Fostering Inclusive Workplaces: The Role of Gender Microaggressions, Perceived Inclusion, and Work Identity on the Work Engagement of Female Employees

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MT2324W&O: Master's Thesis Work & Organisational Psychology

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June 25, 2024

Abstract

While most evidence on microaggressions has identified their detrimental effects on individuals, some scholars doubt that this is always the case. Given that women are particularly vulnerable to gender microaggressions at work, organizations need to understand their effects. With a unique integration of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT), this study investigated how work identity impacts the relationship between gender microaggressions and engagement via perceived inclusion in female workers. Using a cross-sectional online survey design of $N = 175$ female employees from various backgrounds and countries, results showed that gender microaggressions had a positive effect on work engagement via work group inclusion. High levels of work identity strengthened the positive effect on work engagement and protected women's inclusion. These findings challenge the notion that microaggressions are always detrimental and provide a novel perspective on the integration of JD-R and ODT. This study also shows that inclusion and work identity can act as strong resources that protect and enhance women's engagement. Practitioners can find valuable insights into how to increase women's engagement through fostering inclusion and work identity, as well as how to limit their exposure to microaggressions.

Keywords: Gender Microaggressions, Inclusion, Work Identity, Work Engagement, JD-R, ODT

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"You're too sensitive, can't you take a joke?" "You'll regret not having children!" "What she meant to say was [different interpretation]." Likely most women have experienced or witnessed similar phrases. These are termed microaggressions and describe daily behaviors that harm marginalized groups (Turaga, 2020). Often disguised as humor, these subtle insults foster an unwelcoming environment in which women are unlikely to feel included and engaged, thus hindering their productivity and retention (Costa et al., 2022). However, there may be factors that mitigate the effects of microaggressions. A woman's work identity, for instance, could serve as a lens through which she interprets and responds to microaggressions (Elovainio & Kivimäki, 2001). To retain the female workforce and allow women to express their talent, it is important to investigate how experiencing microaggressions may affect a woman's inclusion and engagement and the role that a factor like work identity can play.

Research has shown the presence of gender microaggressions in society and organizations (Kim & Meister, 2022), with harmful effects on individual and organizational outcomes (Costa et al., 2022). One outcome of interest to organizations is engagement, which describes a state of emotional involvement and enthusiasm. Engaged employees burst with energy, find meaning and motivation in their work, and frequently experience flow (Schaufeli et al., 2002). They are also more committed to the organization, satisfied with their job, and likely to engage in prosocial behavior (Jerónimo et al., 2021). The Job-Demands Resources (JD-R) model shows that engagement is enhanced by personal and work resources and hindered by demands, which increase burnout and exhaustion (Bakker et al., 2022). Microaggressions could act as demands that damage engagement, as exemplified by positive associations between microaggressions and burnout (e.g., Ahmad et al., 2022; Chisholm et al., 2021; King et al., 2022; Lund et al., 2022; Sudol et al., 2021) and, on a similar note,

negative associations between gender discrimination and engagement (Kim, 2014; Sia et al., 2015). Yet, the direct link between microaggressions and engagement is understudied (Skinta & Torres-Harding, 2022; Turaga, 2020), and only a few of the studies on burnout are specific to women. Given the prevalence of gender microaggressions and the importance of engagement in organizations, further research on this relationship is warranted.

To shed more light on the relationship between microaggressions and engagement, it is useful to integrate the JD-R model with Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT). ODT argues that, to feel included in their social groups, individuals need to strike a balance between their needs for validation and uniqueness (Brewer, 1991). By making certain differences salient, microaggressions may create an imbalance in favor of individuation. This may make women feel like they do not belong and that their contributions are not valued. Evidence from ethnic minorities suggests that those who experience microaggressions tend to feel excluded and left out from the majority group (Galupo & Resnick, 2016; Houshmand et al., 2014; Nair et al., 2019; Wesselmann et al., 2022; Wilkins-Yel et al., 2019), but research on women is lacking. Restoring the equilibrium between uniqueness and validation requires effort (Shore et al., 2011), in line with the definition of demands in the JD-R model. Thus, by impairing inclusion, microaggressions may act as a demand that damages engagement. In support of this claim, evidence shows that feelings of inclusion are associated with more engagement (Bao et al., 2021; Goswami & Goswami, 2017; Innstrand & Grødal, 2022). Existing evidence and the integration of the JD-R model with ODT point to the detrimental effects of microaggressions on engagement through decreased perceived inclusion.

Some scholars are skeptical about the evidence on microaggressions and suggest that we cannot conclusively demonstrate their detrimental outcomes (Lilienfeld, 2017; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2015). Consequently, we must investigate whether there are factors that counteract the effects found in most studies. For instance, having a strong sense of identity may act as a

protective resource for individuals who experience demands like discrimination and microaggressions (Yoo & Lee, 2008). Studies found that ethnic identity plays an important protective role in the negative relationship between discrimination and well-being (Forrest-Bank & Cuellar, 2018; Ikram et al., 2016; Stock et al., 2018; Yoo & Lee, 2008). In the organizational context, a similar resource could be work identity, which shapes how individuals perceive themselves and the roles they take at work (Bothma et al., 2015). Work identity might reduce vulnerability to stress in ambiguous situations by helping individuals protect their ideas of themselves as professionals (Elovainio & Kivimäki, 2001). Empirically investigating this proposition in the context of microaggressions could contribute to creating more consensus in the literature around the consequences of microaggressions.

In line with what has been presented, this study will investigate the question: how does work identity impact the relationship between gender microaggressions and engagement via perceived inclusion in female workers? As most scholars see microaggressions as harmful, but some feel that the evidence is inconclusive, it is critical to investigate whether the effect may vary depending on other variables. This research will advance the field's knowledge of the consequences of gender microaggressions, an understudied topic compared to overt discrimination and ethnic microaggressions. Further, the research will help clarify whether inclusion and work identity can protect women's work engagement from microaggressions. Practitioners will gain insights into the benefits of addressing microaggressions and fostering work identity and inclusion, with the ultimate goal of ensuring the vitality and retention of their female workers. Data will be collected through a cross-sectional study of female employees using an online questionnaire. The possible mechanisms behind gender microaggressions and engagement will be explained by drawing on the JD-R model and ODT. The next sections proceed to explore the theoretical framework and hypothesized mechanisms in greater detail.

Microaggressions and Work Engagement

Work engagement describes the "positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). It is a kind of work-related well-being that involves both pleasure and activation and is associated with positive outcomes (Tummers et al., 2018). Engaged employees thrive on challenging tasks, demonstrating energy, persistence, and enthusiasm while being fully immersed in their work (Bakker et al., 2014). They experience happiness, enthusiasm (Pleasant, 2017), better physical and psychological health (Jerónimo et al., 2021), creativity (Bakker et al., 2020), job and organizational commitment, job satisfaction (Mazzetti et al., 2021), and in-role and extra-role performance through organizational citizenship behaviors (Christian et al., 2011). Given the benefits of engagement, practitioners should try to understand the mechanisms behind it. One factor that damages engagement is overt discrimination (Bayl-Smith & Griffin, 2014; Jones & Harter, 2005; MacIntosh, 2012; Messarra, 2014), so investigating whether covert discrimination has a similar effect could be insightful for researchers and organizations.

Microaggressions are a form of covert discrimination that refers to any verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignity that communicates "[…] hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target people based solely on their marginalized group membership" (Turaga, 2020, p. 1). In the workplace, gender microaggressions could manifest as, for example, women receiving compliments that they find inappropriate or comments on the way they are dressed, or feeling that they have to prove themselves all the time and that their performance is valued differently from that of men (Algner & Lorenz, 2022). Given their subtleness, they are often overlooked and not legally addressed in organizations, despite being responsible for perpetuating inequalities (Costa et al., 2022). They have also been overlooked in research, as scholars have mainly focused on the outcomes of overt

discrimination. To keep a healthy and productive female workforce, this research gap needs to be addressed.

To investigate how gender microaggressions can affect engagement, it is necessary to draw on a model that explains the antecedents of engagement. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model suggests that work engagement arises from a balance of job resources and job demands (Bakker et al., 2022). When they are not balanced, work becomes disengaging. A lack of stimulation occurs when resources exceed demands, whereas exhaustion and eventually burnout can emerge in the opposite scenario (Demerouti & Bakker, 2014). Demands can generate exhaustion because they encompass the different aspects of a job that necessitate sustained physical, cognitive, or emotional effort and, consequently, involve physiological and psychological costs (Demerouti et al., 2001). This definition implies that frequent microaggressions could act as demands that attack a woman's sense of self and her professional capabilities, suggesting that there will be psychological costs associated with reacting to or accepting the aggression (King et al., 2022). In this light, the JD-R model suggests that gender microaggressions could contribute to burnout and reduce engagement.

Surprisingly, the association between gender microaggressions and engagement appears to lack empirical foundations, despite scholars having suggested this link (Skinta & Torres-Harding, 2022; Turaga, 2020). This proposed relationship is supported by adjacent constructs. For instance, a study on female employees in Asia found that gender discrimination had a negative relationship with work engagement (Kim, 2014). Gender microaggressions were found to be highly prevalent in the medical sector and associated with higher burnout (Ahmad et al., 2022; Sudol et al., 2021) and lower job satisfaction. A study on faculty surgeons found that women experienced more burnout than men as a result of experiencing microaggressions (Lund et al., 2022). This preliminary evidence is promising, but the debate around whether engagement and burnout are opposite or overlapping

constructs (Epstein, 2017; Taris et al., 2017), the prevalence of gender microaggressions at work (Field et al., 2023), and the importance of engagement (Demerouti & Bakker, 2014) make it is paramount that more research be conducted on gender microaggressions and engagement specifically. Drawing on the JD-R model and available evidence, this study predicts that gender microaggressions will be associated with lower work engagement in female employees.

H1. Gender microaggressions will be negatively related to work engagement.

Perceived Inclusion as a Mediator

Drawing on inclusion literature is useful to understand what makes microaggressions psychologically demanding and detrimental to work engagement. Inclusion stems from Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT; Brewer, 1991) and describes the extent to which individuals feel both a sense of belongingness and uniqueness (Shore et al., 2011). Belongingness emerges from validation and fosters acceptance, in-group favoritism, loyalty, cooperation, and trustworthiness among group members, thus enhancing the security of individual members and preventing isolation (Brewer, 2007; Pickett et al., 2002). On the other hand, members do not wish to be interchangeable and, as such, need to perceive some individuation and uniqueness (Shore et al., 2011). According to ODT, individuals cease to feel included in their group when an imbalance between belongingness and uniqueness occurs (Brewer, 1991; Shore et al., 2011). By making differences between males and females more salient, microaggressions are likely to disrupt women's perceived inclusion in favor of more individuation. Following this logic, female employees may feel less included in their work groups as a result of microaggressions.

Evidence for the negative relationship between microaggressions and inclusion primarily comes from qualitative research on ethnic minorities, so this calls for more research on female populations, especially of quantitative nature. University students from different marginalized identities experienced various forms of exclusion on campus as a result of microaggressions (Houshmand et al., 2014; Nair et al., 2019). Microaggressions toward women of color in graduate STEM programs were associated with feelings of not belonging and not being welcome (Wilkins-Yel et al., 2019). One quantitative study on experiences of transgender microaggressions found that these were comparable to those of social exclusion in terms of psychological outcomes (Wesselmann et al., 2022). The only study conducted in a workplace setting examined LGBTQ+ microaggressions and reported that these made individuals feel left out and excluded from office events (Galupo & Resnick, 2016). The available evidence on other types of microaggressions suggests that microaggressions towards female employees could also have a negative relationship with perceived inclusion.

Investigating how gender microaggressions and inclusion interact is important because there are consequences associated with not feeling included in one's group. When employees' needs for belongingness and uniqueness are at risk, they are less likely to identify and commit to their organization (Bao et al., 2021) and, consequently, engage in their work (Shuck et al., 2011). Because restoring the balance between uniqueness and belongingness requires effort (Shore et al., 2011), feeling excluded may be compared to a job demand in the JD-R model. If a woman lacks the necessary resources to compensate for this demand, she will be more likely to experience exhaustion and burnout and eventually be less engaged in her work (Bakker et al., 2022). In this light, ODT complements the JD-R model in explaining why microaggressions could reduce feelings of inclusion and, in turn, impair engagement.

There is some empirical evidence in support of the relationship between perceived inclusion and engagement. In a study of Indian telecom companies (Goswami & Goswami,

2017) and a study of Norwegian higher education staff (Innstrand & Grødal, 2022), employees' feelings of inclusion were positively related to employee engagement. Another study conducted at a telecommunications company found that inclusion mediated the positive relationship between perceptions of diversity practices and engagement (Jerónimo et al., 2021). On a slightly different but related note, inclusive leadership was found to correlate to increased engagement, possibly also due to the feelings of belongingness and uniqueness that inclusive leaders foster in their followers (Bao et al., 2021). According to these findings and the theoretical framework presented, perceived inclusion could explain, at least in part, the negative relationship between microaggressions and engagement.

H2. The negative relationship between microaggressions and work engagement will be partially mediated by perceived feelings of inclusion.

The Protective Role of Work Identity

In the JD-R model, job and personal resources increase engagement and protect employees from the detrimental effects of demands (Bakker et al., 2022). Because microaggressions attack one's personal identity, this paper will specifically focus on personal rather than job resources. Personal resources are "positive self-evaluations that refer to individuals' sense of their ability to control and impact their environment successfully." (Bakker et al., 2022, p. 33). One such resource could be work identity. Work identity reflects an individual's self-image that combines organizational, occupational, and other identities such as cultural and gender. These combined identities shape the roles and behaviors that individuals adopt when performing their work (Bothma et al., 2015). Someone with a strong sense of work identity is likely to feel in control, confident, and optimistic about their role and

performance. This could reduce vulnerability to stress in ambiguous situations, as the individual's ideas of themselves as professionals would not be easily threatened (Elovainio & Kivimäki, 2001). Accordingly, work identity could act as a resource in the JD-R model, such that it protects women's engagement from the negative effects of gender microaggressions.

Identity research has mainly focused on ethnic identity as a resource that protects well-being from discrimination and microaggressions. In two studies, ethnic identity buffered the damaging effects of racial discrimination on psychological well-being (Forrest-Bank & Cuellar, 2018; Ikram et al., 2016). In another study, Black participants who were excluded because of their race showed faster psychological recovery if they had the opportunity to affirm their identity as Black (Stock et al., 2018). Scholars who hold an opposing view claim that individuals with high ethnic identity may be more rejection-sensitive when experiencing domain-specific rejections such as racial discrimination (Yoo & Lee, 2008). In the context of gender, the domain-specific self-concept targeted by microaggressions is gender identity. Given the debate in the literature, this study focuses on work identity, assuming that it would be less impacted by microaggressions because it is not domain-specific. Following JD-R theory, work identity may act as a resource for women by protecting them from the impact of microaggressions on their work engagement.

H3. Work identity will moderate the negative relationship between gender microaggressions and engagement, such that the relationship is weaker when work identity is stronger.

ODT suggests that work identity is also likely to affect the relationship between microaggressions and inclusion. By having a strong work identity, individuals place

themselves in particular groups and out of other groups (Walsh & Gordon, 2008). Women with a strong work identity trust their abilities and believe that they belong in their roles and work groups (Bothma et al., 2018), even if they are not fully appreciated by their colleagues. Having this confidence may protect women from experiencing the inclusion imbalance predicted by ODT. Alternatively, a woman could still experience the imbalance, but her work identity may help her to restore a sense of inclusion. In both scenarios, work identity could be a resource that helps women protect or restore perceived inclusion in their work groups, despite experiencing microaggressions. In this light, work identity could be a moderator in the negative relationship between microaggressions and perceived inclusion. If work identity can act as a resource that protects one's feelings of inclusion, engagement could be less or not at all affected by encountering microaggressions (Bakker et al., 2022). In line with what has been presented, the overall model for this research predicts that women who experience microaggressions will also show lower engagement. This relationship will, at least in part, be explained by lower feelings of inclusion in their work group. However, work identity may be a protective resource that reduces both the direct effect of microaggressions on engagement and the effect via perceived inclusion.

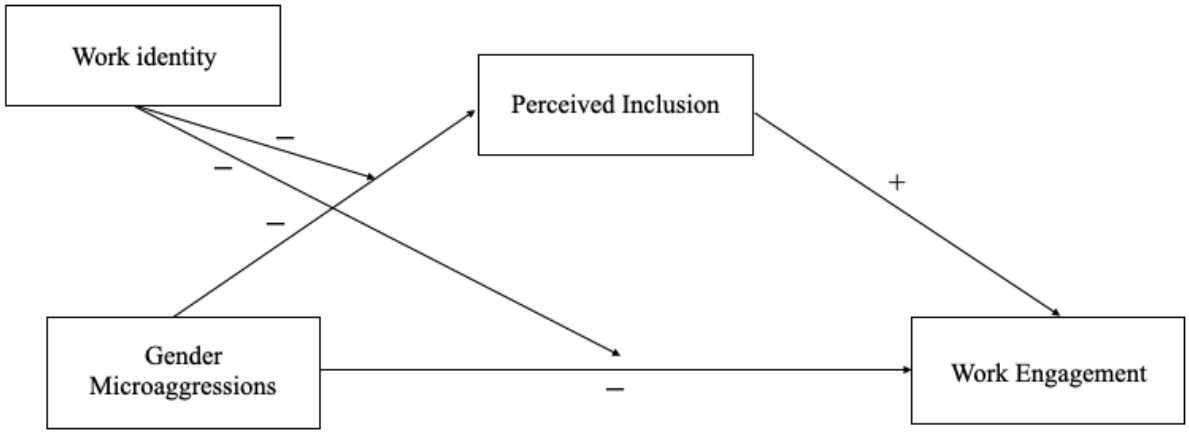
H4. Work identity will moderate the relationship between microaggressions and work engagement via feelings of inclusion.

This research integrates the JD-R model and ODT to explain how microaggressions act as demands that reduce women's perceived inclusion and work engagement by increasing their feelings of individualization and decreasing their feelings of belongingness. The two theories also suggest that work identity may protect or restore perceived belongingness and,

consequently, protect inclusion and engagement from the negative consequences of microaggressions. Figure 1 shows a representation of the overall conceptual model.

Figure 1

Conceptual research model of the research



Methods

Sample Characteristics

G-power was calculated (G*Power 3.1.9.6, Faul et al., 2009) for a Linear Multiple Regression: Fixed model, R^2 increase. This model will allow for an exploration of the added explanatory power that comes from including new predictors in the relationship between microaggressions and engagement. The model has seven predictors, namely an independent variable (IV), a moderator, the interaction term between the IV and the moderator, a mediator, and three control variables. Previous studies have not tested a similar model using engagement as a dependent variable. Given the exploratory nature of the study, the aim will be for a small-medium effect size of Cohen's $f^2 = 0.085$. The calculation indicates that to obtain a power of 0.80 at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, the sample size should be a minimum of 176 participants.

Overall, 239 females in the range of 20 to 66 years old completed the survey (M = 33.99, SD = 11.77). Of these, 18.4% indicated that they were part of an ethnic minority in their organization, 79.5% saw themselves as part of a majority group, and 5% answered "maybe". They were from different companies and nationalities and were recruited among personal networks using snowball sampling and convenience sampling to ensure easy accessibility, availability during our data collection period, and willingness to participate (Naderifar et al., 2017). The majority of participants worked in the Netherlands (18.8%) and Finland (16.7%), while the rest were scattered across the world. The data cleaning process involved eliminating 61 participants, who were flagged by Qualtrics as potential bots (Recaptcha Score < 0.50), had missing items in the scales of interest, were working less than 24 hours a week, indicated that they had "below average" English proficiency, had not been at the organization for 6 months, or did not work in a team. This led to a total of 178 participants, suggesting enough power for the study according to the calculations above.

Design and Procedures

The design was a cross-sectional quantitative field research study. Six researchers collected data through an online Qualtrics questionnaire sent via email to each participant and published on personal social media accounts. The questionnaire took 15-20 minutes to complete and data collection ran from March 15th to April 19th, 2024. We collected the variables of interest for each researcher and general demographic information (such as gender, age, ethnicity, occupational field, country of work). The demographic information allowed us to control for certain variables, filter our own samples based on our variables of interest, and prevent those who identified as men from an ethnic majority from completing the survey. See Appendix A for an overview of the main scales used for this study.

Measures and Variables

Microaggressions. The independent variable gender microaggressions was measured with the Microinsults and Microinvalidations Toward Women in the Workplace (MIMI-16) scale by Algner and Lorenz (2022). The scale measures microinvalidations (9 items; e.g. "Others assume that starting a family has a negative impact on women's work performance) and microinsults (9 items; e.g. "My behavior has been jokingly imitated because of my gender). The 16 items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*I do not agree at all*) to 7 (*I fully agree*). Additionally, microaggressions were measured via the Workplace and School Microaggressions subscale of the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS) by Nadal (2011), where race was substituted with gender. The scale measures microaggressions at work (5 items; e.g. "An employer or co-worker treated me differently than male co-workers"). The items are rated on a 6-point Likert scale from 1 (*I did not experience this event in the past six months*) to 6 (*I experienced this event 5 or more times in the past six months*). Reliability checks reported a Cronbach's $\alpha = .95$ for the two scales together. The total score for each participant was calculated based on the mean of all the items, where a higher score indicates that the participant experienced more microaggressions.

Work Engagement. The dependent variable engagement was measured via the ultra-short version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-3) by Schaufeli et al. (2019). The three items measure vigor ("At my work, I feel that I am bursting with energy"), dedication ("I am enthusiastic about my job"), and absorption ("I am immersed in my work") on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*always*). The items are measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*always*). In this study, we found a reliability of Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$. Each participant's total score was calculated based on their mean score on the items, with a higher score indicating higher engagement.

Work Group Inclusion. The mediator variable inclusion was measured with the Work Group Inclusion Scale by Chung et al. (2019). The scale comprises 10 items, rated on a

5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The items measure the dimensions of belongingness (5 items; e.g., "I believe that my work group is where I am meant to be") and uniqueness (5 items; e.g., "I can bring aspects of myself to this work group that others in the group don't have in common with me."), in line with Shore et al.'s (2011) definition of inclusion. The items returned reliability of Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$. The total inclusion score for each participant was calculated as the mean of all the items, with a higher score indicating higher perceived inclusion.

Work Identity. The moderator work identity was measured using the Tilburg Work Identity Scale for Commitment and Reconsideration of Commitment (TWIS-CRC) by Adams et al. (2016). The scale has 12 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The items measure personal (5 items; e.g., "My work is important for who I am"), relational (2 items; e.g., "I feel as if I belong when I am at work") and social (2 items; e.g., "I am a valued member in the organization I work for") dimensions of identity, as well as the reconsideration of work identity (3 items; e.g., "I often think it would be better to change my line of work."). After reverse-coding the work identity reconsideration items, the reliability of the items was $\alpha = .92$. A higher mean score on the items indicates a stronger work identity.

Control variables. Evidence shows that tenure may influence work engagement (Bal et al., 2013), so tenure was introduced as a covariate and measured in years. Age was also measured as a confounding variable, as it was found to correlate to microinvalidations in Latino/a Americans (Nadal et al., 2014) and to work engagement (Douglas & Roberts, 2020). We also asked participants to rate on a scale of 1 (*Not diverse at all*) to 5 (*Very diverse*) how gender diverse their organization was, as diversity appears to have a positive relationship with work engagement (Onwuchekwa et al., 2019; Trong Tuan et al., 2019) and could impact

the frequency with which a woman is likely to experience microaggressions. For this reason, gender diversity will also be used as a confounding variable in the analyses.

Results

Preliminary Data Analysis

All data manipulations and analyses were conducted via the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 28. For all statistical tests, the significance threshold was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. After removing participants with missing entries or who failed to meet our exclusion criteria, the dataset included 178 participants. Reliability checks for each scale were conducted after reverse-coding items where necessary and can be found in the methods section. Participant scores for every variable were computed by taking the mean of the items in each scale. Two work group inclusion observations over *–3SD* below the mean were identified. They had both scored a 1 on all the inclusion items: as these were extreme observations and could also indicate that the participant had not read the items, they were removed. While testing assumptions, an observation with Mahalanobis Distance > 15 was identified and removed, given that it could have significantly influenced the results. This led to a final count of 175 participants, meaning that the study was underpowered by one participant. The next section presents the descriptive statistics of this final dataset.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows the means (*M*), standard deviations (*SD*), and correlations among the variables that will be used for the analyses. Tenure was correlated with the variables of interest: the longer a participant had worked at their organization, the fewer microaggressions ($r(175) = –.20$, $p = .009$), and the more work identity ($r(175) = .25$, $p = .001$), work group inclusion ($r(175) = .24$, $p = .002$), and engagement ($r(175) = .18$, $p = .016$) they experienced, as per previous research on engagement (Bal et al., 2013). Older employees had a stronger

Table 1

Means (M), Standard Deviations (SD), and Correlations Among the Variables

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	33.92	11.57	–						
2. Tenure	5.48	6.96	.68**	–					
3. Organizational Diversity[a]	2.97	1.22	.03	0	–				
4. Gender MA	3.11	1.24	–.30**	–.20**	–.28**	–			
5. Work Identity	3.75	0.74	.36**	.25**	.06	–.40**	–		
6. Work Group Inclusion	3.77	0.77	.31**	.24**	.20**	–.59**	.73**	–	
7. Work Engagement	4.50	1.30	.24**	.18*	.13	–.23**	.72**	.64**	–

Note. $N = 175$. *SD* = Standard Deviation; MA= Microaggressions. [a]Organizational Diversity refers to the participant's rating of the gender diversity in their organization.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

work identity ($r(175) = .36$, $p < .001$), were more engaged ($r(175) = .24$, $p = .001$), and experienced fewer microaggressions, in line with existing evidence (Douglas & Roberts, 2020; Nadal et al., 2014). On average, the participants' workplaces were moderately diverse. The more diverse their organization, the fewer microaggressions participants experienced ($r(175) = –.28$, $p < .001$) and the more they felt included in their work group ($r(175) = .20$, $p = .007$). However, having a more diverse organization did not significantly increase participants' engagement ($r(175) = .13$, $p = .093$), while previous studies did find a positive correlation between diversity and engagement (Onwuchekwa et al., 2019; Trong Tuan et al., 2019). Therefore, the variables organizational diversity, tenure, and age will be introduced as confound variables and controlled for in subsequent analyses, where the correlations between the main variables will be explored further.

Hypothesis testing

Before testing the hypotheses, assumption checks were performed. The scatterplots used to assess linearity revealed that this assumption is not violated for any of the variables of interest. A normal P-P plot showed that the residuals are normally distributed. The homoscedasticity assumption was assessed with a scatterplot of standardized predicted values against standardized residuals, which revealed a slight deviation from homoscedasticity. Scholars believe that minimal deviations have little effect on hypothesis testing (Osborne & Waters, 2019) and do not bias parameter estimates of the regression coefficient (Gelman & Hill, 2007). Nonetheless, this violated assumption will be accounted for when interpreting the results. The VIF values for the scales were all below 3 and tolerance was above 0.2, suggesting that multicollinearity was not violated. No data points had a Cook's distance >1, while there was one influential point with Mahalanobis > 15, which was removed.

Gender microaggressions and work engagement via work group inclusion

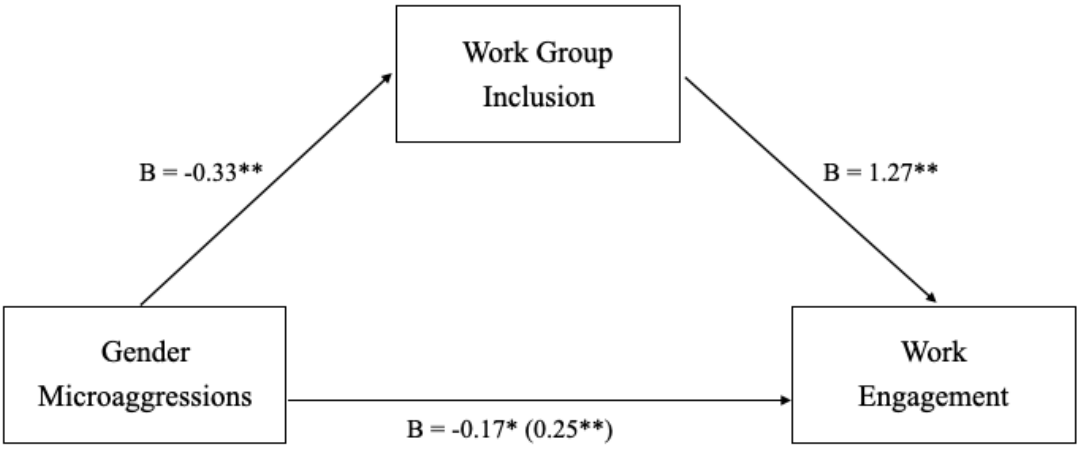
The hypotheses were tested using the PROCESS macro in SPSS (Hayes, 2012). All continuous predictors were standardized using the built-in option in PROCESS. In all models tested, the three confound variables age, tenure, and organizational gender diversity were present. Hypothesis 1 predicted that gender microaggressions would be negatively related to work engagement. Hypothesis 2 stated that the negative relationship between microaggressions and work engagement would be, at least partially, mediated by perceived feelings of inclusion. For these two hypotheses, PROCESS model 4 was used, which tested a mediation model with 5000 bootstrapped samples with microaggressions as the predictor, engagement as the dependent variable, and inclusion as the mediator. The total effect of the mediation showed a significant negative relationship between microaggressions and work engagement, $B = –0.17$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(167) = –2.03$, $p = .044$, 95% CI [–0.34, –0.01], indicating that the experience of microaggressions is related to lower work engagement in female employees. The same results were found using a regression analysis. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was supported.

When inclusion was added to the model as a mediator, the significant relationship between microaggressions and work engagement became larger and positive, $B = 0.25$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(166) = 3.26$, $p = .001$, 95% CI [0.10, 0.40]. This indicates the presence of a suppression effect, which may mean that work group inclusion suppresses some of the irrelevant variance in microaggressions, revealing the true relationship between microaggressions and engagement (MacKinnon et al., 2000, Tzelgov & Henik, 1991). There was a significant negative relationship between microaggressions and work group inclusion, $B = –0.33$, $SE = 0.04$, $t(167) = –8.05$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [–0.41, –0.25], such that a female who experiences microaggressions feels less included in her work group. Additionally, the relationship between inclusion and engagement was positive and significant, $B = 1.27$, $SE = 0.12$, $t(166) = 10.32$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [1.02, 1.51], meaning that feeling included in one's

work group is associated with higher engagement. The effect of microaggressions on engagement via inclusion was significant, as the 95% confidence interval did not include a zero, $B_{indirect}$ = –0.42, *SE* = 0.08, 95% CI [–0.58, –0.28]. These findings indicate support for the mediation model (Figure 2), suggesting that the relationship between microaggressions and engagement is mediated by perceived inclusion. Thus, hypothesis 2 was supported.

Figure 2

The relationship between gender microaggressions and engagement, via perceived inclusion



The moderating effect of work identity on gender microaggressions and engagement

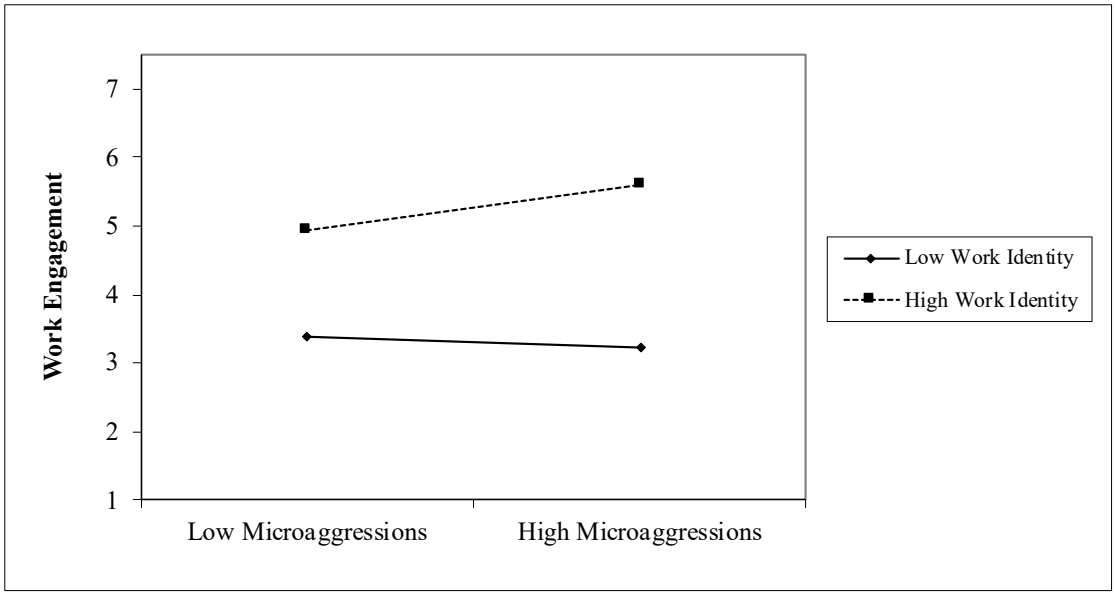
Hypothesis 3 predicted that work identity would moderate the negative relationship between microaggressions and engagement in women, such that the relationship is weaker when work identity is stronger. This hypothesis was tested using multiple regression to obtain the main effects and PROCESS model 1 to analyze a moderation model with microaggressions as the predictor, engagement as the dependent variable, and work identity as the moderator. A multiple regression analysis with the control variables plus microaggressions and work identity as predictors, and work engagement as the dependent variable, showed a non-significant positive relationship between microaggressions and

engagement, B = 0.11, SE = 0.07, $t(165) = 1.66$, $p = .099$, 95% CI [-0.02, 0.24]. The relationship between work identity and engagement was positive and significant, B = 1.33, SE = 0.11, $t(165) = 12.29$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [1.11, 1.54]. The analysis with PROCESS model 1 showed a significant moderation model, $R^2 = 0.55$, $SE = 0.79$, $F(6, 165) = 34.06$, $p < .001$. Moreover, there was a significant positive interaction between microaggressions and work identity, $B = 0.21$, $SE = 0.07$, $t(165) = 3.01$, $p = .003$, 95% CI [0.07, 0.35].

Simple slopes analysis revealed that the positive relationship between microaggressions and work engagement was significant at higher levels (+1 *SD*) of work identity, $B = 0.26$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(165) = 3.22$, $p = 0.002$, 95% CI [0.10, 0.43], but not when participants had lower work identity (–1 *SD*), $B = –0.05$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(165) = –0.59$, $p = .558$, 95% CI [–0.21, 0.11]. A visual representation of this interaction can be seen in Figure 3. The figure shows that work identity had a protective effect: experiencing more microaggressions did not impair women's engagement if they had a strong work identity, but rather increased engagement. When work identity was low, experiencing more microaggressions was associated with decreased work engagement. These findings show partial support for hypothesis 3, since work identity protected engagement from the negative effect of microaggressions, while no significant results were found at lower levels of work identity.

Figure 3

The effect of work identity on the relationship between microaggressions and work engagement



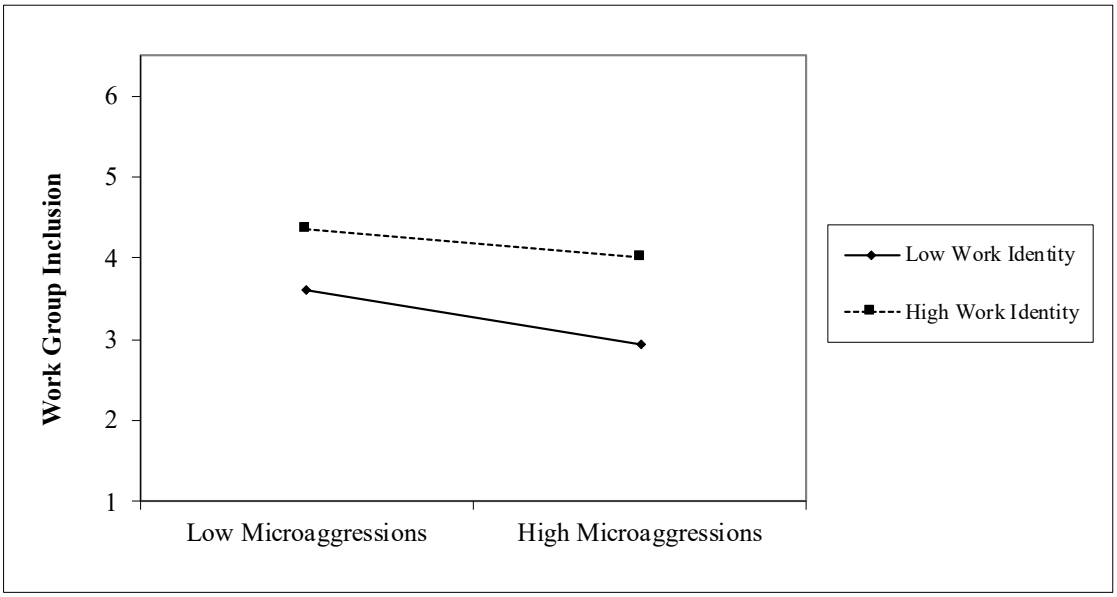
Moderated mediation: the role of work identity in the relationship between microaggressions and engagement via work group inclusion

Hypothesis 4 stated that work identity would moderate the relationship between microaggressions and work engagement via feelings of inclusion. PROCESS model 8 was used to test a moderated mediation with 5000 bootstrapped samples and microaggressions as the predictor, engagement as the dependent variable, inclusion as the mediator, and work identity as the moderator. Hypothesis 3 showed that the total effect of the interaction between microaggressions and work identity on engagement was significant, $B = 0.21$, $SE = 0.07$, $t(165) = 3.01$, $p = .003$, 95% CI [0.07, 0.35]. Simple slopes analysis then revealed that this effect was only significant at higher levels of work identity, where females who experienced high microaggressions showed slightly increased engagement. When inclusion was added to the model as a mediator, the interaction between microaggressions and work identity remained significant, $B = 0.17$, $SE = 0.07$, $t(164) = 2.45$, $p = .015$, 95% CI [0.03, 0.30]. In this model, the suppression effect found for hypothesis 2 disappeared.

There was also a statistically significant effect of the interaction between microaggressions and work identity on work group inclusion, $B = 0.08$, $SE = 0.04$, $t(165) = 2.13$, $p = .035$, 95% CI [0.01, 0.15]. Simple slopes analysis (see Figure 4) showed that microaggressions are associated with decreased inclusion at lower levels of work identity (–1*SD*), $B = –0.26$, $SE = 0.04$, $t(165) = –6.10$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [–0.35, –0.18]. The negative relationship between microaggressions and inclusion gets weaker when work identity is higher (+ 1*SD*), $B = –0.15$, $SE = 0.04$, $t(165) = –3.38$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [–0.23, –0.06]. These findings suggest that experiencing microaggressions makes women feel less included in their work group, but having a strong work identity helps to protect women's perceived inclusion.

Figure 4

The effect of work identity on the relationship between microaggressions and inclusion

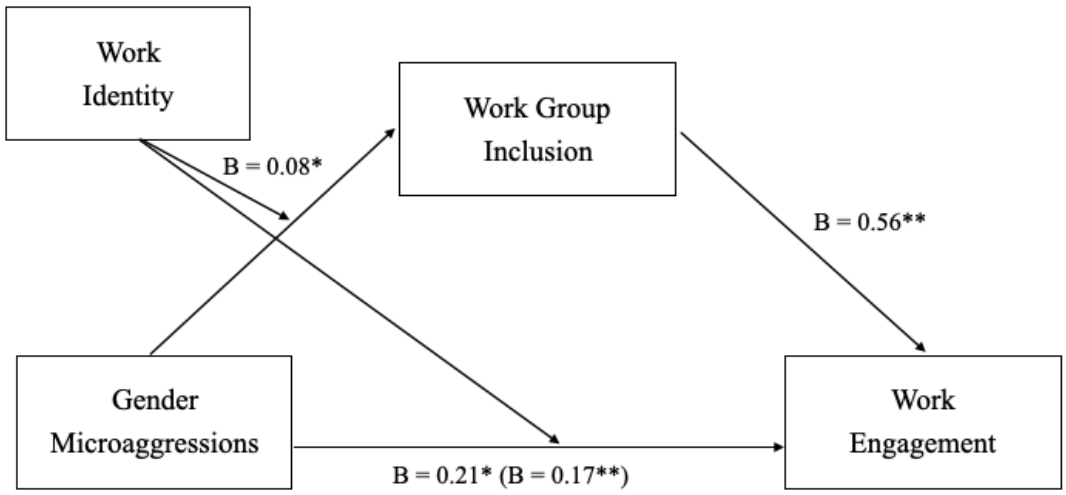


Lastly, the relationship between inclusion and engagement was positive and significant, $B = 0.56$, $SE = 0.14$, $t(164) = 3.96$, $p = .001$, 95% CI [0.28, 0.84], suggesting that feeling more included is associated with higher engagement. The effect of the interaction between microaggressions and work identity on engagement via work group inclusion was

only marginally significant at the 95% confidence interval, $B_{indirect}$ = 0.04, *SE* = 0.03, 95% CI [–0.00, 0.11]. Simple slopes analysis showed that the effect of microaggressions on engagement via perceived inclusion was significant for females with low work identity (–1*SD*), *B* = –0.15, *SE* = 0.06, 95% CI [–0.28, –0.04], as well as for females with high work identity (+1*SD*), *B* = –0.08, *SE* = 0.04, 95% CI [–0.17, –0.02]. The negative effect of microaggressions on engagement via inclusion is weaker at higher levels of work identity, demonstrating support for the hypothesized protective effect of work identity. Given the statistical significance of the simple slopes and all the other paths, the moderated mediation model (Figure 5) will be regarded as supported despite the marginally significant total indirect effect. As such, hypothesis 4 was supported.

Figure 5

The effect of work identity on the relationship between microaggressions and engagement via work group inclusion



Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients are presented for all of the paths. The regression coefficient between microaggressions and engagement, while controlling for work group inclusion, is in parentheses.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

Exploratory Analyses

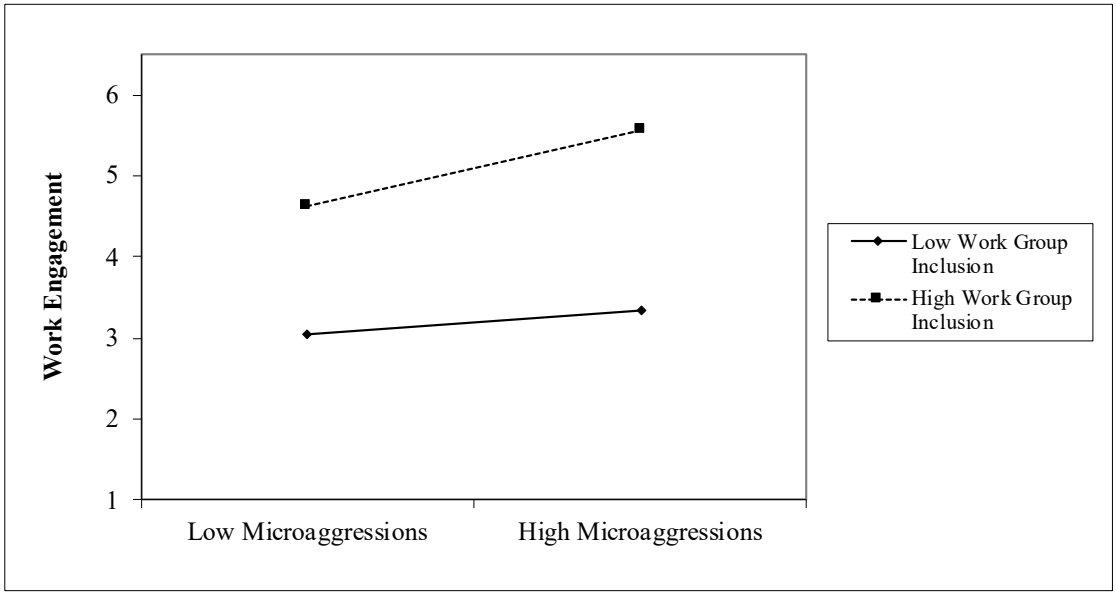
Given the suppression effect identified in Hypothesis 2, further exploratory analyses were conducted to better understand the role of work group inclusion. A previous study found that high perceived inclusion boosted the effects of diversity practices on work engagement via enhancing a trust climate, while low perceived inclusion eliminated any benefit of diversity practices on trust climate and, in turn, on work engagement (Downey et al., 2015). In another moderated mediation, perceived inclusion weakened the negative relationship between disability and thriving at work via job self-efficacy (Zhu et al., 2018). Building upon the models and results of these studies, the present section explores whether inclusion could be a moderator in the relationship between microaggressions and engagement.

This analysis was conducted using multiple regression to obtain the main effects and PROCESS model 1 to analyze a moderation model. All analyses included the control variables. Multiple regression with microaggressions and inclusion as predictors and work engagement as the dependent variable showed a significant positive relationship between microaggressions and engagement, B = 0.25, SE = 0.08, $t(165) = 3.26$, $p = .001$, 95% CI [0.10, 0.40], and between inclusion and engagement, B = 1.27, SE = 0.12, $t(165) = 10.32$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [1.03, 1.51]. The PROCESS model with microaggressions as the predictor, engagement as the dependent variable, and inclusion as the moderator showed a significant moderation, $R^2 = 0.47$, $SE = 0.94$, $F(6, 165) = 24.38$, $p < .001$. There was a significant positive interaction between microaggressions and work group inclusion, $B = 0.16$, $SE = 0.07$, $t(165) = 2.40$, $p = .018$, 95% CI [0.03, 0.29]. Simple slopes analysis revealed that the positive relationship between microaggressions and work engagement was significant at higher levels (+1 *SD*) of perceived inclusion, $B = 0.38$, $SE = 0.09$, $t(165) = 4.08$, $p = 0.001$, 95% CI [0.19, 0.56], but not at lower levels of perceived inclusion (–1 *SD*), $B = 0.13$, $SE =$

0.09, $t(165) = 1.44$, $p = .151$, 95% CI [–0.05, 0.31]. As women with high levels of work group inclusion experienced more microaggressions, their engagement increased (Figure 5).

Figure 5

The effect of inclusion on the relationship between microaggressions and engagement



Discussion

The present study addressed the research question: how does work identity impact the relationship between gender microaggressions and engagement via perceived inclusion in female workers? This research aimed to contribute to the understudied relationship between gender microaggressions and work engagement, as well as to the debate around whether microaggressions are detrimental to well-being and work outcomes. Due to the slight underpower and deviation from homoscedasticity, the findings should be interpreted with caution.

This was the first time, to the best of current knowledge, that a negative relationship between gender microaggressions and work engagement was investigated and found. This finding complements previous findings of a positive relationship between microaggressions

and burnout (Ahmad et al., 2022; Chisholm et al., 2021; King et al., 2022; Lund et al., 2022; Sudol et al., 2021) and of a negative relationship between gender discrimination and engagement (Kim, 2014; Sia et al., 2015). Females who experienced more microaggressions also felt less included in their work group, in line with previous evidence from ethnic microaggressions and discrimination (Galupo & Resnick, 2016; Houshmand et al., 2014; Nair et al., 2019; Wesselmann et al., 2022; Wilkins-Yel et al., 2019). Lower inclusion, in turn, was associated with lower work engagement, similar to previous studies (Bao et al., 2021; Goswami & Goswami, 2017; Innstrand & Grødal, 2022). These findings align with the predictions based on the JD-R model and ODT that microaggressions would act as a demand that disrupts the inclusion balance and eventually decreases engagement. Feeling included was instead a resource that enhanced engagement. However, when these predictors were entered into a mediation model, the relationship between microaggressions and engagement became unexpectedly positive due to a suppression effect. The positive effect of microaggressions on engagement got even stronger as females with high work identity experienced more microaggressions, whereas the moderating effect was not significant at low levels of work identity.

As predicted by the JD-R model, work identity protected women's feelings of inclusion, such that the negative impact of microaggressions on inclusion was weaker when women had a high work identity. These findings align with adjacent evidence of the beneficial effects of ethnic identity on well-being and recovery following discrimination and exclusion (Forrest-Bank & Cuellar, 2018; Ikram et al., 2016; Stock et al., 2018). In this sample, feeling confident in their abilities and role in their work group made women less vulnerable to the detrimental effects of microaggressions on their perceived inclusion and even reversed the potentially negative effects on engagement. These results, following the

JD-R model, indicate that work identity and inclusion are strong resources that can override a demand like microaggressions in female employees.

Theoretical Implications

The present research relied on a novel integration of ODT and the JD-R model to explain complex relationships that may come into play in the workplace. Microaggressions and work engagement were negatively correlated, but their relationship became positive when inclusion was introduced in the model. This finding contributes to advancing the field's knowledge of microaggressions, finding support for the argument that their detrimental effects cannot always be demonstrated (Lilienfeld, 2017; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2015). This result also contributes to the debate around the operationalization of engagement and burnout (Epstein, 2017; Taris et al., 2017). The positive association between microaggressions and burnout found in previous studies (Ahmad et al., 2022; Lund et al., 2022; Sudol et al., 2021) was not complemented by this study's findings on engagement. Therefore, the present finding adds to the side of the debate that does not see engagement and burnout as opposite and mutually exclusive constructs (Maricuțoiu et al., 2017), in contrast with Maslach & Leiter's (2008) definition of work engagement and more in line with Schaufeli et al.'s (2002). Through a unique combined framework, this research contributed to gaps and debates in the literature around microaggressions and engagement and their complex interactions.

This study also found that experiencing microaggressions was associated with lower inclusion in women. This complements previous evidence on racial microaggressions and aligns with the principles of ODT (Brewer, 1991), which suggest that making one's uniqueness too salient can damage their perception of how included they are in their work group (Shore et al., 2018). Importantly, inclusion was positively associated with engagement, providing evidence that inclusion may be a resource. An exploratory analysis further revealed that strong feelings of inclusion moderate the relationship between microaggressions and

engagement, such that it becomes positive. This effect provides novel evidence for one of the propositions of JD-R theory, the boost hypothesis, which suggests that job resources become salient and most important for engagement when job demands are high (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2023; Hakanen et al., 2005). This study makes a unique contribution to the field by showing that microaggressions are indeed demands for female employees, but also that securing enough resources can help women boost their engagement at work when facing demands.

Work identity also acted as a resource by protecting women's perceived inclusion despite microaggressions. This research was one of the few to study work identity and perhaps the first to investigate its protective effects, making a unique contribution to the identity literature. Work identity acted similarly to ethnic identity in protecting well-being and facilitating recovery (Forrest-Bank & Cuellar, 2018; Ikram et al., 2016; Stock et al., 2018). Feeling confident in their abilities and role in their work group made women's perceived inclusion less vulnerable to the effects of microaggressions. Work identity may have acted as a resource by helping women satisfy their need for belongingness, so much so that it neutralized the heightened feelings of uniqueness that can result from microaggressions. This finding also provides evidence for the boost hypothesis of the JD-R model (Bakker et al., 2023) and aligns with evidence that job resources predict engagement better than job demands (Mauno et al., 2007). It should also be considered that the moderated mediation model was only marginally significant. As scholars continue to investigate how to better retain and engage employees, they may benefit from finding unique ways to integrate the JD-R model with other established theories.

Practical Implications

The findings presented in this study have important implications for organizational psychologists and human resource management. Work group inclusion played a crucial role

in fostering employee engagement, even in the presence of high microaggressions. Thus, any team or organization would benefit from ensuring that everyone feels included. A primary intervention for fostering inclusion would be through development programs on inclusive leadership (Ashikali et al., 2020). Inclusive leadership involves competencies and behaviors that aim to foster a sense of belongingness and uniqueness in all members while contributing to group processes and outcomes (Randel et al., 2018). This conceptualization of inclusive leadership derives from ODT (Veli Korkmaz et al., 2022) and aligns perfectly with the definition of inclusion used in this study. Research shows that inclusive leadership is not only positively correlated with inclusive climates and a sense of belongingness (Ashikali et al., 2020; Byrd, 2022; Canlas & Williams, 2022; Mitchell et al., 2015), but also with other organizational outcomes such as performance (Mitchell et al., 2015), interpersonal citizenship behavior (Kyei-Poku, 2014), and organizational learning behavior (Nejati & Shafaei, 2023). Despite the evident benefits, leadership development practices can be costly as well as ineffective if driven on an episodic basis (Day & Liu, 2018). To create truly inclusive climates and benefit from them, human resources practitioners should ensure that inclusive leadership skills are not only taught but also consistently applied and monitored.

Another relevant outcome of this research was the role of work identity in protecting and fostering inclusion and engagement in the face of microaggressions. Practitioners should direct their efforts toward helping associates, especially females, develop this sense of self in the work context. As research on work identity is scarce, there is no evidence of effective interventions to foster work identity. Nonetheless, human resources departments could rely on organizational psychologists to train associates on what work identity is, how it is shaped by structural, social, and individual-psychological dimensions, and its protective role for engagement (Bothma et al., 2015). On the individual level, organizations could provide employees with the opportunity to discuss their careers and work identities with a coach or

career counselor if they wish to do so (Meijers & Lengelle, 2012). Lastly, research based on social theories of identity highlights the possible beneficial outcomes of role models on work identity construction, especially for women (Sealy & Singh, 2009). In this scenario, organizations have the power to ensure that role models for female employees are available. Hopefully, more research in the upcoming years will reveal more about practitioners' roles in helping women develop and strengthen their work identity.

Lastly, despite the positive relationship found between microaggressions and engagement in this research model, microaggressions were also associated with lower perceived work group inclusion. Further, previous research found associations between microaggressions and burnout (King et al., 2022) as well as other health and job outcomes (Costa et al., 2022). Scholars observe that these subtle forms of discrimination can perpetuate fewer opportunities for minority members and make it more difficult for organizations to attract and retain them (DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016). As a primary intervention, organizations could train their associates to help them understand how microaggressions corroborate stereotypes and sustain women's minority status (Skinner-Dorkenoo et al., 2021). These should be presented in ways that allow individuals at different levels of openness to understand, so as to limit resistance (Fattoracci & King, 2023). To help women and other minority groups recover from having already experienced microaggressions, organizations could facilitate support groups in which associates can share experiences and create a sense of community (Mays, 1995). This secondary intervention has been effective across clinical and work groups in helping people recover, reduce stress, and increase their self-efficacy (Cooper et al., 2024; Mays, 1995). Evidence-based interventions specific to microaggressions are still lacking in the literature, but creating awareness and a support network for minority groups could be a starting point for organizations.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study's interpretations should be treated with caution. The study was one participant away from having enough power and showed a slight violation of the homoscedasticity assumption. The moderated mediation model was interpreted as marginally significant due to the significance of all paths and its proximity to significance, but it cannot be stated with confidence that the indirect effects are statistically significant. Further, the reliance on self-reported measures in the study could have led to self-report bias (Haar, 2023). Due to the cross-sectional nature of the study, it cannot be stated with certainty that the variables influence each other in the direction proposed here (Taris et al., 2021). The proposed model was derived from theory and previous evidence, but reverse relationships cannot be excluded. For example, it could be that more engaged employees are less susceptible to microaggressions and fail to remember whether they experienced microaggressions months before measurement. Scholars also warn against the measurement of engagement at one point in time, as it has been shown to fluctuate daily and weekly in some studies (e.g. Bakker, 2014; Bakker & Bal, 2010; Beattie & Griffin, 2014; Fletcher et al., 2017). Therefore, more longitudinal research is needed to better understand the interactions between microaggressions and engagement.

The choice of variables is another limitation of this research. The scale used to measure microaggressions referred to experiences with any male colleague at work, so not necessarily in the woman's work group (Algner & Lorenz, 2022). On the other hand, the inclusion scale focused specifically on the woman's immediate work group (Chung et al., 2019). The significant correlation between the two variables indicates that they do have an impact on each other, but it may be that a construct with a wider scope, like organizational inclusion, could have better captured the effect of microaggressions. For instance, if a woman's work group is mostly or solely composed of women, her work group inclusion may be less impacted by microaggressions experienced outside of her team, in contrast to her

overall organizational inclusion. This proposition aligns with a previous finding that women experienced higher team identification as the percentage of female teammates increased (Niler et al., 2019). This operationalization concern could have impacted the results, including the unexpected suppression effect, and could limit the replicability of these findings (Fried & Flake, 2018). Future studies could attempt to replace work group inclusion with organizational inclusion in this same research model to see whether organizational inclusion has a stronger correlation with microaggressions and better explains the relationship between microaggressions and engagement.

It is also interesting to note that women in this sample did not appear to be subject to frequent microaggressions, as shown by a moderate skew toward the lower end of the scale. This is in contrast with existing data on the frequency of microaggressions in workplaces (Field et al., 2023; Gartner et al., 2020), which suggests that perhaps the items on the MIMI-16 scale were not the most appropriate indicators of microaggressions in this sample. The scale was developed and validated in Germany and only translated to English afterward by the authors (Algner & Lorenz, 2022). Moreover, the authors themselves raise a question of generalizability as they used non-random sampling to validate their scale. Because this sample included participants from all over the world, it is possible that the MIMI-16 scale failed to capture aspects of microaggressions that are more common in other countries and less common in Germany. The limited availability of other workplace gender microaggression scales necessitates the validation of additional scales for future studies.

Conclusion

Gender microaggressions are subtle insults and invalidations that can create an unwelcoming environment for women in the workplace. Building on gaps in the literature, this study explored the impact of microaggressions on women's work group inclusion and work engagement, as well as the protective role of work identity in these relationships.

Drawing on the JD-R model and ODT, it showed that microaggressions can harm women's inclusion and engagement. However, it also revealed that inclusion and work identity can be strong protective resources that may even enhance women's work engagement in the face of a highly demanding situation like experiencing microaggressions. The results extend current knowledge of gender microaggressions and contribute to the debate about whether their effects are detrimental. Further, the study made a novel contribution toward understanding the protective role of inclusion and work identity on women's work engagement. These findings also yield implications for practitioners, who can direct their efforts toward fostering inclusive leadership, helping associates develop a work identity, and educating them on microaggressions. Given the cross-sectional nature of the study and the acknowledged methodological limitations, more research is still needed to better understand the dynamics behind gender microaggressions and their interaction with other important work-related constructs.

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Appendix A

Survey Items in Order of Appearance

Table A1

Microinsults and Microinvalidations Toward Women in the Workplace (MIMI-16)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. It happens that male colleagues continue a meeting after the women have left the room	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I have the feeling that people expect less of me because I am a woman	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Women get compliments for their appearance, men for their work performance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Others assume that starting a family has a negative impact on women's work performance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. My assertiveness is viewed negatively in a professional context	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. I have been made to feel that my professional performance is valued differently from that of men	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I have the feeling that I have to prove my professional qualifications all the time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Suggestions are more likely to be accepted if they are made by a man	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Sometimes I receive compliments that I consider inappropriate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Among my colleagues, sometimes suggestive jokes are made toward women	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. It has happened that colleagues have commented on the way I was dressed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I have been asked about my menstrual	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

cycle at my workplace							
13. I have been sexualized in a professional context	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. It has happened that I have been given suggestive pet names at my workplace	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. My behavior has been jokingly imitated because of my gender	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I feel that my appearance is more responsible for my professional success than my qualifications	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Note. The scale was preceded by the following text: Below are statements about your feelings and perceptions of your experiences at work based on your gender (being a woman) within the PAST SIX MONTHS. So, even if you are not 100% sure if the statement describes a situation you feel or think has happened to you, you can indicate that you have experienced these situations at work.

Table A2

Adapted Version Workplace and School Microaggressions subscale of the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS)

Below are statements about your feelings and perceptions of your experiences at work based on your gender (being a woman) within the PAST SIX MONTHS. So, even if you are not 100% sure if the statement describes a situation you feel or think has happened to you, you can indicate that you have experienced these situations at work.

	I did not experience this event in the past six months	I experienced this event 1 time in the past six months	I experienced this event 2 times in the past six months	I experienced this event 3 times in the past six months	I experienced this event 4 times in the past six months	I experienced this event 5 or more times in the past six months
1. An employer or co-worker was unfriendly or unwelcoming toward me because of my gender	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. My opinion was overlooked in a group discussion because of my gender	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I was ignored at work because of my gender	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Someone assumed that my work would be inferior to men	1	2	3	4	5	6

5. An employer or co-worker treated me differently than male co-workers	1	2	3	4	5	6

Note. The scale was preceded by the following text: "Below are statements about your feelings and perceptions of your experiences at work based on your gender (being a woman) within the PAST SIX MONTHS. So, even if you are not 100% sure if the statement describes a situation you feel or think has happened to you, you can indicate that you have experienced these situations at work."

Table A3

Work Group Inclusion

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I am treated as a valued member of my work group.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I belong in my work group.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am connected to my work group.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I believe that my work group is where I am meant to be.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel that people really care about me in my work group.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I can bring aspects of myself to this	1	2	3	4	5

work group that others in the group don't have in common with me.					
7. People in my work group listen to me even when my views are dissimilar.	1	2	3	4	5
8. While at work, I am comfortable expressing opinions that diverge from my group.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I can share a perspective on work issues that is different from my group members.	1	2	3	4	5
10. When my group's perspective becomes too narrow, I am able to bring up a new point of view.	1	2	3	4	5

Note. The scale was preceded by the following text: “Below are statements about your experience in your work group (or team). Please indicate the degree to which you personally agree or disagree with each of the following statements.”

Table A4

Tilburg Work Identity Scale for Commitment and Reconsideration of Commitment (TWIS-CRC)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I am proud of my work.	1	2	3	4	5
2. My work is important for who I am.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am optimistic because of my work.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I perform my work tasks confidently.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My work role is important.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I have good relationships with people at work	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel as if I belong when I am at work.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The tasks I perform at work are important.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I am a valued member in the team I work for.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I often think it would be better to change my line of work.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I often think different work would make my life more interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I am looking for a	1	2	3	4	5

different line of work.	

Note. The scale was preceded by the following text: "These statements relate to your thoughts and feelings about you and your work. For each of the statements, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with them."

Table A5

Ultra-short version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-3)

	Never	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Always
1. At work, I feel bursting with energy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I am enthusiastic about my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I am immersed in my work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Note. The scale was preceded by the following text: "The statements below concern your feelings at work; please indicate how often you feel this way at work."