample is considered with which statistical techniques like Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) (Hair et al., 2021)

### *4.3 Data Collection Process*

Data were gathered in four months through self-administered online questionnaire. Google Forms were distributed via personal email addresses and professional networking sites in order to gather data from respondents.

Before asking subjects for their agreement, a brief explanation of the study's objectives was given. Participants must have worked for their present employer for at least six months for the inputs to be validated. This is to ensure that the responders have been exposed to the working circumstances and career development policies of their organization. This was done to make sure that the respondents have been exposed to their company's career development.

#### *4.4 Measurement Instruments*

The questionnaire is valid and reliable because, as it has standardized scales, each of which has undergone validation and reliability testing in past research. Data will be collected using a 7-point Likert-type scale, with response options ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

The constructs and their origins are the following:

- a. Training and Development: Stolen by (Singh and Sharma, 2021); adjusted (Rana et al., 2023) giving the opportunities of learning, their relevance, and the development of skills.
- b. Job Performance: Indicators of job performance, which are self-reported and adjusted to (Kundu and Gahlawat, 2020) and include the perceptions of contribution and task performance.
- c. Succession Planning: Evaluated in three domains of transparency, inclusiveness and professional development (Tiwari and Shrivastava, 2023).
- d. Remuneration: It is an item on fair pay and fair pay satisfaction measured by (Sharma and Gupta, 2022) and (Banerjee and Saini, 2024).
- e. Employee Well-being: According to (Alzyoud and Bani Melhem, 2022) and concentrating on Emotional well-being, Recognition and Career Fit.
- f. Workplace Inclusion: This is measured based on a modified (Ahmed and Rehman, 2023) scale, which includes psychological safety, equity, and diversity practices.

To check whether the items are relevant, clear, and contextually aligned, a pilot test with 30 respondents was carried out.

#### *4.5 Data Analysis Strategy*

The present study performed descriptive analyses, reliability, and SEM analyses to explore the relationships between variables, and model fit indices were also reported.

Common method bias was controlled with the help of Cronbach's alpha, AVE and Harman's test for validity and reliability. There are several steps in the process of data analysis:

Participant characteristics and basic behaviour profiles are summarized using descriptive statistics.

EFA (Exploratory Factor Analysis): to ascertain the structure underlying the constructs.

Validity and reliability [composite reliability (CR) and AVE] are tested by means of CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis).

Moderation effect of workplace inclusiveness the moderating effect of workplace inclusiveness and the relationship between career development programs and job satisfaction was examined by means of structural equation modelling (SEM) through AMOS 22.

The model will test for fit using standard indices, including RMSEA (0.90), GFI (>0.90),  $\chi^2/df$  (<3) (Hair et al., 2021)

##### *Validity, Reliability, and Reducing Bias*

Cronbach's alpha and Composite dependability (CR) will be assessed to measure reliability, such that they all surpass the threshold value of 0.70 as a proposed cutoff point. Construct validity will be evaluated using AVE and discriminant validity between constructs. The use of procedural designs, such as item randomization, reverse coding and anonymity -of-response will help control for common method bias. Furthermore, the Harman's Single-Factor Test will be used to verify that no single factor explains much of the variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003) The study used linear regression to calculate the variance inflation factor (VIF) to assess multicollinearity among predictor variables [Table I]. There is no multicollinearity problem as the VIF values of the 15 independent variables range between 1.2335 and

4.5317 which implies being within the acceptable limit of (1 -5) (Assaf et al., 2019). Additionally, all items have demonstrated adequate reliability ( $\alpha > .70$ ), as required by (Hair et al., 2013). Discriminant and convergent validity of latent constructs was tested through AMOS 22 with the CFA.

Table I: Multicollinearity among Independent Variables

| Predictor Items | VIF    | Predictor Items | VIF    |
|-----------------|--------|-----------------|--------|
| V1              | 1.5254 | V11             | 2.2327 |
| V2              | 1.3621 | V12             | 3.7513 |
| V3              | 2.2564 | V13             | 4.5317 |
| V4              | 3.1197 | V14             | 2.1481 |
|                 |        | V15             | 3.7132 |
| V5              | 1.2335 |                 |        |
| V6              | 2.6731 |                 |        |
| V7              | 3.5213 |                 |        |
| V8              | 1.8354 |                 |        |
| V9              | 2.2798 |                 |        |
| V10             | 2.3881 |                 |        |

\*VIF Variance Inflation Factor

Source: Authors' Work

With the CFA, it is found that the model fit is strong when benchmarked against parameter values adopted by Hair et al. (Hair et al., 2013). The CFA model provided a good fit since its constructs align with theoretical expectations. Table II shows that the CMIN/DF of analysis CFA model's path is 1.862, GFI is 0.917, TLI is 0.958, CFI is 0.943, NFI is 0.929 and RMSEA is 0.038.

Table II: Measurement Model Analysis

| Fit Indices | Sources                  | Calculated value |
|-------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| $\chi^2/df$ | Marsh et al. (2004)      | 1.892<3          |
| GFI         | Hair et al. (2015)       | 0.917>0.90       |
| TLI         | Awang (2012)             | 0.958>0.90       |
| NFI         | Arifin and Yusoff (2016) | 0.929>0.90       |
| CFI         | Awang (2012)             | 0.943>0.90       |
| RMSEA       | Brown and Cudeck (1993)  | 0.038<0.08       |

Table III: Depicting Standard Factor Loading, AVE, Cronbach's alphas, and CR

| Items  | Variable                                              | Standard Factor Loading | CR/AVE/Cronbach's Alpha                  |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| SP1    | Succession Planning<br>(Tiwari and Shrivastava, 2023) | 0.735                   | $\alpha=0.821$<br>AVE=0.607<br>CR= 0.825 |
| SP2    |                                                       | 0.854                   |                                          |
| SP3    |                                                       | 0.812                   |                                          |
| Comp1  | Compensation<br>Sharma and Gupta, 2022                | 0.763                   | $\alpha=0.842$<br>AVE=0.652<br>CR=0.846  |
| Comp 2 |                                                       | 0.869                   |                                          |
| Comp 3 |                                                       | 0.713                   |                                          |

|      |                                                                 |       |                                           |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------------|
| JP1  | Job Performance<br>(Kundu and Gahlawat,<br>2020)                | 0.781 | $\alpha=0.809$<br>AVE=0.693<br>CR= 0.813  |
| JP2  |                                                                 | 0.746 |                                           |
| JP3  |                                                                 | 0.829 |                                           |
| TD1  | Training and<br>Development (TD)<br>(Singh and Sharma,<br>2021) | 0.773 | $\alpha=0.856$<br>AVE=0.725<br>CR= 0.861  |
| TD2  |                                                                 | 0.856 |                                           |
| TD3  |                                                                 | 0.756 |                                           |
| TD4  |                                                                 | 0.824 |                                           |
| EJS1 | Employee Satisfaction<br>(Alzyoud and Bani<br>Melhem, 2022)     | 0.728 | $\alpha=0.822$ ,<br>AVE=0.682<br>CR=0.827 |
| EJS2 |                                                                 | 0.853 |                                           |
| EJS3 |                                                                 | 0.741 |                                           |
| WI1  | Workplace Inclusion<br>(Ahmed and Rehman,<br>2023)              | 0.871 | $\alpha=0.889$ ,<br>AVE=0.738<br>CR=0.892 |
| WI2  |                                                                 | 0.814 |                                           |
| WI3  |                                                                 | 0.814 |                                           |

To control the bias in our study, we used Harman's one-factor test to identify any covert biases in data collection. As the percentage of total variance explained by a single factor was lower than the predefined threshold of 50%, the results indicated that no serious common method bias was present in our data (Podsakoff et al., 2012). We then demonstrated convergent and discriminant validity by calculating measures such as AVE, ASV, MSV, across constructs. Discriminant validity was tested on all constructs by the more stringent condition of a higher AVE value ( $>0.5$ ) as indicated in Tables III and IV.

Table IV: AVE: Construct Validity and Correlation Matrix

|    | CR    | AVE   | MSV   | ASV   | PE    | EE    | SI    | FC    | UI    | SE    |
|----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| PE | 0.825 | 0.607 | 0.034 | 0.023 | 0.779 |       |       |       |       |       |
| EE | 0.846 | 0.652 | 0.234 | 0.093 | 0.218 | 0.807 |       |       |       |       |
| SI | 0.813 | 0.693 | 0.158 | 0.075 | 0.038 | 0.251 | 0.832 |       |       |       |
| FC | 0.861 | 0.725 | 0.243 | 0.098 | 0.079 | 0.423 | 0.239 | 0.851 |       |       |
| UI | 0.827 | 0.682 | 0.084 | 0.053 | 0.234 | 0.249 | 0.241 | 0.141 | 0.825 |       |
| SE | 0.892 | 0.738 | 0.089 | 0.052 | 0.128 | 0.214 | 0.232 | 0.218 | 0.019 | 0.859 |

#### *Hypotheses Testing and Structural Model*

The current study uses Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), which Hair et al. (2015) argue is an essential investigative method for evaluating the links among components. To assess the congruence between the proposed models and the available data, several frequently used fit indices were employed. The  $\chi^2/df$  values (398.439/158= 2.522) were deemed appropriate and met the guidelines ( $\chi^2/df < 3$ ). According to Hair et al. (2015)'s recommended criteria, incremental fit indices (IFIs) (CFI, GFI, NFI, and TLI) were appropriate and greater than 0.90 in every scenario (see Table V). A reasonable match is also suggested by RMSEA = 0.046  $< 0.08$  (Brown and Cudeck, 1993). The fit statistics show that the data are adequately fitted by the research model.

Table V Path Analysis

| Fit Indices | Threshold Value | Calculated value |
|-------------|-----------------|------------------|
| $\chi^2/df$ | $<3$            | 2.522            |
| GFI         | $>0.90$         | 0.912            |
| CFI         | $>0.90$         | 0.936            |



|       |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|
| TLI   | >0.90 | 0.952 |
| NFI   | >0.90 | 0.917 |
| RMSEA | <0.08 | 0.046 |

The suggestions made above were modified from (Marsh, Hau and Wen, 2004), Hair et al. (2015), (Awang, 2012), Arifin and Yusoff (2016), and (Brown and Cudeck, 1993). As can be seen in Table VI, path coefficients were computed to test the assumptions that had been generated. As indicated from inspecting the standardized coefficients (Table VII), the significance of the model between each pair of sub-models is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$  for all comparisons) and satisfies Hair et al.'s adoption rules. (2015). Results show that TD has a significant impact on employees' job performance (H1:  $\beta = 0.417$ ,  $t = 5.141$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). On the workers' job performance, the succession planning has an effect (H2:  $\beta = 0.382$ ,  $t = 4.667$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The research found that pay has a significant impact on employees' job performance (H3:  $\beta = 0.438$ ,  $t = 6.274$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The analysis further discovered a positive association between job satisfaction and job performance (H4:  $\beta = 0.343$ ,  $t = 4.267$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

Table VI. Hypotheses Testing

| Conceptualized Path | Standardized Estimates | Critical Ratio | P- Value | Hypotheses Supported |
|---------------------|------------------------|----------------|----------|----------------------|
| H1 TD- JP           | 0.417                  | 5.141          | 0.000    | Supported            |
| H2 SP- JP           | 0.382                  | 4.667          | 0.000    | Supported            |
| H3 CMP- JP          | 0.438                  | 6.274          | 0.000    | Supported            |
| H4 JP-EJS           | 0.343                  | 4.267          | 0.000    | Supported            |

Table VII. Moderating Effect of Workplace Inclusion on the Relationship Between Job Performance and Employee Job Satisfaction

| Hypothesized Path                    | Standardized Estimate (SE) | t Statistics (Critical Ratio) | P - Values | Hypotheses Supported |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|----------------------|
| JP X WI (Interaction Variable)-> EJS | 0.497                      | 6.981                         | 0.000      | Yes                  |

## 6. Discussion

The study demonstrates that career development programs—such as training and development, succession planning, and equitable compensation—serve as key drivers of employee job satisfaction in the IT sector. Training helps employees build skills and confidence, which strengthens their attachment to the organization (Zehra, 2016; Mampuru et al., 2024). Similarly, transparent succession planning gives clarity about career growth, increasing commitment (Bano et al., 2023), while fair compensation not only meets financial needs but also reflects how much the organization values its employees (Moriarty, 2019; Devates et al., 2024).

The findings also highlight that workplace inclusion makes these practices even more effective. When employees feel supported, treated fairly, and included, they are more satisfied and engaged (Maj, 2023; Brown et al., 2025). This means organizations should not just design HR programs but also ensure they are implemented in a positive and inclusive environment. In this sense, inclusion is not only a social ideal but a practical strategy that strengthens HR outcomes, especially in fast-moving industries like IT, and supports long-term performance and retention.

### *Training and Development and Employee Satisfaction*

This suggests that employee satisfaction is strongly influenced by training and development ( $\beta = 0.417$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Upskilling and reskilling staff If employees can learn within an organization, whether it be facilitated by a learning platform or workshops, they are often more likely to feel that their company values them and supports them. In the fast-paced world of IT, once you're exposed to technology, it's seen as investing in your own future – and it

fosters a sense of commitment to an employer. The results are consistent with those of (Singh and Sharma 2021), in which people become more well-connected as certain training progresses. (Rana et al., 2023) maintain that companies can achieve high levels of satisfaction when they demonstrate their passion for helping its employees to flourish. These results also indicate that training allows workers to move closer emotionally, spiritually, and not only technically, toward the firm.

#### *Job Performance and Employee Satisfaction*

Results indicate that satisfaction is positively affected by job performance ( $\beta = 0.343$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). High performers are rewarded with respect, freedom and trust to mention a few which adds value to the work they do. For IT firms with tangible deliverables and results that can be measured, consistent performance could make an employee feel better about themselves if they felt like a worthwhile asset to the company. These findings were similar to what (Kundu and Gahlawat, 2020) had found in their study that high job performance led towards enhancement of self-worth and emotional bond with the organization. (Rana et al., 2023) also argued that recognizing high performers enhances morale and ensures long-term commitment. As a result, the study shows that performance is also a significant source of satisfaction.

#### *Succession Planning and Employee Satisfaction*

The other important indicator that is strongly linked to satisfaction is succession planning ( $\beta = 0.382$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). When employees know that their growth is important, they are less likely to leave and are more likely to stay when succession plans and resources are clear and available. Given the continued dominance of star talent, career trajectory is even more crucial for IT workers. Therefore, employees will be more inclined to remain involved with the organization if you demonstrate how their efforts are contributing to long-term success. (Tiwari and Shrivastava's, 2023) study also reveal these characteristics, as they assert that succession planning promotes organizational loyalty and psychological stability.

Also, people's perceptions of justice and participation levels will increase if they are involved in succession planning, as indicated by (Gupta and Jaiswal, 2024). The results indicate that general satisfaction were greatly affected by career development.

#### *Compensation and Employee Satisfaction*

Out of all the variables, the one that had the greatest impact on work satisfaction was pay ( $\beta = 0.438$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). In addition to providing fair compensation for employees' labour, open, competitive, and simple compensation plans indicate that employers value their contributions. In the Indian IT sector, which has a high turnover rate and occasionally many offers, compensation policies have a significant impact on motivation and retention (Zavyalova et al., 2020; Agrawal and Reade, 2024). Reduced attrition and increased trust are the results of fair compensation (Sharma and Gupta, 2022). Similar findings were confirmed by (Banerjee and Saini's, 2024) study, which found that equal pay schemes significantly improve employee job commitment and strengthen organizational ties. These results imply that rewards function both financially and emotionally, satisfying workers' need to be valued as valuable contributors to an organization.

#### *Moderating Role of Workplace Inclusion*

Determination of the moderating relationship between workplace inclusion and the impact of job performance on employee satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.497$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) is a key argument that this paper proposes. The results show that there is a positive moderating relationship between performance and Satisfaction in inclusive work environment. Employee motivation and job satisfaction can be enhanced by the way learning, rewards, and recognition are dispersed throughout the organization, if it is ultimately regarded as distributed. However, high-performing employees may still feel underappreciated at a company with a less welcoming culture, which reduces enjoyment. (Ahmed and Rehman's 2023) conclusion that inclusion fosters psychological safety and encourages employees to identify with development initiatives is supported by these findings. Workers remain in place: It is thought that inclusive workplaces encourage employees to take advantage of learning opportunities, which in turn encourages loyalty to the company (Narayanan and Menon, 2022). Put another way, inclusion serves as the pivot that allows HR procedures to accomplish their goals.

## **7. Theoretical and practical implications**

The study enriches Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) by establishing workplace inclusion as a critical moderating factor in the relationship between career development programs (CDPs) and employee job satisfaction. Instead of looking only at individual factors, it highlights how personal and workplace conditions interact. By

introducing a moderated mediation approach, the study explains how inclusion influences the way HR practices affect employee satisfaction, offering a more complete and realistic view.

While earlier SCCT research focused on self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Lent et al., 1994), this study highlights workplace inclusion as a key environmental factor. This makes the theory more relevant to today's diverse and dynamic workplaces (Damodar et al., 2024). It also extends SCCT to the Indian IT sector, addressing challenges like high turnover and competition, while responding to concerns about its Western focus (Garcia and Patel, 2024). In doing so, it brings in a stronger social perspective to understand employee experiences (Narayanan and Menon, 2022; Ahmed and Rehman, 2023).

From a practical point of view, the study shows that HR practices work best in inclusive environments. When organizations ensure equal access to opportunities, transparent processes, and fair pay, employees feel more valued and satisfied. Inclusion create belonging and psychological safety, which strengthens engagement and retention (Vikasitha et al., 2021; Gupta & Jaiswal, 2024). It also highlights that compensation is not just about money but also about recognition and fairness, influencing loyalty and satisfaction (Sharma and Gupta, 2022).

Overall, the study makes it clear that inclusion is not just an additional effort but a strategic necessity that enhances the impact of all career development initiatives (Singh and Sharma, 2021; Alzyoud and Bani Melhem, 2022). It also offers a practical SEM-based framework to evaluate the effectiveness of CDPs, which can be applied beyond the Indian IT sector to other knowledge-driven industries (Hair et al., 2021).

## **8. Limitations of the study and Future Research Directions**

While the study advances understanding in this area, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations that may influence the interpretation of the results First, the research design is cross-sectional, and it is difficult to determine what is problematic with career development programs, workplace inclusiveness, and job satisfaction. The design would not reveal the time-varying characteristics of such associations, although it would have positive associations. The second generation of study can be longitudinal or experimental to enhance its explanations of long-term impacts of career development programs and inclusiveness on the performance of employees. Second, the study is restricted to particular to the employees of Indian IT sector therefore a limitation of the extrapolation of findings to other areas or industries. The various industries have varied organizational culture, work environment and career development opportunities. It should therefore be the focus of future research to explore such relationships in other industries, regions and in other cultural settings to generalize the research. The study is based on self-reported survey data, which may be influenced by social desirability bias and common method variance. Even though some procedural measures have been used to reduce these problems, the respondents can still give subjective or socially acceptable answers. Further research can enhance the reliability of the study by using various forms of data, including, but not limited to, evaluation by supervisors, organizational documentation, or HR performance measures. Also, although this paper examines the moderating nature of inclusivity in the workplace, other elements of the organization can also affect employee job satisfaction and career performance. Further studies can be used to determine other moderating/mediating factors, including leadership style, succession planning, reward systems, or job characteristics to get a better picture of the dynamics of career development.

The dynamism of the IT sector and the changing nature of career patterns also implies that the traditional career lines are becoming more attentive. In the future, it would be prudent to periodically carry out research to find out the effect of technological changes, the change in expectation amongst employees in relation to the effectiveness of career development programs over time.

## **9. Conclusion**

The effect on job satisfaction of the employees by the workplace inclusion has a positive influence on the Career development initiatives. Those organizations focused on enhancing the level of employee engagement and retention need to consider what can be done not only to invest in active career development programs but also in inclusive and equitable workplace cultures.

The sphere of information technology is developing, and the outcomes of the educational courses on the job satisfaction should be monitored. These results reveal that people are satisfied with their jobs because of training, job performance, succession planning and compensation. In addition, such aspects are stronger in diverse workplaces.

Considering the dynamism in information technology, it is essential to know the relationship between career programs and job satisfaction. The outcomes define training, job performance, succession planning and pay as most important to persons in job satisfaction. They are mostly evident in non-discriminatory workplaces.

Career planning has significant effects on overall job satisfaction that has been vital in the delicate IT world. The results of our job satisfaction analysis indicate that training, job performance, succession planning and pay tend to have a positive influence on job satisfaction. These are stronger factors in inclusive workplaces. The strategic engagement of employees as opposed to an appendage will maximize returns of all the development processes and an enhanced psychological attachment between employees and their firms. As a strategic business enabler, inclusion should be improved and organizations which foster high performing and motivated employees will surely emerge successful in changing markets.

The paper, therefore, contributes both theoretically and practically by creating awareness of the necessity of practicing holistic talent management, hence, improving knowledge in different organizations. Practical Implications: The disincentives are a fact among the practitioners; thus, the businesses should be more open in terms of their HR policies. Professional development, high salaries and learning opportunities are the main pillars of happy and sticky team. Companies that put emphasis on such aspects are more likely to retain the best talents and get new ideas.

Lastly, a career development program should be inclusive, which is best suited by an inclusive corporate culture. A work environment that is inclusive underlines and assists in establishing an environment where employees feel valued, which encourages them to lead changes that will ensure that they are successful and that they grow consistently.

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