



Measurement Tools During Times of Shifting Sands

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Over the past few years, organizations and employees alike have turned their attention toward addressing inequities in the workplace made starkly visible by the Covid 19 pandemic and renewed emphasis on social injustice acts. While some progress has been made in this space, the increased attention has also led to a recognition that diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs can contribute, stall, or even backfire if not implemented thoughtfully (Catsouphe et al, 2022).

In the fall of 2021, Chestnut Health Systems, the parent company of Chestnut Global Partners, created a psychometrically informed instrument, the Workplace Inclusion Scale (WIS), designed to survey and integrate the felt experience of *inclusion* into EAP service offerings. The WIS is a tool that organizations can use to quickly assess the impact of diversity and inclusion efforts as perceived by employees in the work environment. Specifically, it is a measurement tool for EAPs, as management consultants, to offer HR, benefit departments, and other stakeholders a unique lens to assess the perceived level of employee inclusion. The specifics of how this tool was developed and validated can be found in (Lennox et al, 2022).

Examples

The WIS has drawn wide interest when presented at conferences, poster sessions, and collegial conversations since its introduction. The initial WIS article in JEA's VOL. 52 NO. 1 (Herlihy et al, 2022) recorded over 2500 reads within the first year. Over the course of the last two years, approximately 40 individuals have reached out to

WORKPLACE INCLUSION SCALE

Thank you for agreeing to participate in our short study of inclusion at the workplace. As you can see neither your name nor any other identifying information appears on this questionnaire. Therefore, your responses to the questions will never be linked to you personally. Please answer the questions as honestly as you can.

Please check the appropriate box:

Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Man <input type="checkbox"/> Woman <input type="checkbox"/> Transgender or Nonbinary <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	Sexual Identity: <input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual, Pansexual, or Queer <input type="checkbox"/> Gay/Lesbian <input type="checkbox"/> Heterosexual <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	Race and Ethnicity: <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian or Alaskan Native <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Black <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latinx <input type="checkbox"/> Multiracial or Multiethnic <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders <input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	Age: <input type="checkbox"/> 15-20 <input type="checkbox"/> 21-30 <input type="checkbox"/> 31-40 <input type="checkbox"/> 41-50 <input type="checkbox"/> 51-60 <input type="checkbox"/> 61+ <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say
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Instructions: The following statements reflect your impressions of your work environment. Please answer as honestly as you can and remember that your answers are completely anonymous. Please circle the appropriate number to the right of each question using the 1-5 response format.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
1. I know I can trust this organization.	1	2	3	4	5
2. People are valued as individual by this organization.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My opinions matter to the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I have access to new opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The Organization distributes recognition evenly.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I think the organization recognizes diversity.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel respected by the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I always feel like I'm part of a team at work.	1	2	3	4	5

THANK YOU!

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gain permission to license the scale and explore its utility. For example, in Canada, employees of Health Canada are currently being surveyed about numerous work items on an annual basis. In 2024, the WIS will be added to the list of survey questions (personal conversation Wayne Corneil). The hope is that these employees will feel they are included in the corporation as their professional careers depend on being able to provide health services without prejudice.

Another health system in the US Midwest utilized the WIS and discovered their employees did not fully trust the organization, that their work was not valued, and that employees didn't feel there was a possibility of advancement. These findings prompted the organization to launch intense focus group sessions to sort out these issues and begin to address them.

The WIS is an agile and helpful tool to have in the EAP toolbox when dealing with group dynamic concerns whether related to political events such as the Israel-Hamas War, presidential elections, or mergers/layoffs within

a company. One EAP provider organization which recently merged with two other EAP provider organizations is considering using the WIS to determine if, after the transition, employees were feeling appreciated in the new corporate structure.

Shifting Sands

New York Times columnist David Brooks, recently wrote a piece titled: *Universities are Failing at Inclusion* (November 16, 2023). Brooks highlighted the many difficulties currently facing college campuses. Students on America’s campuses have found themselves in confrontation with those who celebrate a terrorist operation that featured the mass murder and reportedly the rape of fellow Jews. Brooks quoted Eboo Patel, founder of Interfaith America, who doesn’t believe we should try to “end D.E.I.,” as some have proposed. Besides, in a liberal society Patel states: “we beat bad ideas with better ideas.” Patel argues that we’re at a paradigm-shifting moment when we can replace a destructive form of diversity, equity and inclusion with a better form — one that actually includes people feeling included, instead of excluded.

Inclusion vs Belonging

During these times of social upheaval and frequent global protests related to the Israel-Hamas War and other controversial issues, we can note a nascent movement afoot to focus on the concept of “*belonging*”. The WIS was designed to measure inclusion before belongingness entered the dialogue and published literature, however, while the WIS was not intended to measure the construct of belonging, per se, the researchers note the WIS contains an item measuring “feeling like a member of a team”, which may indeed be a valid proxy for the belongingness construct. This item might be sound enough to examine its relationship to the traditional meanings associated with inclusion.

The statistical factor analysis used in the psychometric process of designing the WIS found that the concepts of inclusion and belonging empirically converged. This raises the question about whether there is a benefit to the separability of the two constructs? From an empirical perspective, it remains to be seen whether the meanings of the two concepts (inclusion and belonging) can or even should be separated. The main question is not so much whether these two constructs are correlated, but rather whether they can differentially predict external outcome measures?

Given the lack of a validated and widely accepted definition of belongingness separate from inclusion, it would seem important to concentrate focus on the two constructs as being distinct from one another. Doing so treats inclusion as related to the equitable distribution of work-related opportunities and belongingness as creating an environment that fosters an emotionally supportive workplace. Belongingness should focus on supporting employees so they feel like a member of a team or organization. The WIS does not claim to measure the extent of “belongingness” in an organization although some may claim that “belongingness” is another metric for inclusion. (Zheng, 2023).

DEFINITIONS

Inclusion

Inclusion is the achievement of a cultural environment that all stakeholders, especially underserved and marginalized populations, trust to be respectful and accountable. Inclusion is achieved through actions that explicitly counter present-day and historical inequities and meet the needs of all populations. (Zheng, 2023)

Belonging

Belonging is the feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion and identity for a member of a certain group. (Cornell.edu - 2020).

Summary

The Workplace Inclusion Scale (WIS) is an emerging tool to establish a systematic and rigorous basis for conducting diversity and inclusion audits of employees in a wide range of work organizations. EAP provider organizations and other stakeholders need additional evidence-based tools to monitor and measure the penetration, impact and outcomes of their efforts. This relatively new scale provides a uniquely different and timely vantage point for EA related services.

During these times of international crises, it is critical for EAP and other workplace service providers to be armed with tools to identify the extent to which a company/organization provides an inclusive environment. It is also possible this could well be a new arena of use by those in other mental health sectors to help organizations understand the needs of their employees to secure a productive workforce.

In addition, traditional EAPs have recently been challenged by the onslaught of disruptors, digital applications, and coaching alternatives. It is critical for the sustainability of the field that EAPs expand and explore engaging ways to get their message out about their much-needed services. Tools like the WIS offer that opportunity.

The WIS tool, when deployed and used as an easy to administer before/after assessment, has the ability to bring empirical and credible assessments of employee experiences to what is now primarily a qualitative assessment and subjective approach to evaluating the efficacy of organizational DEI initiatives.

WIS Link: <https://www.chestnut.org/workplace-inclusion-scale/>

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