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Workforce diversity in Cambodia: Does it make differences in employees' perceptions?

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Abstract

This study explored the dynamics of workforce diversity and employees' perceptions of inclusion, fairness, organization support, and leader-member exchange (LMX) in Cambodia. The survey was conducted with 90 participants in international non-profit organizations. Data was analyzed using the nonparametric tests. Among diversity characteristics, gender and religion were associated with differences in interactional fairness and LMX. Marital status and educational level produced differences in LMX and distributive fairness, respectively. Further, higher job positions were found to be associated with positive inclusion and LMX. This study points to the necessity of establishing a culture of diversity and inclusion in Cambodian workplaces.

KEYWORDS
Cambodia, employees' perceptions, NGOs, nonparametric test, workforce diversity

1 | INTRODUCTION

Globally, there is a trend of increasing visible workforce diversity, but the "diversity characteristics" which cause employees to be treated differently regardless of their ability due to certain factors within the organization, have always existed in homogeneous countries. Workforce diversity is defined as the division of the workforce into distinct categories that (a) have a perceived commonality within a given cultural or national context, and that (b) impact potentially harmful or beneficial employment outcomes such as job opportunities, treatment in the workplace, promotion prospects, irrespective of job-related skills and qualifications (Mor Barak, 2017). In a social culture where races and ethnicities are homogeneous, the diversity characteristics that cause exclusion and injustice within the organization are not visible but penetrate deeply into the organizational culture and hinder organizational performance and growth. Cox (1994) also pointed out that various dynamics within an organization due to the characteristics of diversity are limited by the socio-cultural environment in which the organization operates. Diversity characteristics could be associated with social characteristics that have long been distinguished as mainstream or non-mainstream, socially and culturally. Further, the specifics of inclusive and fair business practices can differ across cultures as different nations have different diversity challenges (Tang et al., 2015). For example, in the United States, where the culture of immigration has developed, gender, race, ethnicity, and immigration patterns are the main characteristics of diversity that must be managed by organizations. On the other hand, in India, a homogeneous culture, the diversity of castes, religions, and genders that determine social status is a major concern (Kundu, 2003).

As such, attempts to explore in-depth characteristics of organizational diversity in Asian countries with a homogeneous cultural background are gradually increasing, but there is no research on the diversity in organizations in Southeast Asian countries. In particular, NGOs in developing countries are contributing greatly to the delivery of a wide range of social services, while maintaining a people-centered organizational culture. Therefore, it is especially important to examine what characteristics of executives and staff workers affect inclusion, fairness, and relationships with supervisors within the organization. Given the need to understand diversity within the Cambodian cultural context,

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this study aims to: (i) understand social culture, non-government organizations, and diversity-related issues in Cambodia through a literature review; (ii) identify unique and critical diversity characteristics that affect workplace inclusion, fairness, perceived organizational support, and leader-member exchange; (iii) investigate whether there is any particular diversity characteristic in Cambodia that causes significant differences on employees' perceptions; and, (iv) offer suggestions that may create a truly inclusive and fair workplace in the organization.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | The sociocultural context of diversity in Cambodia

Cultural value dimensions (Hofstede, 2001) provide a perspective of culture for oneself and a perspective of how others perceive their culture as well as individual achievement and interpersonal relationships. Utilizing a cultural value dimensions approach to comprehend others shows the validity and establishes a link among individual, organizational and societal level phenomena to establish effective communication (Aycan, 2005). To understand the 2000-year-old rich culture and civilization of Cambodia one must deep dive into its history, which has absorbed the influences of colonial powers (French and Japanese) and cultural influences from India and China and, in turn, transferred them to other Southeast Asian civilizations. The country experienced almost 30 years of civil war, including 5 years (1975–1979) under the Khmer Rouge rule, followed by Vietnamese occupation. In 1991, Cambodia again became a sovereign state.

The Khmer Rouge regime under Pol Pot practiced a hierarchical political culture and attempted to institute one of the most radical revolutions in modern history, wherein the policy required the elimination of religious and ethnic minority groups such as Buddhism, ethnic Chinese, Vietnamese, Lao, Thai, Cham, and Pakistani citizens was systematically executed (Duffy, 1994). Nonetheless, the social and psychological characteristics often ascribed to the Khmer—represent Buddhist ideals toward which Cambodians, especially in rural areas, continue to aspire. However, Buddhist precepts do not permeate Cambodian education and ideology as strongly as they did before 1975. Minority populations like Khmer Loeu groups generally follow local religions, while ethnic Vietnamese and Chinese are eclectic, following Mahayana Buddhism and Daoism. Many Vietnamese are members of the Roman Catholic Church or Cao Dai. The Cham minority is Muslim, generally of the Sunni branch. More recently, thousands have converted to Evangelical Protestantism, particularly in urban Khmer. The Khmer belong to the Mon-Khmer ethno-linguistic group and Mon-Khmer languages are spoken by nearly all people in Cambodia. Smaller numbers speak Vietnamese and Chinese dialects. The Khmer account for the vast majority of the population, producing a homogeneity unique in Southeast Asia that has encouraged a strong sense of national identity.

The civil conflicts of the 1970s resulted in the nearly complete destruction of the education system in Cambodia, ending with the survival of only 15% of people with high school educational levels or above. A more systematic development of the education sector began in the late 1990s. Governmental strategies for implementing universal basic education and reducing the gender gap have produced tangible results in Cambodia. The report from the OECD showed that facilities in rural, disadvantaged, and public schools tend to be in worse condition than in urban, advantaged, and private schools (MoEYS, 2018).

Gender relations in Cambodia are complex. In ancient times, Khmer women held high positions in the central government and greatly contributed to nation-building. However, in the present day, Cambodia remains a patriarchal and hierarchical society with rigid ideas about power and status and the basis of the representation of gender roles. Moreover, status is also determined by age and other socioeconomic characteristics, especially by wealth (ADB, 2012). There are aspects of Cambodian society that would be suggestive of the existence of matriarchal forms of family relations. Khmer women are viewed as having power in a bilateral kinship system, with a preference for uxorilocal residence after marriage (Pak, 2019). However, in practice, Cambodian culture, women's rights, and freedoms are limited in almost all spheres.

2.2 | The organizational (NGO) contexts of diversity in Cambodia

NGOs often play an active role in building a nation's health, economic, or social activities and they assess and address multidimensional problems in both national and international issues (Grobman, 2008). The rise of civil society became visible at the arrival of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in 1992. After the creation of UNTAC in Cambodia, gradually great numbers of international NGOs commenced to work, which created a level of stability that had been absent in the country for decades. This stability caught the eyes of donors to flow the funding and spaces available for NGOs, which created a development marketplace within the service provision industry (Hughes, 2003). The transformative key roles of NGOs are seen as central to the new policy agenda within Cambodia. NGOs are seen as service providers and democratic watchdogs that act as a driving force of good governance and neoliberalism, which were the central focus of donors' demand (Norman, 2014).

A social anthropological approach for understanding NGO management in non-Western contexts is acknowledging that development interventions frequently take the form of a cultural encounter at the level of both organization and individual. Campbell, 1987 "framework for

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understanding NGO management" emphasized cultural differences as a key element. Campbell (1987) referred to this as the fourth element (context, environment and culture in NGOs) alongside generic management, development management, and third-sector management—in Campbell's (1987) NGO management overview.

Tayeb (1988) analyzes the main approaches of the cross-national study of organizations, where he showed that a set of different factors helps to determine the structures and activities of organizations, within which culture is just one factor. The "cultural perspective" highlights the ideational process in which the attitudes and values of individual employees help determine the organization's structure. Analyses through these perspectives on "the culture and management of NGOs," distinctly explain the NGO culture of Cambodia, showing that the dominant Buddhist culture and the patron-client relationships pattern of the social hierarchy did not necessarily form the organizational culture and management of NGOs but rather influenced by the neoliberalism ideology.

2.3 | Diversity characteristic and employee perceptions of inclusion, fairness, perceived organizational support, and leader–member exchange

Employees' diversity characteristics influence the formation of employee perceptions such as inclusion–exclusion, fairness, perceived organizational support, and leader–member exchange in the workplace.

Inclusion refers to the extent to which all employees are accepted as valued members of the organization, recognized for their unique characteristics, and encouraged to participate in the workplace (Cho & Mor Barak, 2008; Mor Barak, Cherin, Levin, Nissly, & Lane, 2013, 2015; Shore et al., 2011; Nishii, 2013). The perception of inclusion and exclusion in the workplace can be explained by several connected theories. Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982), self-categorization theory (Maines, 1989), and optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991) provide insights into the importance of creating an inclusive workplace and its connection to positive organizational outcomes. All these theories suggest that individuals seek to maintain a positive social identity and similarity through a process of self-categorization (Maines, 1989) using demographic characteristics as indicators such as race, age, and gender to categorize themselves as included or excluded. When group members perceive that they are similar to those around them, trust and acceptance increase (Tajfel, 1982). As feelings of acceptance increase, so do feelings of inclusion (Shore et al., 2011). In an inclusive work environment, diverse employees are included in decision-making processes; therefore, the negative impacts of demographic diversity, such as stereotypes, conflict, turnover, and interpersonal bias, could be eliminated (Nishii, 2013).

"People's perception of fairness in organizational settings" classified into three classes of events: distributive, procedural, and interactional fairness. Distributive fairness refers to the perceived fairness of the outcomes employees receive, procedural fairness refers to the perceived fairness of the means used to determine those outcomes, and interactional fairness refers to the quality of interpersonal treatment received from decision-makers (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Greenberg, 1990). Employees' empirical experience of each diversity-oriented event (i.e., procedural, distributive, and interactional events) would predict or influence individuals' socio-psychological processes in ways that facilitate either positive or negative work outcomes such as organizational commitment and work satisfaction (Fujimoto, Härtel, & Azmat, 2013). Distributive fairness research has repeatedly revealed that, compared to members of majority groups, minority group members suffered more discrimination by organizations about fair work outcomes such as hiring and promotion (Pelled, 1996; Wooten & James, 2004). In the case of procedural fairness, research indicated that a minority employee with multiple social identities (e.g., race, gender, and social class) tends to experience compounded employment barriers (Pager et al., 2009; Poster, 2008).

Perceived organizational support (POS) refers to employees' perceptions regarding the extent to which their organization thinks highly of their contributions and promotes their welfare (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Evidence shows that when employees perceive that they are receiving a low level of support, courage and feedback may lead to frustration (Colbert et al., 2004), which also leads to deviant behavior, including hostility or aggression (Spector, 1997). Empirical evidence has shown that high POS is positively related to a plethora of positive attitudes and behaviors at work, such as employees' affective commitment (Eisenberger et al., 2001), organizational identification (Sluss et al., 2008), work engagement (Caesens et al., 2016), and job performance (Shoss et al., 2013).

Leader–member exchange (LMX) theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) predicts that leaders, through the quality of their interactions with followers, can influence how employees evaluate themselves in their work environment (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Some LMX research suggests that similarity between leaders and followers translates to higher quality relationships (Turban & Jones, 1988), while others have found no effect of demographic similarity/dissimilarity on LMX (Stark & Poppler, 2009).

2.3.1 | Gender and employee perceptions

Findler, Wind, & Barak, 2007 found that support for a link between inclusion and diversity was somewhat mixed, with gender showing the only consistent link to information networks and decision-making (such that women reported lower levels of inclusion than men did). Gender

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similarity has been found to be positively related to trust, LMX, group cohesion, feelings of competence, psychological attachment, and intent to stay (Mellor, 1995; Pelled & Xin, 2000). A study by Nishii and Mayer (2009) examined the role of LMX in lowering turnover in diverse work groups (in terms of race, age, gender, and tenure). A study on gender differences in perceptions of fairness and results indicated that gender did moderate fairness. The weightage indicated by male and female respondents did differ, as both reported lower fairness, specifically procedural and interactional fairness when the authority figure was a female (Ansari et al., 2016). Researchers reviewed gender and fairness literature and argued that men and women did not have fundamentally different fairness orientations. Based on these findings, we shall explore the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1. Men will have a higher perception of inclusion, fairness, POS, and LMX than women.

2.3.2 | Marital status and employee perceptions

Qualitative research suggests that employers discriminate against mothers (Blair-Loy, 2003), and surveys have found lower wages among mothers than comparable women without children (Anderson et al., 2003). Jordan and Zitek (2012) presented significant findings after comparing perceptions toward male and female employees based on their marital status. They found that married female job applicants were perceived as less suitable for employment than single women, and a female job applicant was viewed less favorably when she was married; in contrast, a male applicant was perceived more favorably when married, and a recently married woman's job performance and dedication was expected to decline, whereas a recently married man's dedication was predicted to rise. This difference made participants more willing to lay off women employees rather than men.

Hypothesis 2. Married men will have the highest perceptions of inclusion, fairness, POS, and LMX than others (single men, single women, and married women).

2.3.3 | Education and employee perceptions

Using education as a demographic variable, Coetzer (2007) found that respondents with tertiary qualifications perceived most work environment characteristics and their immediate supervisors' level of proximate support for learning less favorably. They also reported lower levels of satisfaction with their learning experiences. Another study directly measured the effect of education level on the job satisfaction of five-star hotel employees and found a positive relationship between educational level and job satisfaction (Gürbüz, 2007).

Hypothesis 3. The higher the level of education of an employee, the higher the perceptions of inclusion, fairness, POS, and LMX will be.

2.3.4 | Religion and employee perceptions

Employees in religiously diverse organizations might be prone to increased interpersonal conflicts and misunderstandings, which can increase prejudice between co-workers (Day, 2005). Teamwork and manager/employee relationships are important attributes of employee engagement, which can be negatively affected by religious discrimination (Messarra, 2014). An individual's commitment to the organization has been linked to fair treatment (Allen & Meyer, 1990) and leadership behaviors (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), where identity threats resulting from religious discrimination will more likely result in the worker being less engaged at work (Messarra, 2014).

Hypothesis 4. Buddhists will have the highest perceptions of inclusion, fairness, POS, and LMX than people of other religions in Cambodia.

2.3.5 | Position and employee perceptions

Research findings from Mor Barak, Cherin, Levin, Nissly, and Lane (2006) showed that younger workers and those with lower tenure experienced higher rates of exclusion from information networks and decision-making. Utilizing a sample of 381 employees in a large Korean corporation, Cho and Mor Barak (2008), revealed that employees with higher positions were more likely to feel included, and more committed

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to their organization than employees with lower positions. A qualitative study revealed that employees in high and mid-level positions have direct access to and influence on decision-making processes because of their position, experience, longer tenure, expertise, and knowledge (Cho & Sultana, 2017).

Hypothesis 5. The higher the job position in the organization, the higher the perceptions of inclusion, fairness, POS, and LMX.

3 | METHODS

3.1 | Sampling procedures

This study explores differences in employees' perceptions of organization based on diversity characteristics. A purposive convenience sampling method was used to collect data. The subjects were employees of international non-profit organizations in Cambodia, as NGOs offer the most suitable conditions for examining diversity characteristics of employees in the socio-cultural context of a country and the context of the uniqueness of an organization. The survey was conducted by visiting international non-profit organizations and those who attended the Korea-Cambodia International Social Welfare Conference for 1 week in December 2019. Approximately 100 questionnaires were distributed, and 96 questionnaires were collected. A total of 90 questionnaires were used in the study, excluding incomplete questionnaires.

3.2 | Sample

The sample used in this study included 90 participants ranging in age from 20 to 51 years ($M = 28.32$, $SD = 5.3$; see Table 1 for descriptive statistics). More than half (52.2%) were women and the majority marital status was single (64.4%). Most of the participants held a bachelor's degree (57.8%) and were Buddhist (83.9%) and from the capital (30%). The majority of participants were general staff (79.7%) and regarding the service types of NGOs, most were into education and training (17.5%) followed by health and sanitation (11.9%).

4 | MEASURES

4.1 | Diversity characteristics

Gender, marital status, education, religion, and position were used as diversity characteristics. Gender was separated into men and women. Marital status was represented by married, single, divorced, and widowed. Education was categorized as follows: from below secondary school to above master's degree. Religion was separated into six variables: None, Buddhism, Muslim, Catholic, Protestantism (Christian). Finally, job position was represented by three variables executive, supervisor, and general staff.

4.2 | Inclusion

The inclusion–exclusion scale (Mor Barak et al., 1998) was used to measure inclusion. The measure consists of 15 questions that evaluate an individual's sense of inclusion in relation to five system levels with three items each: workgroup, organization, supervisor, upper management, and social/informal. Previous studies using this scale reported Cronbach's alphas of .88, .90, .81, and .87 (Cho & Mor Barak, 2008; Mor Barak, Cherin, Levin, Nissly, & Lane, 2013).

4.3 | Fairness

Perception of fairness is measured in three dimensions: distributive fairness, procedural fairness, and interactional fairness. The five items related to distributive fairness are adopted from Price and Mueller (1986) and the four items related to procedural fairness were developed by McFarlin and Sweeney (1992). The six items for supervisor/interactional fairness were from Niehoff and Moorman (1993). Previous studies using this measure reported Cronbach's alphas of .90 for distributive fairness, .95 for procedural fairness, and .89 for supervisor/interactional fairness, respectively (Bayarcelik & Findikli, 2016).

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TABLE 1 The main characteristics of the study sample.

Characteristic		N	%	Characteristic		N	%
Gender (N = 90)	Man	43	47.8	Organization main service (N = 302, double response possible)	Education & training	53	17.5
	Woman	47	52.2				
Marital (N = 90)	Man married	13	14.4		Health & sanitary	36	11.9
	Man single	30	33.3				
	Woman married	15	16.7		HIV/AIDS	30	9.9
	Woman single	32	35.6		Women	29	9.6
Age (N = 90) M = 28.32 SD = 5.3	20–24	17	18.9		Human rights & democracy	25	8.3
	25–29	45	50.0				
	30–34	18	20.0		Community development	25	8.3
	Above 35	10	11.1				
Education (N = 90)	High school	4	4.4		Child welfare	20	6.6
	Bachelor	52	57.8		Water & sanitation	17	5.6
	Above master	34	37.8				
					Agriculture	15	5.0
Religion (N = 87)	None	3	3.4		Disaster & rescue	10	3.3
	Buddhist	73	83.9				
	Christian	11	12.2		Environment & resources	10	3.3
Hometown (N = 85)	Capital	30	33.3				
	2nd urban	7	7.8		Art & culture	9	3.0
	3rd urban	2	2.2				
	Other cities	4	4.4		Disability rehabilitation	9	3.0
	Western	5	5.6				
Position (N = 79)	Executive	2	2.5		Support local NGO	7	2.3
	Supervisor	14	17.7				
	General staff	53	79.7		Credit & saving	7	2.3

4.4 | Perceived organizational support

POS was measured using eight items from Wayne et al. (1997). These items were rated on a six-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree). Higher scores indicate higher levels of POS. Previous studies using this measure reported Cronbach's alphas of .89, .86, and .86, respectively (Kim & Mor Barak, 2015).

4.5 | Leader–member exchange

Scandura and Graen's (1984) seven-item questionnaire was used to measure LMX. Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = extremely ineffective to 5 = extremely effective. Higher scores indicated a higher quality leader–follower relationship. Previous studies using this measure reported Cronbach's alpha of .92, and .94, respectively (Kim & Mor Barak, 2015; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). The below is Table 2 for measure scale and instrument reliability.

5 | DATA ANALYSIS

Nonparametric analysis is used as the sample size does not have a sufficient number of samples to determine that the sample data of this study were extracted from the normal distribution population, or the samples to be compared have the same variance of each population extracted. The nonparametric statistical test focuses on the difference between the median because it is interested in the sequence of the data, while parametric statistics mainly focuses on the difference between the means of the two groups.

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TABLE 2 Measure scale and instrument reliability.

Scale		Instrument reliability
Inclusion–Exclusion Scale Mor Barak and Cherin (1998)		Cronbach's alpha of .84 (Cho & Mor Barak, 2008)
Fairness	Procedural fairness Price and Mueller (1986)	Cronbach's alpha of .90 (Moorman, 1991), .89 (Bayarcelik & Findikli, 2016)
	Distributive fairness McFarlin and Sweeney (1992)	Cronbach's alpha of .90 (Moorman, 1991), .95 (Bayarcelik & Findikli, 2016)
	Interactional fairness Niehoff and Moorman (1993)	Cronbach's alpha of .89 (Bayarcelik & Findikli, 2016)
Perceived Organizational Support Wayne et al. (1997)		Cronbach's alphas of .89, .86, and .86 (Kim & Mor Barak, 2015)
Leader–Member Exchange Scandura and Graen (1984)		Cronbach's alpha of .92, and .94 (Kim & Mor Barak, 2015; Nishii & Mayer, 2009)

TABLE 3 Descriptive statistics and inter correlations among continuous variables.

	N	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Inclusion	76	3.87	.72	1					
2. Distributive fairness	86	4.27	.85	.48**	1				
3. Procedural fairness	82	3.98	.82	.49**	.60**	1			
4. Interactional fairness	83	4.21	.74	.47**	.44**	.38**	1		
5. POS	87	4.51	.99	.66**	.58**	.48**	.57**	1	
6. LMX	80	3.32	.54	.58**	.45**	.39**	.69**	.66**	1
Number of items				12	5	4	6	7	7
Reliability coefficient				.821	.849	.790	.845	.862	.773

**$p < .01$.

Among the various nonparametric test techniques, the Mann–Whitney *U*-test corresponds to the *t*-test, and the Kruskal–Wallis test corresponds to the one-way ANOVAs in the parameter test. The Mann–Whitney *U*-test was used to determine whether the two samples differed to a statistically significant degree when comparing two independent samples around a specific variable above the sequence variable. This test is a powerful nonparametric statistical method. The Kruskal–Wallis is a method used to test whether at least two of the k-independent samples show a difference in their median. More precisely, this test was used to statistically test whether k-independent samples were extracted from the same population. For hypothesis 1, the Mann–Whitney *U* test was conducted and for hypotheses 2, 3, and 4, the Kruskal–Wallis test was conducted.

6 | RESULTS

6.1 | Descriptive statistics

Table 3 displays the means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations among continuous measures. Among employees' perceptions, the perceived organizational support average was the highest at 4.51(SD = .99), followed by distributive fairness (Mean = 4.27, SD = .85). On the other hand, LMX was the lowest with an average of 3.32 (SD = .54). There was a significant positive correlation between all employees' perceptions ($p < .01$). The reliability of all variables was generally found to be above the social sciences' level of reliability above .60 (Nunnally, 1978).

6.2 | Hypotheses testing

A significant difference in perception of inclusion, fairness, POS, and LMX according to gender among diversity characteristics was verified using the Mann–Whitney *U* test method. As shown in Table 4, significant differences were found only in interactional fairness and LMX.

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Among the subcategories of fairness, in interactional fairness, males averaged 4.44 [SD = .93], which was significantly ($p < .05$) higher than females 4.11(SD = .75), and males also had an average of 3.47 (LMX), again significantly ($p < .01$) higher than females 3.16.

To verify the differences in inclusion, fairness, POS, and LMX according to marital status, education, religion, and position, the Kruskal–Wallis test was used. First, as a result of testing the difference in employees' perceptions according to marital status by gender, there was a significant difference ($p < .05$) only in LMX. So, Man—Single is the highest with an average of 3.52 (SD = .59), but Woman—Married is the lowest with 2.97 (SD = .37) as shown in Table 5.

On examining the difference between employees' perceptions according to educational level, as shown in Table 6, a notable difference was found in the significance level ($p < .05$) of distributive fairness, while the other categories did not show a statistically significant difference. That is, in distributive fairness, high school graduates had the highest score with an average of 4.75 (SD = .19), followed by those with above master's degree who had an average of 4.11 (SD = .84), while bachelor's degree had the lowest score at 3.82 (SD = .79).

Statistically significant differences were found in interactional fairness and LMX, as shown in Table 7, after testing the differences in perception of inclusion, fairness, POS, and LMX according to religion. In interactional fairness at $p < .05$ significant level, people without religion were highest with 5.61 (SD = .54), followed by Christians with 4.35 (SD = .66), while Buddhism with 4.20 (SD = .84) was the lowest. Also, in LMX, those without religion were the highest with 4.06 (SD = .33), followed by Christian at 3.31 (SD = .39), and Buddhism at 3.27 (SD = .54).

Finally, it was found that the job position produces a statistically significant difference in perception of inclusion and perceived organizational support, as shown in Table 8. Executives' perception of inclusion averaged 5.17 (SD = .35), followed by supervisors at 4.43 (SD = .55) at the $p < .001$ significance level. On the other hand, general staff exhibited remarkably low perceptions of inclusion at 3.71 (SD = .64).

TABLE 4 Mean scores for gender on perceptions.

	Male		Female		Mann–Whiney	
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	*U* statistic	*p*
Inclusion	3.99	(.78)	3.77	(.65)	578.5	NS
Distributive fairness	4.04	(.81)	3.91	(.83)	751.5	NS
Procedural fairness	4.31	(.63)	4.13	(.83)	757.0	NS
Interactional fairness	4.44	(.93)	4.11	(.75)	658.0	.022
POS	4.66	(1.07)	4.37	(.92)	727.5	NS
LMX	3.47	(.56)	3.16	(.47)	508.0	.005

TABLE 5 Mean scores for marital status on perceptions.

	Man married		Man single		Woman married		Woman single			
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Kruskal–Wallis χ^2	*p*
Inclusion	3.75	(.59)	4.08	(.84)	3.84	(.68)	3.73	(.65)	4.656	NS
Distributive fairness	4.00	(.94)	4.05	(.77)	4.00	(.91)	3.87	(.80)	1.057	NS
Procedural fairness	4.23	(.75)	4.34	(.58)	3.77	(.95)	4.25	(.76)	5.548	NS
Interactional fairness	4.41	(.81)	4.45	(.98)	4.23	(.64)	4.05	(.79)	2.916	NS
POS	4.62	(.90)	4.68	(1.15)	4.48	(.82)	4.31	(.97)	4.199	NS
LMX	3.34	(.48)	3.52	(.59)	2.97	(.37)	3.23	(.49)	10.874	.012

TABLE 6 Mean scores for educational level on perceptions.

	High school		Bachelor		Above master			
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Kruskal–Wallis χ^2	*p*
Inclusion	3.80	(.57)	3.72	(.69)	4.13	(.73)	5.099	NS
Distributive fairness	4.75	(.19)	3.82	(.79)	4.11	(.84)	7.145	.035
Procedural fairness	3.87	(.97)	4.20	(.62)	4.29	(.88)	1.300	NS
Interactional fairness	4.00	(.53)	4.18	(.85)	4.45	(.87)	3.271	NS
POS	4.43	(.99)	4.42	(.98)	4.65	(1.03)	.595	NS
LMX	3.11	(.32)	3.26	(.53)	3.42	(.57)	2.786	NS

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TABLE 7 Mean scores for religion on perceptions.

	None		Buddhism		Christian			
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Kruskal–Wallis χ^2	*p*
Inclusion	4.29	(1.00)	3.83	(.72)	3.93	(.54)	.671	NS
Distributive fairness	4.47	(1.10)	3.92	(.83)	4.14	(.61)	1.615	NS
Procedural fairness	3.63	(1.24)	4.22	(.72)	4.20	(.80)	.787	NS
Interactional fairness	5.61	(.54)	4.20	(.84)	4.35	(.66)	6.775	.034
POS	5.21	(1.11)	4.40	(.97)	4.87	(.70)	3.355	NS
LMX	4.05	(.33)	3.27	(.54)	3.31	(.39)	5.858	.049

TABLE 8 Mean scores for position on perceptions.

	General staff		Supervisor		Executive			
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Kruskal–Wallis χ^2	*p*
Inclusion	3.71	(.64)	4.43	(.55)	5.17	(.35)	16.519	.000
Distributive fairness	3.93	(.88)	4.09	(.71)	4.00	-	.146	NS
Procedural fairness	4.10	(.78)	4.36	(.54)	4.75	(.71)	2.247	NS
Interactional fairness	4.20	(.89)	4.45	(.84)	4.58	(.12)	.955	NS
POS	4.38	(.99)	4.78	(.90)	5.93	(.50)	6.584	.037
LMX	3.26	(.56)	3.48	(.60)	3.64	(.50)	1.946	NS

In perceived organizational support, executives averaged the highest at 5.93 (SD = .50), followed by supervisors at 4.78 (SD = .90) and staff at 4.38 (SD = .99) at the $p < .05$ significance level.

7 | DISCUSSION

This study investigated whether there are differences in the sense of inclusion, fairness, POS, and LMX perception in any diversity characteristics within international NGOs in Cambodia.

First, in terms of gender, men reported they were treated fairly (interactional fairness) by their bosses in their workplace interactions, and they also reported having more positive exchange relationships (LMX, POS) with their bosses than women. In addition, when gender was classified according to marital status, significant differences were found only in LMX; specifically, married women showed negative perceptions of exchange relations with their bosses compared to other groups. In this study, it can be said that women's lower level of interactional fairness and LMX than men, especially married women compared to other groups, is based on the social and cultural context of Cambodia. Married women tend to be seriously underestimated outside the home and in decision-making processes at work, as the general attitude toward gender roles is still that women are meant to take care of the house and men are supposed to provide.

Second, unexpectedly, the hypothesis that Buddhists, who represent the social and cultural mainstream of religion in Cambodia, will have higher positive perceptions than other groups in employees' perceptions, was rejected altogether. Buddhists showed more negative perceptions of interactional fairness and exchange relations with their superiors than Christians and non-religious people. The state religion's (Buddhism) influence on Cambodian education or ideology is weaker now than it was in the past. Moreover, as the participants of this study were employees of international NGOs that function as per Western organizational culture, which is relatively unsupportive of religious discrimination. Further research is needed, on whether this result is different in traditional Cambodian organizations.

Third, among the diversity characteristics, there was a significant difference in distributive fairness at the level of education. Workers who graduated from high school showed more positive perceptions than those who graduated from university or higher. Distributive fairness is a relatively subjective perception of employee rewards for contributions, so it can be greatly influenced by socio-cultural norms and standards.

The government made systematic efforts to improve education after the 1990s and was successful in narrowing down the education gap, but the educational level continues to be an important indicator of social status in Cambodia. In this study, the reason that high school graduates show high distribution fairness seems to be that the treatment within the organization is relatively positive compared to their social status. Since international NGOs function on voluntary participation and have a democratic organizational culture, high school graduates with relatively low social status will likely perceive high distribution fairness.

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Lastly, among the diversity characteristics, there were significant differences in perceptions of inclusion and POS in the category of job position—the higher the position, the more positive the perception. In that respect, employees in the lower positions working at international NGOs in Cambodia recognized that they were not supported or treated with sufficient inclusiveness within the organization. POS is closely related to emotional attachment, which is consistent with the values pursued by the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2001). Thus, it can be interpreted that the vision and goals pursued by the organization in all positions are not sufficiently shared. The vision and goal of the organization should be shared with all employees, and individual employees should fully demonstrate their abilities and capabilities to make a unique and differentiated contribution to the organization.

The important implications of this study are as follows. First, it is necessary to establish an institutional safety net so as not to propagate exclusion, unfairness, and negative interactions within the organization based on gender and marital status. Diversity management systems that prohibit discrimination and unreasonable treatment based on visible diversity characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and gender in advanced Western companies should be benchmarked and built urgently.

Second, an organizational culture that embraces all employees of the organization should be created without discrimination and exclusion within the organization, even regarding diversity characteristics that are not visible. It is necessary to provide an environment that embraces individual differences in employees and allows each employee to fulfill their potential and participate in the organization's progress.

Finally, the diverse climate of the organization should spread its social impact to the local community to which the company belongs. Companies should fulfill their social responsibilities to help Cambodians cultivate a culture that respects diversity and strives for fairness. International NGOs, with their relatively inclusive culture, are in a suitable position to inspire and lead such a change in Cambodian workplaces and society.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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