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Inclusion Programs and Employee Retention: Survey Evidence from National and Multinational Companies in Romania

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Abstract

In the context of severe talent shortages and digital transformation, employee retention remains a critical challenge in the Romanian labor market. This study investigates how perceived inclusion climate influences turnover intentions, while examining the impact of artificial intelligence anxiety and formal diversity training. Using a quantitative cross-sectional design, data were collected via an online convenience survey distributed through professional networks to white-collar employees. While open digital distribution precluded calculating a traditional response rate, the process yielded 129 valid responses. To mitigate Common Method Variance and social desirability biases, strict procedural anonymity and statistical validations (e.g., VIF, Harman's test) were implemented. Multiple regression models, controlling for demographic confounders, identified psychological inclusion as the strongest predictor of retention, significantly outweighing baseline demographic factors. Crucially, participation in diversity training showed no statistical association with actual feelings of inclusion. This empirical finding supports the theory of institutional decoupling, suggesting organizations adopt policies for symbolic compliance rather than substantive practice. Additionally, AI anxiety was consistently low, indicating the workforce views technological integration as augmented intelligence rather than a threat. Ultimately, sustainable retention depends on bridging the gap between formal policies and enacted leadership behaviors. These findings provide actionable insights for managers to move beyond superficial compliance and foster authentic relational dynamics in an emerging economy.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence anxiety; Diversity and inclusion training; Employee retention; Institutional decoupling; Organizational inclusion