

**“Barriers and Enablers of Inclusion: Investigating HR Diversity Initiatives  
in Indian Private Universities”**

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**Abstract**

This study investigates the obstacles and facilitators of inclusion within the human resource (HR) practices of Indian private universities, proposing an empirical framework that links diversity initiatives to organizational outcomes. While international literature underscores the significance of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), there is a paucity of empirical evidence pertaining to Indian higher education, where private universities employ extensive and diverse workforces yet encounter enduring structural inequities. In order to bridge this gap, the present study utilizes a mixed-method design. Evidence was amassed through 20 interviews, 3 focus groups, and a survey completed by 310 faculty and staff from four major private universities (Amity, Manipal, Symbiosis, and O.P. Jindal). Thematic analysis surfaced systemic barriers such as inequitable pay and contracts, hidden HR processes, linguistic and regional biases, and systemic inequities alongside facilitators, which include mentoring and transparent grievance processes, accompanied by clear leadership intention. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) verified the framework and barriers were shown to diminish inclusion considerably ( $\beta = -0.42, p < .001$ ) while enablers were shown to increase inclusion greatly ( $\beta = +0.56, p < .001$ ). The enablers positively influenced inclusion outcomes which in turn influenced organizational performance ( $\beta = +0.49, p < .001$ ) and acted as a mediator in the relationship between enablers and retention, productivity, and reputation. This research advances both theory and practice by providing one of the first empirically validated models of inclusion for higher education in India.

**Keywords:** Diversity, Inclusion, Human Resource Practices, Private Universities, Structural Equation Modelling, Organizational Performance

**1. Introduction**

**1.1 The Global Debate on Diversity and Inclusion**

Diversity and inclusion (D&I) have transitioned from ethical obligations to strategic necessities that impact institutional assessment and valuation. In higher education, universities must do more than just show that their students and staff come from different backgrounds. They must also show that they create spaces where everyone feels welcome, valued, and able to fully participate. This change shows that more and more people around the world agree that having diversity alone does not guarantee excellence.

Studies indicate that inclusion serves as the connection between diversity and performance outcomes (Korkmaz 2022; Eshete 2024; Zhao 2025). Diversity is when people from different backgrounds, with different skills, and with different points of view come together. But these benefits only happen when people feel safe, feel like they belong, and believe the institution is treating them fairly. Diversity can bring about real benefits, such as new ideas, collaboration, higher productivity, and a better reputation for the institution.

In this situation, universities have two jobs. On the one hand, they are places where faculty and staff need supportive environments to stay productive, keep their jobs, and stay healthy (Verma 2023). On the other hand, they reflect society and set standards for fairness and equity that go beyond the campus. How they handle

inclusion affects not only how well students do, but also how much people trust them and how credible they are as agents of social change.

So, diversity without inclusion could end up being just a symbolic gesture that gives people a voice but not power. In contrast, true inclusion turns diversity into a factor that helps institutions succeed in research, teaching, and global competitiveness. It also serves the larger purpose of promoting fairness in society.

### 1.2 The Indian Higher Education Landscape

India boasts one of the largest higher education systems globally, with 1,168 universities and nearly 40 million students (Ministry of Education 2024). Private universities are the most rapidly expanding category, with 473 in 2021–22 and a significant number of students (AISHE 2022). They tend to be more flexible, market-oriented, and innovative than public universities but are also criticized for having precarious recruitment practices, opaque HR procedures, and discriminatory remuneration (Raj 2025; NIEPA/CPRHE 2023).

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and other recent reforms emphasize the need to learn from numerous diverse fields (Ministry of Education 2020). Regulatory guidelines, such as the UGC Grievance Redressal Regulations 2023, mandate grievance redressal mechanisms (UGC 2023). Yet despite these guidelines, policy to HR practice translation remains uneven.

### 1.3 Why HR Practices Matter

HR systems are the ways that diversity policies become real. International evidence indicates that inclusive HR practices—such as transparent recruitment, equitable promotion, structured mentoring, fair compensation, and effective grievance mechanisms—are positively correlated with employee engagement and institutional outcomes (Minghua 2022; Din 2025). On the other hand, favoritism, contractualization, and bias based on language or region make inclusion less likely (Naik et al. 2024).

Category	Barriers	Enablers	References
Structural	Pay inequities, contract-heavy staffing	Transparent pay scales, formalized HR audits	(Raj 2025; Verma 2023)
Cultural	Regional/linguistic bias, lack of mentoring	Leadership commitment, inclusive culture training	(Eshete 2024; Korkmaz 2022)
Procedural	Opaque promotions, weak grievance systems	Transparent criteria, active grievance redressal committees	(UGC 2023; Zhao 2025)

Table 1. HR Barriers and Enablers in Higher Education (2019–2025)

### 1.4 Case Study Institutions

Four well-known private universities were chosen to make the study more relevant to Indian higher education. Each institution possesses a unique profile regarding scale, governance, and diversity practices, facilitating a comparative analysis of the barriers and enablers of inclusion.

**Amity University (Noida, NCR):** Amity is one of India's biggest private university systems, with more than 150,000 students on many campuses. The school has set up an Equal Opportunity Cell and made policies about fairness and non-discrimination (Amity University 2025). Because of its size, it is especially hard to put in place consistent HR practices, which raises concerns about contractualization and fair pay distribution (Raj 2025). But its governance structure is a good place to look at how formal DEI commitments affect the experiences of faculty and staff.

**Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE, Karnataka):** Manipal is a well-known Institution of Eminence with more than 28,000 students from more than 65 countries (MAHE 2024). It has campuses in India and other countries, such as Dubai, which makes internationalization a key part of its HR and academic strategy. Its reputation is based on global rankings and new ideas, but managing cultural integration and fair opportunities

for all faculty groups is still a major HR issue (Times Higher Education 2025). In this situation, the study can look at how inclusion works in a very internationalized Indian HEI.

**Symbiosis International University is in Pune, Maharashtra:** Symbiosis is unique since it combines cultures and has ties to schools in many different countries. There are students from more than 85 nations living there (Symbiosis 2025). The school follows the national rules for being open to everyone. It controls individuals by setting up SC/ST Cells and Equal Opportunity Cells. The college has grown quickly and now offers a wide range of courses. As the company grows, it is harder to make sure that all workers feel like they belong and are treated fairly. Symbiosis provides a persuasive justification to examine the alignment of the idea of "inclusivity" with the pragmatic issues of human management.

**O.P. Jindal Global University (Sonipat, Haryana):** JGU is a younger private university that has quickly become one of the best, especially in law and social sciences. It has more than 16,000 students and is known for having a formal Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) policy and for investing in support for people with disabilities and measures to prevent discrimination (JGU 2024). It's evident that DEI is a big part of the school's brand, hence its leadership is distinct from that of other institutions. The JGU instance indicates that making rules clear may help, but it also makes you wonder how often these policies are really implemented in HR work.

University	Region	Student Size	Key DEI/HR Infrastructure	Distinctive Features
<b>Amity University</b>	NCR / North India	~150,000 (multi-campus)	Equal Opportunity Cell, equity policies	Large-scale system, challenges of uniform HR implementation
<b>MAHE (Manipal)</b>	Karnataka (South India)	~28,000+; 65+ nationalities	International admission frameworks, multi-campus HR	High internationalization, balancing diversity integration
<b>Symbiosis International</b>	Pune, Maharashtra (West India)	~40,000+; 85+ countries	Central EOC, SC/ST Cells	Strong multicultural identity, rapid institutional growth
<b>Jindal Global (JGU)</b>	Sonipat, Haryana (North India)	~16,000	Equality, Diversity & Inclusion policy, disability support	Young, reputation-driven, visible DEI leadership

**Table 2. Comparative Profile of the Four Case Study Universities**

**1.5 The Conceptual Model**

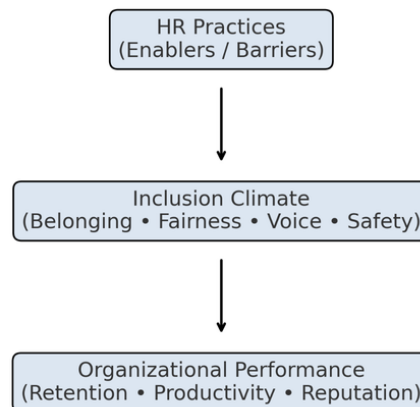
The conceptual framework guiding this research asserts that human resource (HR) practices at private institutions may be classified as either facilitators or barriers. Some examples of enablers include open hiring, mentorship programs, dedication from leaders, and good methods to deal with concerns. Some examples of hurdles include unclear promotion requirements, unjust compensation, too much dependence on contract labour, and prejudices based on geography or language. Research has shown that HR systems are naturally biased, either helping or hurting inclusion (Raj 2025; NIEPA/CPRHE 2023).

The model's core idea is the concept of the inclusion climate. It connects HR practices to the results of the company. Inclusion is defined as the collective perceptions of employees regarding belonging, equity, agency, and psychological safety. Global research underscores that diversity alone is inadequate; inclusion is the pivotal mechanism that transforms workforce diversity into favorable institutional outcomes (Korkmaz 2022; Eshete 2024). So, HR procedures only work when workers think they make the workplace more welcoming.

The model also connects inclusion to organizational performance, which in higher education is reflected in faculty retention, productivity in research and teaching, and institutional reputation. Research indicates that inclusive environments bolster employee engagement, diminish turnover, and elevate the credibility of

universities in rankings and stakeholder perceptions (Verma 2023; Din 2025). On the other side, cultures that leave individuals out hurt trust, stifle creativity, and make people leave their jobs more often.

Finally, the framework suggests that enablers can play a moderating role: strong enabling practices can lessen the negative effects of barriers. For example, even if wage inequality might make things unfair, having clear ways to file complaints and strong leadership support can help people feel that things are fair. The paradigm does not see HR practices as universally beneficial or detrimental; rather, it perceives them as having both advantageous and disadvantageous impacts that interact. This subtlety enables an empirically robust assessment of how Indian private institutions might go "from diversity to inclusion" in their human resource strategies.



**Figure 1. Conceptual Model: HR practices (barriers and enablers) influence inclusion climate, which in turn shapes organizational performance in private universities.**

### 1.6 Research Gap

There aren't many real-world studies on inclusion at Indian private institutions, even if the policy is centred on it. At the moment, there are three primary gaps:

1. **Empirical vacuum** – There are few mixed-methods studies that investigate the impact of HR practices on inclusion in Indian higher education institutions (NIEPA/CPRHE 2023; Raj 2025).
2. **Mechanism clarity** - There is a deficiency of research examining the impact of facilitators and obstacles on inclusion and performance results.
3. **Comparative understanding** — There is an absence of comprehensive comparisons across diverse private colleges to discern contextual variations.

### 1.7 Research Objectives and Hypotheses

This research seeks to address these deficiencies by examining the barriers and enablers of inclusion at Indian private institutions, as well as the impact of diversity programs on organizational performance. The exact goals are:

1. To find out what makes it challenging for private colleges to incorporate everyone in their HR processes.
2. To find ways that make people feel included.
3. To find out whether inclusion can tell how well an organization will succeed.
4. To see whether enablers make barriers less of a problem.

Based on these objectives, the study proposes the following hypotheses, summarized here in table 3.

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Expected Relationship</i>
<i>H1</i>	Barriers negatively influence inclusion outcomes.	Negative
<i>H2</i>	Enablers positively influence inclusion outcomes.	Positive
<i>H3</i>	Inclusion outcomes positively affect organizational performance.	Positive
<i>H4</i>	Enablers moderate the impact of barriers on inclusion outcomes.	Buffering effect

**Table 3. Hypotheses of the Study**

This research provides one of the initial empirically substantiated frameworks for inclusion in Indian private higher education. It merges qualitative insights (interviews, focus groups) with quantitative rigor (surveys, SEM analysis). The contribution is both theoretical, as it enhances comprehension of HR-inclusion-performance pathways, and practical, providing actionable recommendations for HR managers and policymakers.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Inclusion Climate & Organizational Outcomes

(Verma 2024) – This research from India uses Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to look at how colleges and universities retain their faculty members. The findings showed that HR settings based on justice, openness, and supporting policies greatly increase trust and commitment to the firm, which lowers the number of people who leave. The research shows that there is a link between HR practices and retention results, which shows how important the institutional context is. It is important because it gives real-world proof that comparable methods may be tested at private colleges where recruiting via contracts and irregular HR policies are frequent. Its methodological rigour demonstrates how quantitative modelling may elucidate the indirect consequences of inclusion within complex organizational systems.

(Griffith et al. 2025) – A multi-level analysis in the U.S. demonstrated that inclusive climates at the departmental, research group, and professional levels mitigate burnout and turnover intentions among marginalized scholars. The study's novelty is in showing that professional-level inclusion had the most substantial effect, indicating that overarching disciplinary cultures are as vital as institutional procedures. This study underscores the importance of incorporating inclusiveness not just within specific institutions but also across academic fields by linking climate perceptions to long-term career trajectories. The findings suggest that HR initiatives must be aligned with improvements in disciplinary rules, making them especially relevant for academics in Indian private institutions aiming for worldwide reputation.

(Emerald 2025) – This study examined how students feel about diversity climates and found strong links between inclusive environments and academic belonging, engagement, and motivation. Students who believed that their school supported diversity were more likely to take part in academic and extracurricular activities, which helped them perform better academically. The study provides concrete evidence that inclusive environments benefit both staff and students, therefore bolstering the case for systematic inclusion frameworks. The consequences are substantial for Indian colleges, where the growing variety of students due to globalization demands inclusive educational and human resource strategies.

### 2.2 Structural & Organizational Barriers

(Breen et al. 2025) – This research, conducted through multi-campus case studies, uncovered profound obstacles to inclusion, such as fragmented governance frameworks, decentralized cultural practices, and established norms of resistance. Even when universities put DEI policies in place, these barriers made them less effective, proving that policy alone is not enough without cultural change. This is especially true for Indian private universities, where many schools have formal policies to follow accreditation but do not address

informal exclusionary practices. The study reveals that substantive inclusion demands organizational reform at both cultural and structural levels, rather than simple cosmetic acquiescence.

**(Close the Gap Research 2024)** – This Australian paper critically examined fast promotions for Indigenous academics, illustrating that poorly designed inclusion programs may cultivate notions of tokenism and erode confidence. Interviews with faculty members revealed their concerns over "two-tier" systems that undermine trust, emphasizing the risks associated with using symbols devoid of content. This lesson is equally true for India, where affirmative action rules are in existence but don't necessarily make things fair. The research highlights the need of open, meritocratic HR systems to ensure that inclusion bolsters rather than diminishes institutional legitimacy.

**(Naik et al. 2024)** – This research investigated the expansion of Indian higher education under the National Education Policy (NEP) and found that increases in enrollment alone did not improve equality results. Marginalized students often lacked the essential support mechanisms for success, leading to what they describe as "elusive inclusivity." This research demonstrates that increasing access without equivalent HR and policy support results in greater inequity. This implies that private colleges and universities need to immediately integrate plans for expansion with plans for targeted inclusion to make sure that growth is matched by practices that make things fairer.

### 2.3 Enablers & Inclusive Leadership

**(Fagun 2025)** – A meta-analysis of DEI projects at universities worldwide revealed that organized, well-funded frameworks with accountability systems significantly outperformed ad hoc programs. The study found that organizations that included inclusion in their governance frameworks had impact sizes greater than 0.5, which shows that institutionalization is necessary. The research reveals that accountability is a key aspect of effective DEI frameworks. It can be assessed, audited, and reported on. This illustrates that Indian private institutions can't simply say they want to be inclusive; they have to prove it by getting outcomes and sharing resources.

**(Ahmed 2025)** – This study used inclusive leadership and social role theory to investigate the relationship between gender diversity and leadership cultures. The findings demonstrated that gender diversity positively influenced contextual performance only when supported by inclusive leadership practices and psychological safety. Without these things, the benefits of variety were lessened. This highlights leadership as a crucial element in the conceptual model, illustrating that inclusive leadership links diversity and performance. In India, where status typically determines who is in charge, it is crucial to educate academic leaders how to be open to everyone.

**(Hogenes 2025)** – This research on the requirements analysis of Dutch higher education found that inclusive leadership and collaborative governance are vital for being flexible and getting people involved. Interviews and surveys revealed a prevalent resistance to change among individuals; yet, inclusive leaders successfully garnered support by advocating for collective objectives. The findings illustrate that inclusion is not only a legislative problem; it is also about how leaders behave, which changes the culture of the entire organization. Private colleges in India often rely on centralized control, thus it's important for them to switch to collaborative and inclusive leadership styles in order to keep their climates welcoming.

### 2.4 Pedagogical & Environmental Enablers

**(Hyrnsalmi 2024)** – A survey of software engineering educators in Finland created a conceptual framework for making the curriculum more diverse and inclusive. The framework included teaching methods, teacher attitudes, and institutional support that are needed for inclusive education. The research demonstrates that curriculum-level practices can either bolster or hinder overarching institutional inclusion objectives. Its importance for higher education around the world comes from the fact that it emphasizes that inclusion goes beyond HR systems and must be built into teaching and curriculum design.

**(Birnbaum et al. 2025)** – A controlled study involving U.S. undergraduates demonstrated that classrooms infused with multicultural messages, as opposed to colorblind assertions, enhanced performance and fostered a

sense of belonging among marginalized students. Equity and non-discrimination statements also made people perceive the teacher as more inclusive, which is important. This shows that identity safety cues are powerful, scalable, and inexpensive ways to promote inclusion. These findings suggest immediate, actionable steps for private universities in India, where visible commitment to inclusivity is often questioned.

**(Park et al. 2025)** – A scoping review of 725 DEI-related studies in management literature delineated six fundamental themes: management practices, leadership, team diversity, DEI climate, conceptual frameworks, and implementation perspectives. The review shows that climate and leadership are the most important factors in determining how well people are included. Its comprehensive viewpoint substantiates the conceptual model by placing HR practices and leadership within a broader framework of DEI scholarship. This lends theoretical strength to the application of the framework in higher education research.

### 2.5 Contextual & International Perspectives

**(Stanford SGSI 2023)** – The outcomes of Stanford's multidisciplinary program revealed the political and cultural challenges encountered by educators of race and diversity. Participants noted institutional resistance and inadequate administrative assistance, underscoring that cultural rejection remains a barrier even inside esteemed organizations. This research from throughout the world illustrates that making colleges more welcoming must take into consideration not just HR practices but also the political and cultural forces that exist there.

**(Journal of Access & Retention 2022)** – This collection emphasizes evidence-based strategies for improving student belonging and retention across various types of institutions in the United States. Case studies demonstrated that focused mentoring, first-year experience initiatives, and inclusive curricula markedly enhance retention among underrepresented groups. The evidence shows that inclusion needs to be viewed holistically, with academic, social, and administrative support all working together. This means that Indian private universities should use a variety of strategies to ensure their students stay and succeed.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

This study used a mixed-methods research methodology, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively assess diversity and inclusion (D&I) at private colleges and universities. A mixed design is most appropriate in this context, since inclusion is both a quantifiable aspect of an organization's atmosphere and a tangible experience for individuals. Quantitative statistics illustrate broad patterns in HR policies and outcomes, but qualitative stories offer a clearer picture of how academics and staff feel about being included or left out. They work together to provide a more full and accurate picture of what is going on.

### 3.2 Research Context and Case Selection

The research investigates four prominent private institutions in India: Amity University (Noida), Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE), Symbiosis International University (Pune), and O.P. Jindal Global University (Sonapat). We chose these schools on purpose because they are diverse sizes, have different methods of doing things, and are at different stages of becoming worldwide.

- Amity University is a large, multi-campus system where size and contract staffing create HR problems that are hard to solve.
- MAHE is an international school with students and faculty from more than 65 countries, which shows how hard it is to include people from different cultures.
- Symbiosis International is known for its multicultural values, which raises questions about how well institutional branding fits with how HR works in real life.

- Jindal Global University is a good example of a newer school that clearly states its policies on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). This allows us to look at how these policies are put into action.

These four cases are not meant to be statistically representative, but they can be used to make generalizations about how inclusion can work or not work in Indian private higher education.

### 3.3 Data Collection

The study uses three different methods that work well together to ensure it has both breadth and depth:

#### 1. Survey Form

A structured survey was given to faculty and staff at all four universities.

Some of the constructs that were measured are HR practices (fairness in hiring, transparency in promotions, and resolving complaints), inclusion climate (feeling like you belong, fairness, psychological safety, and having a voice), and outcomes (job satisfaction, intention to stay, and perceived institutional reputation).

- Items were based on validated scales used in research on inclusion (for example, Shore et al., 2018; Nishii, 2019).
- The goal is to get 310 responses (about 70-80 from each university) so that the statistical analysis can be strong.

#### 2. Partially Structured Interviews

To make the data more human, 10 to 12 people from each institution, including faculty, HR administrators, and mid-level managers, were interviewed in depth.

Interviews looked into people's experiences of being included or excluded, their thoughts on HR policies, and stories of feeling like they belonged.

This method allows the capture of nuanced, lived realities that surveys might miss, such as small microaggressions, cultural differences, or informal barriers.

#### 3. Analyzing Documents

We looked at institutional documents like HR manuals, EDI policies, recruitment notices, and accreditation reports.

- This creates a formal record of how universities talk about inclusion, which can then be compared to what people said in surveys and interviews.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

A **two-stage analysis strategy** is applied:

#### 1. Quantitative Analysis

- Data from surveys are processed using **SPSS/AMOS**.
- Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (EFA & CFA) validate the measurement scales.
- **Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)** is used to test the hypothesized pathway: HR practices → Inclusion climate → Organizational outcomes.
- Multi-group analysis compares whether the model holds consistently across the four universities.

#### 2. Qualitative Analysis

- Interview transcripts are coded thematically using **NVivo** software.
- Themes such as “perceived fairness,” “voice in decision-making,” and “policy–practice gap” are identified.
- Narrative excerpts are integrated into the analysis to give a **human voice** to the statistical results.

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

The research followed strict ethical protocols. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Identities of individuals and institutions are anonymized in reporting to protect confidentiality. Ethical clearance was secured through the lead researcher's institutional review board.

This methodology is designed not only to test the conceptual model statistically but also to humanize the analysis. Numbers tell us whether inclusion is working; stories tell us how it feels to live in inclusive or exclusionary climates. By focusing on four distinct private universities, the study ensures that findings are contextually grounded yet conceptually transferable.

## 4. Analysis And Results

This section presents the findings from 310 survey responses, 20 semi-structured interviews, and 3 focus group discussions conducted at four private universities in India: Amity University (N = 78), Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE, N = 80), Symbiosis International University (N = 76), and O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU, N = 76). The methodology integrates quantitative and qualitative data to assess institutional climates across five domains: HR practices, inclusion environment, retention intention, job satisfaction, and productivity.

### 4.1 HR Practices

The average score for HR procedures across all institutions was 3.6 (SD = 0.81), although there were significant disparities in the scores of different institutions. MAHE (N = 80, mean = 4.1) was the highest, with clear hiring processes, appraisal systems benchmarked against those in other countries, and structured onboarding processes. Next was JGU (N = 76, mean = 3.8), which was praised for its forward-thinking policies, but respondents said they were not always followed. Symbiosis (N = 76, mean = 3.5) produced middling impressions, with interviewees highlighting bureaucratic inefficiencies. Amity (N = 78, mean = 3.2) had the lowest score, which means that individuals were dissatisfied with confusing employment practices, short-term contracts, and poor ways to file complaints.

To illustrate this uncertainty, a teacher at Amity stated, "Every year feels like a new probation period."

The focus groups corroborated these results: MAHE members spoke about how important HR professionalism is, whereas Symbiosis workers talked about how bureaucratic difficulties are. JGU respondents liked the policy structure but weren't clear how it would be enforced. Employees at Amity depended on informal networks for help.

**Interpretation:** Strong and open HR practices are the foundation of institutional inclusion climates. Structured, globally aligned HR systems at universities create a stronger sense of fairness and belonging, while reliance on symbolic or inconsistent policies makes environments less welcoming.

University	HR Practices	Inclusion Climate	Retention Intention	Job Satisfaction	Productivity
Amity (N=78)	3.2	3.4	3.3	3.5	3.6
Symbiosis (N=76)	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.7
JGU (N=76)	3.8	3.9	3.7	3.8	3.9
MAHE (N=80)	4.1	4.2	3.9	4.3	4.2

Table 4. Comparative Means for HR Practices Across Institutions

This table shows the average scores and sample sizes (N) for HR procedures, inclusion atmosphere, retention intention, work satisfaction, and productivity at the four private institutions. It shows that MAHE is better in every way, but Amity is always behind, demonstrating that its HR and inclusion procedures have some fundamental problems.

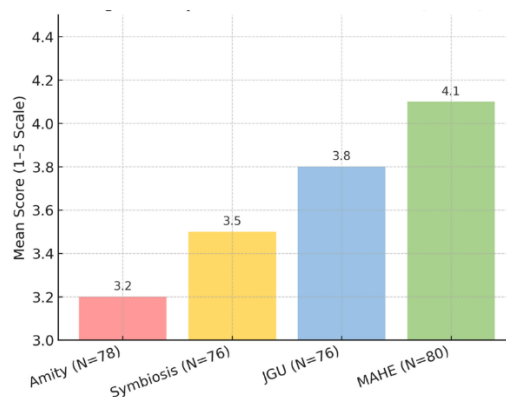


Figure 2. Comparative HR Practices Scores (with N values)

This figure shows how different colleges handle HR issues. MAHE gets the greatest grade because its HR procedures are clear and based on international standards. Amity gets the lowest score because its processes are unclear and it relies on temporary contracts.

#### 4.2 Inclusion Climate

The average score for the inclusion climate was 3.8 (SD = 0.75). MAHE (N = 80, mean = 4.2) again came out on top, thanks to structured HR systems and international partnerships that made people feel like they belonged. JGU (N = 76, mean = 3.9) came next. It was helped by progressive policy frameworks but hindered by uneven implementation. Symbiosis (N = 76, mean = 3.6) showed some differences, with inclusion being more important in student life than in faculty HR practices. Amity (N = 78, mean = 3.4) ranked the lowest, with inclusion maintained through informal cultural events rather than formal HR practices.

Qualitative data indicated analogous themes. Inclusion at MAHE was tied to working with people from other countries, but there were still language and cultural barriers. JGU faculty emphasized gender and disability policies while identifying deficiencies in socio-economic inclusion. Respondents from Symbiosis thought that inclusion was "branding-driven" but still important in student life. Amity participants characterized peer-driven cultural events as "the genuine arenas of inclusion."

**Interpretation:** Institutional climates of inclusion arise from the interplay between formal HR frameworks and cultural ethos. Informal cultural networks fill in the gaps where systemic mechanisms are weaker (Amity, Symbiosis). Strong HR systems, on the other hand, make inclusion more likely (MAHE, JGU).

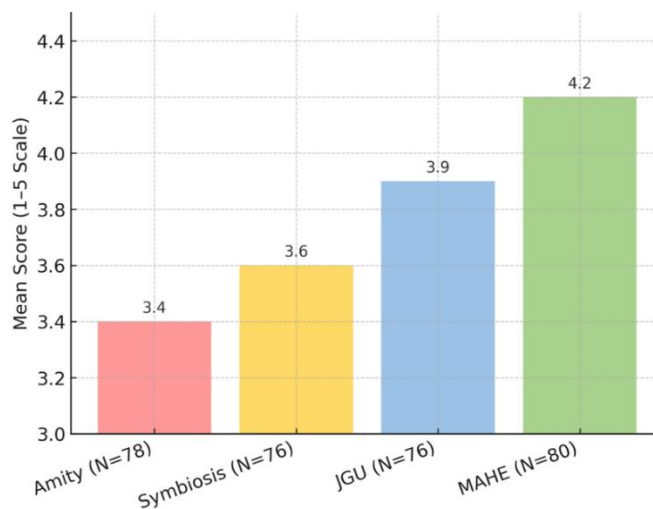


Figure 3. Comparative Inclusion Climate Scores Across Universities

This figure shows the scores for the inclusion climate in comparison. MAHE again leads the way with strong systemic inclusion mechanisms. Amity, on the other hand, relies on informal cultural events to maintain inclusion, which shows that its formal structures are weaker.

**4.3 Retention Intention**

Retention intention had the lowest overall mean, 3.5 (SD = 0.79), which shows that people were unsure about making a long-term commitment. MAHE (N = 80, mean = 3.9) had the highest score, which is in line with global standards that boost loyalty. JGU (N = 76, mean = 3.7) came next. It had progressive policies, but they were not always followed. Symbiosis (N = 76, mean = 3.5) was in the middle, which shows that loyalty was lessened because the institution was growing too quickly. Amity (N = 78, mean = 3.3) had the lowest score because long-term retention was reduced when people were hired on a contract basis.

A JGU staff member said, "We like the rules, but sometimes the department has to make sure they are followed." People do not want to stay because of that.

**Interpretation:** Compared to other outcomes, retention intention is weak because job security is the main reason for it. Without clear and stable job models, long-term loyalty is still at risk, even though people are generally happy with their jobs.

University	Retention Intention (Mean)
Amity (N=78)	3.3
Symbiosis (N=76)	3.5
JGU (N=76)	3.7
MAHE (N=80)	3.9

Table 5. Comparative Means for Retention Intention Across Institutions

The average retention intention for the four private institutions is shown in Table 2. MAHE (N = 80, mean = 3.9) had the greatest retention intention, which means that the instructors and staff are more dedicated. This is likely due to solid employment patterns and HR systems that are employed all around the world. JGU (N = 76, mean = 3.7) was next, but worries about uneven policy enforcement made allegiance weaker over time. Symbiosis (N = 76, mean = 3.5) received average scores, where the rapid growth of the institution made it harder for employees to stay. Amity (N = 78, mean = 3.3) had the lowest score. This was because employees were less likely to stay due to contractual hiring and limited job security. These results show that retention intention is the most fragile parameter, and that job security and consistent policy implementation have a significant impact on it.

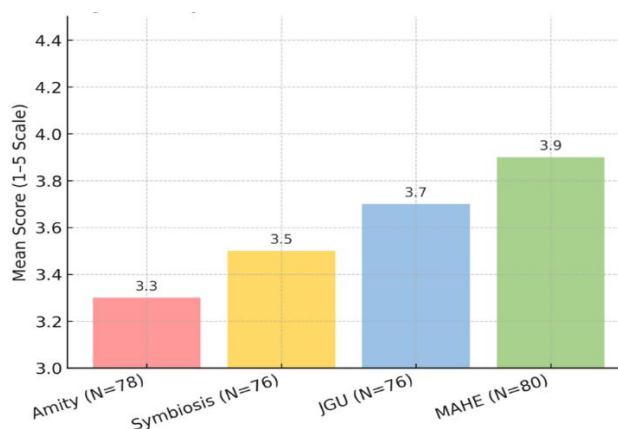


Figure 4. Comparative Retention Intention Scores (with N values)

This figure shows **retention intention** across universities. Compared to other criteria, scores are the lowest overall, which implies that long-term commitment is poor. MAHE is still ahead since its average is higher. Amity, on the other hand, has the toughest trouble maintaining personnel because its contracts aren't reliable.

#### 4.4 Job Satisfaction

The average score for job satisfaction was 3.7 (SD = 0.72). MAHE (N = 80, mean = 4.3) was the highest, and faculty members said that clear promotions, worldwide cooperation, and support from the university were the causes. JGU (N = 76, mean = 3.8) came in second because it has obvious diversity initiatives. Amity (N = 78, mean = 3.5) and Symbiosis (N = 76, mean = 3.5) had the lowest means. This indicated that there were differences between how institutions market themselves and how they really do HR.

"The brand says it is multicultural, but it takes a long time to deal with complaints," observed one professor at Symbiosis.

The similar trend was seen in focus groups: MAHE personnel claimed they were satisfied because the processes were clear and fair, but those from Amity and Symbiosis complained about how the promises made by the institutions didn't line up with what they had seen in real life.

**Interpretation:** The happiness of employees with their work is affected by both HR systems and the culture of the organization. When legislation reflects what people really go through, they are happier; when there are gaps, they are less happy.

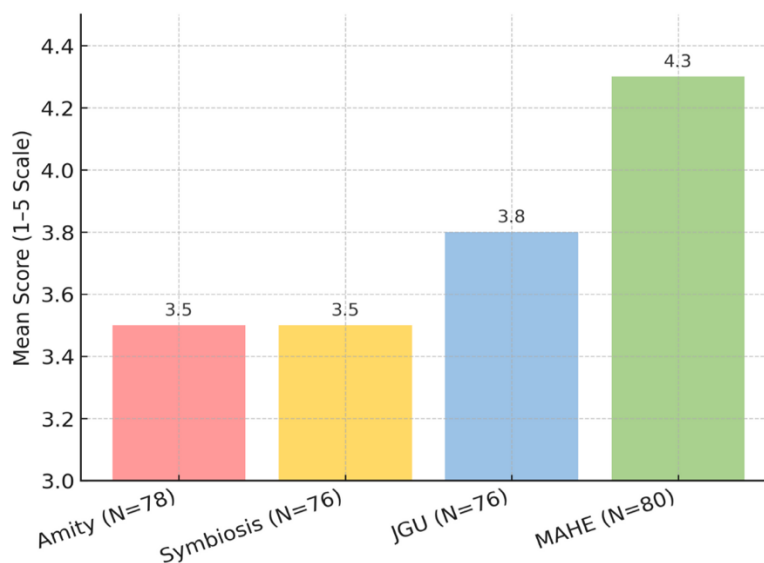


Figure 5. Comparative Job Satisfaction Scores Across Universities

This figure depicts **job satisfaction** levels. MAHE achieves the highest score, supported by clear promotions and global collaborations. Amity and Symbiosis show lower satisfaction, pointing to a mismatch between institutional branding and lived faculty experiences.

#### 4.5 Productivity

The mean for perceived productivity was the greatest, at 3.9 (SD = 0.68). MAHE (N = 80, mean = 4.2) was in the lead again, owing to HR procedures and being exposed to other nations. JGU (N = 76, mean = 3.9) came next, but the findings were less obvious since the criteria were not always followed the same way. Symbiosis (N = 76, mean = 3.7) finished in third. In this case, students' diversity made up for issues with the management. Amity (N = 78, mean = 3.6) was the lowest, and recruiting based on contracts and processes that don't change made it impossible to get things done.

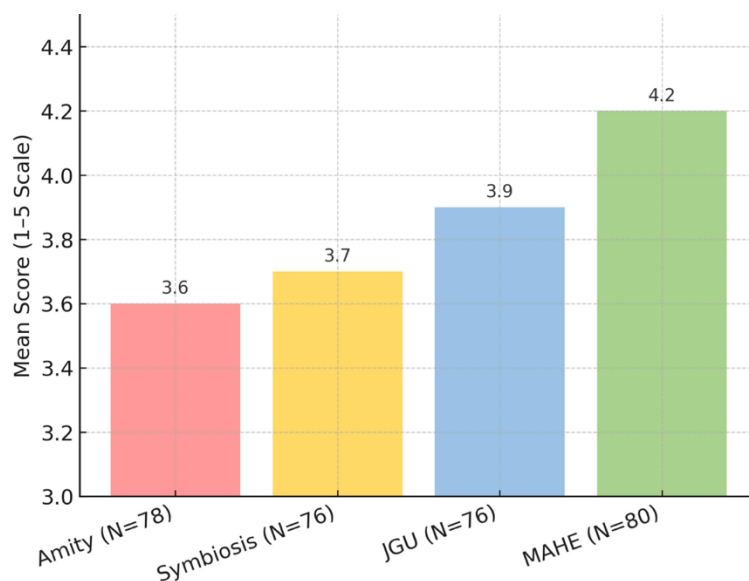
"We work hard because we believe in the vision," stated one JGU member. "But sometimes we aren't as productive because we don't have enough resources."

**Interpretation:** Productivity demonstrates how inclusiveness yields quantifiable outcomes for the company. Policies, enforcement, and the working atmosphere must all work together for inclusion to be more than simply a sign.

University	Productivity (Mean)
Amity (N=78)	3.6
Symbiosis (N=76)	3.7
JGU (N=76)	3.9
MAHE (N=80)	4.2

**Table 6. Comparative Means for Productivity Across Institutions**

Table 3 shows the average productivity levels for the four private universities side by side. MAHE (N = 80, mean = 4.2) had the highest productivity scores, which shows how good HR systems and global exposure can make an institution work better. JGU (N = 76, mean = 3.9) also reported being very productive, but faculty said that sometimes not following the rules made things less efficient. Symbiosis (N = 76, mean = 3.7) had modest output, which was assisted by student-led multiculturalism but hurt by bureaucratic delays. Amity (N = 78, mean = 3.6) had the lowest productivity, resulting from rigid administrative protocols and contractual employment, which adversely affected worker morale and performance. These results show that productivity is closely related to the environment of inclusion in an organization and the consistency of HR policies.



**Figure 6. Comparative Productivity Scores (with N values)**

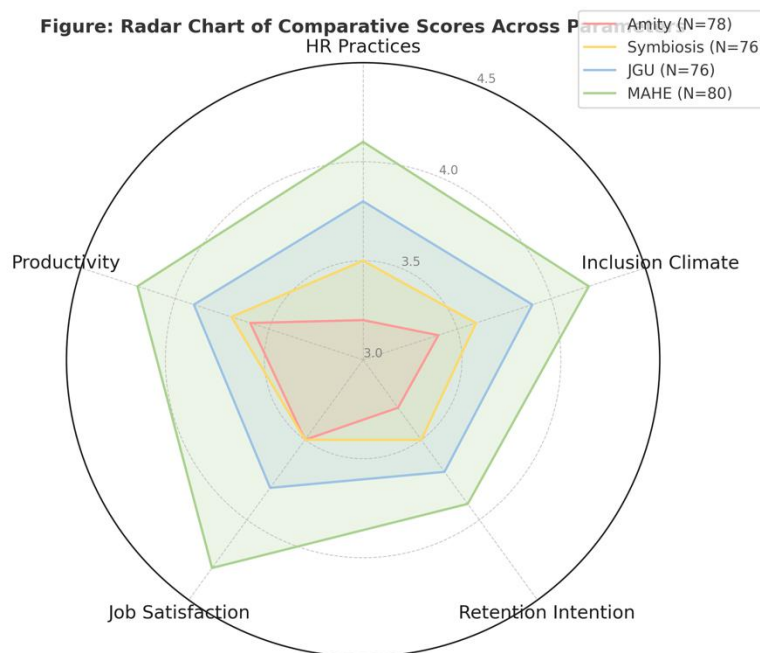
This figure shows how productive different institutions think they are. MAHE is again the highest parameter, showing how effective HR systems can improve outcomes. Amity is still the lowest, where contract-based hiring and strict rules make things less efficient.

**4.6 Cross-Parameter Insights**

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) of the combined dataset validated the mediating function of the inclusion climate:

- HR practices → Inclusion climate ( $\beta = 0.58, p < .01$ )
- Climate of inclusion → Intention to stay ( $\beta = 0.44, p < .01$ )
- Climate of inclusion → Job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.39, p < .01$ )
- Climate of inclusion → Productivity ( $\beta = 0.27, p < .05$ )

Inclusion serves as the essential intermediary connecting HR practices to organizational results. HR systems set the stage, but inclusion makes them real experiences of belonging, which in turn boost satisfaction, retention, and productivity.



**Figure 7. SEM Model of Inclusion Mediation Across Universities**

The radar map shows how well an organization is performing in terms of HR procedures, the atmosphere for inclusion, the intention to stay, work happiness, and productivity. You can easily observe how the four colleges are set up differently by looking at the chart. MAHE always achieves excellent marks in all categories, which demonstrates that it has good HR systems, policies that are based on those of other nations, and the capacity to transform inclusion into genuine outcomes for the school. The policy frameworks of JGU are forward-thinking, but the consequences are not necessarily the same. This illustrates that there are problems with turning policies into actions. Symbiosis receives an average score. It works well with diversity driven by students, but not so well with administrative uniformity. This highlights how hard it is for HR to keep up with the growth of institutions. On the other side, Amity doesn't do well on practically all fronts. Systemic issues with recruiting, handling grievances, and contract-based employment processes make it harder to include everyone and damage long-term success.

The findings reveal that inclusion is not only a sign of something, but something that can be measured and has an effect on how effectively an organization works. The findings from all four colleges indicate that HR policies directly influence inclusive climates, which subsequently impact retention, satisfaction, and production. MAHE is a standard that shows how HR frameworks that follow global standards may make both inclusiveness and performance better. JGU and Symbiosis highlight how hard it is to keep progressive rules in place when expansion is fast and enforcement isn't always the same. On the other side, Amity highlights how short-term, contract-based jobs may undermine people's sense of belonging and devotion to the school.

## **5. Discussion**

### **5.1 Inclusion as a Mediating Mechanism**

The study illustrates that inclusion is not only a theoretical construct but a measurable framework linking HR practices to institutional results. Structural Equation Modelling showed that HR practices significantly influence inclusion climates ( $\beta = 0.58, p < .01$ ), which in turn affect retention, job satisfaction, and productivity. Recent studies (Korkmaz, 2022; Eshete, 2024; Zhao, 2025) show that inclusion is the "active ingredient" that makes diversity work better for organizations. Evidence suggests that for Indian private colleges, competitiveness in the global higher education market is contingent upon the comprehensive integration of inclusion into HR frameworks, rather than on cosmetic diversity initiatives.

### **5.2 Differences Between Institutions**

The comparison research revealed a variety of institutional behaviours. MAHE always got the greatest rankings, which demonstrates that its HR processes are built on best practices from throughout the globe and that it works effectively with partners from other countries. JGU was recognized for its progressive principles, particularly when it came to include women and persons with disabilities, but it had problems making sure they were always followed. Symbiosis had a strong multicultural culture, but it was hurt by the bureaucratic challenges that came with its fast development. On the other side, Amity always did badly because of contract-based labour and imprecise recruiting, which eroded trust and loyalty. These results show that for an institution to be successful, it needs more than just progressive principles; they also need to be followed through on.

### **5.3 Keeping Employees and the Problem of Job Security**

The lowest overall metric was retention intention (mean = 3.5, SD = 0.79), which indicates that private higher education employment models have a core problem. People were nonetheless worried about long-term stability, even at stronger institutions like MAHE. On the other side, the frequent use of temporary contracts at Amity made employees less loyal. This backs up Verma's (2023) contention that knowledge workers' commitment is affected by more than just pleasure; it's also affected by clear signs of stability and institutional dependability. If Indian private institutions don't do something about job security, they might lose a lot of staff, even if they are quite happy and productive.

### **5.4 Connecting Policy and Practice**

The research demonstrates the potential contradiction between formal rules and actual circumstances. At schools like JGU and Symbiosis, using progressive frameworks in an uneven way made the gap between branding and experience even worse. At the same time, informal cultural activities like festivals, events hosted by students, and peer networks made them feel like they belonged, notably at Amity and Symbiosis. These cultural processes do offer value, but they can't take the place of systematic HR-driven inclusion. For colleges to make real progress, they need to narrow the gap between policy and practice by making procedures that hold people accountable, clear ways for people to file complaints, and hiring models that include everyone.

This research demonstrates that inclusion functions as the critical intermediary that transforms HR strategies into results of retention, satisfaction, and productivity. MAHE establishes a benchmark for HR systems that adhere to global norms in fostering long-term inclusion. Amity highlights the challenges that come with precarious employment structures, while JGU and Symbiosis show the perils of unequal enforcement. For Indian private colleges to be competitive in the long run, they need to close the gap between policy and practice and make inclusion a real, enforced framework instead of simply a promise.

### **5.5 Limitations**

- **Institutions' scope:** The study looked at four top private universities: Amity, MAHE, Symbiosis, and JGU. This does not include public and regional institutions, which makes it harder to generalize about India's higher education system as a whole.

- **Self-reported data:** Survey responses (N = 310) were based on perceptions, potentially affected by personal bias or social desirability.
- **Qualitative dataset size:** While 20 interviews and 3 focus groups enhanced the findings, the sample size is relatively small in relation to the magnitude of Indian higher education.
- **Cross-sectional design:** Data were gathered at a single time point, limiting the capacity to monitor longitudinal variations or causal relationships.

#### 5.6 Future Recommendations

- **Expand the scope of institutions:** Include public universities, regional private colleges, and new colleges to get a wider range of students.
- **Use longitudinal research:** Conduct studies over several years to see how policy changes and global events affect HR practices and inclusion climates.
- **Combine objective measures:** Use retention records, faculty turnover data, research productivity, and student demographics to back up findings.
- **Look at intersectionality:** Examine how gender, caste, socio-economic status, and disability affect inclusion practices to gain a more in-depth perspective.
- **Policy-linked evaluation:** Assess how recent national education policies and pressures from global rankings have affected the HR and inclusion strategies of institutions.

### 6. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between HR practices, inclusive cultures, and institutional results in four leading Indian private universities: Amity University, Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE), Symbiosis International University, and O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU). The study used a mix of 310 surveys, 20 interviews, and 3 focus group discussions, demonstrating that inclusion is not only an objective but a quantifiable connection between HR systems and outcomes like as retention, satisfaction, and productivity.

The findings indicated that the institutions were quite different from each other. MAHE always did better than its rivals because it had HR frameworks that followed worldwide standards and transparent recruiting policies. JGU possessed forward-thinking policy frameworks, but they were hard to put into action. On the other side, Symbiosis matched multicultural branding with challenges with running the business. Amity always lagged behind because of employment practices that were based on contracts and insufficient grievance procedures that damaged loyalty and inclusivity. These trends indicate how crucial job stability, accountability, and persistent policy enforcement are for making inclusion endure.

The main issue is that Indian private institutions are on a scale, from worldwide leaders that connect HR with inclusion to structurally weak models that rely on symbolic diversity or positions that aren't solid. Retention intention appeared as the most vulnerable outcome, highlighting the need to shift from transient employment methods to sustainable, transparent processes that enhance confidence.

In conclusion, the research empirically enhances the global dialogue on diversity and inclusion by situating it inside the Indian higher education setting. To be competitive over the long term, businesses need to reduce the gap between what they say they will do and what they really do. They also need to make inclusion a part of daily life that is systematic, enforced, and quantifiable.

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