
The relationship between organizational virtuousness, workplace diversity, and affective commitment: Mediating role of workplace inclusion

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ABSTRACT. Questo studio indaga l'associazione tra virtù organizzativa, impegno affettivo e diversità tra i docenti universitari, considerando l'inclusione sul posto di lavoro come fattore di mediazione. L'obiettivo della ricerca è quello di esplorare come i comportamenti virtuosi all'interno di un'organizzazione siano associati all'attaccamento emotivo dei dipendenti e alla diversità. Allo studio ha partecipato un campione di 320 docenti universitari provenienti da università pubbliche e private di Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore e Multan. L'analisi dei dati ha incluso statistiche descrittive, test di affidabilità, correlazione di Pearson, *t*-test, ANOVA a una via e analisi di mediazione tramite PROCESS Macro Model 4. I risultati indicano un'associazione positiva tra virtù organizzativa e impegno affettivo e diversità sul posto di lavoro. I limiti dello studio riguardano il suo disegno trasversale e il focus geografico che impediscono l'estensibilità dei risultati.

SUMMARY. This study investigates the association of organizational virtuousness, affective commitment and workplace diversity among university teachers, with workplace inclusion as a mediating factor. The objective of the research is to explore how virtuous behaviors within an organization are associated with employees' emotional attachment and diversity. A purposive convenient sample of 320 regular university instructors from public and private universities in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, and Multan participated in the study. Data were collected using standardized and established instruments. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, reliability testing, Pearson's correlation, *t*-test, one way ANOVA, and mediation analysis via PROCESS Macro Model 4. The findings indicate a positive association between organizational virtuousness and both affective commitment and workplace diversity. The study limitations include its cross-sectional design and the geographical focus, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. The implications suggest that fostering a virtuous organizational culture can enhance employee commitment and diversity, thus creating a more inclusive work environment.

Keywords: Organizational virtuousness, Affective commitment, Workplace inclusion

INTRODUCTION

Diverse scholars are increasingly emphasizing workplace inclusion; however, most of the research has been restricted in scope and has lacked robust theoretical underpinnings (Lennox, Herlihy, Sharar & Robey, 2022). This study examines the relationship of organizational virtuousness defined as a set of positive organizational characteristics such as compassion, forgiveness, and integrity with affective commitment and workplace diversity in an educational setting. Affective commitment refers to employees' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991), while workplace diversity involves the representation and inclusion of individuals from various backgrounds, which can influence organizational outcomes (Shen, Chanda, D'Netto & Monga, 2009). Workplace inclusion refers to the extent to which individuals feel valued, respected and integrated into the organization (Roberson, 2006).

The educational sector has received comparatively less attention than areas such as information technology and the industrial sector, which have been the primary focus of most research on this subject (Oztemel & Gursev, 2020). Guo and colleagues (Guo, Xue, He & Yasmin, 2023) emphasizes the importance of examining the factors that significantly impact affective commitment within the workplace.

However, while several studies have emphasized the importance of inclusion and diversity in western contexts, limited empirical research has explored how these dynamics operate within higher education institution in Pakistan. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the relationship between organizational virtuousness, workplace inclusion, workplace diversity, and affective commitment among university teachers. Furthermore, there is a lack of research investigating how organizational virtuousness may foster workplace inclusion which in turn may enhance workplace diversity and affective commitment in the context of Pakistani academia.

Furthermore, there has been not enough attention on how organizational virtuousness, workplace diversity, and emotional commitment relate to relevant demographics like gender, ethnicity, and background in education. This study fills this gap by investigating an issue that has received little attention in previous research (Sabharwal, 2014; Shore, Cleveland & Sanchez, 2011): whether demographic characteristics are linked to differences in these organizational variables.

This study contributes to the understanding of relationships between organizational virtuousness, workplace inclusion, affective commitment, and workplace diversity in educational workplaces, building on the importance of investments in education to foster a supportive and inclusive environment. Organizations use strategies and policies to build a sense of positive attitudes and behaviors toward work to meet and achieve their goals effectively, increasing employee interest, performance, and outcomes (Albrecht, Bakker, Gruman, Macey & Saks, 2015; Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2009). In today's challenging and ever-changing environment, organizations also strive to build highly knowledgeable and skillful workers (Barney & Wright, 1998).

In essence, developing such a workforce is closely associated with the mandate of higher education institutions, which remain the principal source of competent personnel (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009). The role and influence of educational institutions have thus impacted organizational performance, largely through their contribution of intellectual capital (Delanty, 2001). Therefore, it is imperative to continue investing in and fostering the growth of educational institutions, particularly those in higher education, to guarantee their ability to adapt and flourish in a world undergoing rapid transformation.

At present, higher education institutions are engaged in developing operational strategies to aid instructors in establishing a welcoming learning environment. By fostering a virtuous work environment grounded in forgiveness and integrity, organizations can enhance productivity and satisfaction (Cameron, Bright & Caza, 2004; Zaheer, Breyer, Dumay & Enjeti, 2022). Mor Barak (2015) describes workforce diversity as the categorization of employees into distinct groups, influencing employment outcomes such as job opportunities, workplace interactions, and promotion prospects. Building on this understanding, inclusive and diverse workplaces recognize and value the unique needs, perspectives, and potential of their workforce (Roberson, 2019). This approach not only mitigates challenges associated with diversity but also fosters deeper employee trust and commitment (Shore, Cleveland & Sanchez, 2018). Consequently, inclusive workplace cultures lead to improved recruitment, employee loyalty, innovation, and performance (Cox, 1994; Sabharwal, 2014).

Literature review

Organizational virtuousness. Cameron and colleagues (2004) defines organizational virtuousness as “the behaviors of individuals, collective activities, cultural qualities, or processes that encourage and maintain virtuousness within an organization” (p. 768). Virtue is a concept that is significant in organizations and can be defined as the embodiment of moral excellence, a beneficial impact on individuals, and an encouragement of societal improvement (Cameron et al., 2004). The evaluation of an organization’s virtuousness entails the examination of five fundamental components: optimism, trust, compassion, integrity, and forgiveness (Cameron et al., 2004). The presence of organizational virtuousness can enhance an organization ability to withstand challenges and achieve sustained success over time. The attribute is considered self-sustaining since the setting functions as a conductor of virtue, potentially motivating others to act virtuously (Meyer, 2018). In a broader sense, virtuousness in the workplace aims to create a setting that promotes self-esteem, improves the skills and abilities of employees, and increases their whole state of being (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012).

Despite the ongoing debate regarding the existence of universal virtues and the precise nature of goodness, each society and culture maintains a unique set of characteristics that they consider to be virtuous (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Cameron et al. (2004) have demonstrated that the presence of virtuousness in individuals and organizations enhances their ability to effectively navigate challenging circumstances, thereby fostering fortitude and resilience. As a result, it serves to protect the organization from the adverse consequences frequently associated with downsizing (Cameron & Dutton, 2003).

The fields of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and positive organizational behavior (Luthans, 2002) have greatly enhanced our scientific knowledge of positive traits, virtues, emotions, and institutions that promote the well-being and success of individuals. Peterson and Seligman’s (2004) research focus on individuals, particularly through the development of the values in action classification of character strengths and virtues. This classification identifies and organizes essential human traits that contribute to individuals’ pursuit of happiness and well-being. Affective well-being has been found to considerably impact the association between organizational virtuousness and outcomes such as affective

commitment, work engagement, job performance, and organizational citizenship practices (Ahmed, Rehman, Ali, Ali & Anwar, 2018; Magnier-Watanabe, Uchida, Orsini & Benton, 2020; Singh, David & Mikkilineni, 2018).

Organizational virtuousness and positive outcomes. Employees who perceive their organization as ethically sound will likely experience positive emotions, such as happiness, joy, and contentment. These emotions, in return, amplify their commitment in their task (Sharma & Goyal, 2022). Rego and colleagues (Rego, Ribeiro & Cunha, 2010) found that organizational virtuousness enhances employees’ state of flow, engagement, and well-being by fostering positive social interactions that generate pleasant emotions. Ho and colleagues (Ho, Hou, Poon, Leung & Kwan, 2023) conducted a study that focuses on analyzing the individual components of collective appreciation, compassion, care, and forgiveness and this study highlights the impact of each of these elements on positive employee outcomes and enhances theoretical understanding by revealing the specific effects of individual components of organizational virtuousness on well-being and organizational commitment.

Additionally, organizational virtuousness contributes to creating an inclusive and respectful environment that values differences, thereby supporting the development of workplace diversity (Shore et al., 2018). Virtuous practices like fairness, compassion, and integrity promote psychological safety, which encourages diverse individuals to practice and thrive within organizations (Grimani & Gotsis, 2020). Thus, organizational virtuousness not only enhances affective commitment but also fosters a more diverse and inclusive workplace culture. Based on these relationships reported in the literature, the following hypotheses can be formulated.

H1: Organizational virtuousness is positively correlated with Workplace diversity among university teachers;

H2: Organizational virtuousness is positively correlated with the Affective commitment among university teachers.

Organizational virtuousness and workplace inclusion. Shore et al. (2018) discuss the relationship between organizational virtuousness and workplace diversity within the context of inclusive workplaces. The authors highlight that fostering organizational virtuousness, which involves principles such as integrity, compassion, and respect, is central to promoting inclusivity and effectively managing diversity. They propose that such practices enhance a supportive environment, enabling diverse employees to feel valued and engaged. This connection emphasizes that

organizational virtuousness not only supports moral and ethical behavior but also serves as a practical framework for achieving greater workplace diversity.

Nawaz and Laij (2021) study that organizational virtuousness plays a crucial role in enhancing organizational effectiveness within private universities by fostering a positive environment marked by trust, integrity, and compassion. Virtuous practices, such as ethical decision-making and supportive leadership, contribute to better professional development for faculty and staff, as well as improved student outcomes. This alignment of virtuousness with educational settings highlights its importance in creating resilient and inclusive institutional cultures that drive success in higher education contexts.

Workplace diversity. Building on the discussion of organizational factors that influence employee outcomes, it is also essential to consider the role of workforce diversity in shaping the workplace experience. The term diversity refers to the compositional distinctions among individuals within a work unit (Roberson, Ryan & Ragins, 2017). These discrepancies can lead individuals to perceive others as either like or different from themselves. Manoharan and Singal (2017) provide a comprehensive definition of workforce diversity as the heterogeneity and differences among employees in an organization in terms of race, age, ethnicity, cultural background, physical abilities, religion, gender, sexual orientation, language, education, lifestyle, beliefs, appearance, and economic status.

Simultaneously, organizations in a diverse array of sectors have begun to prioritize demographic and organizational diversity. Numerous researchers have proposed typologies for the classification of diversity attributes like Milliken and Martins (1996) distinguished between observable attributes (age, gender, and ethnicity) and latent attributes (education, functional background, and tenure). Harrison and colleagues (Harrison, Price & Bell, 1998) classified diversity into two categories: surface-level diversity and deep-level diversity.

Despite the utilization of distinct terminology, these classifications are intrinsically comparable. According to prior research (Webber & Donahue, 2001), diversity can be classified into two categories: task-oriented diversity (tenure, functional, and educational background) and relations-oriented diversity (age, gender, racial/ethnic). In conclusion, Webber and Donahue (2001) research has classified diversity into two primary categories: social categorization and informational diversity.

Workplace diversity plays a crucial role in shaping employee performance and organizational success, especially within the educational sector and workforce diversity introduces a variety of perspectives, skills, and experiences, fostering creativity and enhancing problem-solving capabilities (Radha & Aithal, 2024). It enables educational institutions to better understand and address the needs of diverse populations while also enriching academic and administrative functions (Sohail et al., 2019).

Affective commitment. Affective organizational commitment refers to the emotional attachment employees have toward their organization, reflecting the strength of their identification with and involvement in it (Meyer & Allen, 1997). When employees have strong relationships and trust in their organization, their commitment to the organization is increased (Klein, Cooper, Molloy & Swanson, 2014). Organizations can cultivate employees' emotional loyalty and confidence by offering a variety of incentives, including compensation, managerial support, and opportunities for professional development. Employees respond to these incentives by enhancing their affective attachment to the organization, trust, and commitment to achieving organizational objectives, as per social exchange theory (Kim, Roh, Dong & Lee, 2016).

Employees' experiences throughout their work life in an organization significantly influence their socialization process and overall effectiveness, which in turn impacts their emotional attachment to the organization (Saks & Gruman, 2014). Lee and colleagues (Lee, Carswell & Allen, 2000) exhibited that senior managers and leadership's open communication and support for employees foster affective commitment, thereby enhancing productivity and performance.

Affective commitment enhances the likelihood of employees engaging creatively and striving for organizational success (Fu, Ye & Law, 2014; Nazir, Shafi, Atif, Qun & Abdullah, 2019). Academic institutions, especially those in higher education, benefit from affective commitment as it positively influences organizational identification and individual innovation. Employees who feel emotionally attached to their workplace are more inclined to contribute to innovation, which is crucial in highly competitive and dynamic educational environments (Khaola & Coldwell, 2019).

Workplace inclusion. The concept of inclusion-exclusion in the workplace refers to the extent to which an individual feels thoroughly integrated into the organizational system.

This integration may take place through formal methods, such as having access to information and participating in decision-making processes, or through informal methods, such as engaging in casual conversations and lunch meetings where information is exchanged, and decisions are made less formally (Mor Barak, 2015). An individual must satisfy two interrelated needs to feel a sense of belonging within a workgroup: the need to maintain a sense of individuality and the need to feel a part of the group (Shore, Randel et al., 2011).

Ferdman and Deane (2014) defines inclusion as the extent to which organizations and their members effectively engage, utilize, and develop relationships with individuals from a variety of origins. Inclusion refers to a work environment that empowers individuals with diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and cognitive styles to collaborate effectively and leverage their full potential in achieving organizational objectives rooted in sound principles, as defined by Pless and Maak (2004). In recent decades, perceived inclusion has garnered attention in management research and has been developed in education and social work research (Tang, Zheng & Chen, 2017). Perceived inclusion is the phenomenon by which employees perceive that they are accepted and acknowledged in the workplace. According to academicians, inclusion is indicative of the psychological satisfaction and positive experiences of employees within the organization (Mor Barak, Cherin & Berkman, 1998).

Research in this field is concentrated on developing work environments that foster a sense of inclusion among individuals from various backgrounds (Bilimoria, Joy & Liang, 2008). Inclusion and diversity are inextricably linked, as gender consistently influences information networks and decision-making (Findler, Wind & Barak, 2007). The access and legitimacy paradigm emphasizes the alignment of workforce demographics with those of key groups to serve specialized organizations better, while the discrimination and fairness paradigm emphasizes equal opportunity, equitable treatment, recruitment, and compliance (Thomas & Ely, 1996). Social identity theory asserts that employees' perspectives regarding organizational actions and their affiliation with identity groups impact organizational policies (Cho & Mor Barak, 2008).

Mediating role of workplace inclusion. Workplace inclusion and diversity are interrelated and strongly supported by social exchange theory. Inclusive work environments encourage employees from diverse backgrounds to engage more freely in social exchanges without fear of bias or discrimination.

Shore et al. (2011) argues that inclusion results from the fair treatment of all employees, creating a positive cycle of trust and collaboration. When employees feel included, they reciprocate by contributing to a more diverse and harmonious workplace culture.

Moreover, workplace inclusion plays a pivotal mediating role in linking organizational virtuousness to both workplace diversity and affective commitment. Inclusion serves as the behavioral expression of organizational virtuousness, fostering an environment where diverse individuals feel psychologically safe and engaged (Nishii & Rich, 2013). When employees feel genuinely included, respected, valued, and integrated they are more likely to develop emotional bonds with their organization, reinforcing affective commitment (Ferdman & Deane, 2014; Shore et al., 2011). This inclusive climate enables the translation of virtuous values into tangible diversity outcomes and strong emotional commitment to the organization (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). Based on these relationships reported in the literature, the following hypotheses can be proposed.

H3: Workplace inclusion mediates the relationship between Organizational virtuousness and Workplace diversity among university teachers;

H4: Workplace inclusion mediates the relationship between Organizational virtuousness and Affective commitment among university teachers.

Gender differences in perspective of organizational setting. Gender has long been recognized as a key factor influencing individuals' experiences and perceptions in an organizational setting. In academic institutions, gender-based disparities in access to opportunities, inclusion and perception of organizational values have been widely documented. Le and colleagues (Le, Palmer Johnson & Fujimoto, 2021) emphasized the gender plays a crucial role in how employees perceive workplace fairness, inclusion, and overall organizational support, particularly in diverse academic environments. Similarly, Shore et al. (2018) argued that gender diversity can shape both the interpersonal and structural dynamics of workplace, affecting levels of perceived inclusion and commitment. This study underlines that gender is not merely a demographic variable, but a social determinant that affects how employees engage with organizational cultural values. Therefore, gender is expected to significantly influence how university teachers perceive organizational virtuousness, workplace inclusion, workplace diversity, and affective commitment.

H5: There is a significant gender-based difference in Organizational virtuousness, Workplace inclusion, Workplace diversity, and Affective commitment among university teachers.

Influence of educational qualification on organizational practices. Educational qualification also influences an employee's perceptions and engagement with organizational settings. Higher levels of education are often associated with greater expectations for fairness, inclusion, and professional growth. Altbach et al. (2009) noted that individuals with advanced academic qualifications tend to have more nuanced understanding of organizational values and may seek more inclusive and supportive environments. Furthermore, Meyer and Allen (1997) theory of organizational commitment highlights that educational background can shape affective commitment by influencing how employees interpret organizational support and shared values. These findings suggest that individuals with varying educational qualifications may perceive and respond to organizational virtuousness, workplace inclusion, workplace diversity, and affective commitment in different patterns.

H6: There is a significant difference based on educational qualification in Organizational virtuousness, Workplace inclusion, Workplace diversity, and Affective commitment among university teachers.

Impact of ethnicity on workplace perception. Ethnic background plays a pivotal role in shaping workplace experiences, particularly in multicultural or multiethnic settings like Pakistan. Employees from different ethnic groups may perceive organizational policies and practices differently based on their cultural identity, which in turn can influence their sense of belonging, and trust in the organization. Mor Barak (2015) highlighted that ethnic identity is closely linked to perceptions of organizational justice and inclusion, which are foundational of affective commitment. Roberson (2019) emphasized that recognizing and valuing ethnic diversity within organization leads to higher organizational trust and positive work attitude. In academic institutions where ethnic identities intersect with professional roles, understanding how ethnicity shapes organizational perception becomes essential.

H7: There is a significant difference based on ethnic background in Organizational virtuousness, Workplace inclusion, Workplace diversity, and Affective commitment among university teachers.

Research design

The investigation implemented a quantitative research design. Quantitative research necessitates the collection of data in a structured manner using survey methods and vast samples. Furthermore, a cross-sectional research approach was employed to gather data on the population at a specific point in time.

METHOD

Participants

A purposive convenient sample consisting of 320 regular university teachers was selected for the study. These teachers were employed across both public and private universities, ensuring a diverse representation of academic institutions. The sampling was conducted in specific geographical regions, namely Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, and Multan. These areas were targeted to capture a broad range of educational environments and teacher experiences from major cities in Pakistan, providing a balanced perspective on the study's subject matter. The purposive nature of the sampling allowed for the selection of participants who were most relevant to the research objectives. Participants in this study's sample needed to meet the criterion of having at least a master's degree (16 years of education), being permanent university teachers, and having one year of experience.

Table 1 represents gender, education level, and ethnicity as the demographic characteristics of the sample. The gender distribution within the sample shows a near-equal representation, with males slightly outnumbering (52.2%) than females (47.8%). Most participants (51.6%) possess a Ph.D, while those with an M.Phil. (32.2%) and an M.Sc. (16.3%) follow. Punjabis are the most numerous ethnic group (53.4%), followed by Sindhi (16.3%), Pashtuns (15.3%), and Saraiki (15.0%).

Instruments

Organizational virtuousness. Organizational virtuousness was assessed using a 29-item Likert-type response scale developed by Cameron (2004). The scale encompassed five characteristics of organizational virtuousness: social

Table 1 – Demographic profile of the sample (N = 320)

Demographics	<i>n</i>	%	Demographics	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Gender</i>			<i>Ethnicity</i>		
Male	167	52.2%	Punjabi	171	53.4%
Female	153	47.8%	Pashtun	49	15.3%
<i>Education</i>			Sindhi	52	16.3%
M.Sc.	52	16.3%	Saraiki	48	15%
M.Phil.	103	32.2%			
Ph.D	165	51.6%			

optimism, trust, compassion, integrity, and forgiveness. Cameron et al. (2004) demonstrated that the scale has a high level of internal consistency, with an estimate of $\alpha = .92$. The scale has a Likert-type rating system with five response categories, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), and items are like “We treat each other with respect”. The current score range for the scale extends from 29 to 145. A high score on this scale represents a significant occurrence of virtuous practices inside the organization, and a low score implies a low frequency of organizational virtuousness.

Workplace inclusion. Workplace inclusion means that people across varying identities feel valued, welcomed, respected, included, represented, and heard and that they entirely belong and can be authentic (Lennox et al., 2022). The study used the workplace inclusion scale developed by Lennox et al. (2022). The workplace inclusion scale designed included eight dimensions and showed trust, values, individual characteristics, personal work engagement, access to opportunity, fair rewards, cultural responsiveness, respect, and social acceptance as the most pertinent dimensions for analyzing inclusion. The reliability of the eight-item scale was estimated to be with a coefficient alpha of .91 (Lennox et al., 2022). The eight items of workplace inclusion are each scored on a Likert scale of 1-5 and range from 8-40. A high score on the scale stands for vital inclusion in the workplace and vice versa.

Workplace diversity. Workplace diversity refers to a workplace composed of employees of varying characteristics, such as different sexes, genders, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, etc. Workplace diversity is measured using the diversity scale, which consists of 14 items and ranges between 14 and 70. The scale is a Likert 5-point scale, with being strongly disagreed (1) to being strongly agreed (5), and the alpha reliability of the scale is of $\alpha = .84$ (Dastane & Esheghe, 2015). A high score stands for high diversity in the workplace and vice versa (Dastane & Esheghe, 2015).

Affective commitment. Affective organizational commitment is a robust indicator of the intensity of the relationship between employees and the organization, as it represents the emotional bond that employees feel towards their organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). An eight-item scale devised by Meyer and Allen (1997) was employed to evaluate the affective commitment of participants to their institution in this study; four items are reverse items (4, 5, 6, and 8), and four items are positive (1, 2, 3, and 7) of the affective commitment scale. The alpha reliability was at $\alpha = .91$ (Allen & Meyer, 1997). The Likert-type scale includes five response categories, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7), with a potential score range of 8-56. Higher scores indicate greater affective commitment to the organization, whereas lower scores suggest a reduced level of commitment.

Procedure

The questionnaires were completed by individuals, and the data was analyzed for reliability using statistical methods. To accomplish a variety of results and more effectively summarize the findings, various statistical analyses were implemented following the study's objectives. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaires within 10-15 minutes, following the provision of informed consent at the start of the survey. Informed consent, demographic sheets, and all study instruments were included in the face-to-face questionnaires. The participant was informed that all responses would be kept confidential and used exclusively for the study. Participants were advised that they had the option to disengage from the study at any time. However, they were strongly encouraged to participate with the utmost honesty and enthusiasm. Ultimately, the participants expressed their gratitude for the time and responses they provided.

Ethical considerations

The survey aims to provide participants with a clear understanding of its objectives, the topics being explored, and the intended use of the collected data. Participation is entirely voluntary, and individuals have the right to withdraw at any stage without any repercussions. Steps have been taken to protect participants' data and ensure its confidentiality, preventing any unauthorized access. Additionally, the selection of participants is conducted fairly and impartially, ensuring equitable treatment for all. Every participant receives consistent information, care, and respect throughout the process.

Data analysis

The data analysis for this study was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26. Various statistical methods were employed to test hypotheses and address the research objectives. To establish the psychometric properties of the scales used, descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha) were calculated to ensure internal consistency. Additionally, correlation analysis was conducted using Pearson's correlation coefficient to explore the strength and nature of relationships among study

variables, including organizational virtuousness, workplace inclusion, workplace diversity, and affective commitment.

For mediation analysis, the SPSS Process Macro (Model 4) was utilized. This allowed for the examination of the indirect effects of predictors on outcomes through mediating variables, providing insights into the mechanisms underlying the relationships among the variables. To analyze mean differences, both independent samples *t*-tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were applied. The *t*-test was used to assess differences between two groups (e.g., gender), while one-way ANOVA was employed for comparisons among multiple groups (e.g., ethnicity or education levels). Post hoc tests were conducted following ANOVA to identify specific group differences where significant results were observed.

RESULTS

The descriptive statistics and alpha reliability coefficients for measures are presented in Table 2. It is generally acknowledged that a Cronbach alpha value of eight or higher indicates a region of satisfactory reliability (Kline, 2015). The alpha coefficients of all instruments are within the range of .72 to .93, as demonstrated. This range is not only acceptable but also suggests that all scales are reliable. It is also evident that the actual scores of all the instruments are within the potential range. The normality of the data is evaluated by calculating skewness and kurtosis. A skewness score between -1 and +1 is considered outstanding, while a value between -2 and +2 is considered acceptable. Skewness levels that exceed -2 and +2 suggest a high degree of normality. The range of values for kurtosis that is considered acceptable is $\sqrt{2}$ to +2. Table 2 demonstrates that the values for all scales are within the permissible range, which suggests that the data is normal.

Correlation between study variables

The Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated among the study variables using a sample of 320 participants. Organizational virtuousness, Workplace inclusion, Workplace diversity, and Affective commitment comprise the variables that were investigated. Significant correlations are denoted by $p < .05$ and $p < .01$.

The correlation matrix among the study variables is

Table 2 – Descriptive statistic and psychometric properties of the study instruments (N = 320)

Variables	K	α	M	SD	Range		Skew	Kurtosis
					Actual	Potential		
Organizational virtuousness	29	.93	115.59	17.23	41-145	29-145	-.78	1.15
Workplace inclusion	8	.94	25.69	8.98	8-40	8-40	-.35	-.96
Workplace diversity	14	.92	46.04	11.86	14-70	14-70	-.72	.21
Affective commitment	8	.71	36.74	8.34	14-56	8-56	.04	-.45

Legenda. K = number of items; Skew = Skewness.

illustrated in Table 3. It demonstrated that Organizational virtuousness has a robust positive correlation with Affective commitment, Workplace diversity, and Workplace inclusion. Affective commitment and Workplace diversity are significantly correlated with Workplace inclusion. All the significant correlations are positive, indicating that the higher levels of one variable are correlated with higher levels of the other ones.

Mediation analysis

SPSS Macroprocess 4 was used for mediation analysis, with workplace inclusion acting as a mediator between organizational virtuousness as predictors, and workplace diversity and affective commitment as outcome variables.

Table 4 illustrates the results of the mediation analysis, which is designed to examine the indirect relationship between organizational virtuousness and workplace diversity. The results indicate that workplace inclusion serves as a mediator in the relationship between organizational virtuousness and workplace diversity. The mediation is statistically supported by indirect effect ($\beta = .06^{***}$, $p < .001$) whose confidence interval (.01, .11) does not include zero. Additionally, the workplace inclusion explains the relationship between organizational virtuousness and workplace diversity, as evidenced by the fact that the coefficient of direct effect ($\beta = .03$) is less than the total effect ($\beta = .09^*$, $p < .02$) while the indirect effect shows consistency in direction and significance. This finding

indicates that workplace inclusion plays a mediating role in the relationship between organizational virtuousness and workplace diversity. Figure 1 illustrates this mediating relationship.

Table 5 illustrates the results of a mediation study that examines the indirect relationship of organizational virtuousness on affective commitment. The investigation specifically concentrates on the mediation link of workplace inclusion. The findings suggest that workplace inclusion is a significant factor in the mediation of the relationship between affective commitment and organizational virtuousness. The direct effect coefficient ($\beta = .10^{***}$, $p < .000$) is considerably smaller than the overall effect coefficient ($\beta = .13^{***}$, $p < .001$), and upper and lower boundaries of the indirect effect in same direction (Positive) indicating that the mediator effectively explains the association between the predictor and the outcome. This evidence supports the hypothesis that workplace inclusion serves as a mediator in the relationship between organizational virtuousness and affective commitment. The mediating relationship is illustrated in Figure 2.

Group differences

The mean differences of demographic variables are assessed using an independent sample *T*-test and One-Way ANOVA to determine the group mean differences among the study variables. Table 6 shows a significant mean difference

Table 3 – Correlation matrix among study variables (N = 320)

Variables	1	2	3	4
1 Organizational virtuousness	—			
2 Workplace inclusion	.14*	—		
3 Workplace diversity	.13*	.66**	—	
4 Affective commitment	.27**	.45**	.39**	—

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ **Table 4** – Mediating role of workplace inclusion in the relationship between Organizational virtuousness and Workplace diversity among university teachers (N = 320)

Variables	β	SE	t	p	95%CI	
					LL	UL
<i>Direct effect</i>						
OV-WI	.07**	.02**	2.45	.01	.01	.12
WI-WD	.86***	.05***	15.28	.000	.75	.97
OV-WD	.03	.03	.914	.36	−.03	.08
<i>Indirect effect</i>						
OV-WI-WD	.06				.01	.11
Total effect						
	.09*	.04**	2.29	.02	.01	.16

Legenda. OV = Organizational virtuousness; WI = Workplace inclusion; WD = Workplace diversity.** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Figure 1 – Mediating role of Workplace inclusion between Organizational virtuousness and Workplace diversity (N = 320)

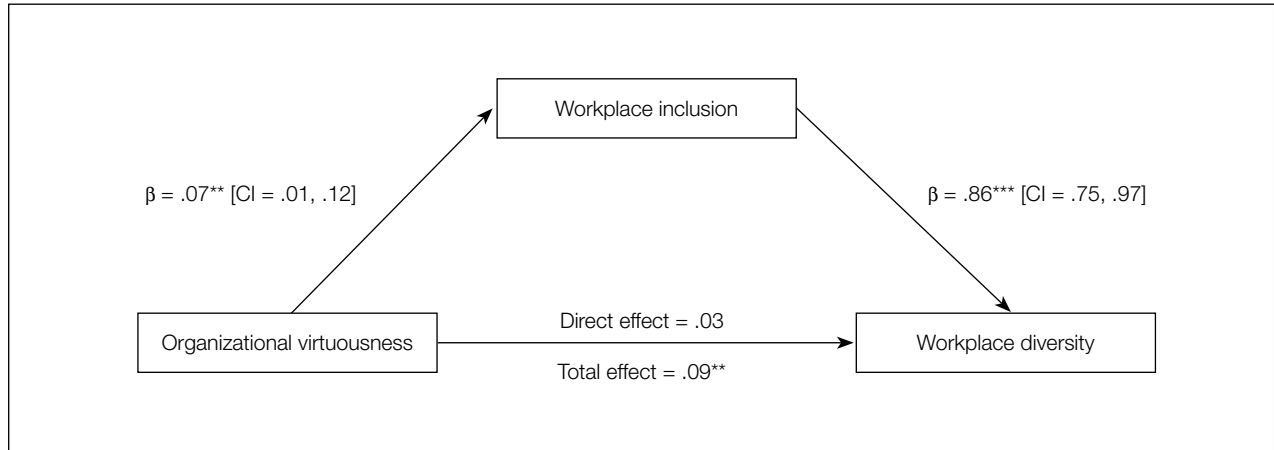


Table 5 – Mediating role of Workplace inclusion in the relationship between Organizational virtuousness and Affective commitment among university teachers (N = 320)

Variables	β	SE	t	p	95%CI	
					LL	UL
<i>Direct effect</i>						
OV-WI	.07**	.03**	2.45	.01	.01	.13
WI-AC	.39***	.05***	8.63	.000	.30	.48
OV-AC	.10***	.02***	4.31	.000	.06	.15
<i>Indirect effect</i>						
	.10				.05	.14
<i>Total effect</i>						
	.13***	.02***	4.99	.000	.08	.18

Legenda. OV = Organizational virtuousness; WI = Workplace inclusion; AC = Affective commitment.

** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Figure 2 – Mediating role of Workplace inclusion between Organizational virtuousness and Affective commitment (N = 320)

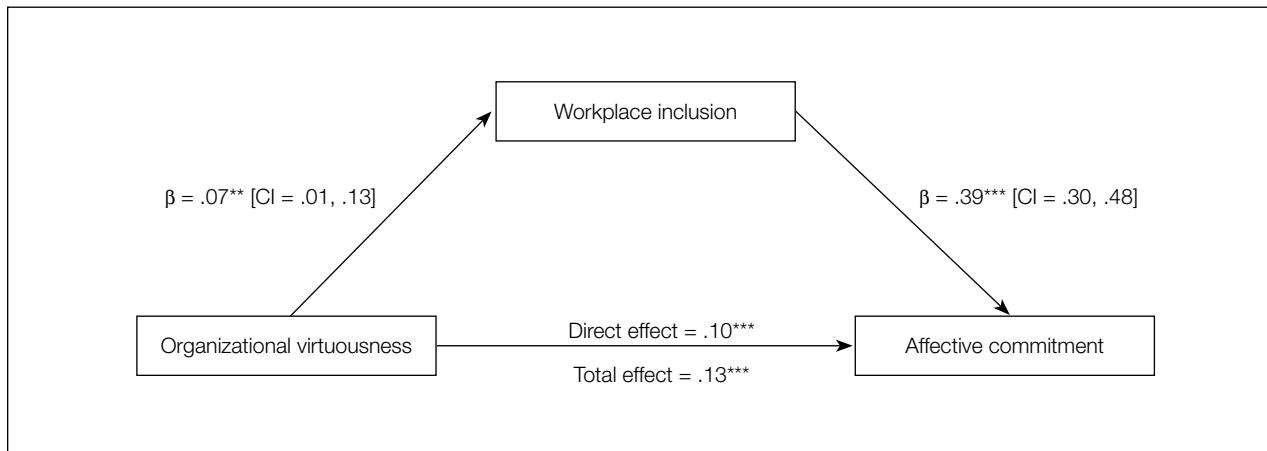


Table 6 – Mean differences in study variables across gender (N = 320)

Variables	Gender				<i>t</i> (318)	<i>p</i>	95%CI		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>Males</i>		<i>Females</i>				<i>UL</i>	<i>LL</i>	
	<i>(n = 168)</i>		<i>(n = 152)</i>						
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>					
OV	113.29	17.55	118.14	16.55	−.74	.46	2.34	−5.16	−.08
WI	25.56	8.62	25.84	9.41	.27	.42	1.72	−2.27	.03
WD	47.18	10.70	44.79	12.94	1.78	.03	4.99	−.21	.20
AC	36.01	8.08	37.55	8.58	1.63	.24	.31	−3.37	.18

Legenda. OV = Organizational virtuousness; WI = Workplace inclusion; WD = Workplace diversity; AC = Affective commitment.

in workplace diversity between male and female faculty. No significant mean difference is found between male and female faculty in organizational virtuousness, workplace inclusion, and affective commitment. First, *t*-test is used to detect gender differences, with female teachers obtaining lower scores in workplace diversity compared to their male colleagues. In contrast, male instructors exhibit lower levels

of organizational virtuousness, workplace inclusion, and affective commitment compared to their female counterparts.

Table 7 analysis highlights notable disparities in organizational virtuousness across different educational qualifications. Specifically, individuals with Master's and M.Phil./MS degrees demonstrated significantly higher levels of organizational virtuousness compared to those

Table 7 – Mean differences in study variables across education (N = 320)

Variables	M.Sc.		M.Phil.		Ph.D		F (317)	p	η ²	Post Hoc
	(n = 52)		(n = 103)		(n = 165)					
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD				
OV	119.25	16.09	118.32	13.97	112.74	18.93	4.84	.01	.03	1>3 2>3
WI	25.90	9.69	26.39	9.07	25.19	8.73	.58	.56	.00	—
WD	47.85	12.25	44.85	12.58	46.22	11.25	1.14	.32	.00	—
AC	38.63	7.57	35.66	8.59	36.82	8.35	2.23	.11	.00	—

Legenda. OV = Organizational virtuousness; WI = Workplace inclusion; WD = Workplace diversity; AC = Affective commitment.

holding Ph.D. degrees. The analysis did not reveal significant differences in the other variables under study, indicating that educational level may not heavily influence factors like workplace inclusion, workplace diversity, or affective commitment.

Table 8 shows that Punjabi, Sindhi, and Pashtun teachers have higher organizational virtuousness than Saraiki university teachers. Teachers who speak Punjabi and Sindhi have more outstanding affective commitment than those who speak Pashtun and Saraiki. University teachers with Punjabi ethnicity represent higher mean differences than those with Pashtun, Sindhi, and Saraiki ethnicity on organizational virtuousness. Sindhi-speaking teachers have more mean differences in affective commitment than Punjabi, Pashtun, and Saraiki-speaking teachers.

DISCUSSION

In the present study, the role of workplace inclusion is examined as a mediator in the intricate relationships between organizational virtuousness, workplace diversity, and affective commitment among university faculty members.

This investigation underscores the significance of virtuous behavior in the promotion of the diverse and inclusive work environment and commitment by investigating how workplace inclusion influences relationships.

The correlation analysis supported Hypothesis 1, indicating that organizational virtuousness among university teachers is positively correlated with workplace diversity. Vallett (2010) provides evidence of a substantial correlation between organizational virtuousness and a diverse workplace. According to Cameron and Dutton (2003), organizational virtuousness is associated with what individuals and organizations aspire to be when they are at their very best and the best of the human condition (Cameron et al., 2004). It affects how a group defines itself, the values it upholds, and how those values are translated into actions. Organizational diversity is a collection of fundamental beliefs or assumptions that are cultivated as an organization adjusts to its environment and internal integration in higher education (Schein, 2010). This workplace diversity is characterized by its structure, environment, and values (Chaffee & Tierney, 1988).

Organizational diversity within the academic environment, therefore, operates not only as a contextual

Table 8 – Mean differences in study variables across ethnicity (N = 320)

Variables	Punjabi		Pashtun		Sindhi		Saraiki		F (316)	p	η ²	Post Hoc
	(n = 171)		(n = 49)		(n = 52)		(n = 48)					
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD				
OV	117.32	16.09	116.89	18.03	114.13	17.61	109.69	18.97	2.71	.04	.03	1>4 2>4
WI	25.33	8.96	25.84	9.79	26.08	9.53	26.39	7.70	.22	.88	.00	
WD	45.15	12.27	47.86	12.56	47.13	10.52	45.19	11.55	.76	.52	.00	
AC	36.29	8.38	37.20	9.43	39.12	7.78	35.31	7.24	2.11	.09	.02	3>1 3>4

Legenda. OV = Organizational virtuousness; WI = Workplace inclusion; WD = Workplace diversity; AC = Affective commitment.

setting but rather as a dynamic of collective beliefs and practices that impinge upon the way the universities deal with and respond to certain external and internal challenges (Schein, 2010). This was marked by its frameworks, settings, and value systems that set about turning the workplace into a suitable environment for germinating diverse views (Chaffee & Tierney, 1988). A positive correlation was observed indicating that organizational virtuousness substantially is associated with diverse workplace in higher education institutions, leading toward better service to a progressively more diverse culture and workplace.

The analysis also demonstrated a substantial correlation between organizational virtuousness and affective commitment among university teachers, thereby supported Hypothesis 2. Employees who perceive their organization as virtuous are more inclined to experience positive emotions, including pleasure, contentment, happiness, and pleasantness. This, in turn, can possibly result in increased levels of commitment and engagement in their work (Sharma & Goyal, 2022). The positive emotions that result from positive social interactions foster a state of continuous and effortless performance, active involvement,

and overall satisfaction among employees, which is a result of organizational virtuousness (Rego et al., 2010). Ho et al. (2023) investigate the contributions of various components of corporate virtuousness, such as collective gratitude, compassion, caring, and forgiveness, to the promotion of positive employee outcomes.

The mediation analysis indicates a substantial role of workplace inclusion as mediator between organizational virtuousness and workplace diversity, indicating that a higher level of organizational virtuousness is associated with more workplace diversity, supported Hypothesis 3. It suggests that organizations that demonstrate greater levels of virtuous behavior are more likely to cultivate a more inclusive work environment. Additionally, there is a well-established correlation between workplace diversity and workplace inclusion, indicating that enhanced workplace inclusion is significantly associated with increased workplace diversity. Nevertheless, the relationship between organizational virtuousness and workplace diversity does not seem to be significant, indicating that the level of organizational virtuousness does not directly influence workplace diversity. These findings contribute to the literature by providing

evidence from Pakistan's university faculty and findings suggest that, although organizational virtuousness is also correlated with workplace diversity, the mediation analysis indicates that this relationship is indirect, operating through workplace inclusion.

This mediation posits that an organization's inclusive environment is fostered by the implementation of virtuous behaviors, including ethical practices, compassion, integrity, and collective flourishing, and that workplace inclusion, in turn, enhances diversity. The hypothesis that virtuous organizational behaviors have a positive impact on workplace diversity is supported by the overall impact of organizational virtuousness on workplace diversity, including the mediation effect. Cameron and Spreitzer's (2012) study the advantageous effects of organizational virtuousness on a variety of workplace outcomes, such as inclusion and diversity.

Hypothesis 4 is supported by mediation analysis and is consistent with the growing body of literature that emphasizes the importance of positive organizational behaviors and their impact on employee attitudes and outcomes. Organizational virtuousness encompasses the behaviors and practices that foster moral excellence and well-being within organizations. Cameron et al. (2011) have discovered that it fosters an advantageous organizational environment. As a mediator in this connection, workplace inclusion is essential. Inclusion is the degree to which individuals are acknowledged and accepted in their professional setting (Shore et al., 2011). Belongingness has the potential to enhance the emotional connection between employees and their organization, thereby increasing their affective commitment.

The critical role of workplace inclusion is emphasized by the substantial direct effect it has on affective commitment in this study. Increased perceptions of organizational inclusion have a positive impact on social identity, affective commitment, and willingness to perform of employees (Marique, Stinglhamber, Desmette, Caesens & De Zanet, 2013; Raineri, 2017). Additionally, the substantial indirect effect implies that organizational virtuousness initiatives can result in a more substantial affective commitment by first enhancing workplace inclusion. This mediating role of inclusion is consistent with research that indicates that inclusive practices foster engagement and loyalty, which in turn benefit individuals and contribute to broader organizational success (Nishii, 2013).

The results presented in Table 6 partially support Hypothesis 5 which highlights a gender difference in

various study variables within the context of Pakistani culture. Females were found to score significantly higher than males in organizational virtuousness. Conversely, no significant difference was found between males and females regarding workplace inclusion, workplace diversity and affective commitment. These findings suggest that females in Pakistani culture may be more engaged in organizational virtuousness which aligns with the existing literature (Smith & Johnson, 2020) indicating that females tend to engage more deeply in these tasks. This pattern could be rooted in cultural norms and gender roles prevalent in Pakistani society, where females might be socialized to be more conscientious and ethically driven, whereas males might have different attitudes or experiences concerning workplace commitment.

Table 7 presents the mean differences in the scores of the study variables across participants with different educational qualifications (M.Sc., M.Phil., and Ph.D), with education being the grouping variable. The results reported partially support Hypothesis 6, as only the difference in organizational virtuousness is statistically significant. Post hoc analysis revealed that both M.sc and M.Phil holders scored significantly higher than Ph.D holders. The findings of the study indicate that higher educational attainment is associated with lower perceptions of Organizational virtuousness can be understood through several theoretical reasons.

First, individuals with higher educational qualifications, such as Ph.D holders, often possess a more critical and analytical mindset. This heightened critical perspective may lead them to have stricter standards and expectations regarding organizational behavior (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). As a result, they may perceive organizational virtues less favorably compared to those with lower educational qualifications, who might have a more pragmatic and less critical viewpoint (Chun, 2005). Second, organizational behavior literature suggests that higher education levels often correlate with increased awareness of complex organizational dynamics and potential ethical dilemmas (Brown & Trevino, 2006). Ph.D holders, due to their extensive academic training, are more likely to recognize subtle organizational issues and shortcomings that others might overlook.

Conversely, M.Sc. and M.Phil. holders might be more involved in the practical aspects of their roles, leading to a more positive perception of their immediate organizational environment (Podsakoff et al., 2009). They may also have less exposure to the highest levels of organizational decision-

making where more complex ethical dilemmas arise, resulting in more favorable evaluations of organizational virtuousness. The lack of significant differences in the workplace inclusion, workplace diversity, and affective commitment suggests that these attributes are more uniformly distributed and less influenced by educational attainment aligning with the idea that inclusivity, diversity, and affective commitment are foundational aspects of professional conduct, irrespective of one's level of academic achievement (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Shore et al. 2011).

In conclusion, the study's results suggest that higher educational attainment fosters a more critical perspective and heightened awareness of organizational issues, leading to lower perceptions of organizational virtuousness among Ph.D holders compared to those with M.Sc. and M.Phil. qualifications. This aligns with previous research indicating that higher education levels can sometimes lead to more critical perspectives on organizational practices (Smith & Brown, 2020). The lack of significant differences in workplace inclusion, workplace diversity, and affective commitment suggests that these traits may be relatively stable across different educational levels, which is consistent with literature suggesting that personality traits and workplace perceptions are less influenced by educational attainment (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnysky, 2002).

Table 8 presents the mean differences in the score of the study variables across ethnic groups. The results reported partially support Hypothesis 7, as only the difference in organizational virtuousness is statistically significant. This study examines cultural differences among Punjabi, Pashtun, Sindhi, and Saraiki ethnic groups in Pakistan. Organizational virtuousness scores were highest among Punjabi participants and lowest among Saraiki participants. Post hoc analysis revealed that Punjabi participants scored significantly higher than Saraiki participants, and Pashtun participants also scored significantly higher than Saraiki participants. These findings align with previous research suggesting that cultural and ethnic backgrounds can influence perceptions of organizational virtuousness (Smith, 2020).

The study's findings on the differences in organizational virtuousness among Punjabi, Pashtun, Sindhi, and Saraiki ethnic groups in Pakistan can be theoretically explained through the lens of cultural and socio-economic factors. Punjabi participants scoring the highest in organizational virtuousness may be attributed to the Punjab region's relatively advanced industrial and educational development, which fosters a more

structured and virtuous organizational culture (Rehman, Khan, Khan, Ullah & Khan, 2024). In contrast, the Saraiki region, being less developed economically and educationally, may not prioritize or have the means to cultivate the same level of organizational virtuousness, thus explaining their lower scores.

Limitations and suggestions

In the present study, a limitation to consider is cross-sectional design, which does not allow for the examination of causal relationships between the variables. The sample was limited to university teachers, and given the variations in structure and culture, it is important to exercise caution when applying the findings to other institutions. Job and performance evaluation systems range across various occupational settings and might have varying effects on employees' behavioral and attitudinal reactions. Moreover, the study's findings may be influenced by cultural disparities between private and public sector universities. An analysis of public and private sector universities could yield significant insights regarding the influence of environmental disparities.

CONCLUSION

This research tries to explain the interrelated roles of organizational virtuousness, affective commitment, workplace diversity, and workplace inclusion within the context of university instructors, emphasizing the mediation of these associations by workplace inclusion. Findings showed that organizational virtuousness is essentially fostering workplace inclusion and is important for the enhanced morale and commitment of faculty members in universities.

The correlation analyses lead to results in line with the hypotheses of the study, organizational virtuousness was correlated positively with workplace inclusion, diversity, and affective commitment. Thus, these findings support the notion that organizational virtuousness leads to more committed employees due to a core value orientation toward respect and understanding, possibly conducive to improving the academic work environment. These findings are critical for higher education institutions seeking ways to enhance workplace dynamics and organizational growth. Universities

can leverage such insights by adding interventions like diversity training programs, workshops, and inclusive leadership policies that clearly show commitment to change. Institutions will then be able to track and fine-tune their strategies based on inclusion and diversity of metrics over

time. In return, institutions of higher education will appreciate the inculcation of these principles in their systems as it fosters an environment that encourages not only diversity in talents but also improves institutional morale and dedication to a sustainable and performing academic community.

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