

# Building a caring workplace: how managerial caring and perceived insider status shape subjective employee well-being

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – Although the study of factors that promote employee well-being is not a new research area, the impact of managerial caring and perceived insider status on subjective employee well-being is a relatively new and unexplored area within the management literature. Therefore, this study examined the relationship between managerial caring and subjective employee well-being while considering the mediating effect of perceived insider status. Based on social identity theory, the study hypothesized that perceived insider status mediates the link between managerial caring and subjective employee well-being.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The study analyzed data from 193 employees working across various industries in the United Arab Emirates using Process Macro Model 4.

**Findings** – The findings revealed a positive relationship between managerial caring and employee well-being, which was influenced by the mediating effect of perceived insider status.

**Originality/value** – The study's results, which shed light on the process by which managerial caring positively affects employee well-being, provide valuable insights for developing a caring workplace. The findings make a significant contribution to the literature on managerial caring by explaining how the mediating role of perceived insider status influences the relationship between managerial caring and subjective employee well-being.

**Keywords** Managerial caring, Perceived insider status, Subjective employee well-being, Caring

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

Employee well-being has become increasingly important to both academics and professionals, as it has become a critical concept in modern organizations (Wahab and Blackman, 2022). In today's work environment, employers are searching for fostering workers who are emotionally invested in their jobs and are willing to go above and beyond to contribute to their company's success (Park *et al.*, 2017). Given the significant changes occurring in many organizations, such as longer working hours and increased job complexity, ensuring employee well-being is crucial (Park *et al.*, 2017). As such, there is growing interest among human resource (HR) managers, business executives, and academic researchers in understanding the organizational factors that influence subjective employee



**Funding:** The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Ethical approval:** All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

**Informed consent:** Informed consent was given by all participants in the study, and there is no identifying information in this manuscript or the data.

well-being (SEW) (Swanberg *et al.*, 2011), which has been linked to better health and higher levels of positive emotions toward life.

The present study characterizes managerial caring (MAC) as an enabling factor in creating a caring environment for employees and assisting them in enhancing their insider status and well-being within the workplace. MAC is defined “as a process wherein a manager exhibits inviting, advancing, capacitizing, and connecting behaviors toward an employee or employees” (Kroth and Keeler, 2009, p. 521). Interest in MAC and developing caring models in management and organizational psychology is a relatively recent phenomenon that has attracted the attention of scholars and practitioners (Kroth and Keeler, 2009; Saks, 2021, 2022).

Despite the widespread use of the caring model in healthcare, education, and sport management, it has not been extensively studied in the management context (Aldabbas, 2022; Kroth and Keeler, 2009; Saks, 2021, 2022). Thus, the use of MAC, in the context of this study, refers to the practice of showing empathy, compassion, and concern for the well-being of employees.

While there is some understanding of how managerial coaching (Zhao and Liu, 2020), managerial support (Baker and Kim, 2020), and leadership (Park *et al.*, 2017) influence SEW, there is limited knowledge on the relationship between MAC and SEW, as well as the mechanisms that explain this relationship. Moreover, to our knowledge, no study has explored the impact of perceived insider status (PIS) on the relationship between MAC and SEW. Additionally, until recently, research had seldom focused on the emotional experiences and subjective well-being of employees (Charalampous *et al.*, 2019; Pataki-Bittó and Kun, 2022). For instance, health professionals have the knowledge, tools, and resources to enhance SEW within changing work conditions, an area needing increased focus (Jeske, 2022). However, empirical studies on the caring model in business management are scarce (Saks, 2021, 2022). To bridge this gap, we propose a mediation model to clarify the relationship between MAC and SEW, utilizing PIS as the mediator.

PIS is a theory proposed by Stamper and Masterson (2002), which draws upon social exchange theory to explain interactions between organizations and their workforces. Insiders and outsiders are different because “employers may use inducements such as benefits, training, and promotions to send signals to certain employees that they have achieved insider status (and subsequently send signals to employees who do not receive these inducements that they are outsiders)” (Stamper and Masterson, 2002, p. 877).

Social identity theory (SIT) is used in this study to explain the concepts of MAC, PIS, and SEW. SIT is defined as “a social psychological theory that sets out to explain group processes and intergroup relations” (Hogg *et al.*, 1995, p. 255). Thus, “social identification is the perception of oneness with or belongingness to some human aggregate” (Ashforth and Mael, 1989, p. 21). SIT provides a framework for investigating how individuals categorize themselves into social groups, including the in-group and out-group. This approach can be utilized to examine how people perceive themselves in relation to others (Stets and Burke, 2000).

This study aims to make several contributions to the literature. First, we seek to investigate the mediating role of PIS in the relationship between MAC and SEW. Second, we highlight the significance of MAC and PIS as antecedents of SEW. Third, we emphasize the importance of MAC and PIS in promoting SEW across diverse industries. Lastly, this study bridges the gap in the empirical research on caring models in the workplace.

## 2. Literature review and hypotheses development

### 2.1 Managerial caring and subjective employee well-being

Effective management is essential for any organization's success, as managers' behavior can significantly impact employees' productivity, well-being, work behavior, performance, and morale (Avolio *et al.*, 2009; Kuoppala *et al.*, 2008; Sarwar *et al.*, 2020). A caring manager

recognizes that employees are a company's most valuable assets. Caring management is a critical leadership trait that benefits both individuals and organizations, as caring managers who prioritize employees' well-being, development, and appreciation are the most influential in driving engagement and commitment to organizational success (Saks, 2021).

Despite its recognition as a crucial value for some organizations (Barsade and O'Neill, 2014) and employees' expectations for employers to prioritize mental health and well-being (Saks, 2022), caring has not received much attention from management studies, and a comprehensive theoretical framework or model for its measurement is still lacking (Houghton *et al.*, 2015; Kroth and Keeler, 2009; Saks, 2021, 2022). Caring is often associated with goals such as promoting the growth, welfare, and well-being of others, meeting their specific needs, and fostering a caring culture in oneself and others (Louis *et al.*, 2016).

Previous research has explored how certain leadership traits, behaviors, and styles impact subordinates' well-being (Perko, 2017). Well-being is influenced by numerous elements in one's life, spanning work and leisure alike (Jonsdottir *et al.*, 2020). However, the relationship between MAC and SEW has not been explicitly investigated. Furthermore, there are indications that MAC is associated with SEW, as managers promote a caring climate to accomplish organizational tasks and create a healthy work environment. Additionally, manager and employee well-being are determined by the interactions and actions occurring between a leader and an employee, which can have either a favorable or adverse impact on the employee's overall SEW (Salmi *et al.*, 2020).

Saks (2021) found that during the pandemic, some organizations displayed a high level of care for their employees by providing remote work options, virtual support, and ensuring necessary precautions. Conversely, other organizations treated employees as commodities, neglecting their safety and well-being by not enforcing social distancing measures and putting them at risk of contracting the virus. Louis *et al.* (2016) emphasized the crucial role that school leaders play in promoting the well-being and success of both teachers and students in an exploratory study conducted in the educational sector. Similarly, leaders play a crucial role in enhancing the well-being of individuals and groups, whether in an organizational, community, or societal context (Liedtka, 1996).

The concept of MAC recently emerged as a theoretical foundation for understanding the role of nurse leadership in healthcare organizations, particularly in the nursing and health science fields (Abou Hashish and Khatab, 2018). Caring behavior from nurse managers toward their staff was found to be a significant predictor of nurses' ability to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic (Faramawy and Abd El Kader, 2021). This literature supports our hypothesis that MAC has an impact on SEW within organizations.

*H1. Managerial caring is positively related to subjective employee well-being.*

## *2.2 Managerial caring and perceived insider status*

Creating a caring and ethical work environment is crucial for organizational success, as it fosters employee initiative, engagement, and motivation (Saks, 2021). A caring environment also contributes to employees' sense of self-worth, well-being, and happiness, both physically and mentally (Li and Peng, 2022). Research indicates that management has the most significant impact on creating a caring climate, as managers' behavior sets an example for subordinates to follow (Agrawal, 2017; Calabrese and Roberts, 2002; Li and Peng, 2022; Rathert and Fleming, 2008).

However, management's caring practices will not positively impact employees' perceptions of the climate if they perceive management to be uncaring about their well-being (Saks, 2021). A positive environment is more likely to be fostered when managers demonstrate a high level of care and ethics and employees empathize with them, resulting in the achievement of organizational goals (Simons and Roberson, 2003). Furthermore, a recent

empirical study found that authentic leadership was positively correlated with inclusion (Srivastava *et al.*, 2022).

As previously stated, no empirical studies in the literature have examined the relationship between MAC and PIS. However, a study conducted by Guo and Zhu (2022) on 420 employees from 12 enterprises in China revealed a strong positive correlation between organizational compassion and PIS. This suggests that organizations that exhibit compassion toward their employees may also have enhanced PIS. Zeng and Xu (2020) conducted an empirical study involving 269 university instructors in China and found a significant and positive correlation between servant leadership and PIS. This implies that instructors who exhibit servant leadership behaviors may also contribute to higher levels of PIS. Additionally, Gu *et al.* (2020) identified a positive association between PIS and supportive HR practices in their empirical research conducted in China. Given this evidence, we hypothesize that PIS is impacted by caring; when employees feel that their managers care about their well-being, they would be more likely to perceive themselves as insiders within the organization. This is because when employees experience a high level of care from their superiors, they may feel a stronger sense of attachment to the company, which could contribute to an increased sense of PIS. Thus, we formulated our hypothesis as follows:

*H2. Managerial caring is positively related to perceived insider status.*

### *2.3 Perceived insider status and subjective employee well-being*

Sufficient empirical evidence on the link between PIS and SEW is lacking. PIS, or inclusion, refers to whether employees feel valued and welcomed within their organization or team (Aldabbas, 2022; Ding and Chang, 2020). PIS has been recognized as generating a sense of belonging and favorably influencing a range of employee outcomes and behaviors (Kumar *et al.*, 2021). Employees who feel like insiders in their organization tend to have more positive feelings and thoughts about their work, resulting in increased workplace happiness (Zhao and Liu, 2020). Insiders are aware of the social norm of reciprocity, leading to responsible behavior that benefits an organization's well-being (Wang *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, feeling like an insider positively affects an individual's psychological well-being and can lead to increased concern for coworkers' well-being (Havig and Hollister, 2018). Empirical studies have found that enhancing PIS can improve job happiness and satisfaction (Choi *et al.*, 2018; Yeh *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, organizations can promote SEW by enhancing employees' perceptions of their being important and having a place in the organization as insiders. This study further argues that PIS refers to the feeling of acceptance and inclusion within an organization, which can impact SEW. Scholars have concentrated on the social interactions that strengthen the relationship between employees and employers, as SIT is based on this bond (Tajfel, 1982).

SIT revealed that employees are more likely to want to belong to organizations that they believe appreciate and value them. Furthermore, individuals desire to be part of esteemed groups because it boosts their self-esteem and gives them a sense of pride (Guerrero *et al.*, 2013). When employees feel accepted, recognized, trusted, and supported by their organizations, they tend to display preferred behaviors, such as increased positive well-being. Approval and acknowledgment from the organization for their status can improve the relationship between employee and employer, which in turn can benefit SEW favorably (Aldabbas, 2022). Therefore, enhancing the understanding between employees and superiors aids in bolstering employees' PIS, ultimately leading to improvements in employees' overall work well-being (Xintian and Peng, 2023). Based on these arguments, we formulated the following hypothesis:

*H3. Perceived insider status is positively related to subjective employee well-being*

#### 2.4 Mediation effect of perceived insider status

This section investigates how the relationship between MAC and SEW is influenced by PIS. The benefits of receiving care and assistance from others are often cited as an explanation for how social connections and well-being are connected. As a result, the dynamics of the work environment and lifestyle choices in an organization can have an impact on people's daily lives (Wattoo *et al.*, 2018). For example, if employees wish to change their work behaviors and influence their managers' future behaviors, they must respond in a manner that strengthens the caring relationship. For example, managers who recognize strong employee support for an intervention are more likely to actively engage in matters related to the intervention (Lundmark *et al.*, 2020). The likelihood of a caring relationship developing is also affected by the environment and the manager. In return, in a caring relationship, managers can potentially influence employee behavior. Additionally, managers who attend to the well-being of their employees and believe in the strategies they employ showcase their sense of care (Andersone *et al.*, 2022).

Additionally, Huang and He (2021) discovered that PIS plays a crucial role in the link between HR practices and organizational citizenship behavior. PIS helps employees feel as though they are valued members of their organization, which encourages them to engage in organizational citizenship behavior and maintain a positive relationship with their employer. However, it remains unclear how PIS influences the relationship between MAC and SEW. Drawing on SIT, we posit that when employees feel cared for, trusted, and secure by their management, it fosters a sense of belonging and positively impacts their well-being. Zhao and Liu (2020) investigated insufficient literature on how PIS functions as a mediator between managerial coaching and SEW. Their research was conducted on 276 employees working for a large company in China and revealed that PIS plays a mediating role in linking managerial coaching with workplace well-being. In addition, a recent study involving 1,926 employees from five countries discovered that inclusion plays a critical role in mediating the link between effective leadership and well-being (Adams *et al.*, 2020). This implies that PIS, which serves as a contextual motivator, can also inform an individual's aspirations for career advancement (Hornig *et al.*, 2016).

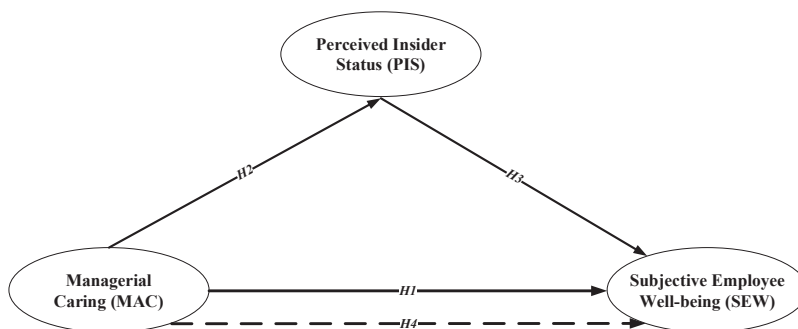
PIS cannot be achieved solely by employees, as it requires a signal from management or direct supervisors that employees are valued members of an organization. One way for management to show acceptance is by involving employees in critical events and decision-making, which can lead to increased SEW. Turner (1987) proposed, based on self-categorization theory, that employees feel trusted by their leaders when they are involved in decision-making, assigning tasks to managers, and taking part in the future of the business (Rouzi and Wang, 2021). Thus, we suggest that such trust and MAC will strengthen employees' PIS, which will improve SEW. Consequently, managers can promote a caring environment by improving their workers' PIS. Therefore, we assume that PIS mediates the relationship between MAC and SEW. Thus, we formulated our hypothesis as follows:

- H4.* The relationship between managerial caring and subjective employee well-being is mediated by perceived insider status (see Figure 1).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research design

This study aimed to examine employees' perceptions using a quantitative study, a cross-sectional survey, and the ontological approach by focusing solely on objectivism. Since the conceptual framework was built based on the hypotheses, the deductive approach was deemed the best choice for answering the research questions and giving insight into the hypotheses tests. Therefore, the data were collected through a questionnaire relying purely on quantitative analysis.



Source(s): Authors' own creation

**Figure 1.**  
Hypothesized model

### 3.2 Data collection

The survey for this study was conducted using an internet link powered by [SmartSurvey.Com](#), and data collection took place during the first two weeks of October 2022. Participants were asked to provide truthful responses, as the study was fully anonymous and confidential. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: [Section 1](#) included 17 items (see [Appendix](#)), and [Section 2](#) contained four questions on demographic information, as shown in [Table 1](#). The survey was conducted in English, which is the second official language of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the primary language of communication in the workplace for many foreign workers ([Aldabbas et al., 2022](#); [Hussain et al., 2019](#)).

### 3.3 Ethical considerations

The researchers followed specific measures to ensure that all ethical aspects were considered prior to data collection. Moreover, informed consent was embedded in the survey. After

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	93	48.2%
Male	100	51.8%
<i>Age range</i>		
19–24	3	1.6%
25–34	55	28.5%
35–44	93	48.2%
45–54	33	17.1%
>55	9	4.7%
<i>Organizational tenure</i>		
1–4	38	19.69%
5–9	46	23.83%
10–14	30	15.54%
15–20	24	12.44%
>21	55	28.50%
<i>Education level</i>		
High school	10	5.18%
Vocational/technical college	11	5.70%
Bachelor's and above	172	89.12%

Source(s): Authors' own creation

**Table 1.**  
Demographic  
characteristics



respondents carefully read the aims and objectives of the study, they clicked “agree” or “disagree” to indicate their choice. The survey had some conditions in which only employees who had completed one year of work in the organization could participate; this was done to ensure they had sufficient familiarity with the organization to fulfill the study objectives.

The survey did not ask the target audience their names or any questions that could lead to identifying the respondent. Moreover, the survey clearly stated that the respondent could withdraw from the survey at any time. In addition, the instructions stated that answers would be sent to a link where the data would be stored in a password-protected electronic format.

### 3.4 Sampling

This study focused on employees in the fields of education, hospitals, information technology, banking, and finance in the UAE. The participants were from the service sector and from different occupations (e.g. customer services, marketing, teachers, accounting, and credit analysis). The researchers used a convenience sampling method, which is a cost-effective and quick way to contact potential participants (Dillman *et al.*, 2014). Additionally, it is commonly used in well-being studies (e.g. Brown *et al.*, 2022; Sood and Kour, 2023). Furthermore, the participants were reached through the professional networks of the authors conducting this study.

Out of the 349 employees invited to participate, only 197 provided complete responses, resulting in a response rate of 56.77%. After identifying four outliers using a threshold of  $\pm 3$ , the final sample for analysis comprised 193 respondents. We employed several strategies to enhance the response rate. For instance, we shortened the survey and invited our connections to participate. Additionally, we sent out three reminders. However, we acknowledge a limitation stemming from the low response rate, which may be attributed to the relatively short timeframe for distributing the survey and collecting the data. In a survey with the goal of enhancing the health of future generations conducted among 20,000 participants in the UAE, the largest segment (60%) of those who declined to participate cited time constraints as their primary reason for not taking part (Abdulle *et al.*, 2018).

To determine whether our sample size was sufficient, we utilized G\*Power (3.1.9.4) (Faul *et al.*, 2009) to conduct a multiple regression analysis with a significance level of 0.05, an effect size  $f^2$  of 0.10, and 95% power. The analysis revealed that a total of 158 participants were needed for our model to generate reliable findings. However, we obtained complete responses from 193 individuals.

### 3.5 Measures

All the measurement methods utilized in this study focused on the perceptions of employees, meaning that the research was carried out at the employee level. The participants rated each item on a 7-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) for all measures except for SEW, which was rated on a 6-point Likert scale of 0 (at no time) to 5 (all of the time).

**3.5.1 Managerial caring (MAC).** The study selected six of the eight appropriate items, with slight modifications in the wording, to make them applicable to the business context (Louis *et al.*, 2016). For instance, an item chosen was “My manager develops an atmosphere of caring and trust.” The sample’s Cronbach’s alpha was  $\alpha = 0.904$ . In detail, the modifications to the scale for the current study were as follows: “school administrator” was replaced with “manager,” “teachers” was replaced with “employees,” and “our principal” was replaced with “my manager.” Additionally, two items were eliminated from the current study: “My school administrator is supportive of my decisions about managing student discipline problems” and “Our principal is responsive to the needs and concerns expressed by community members.” The reasons for eliminating the aforementioned two questions are as follows:

First, the term “student” was used, and since we lack that specific relationship (e.g. customer), such a replacement was not considered suitable. Furthermore, we were specifically concerned about the dyadic relationship between manager and employee. Second, the item focused on the community aspect, which was found to be beyond the scope of our study. Nevertheless, these decisions were made after consulting an academic and a senior manager who served as a consultant. This consultation process constitutes the content validity procedure to which the authors adhered.

**3.5.2 Perceived insider status (PIS).** Six items were chosen from [Stamper and Masterson's \(2002\)](#) scale. The scale is one-dimensional and has three positive items (e.g. “I feel very much a part of my work”) and three reverse items (e.g. “I don't feel included in this organization”). Cronbach's alpha for the sample was  $\alpha = 0.857$ .

**3.5.3 Subjective employee well-being (SEW).** There are different approaches to measuring SEW. For instance, [Dagenais-Desmarais and Savoie \(2012\)](#) proposed a framework comprising five dimensions of well-being at work: interpersonal fit, thriving, feeling of competency, perceived recognition, and desire for involvement. Additionally, [Daniels \(2000\)](#) categorized well-being into five factors of affective well-being in the work context: anxiety–comfort, depression–pleasure, bored–enthusiastic, tiredness–vigor, and angry–placid. [Warr \(1990\)](#) classified well-being into two dimensions: affective well-being and other aspects of well-being. Finally, [Soh et al. \(2016\)](#) suggested the importance of measuring work-related well-being (e.g. job satisfaction and work engagement).

The current study adopted the World Health Organization Well-Being Index (WHO-5), which is a concise and universal global rating scale that measures subjective well-being using only positively worded items ([Topp et al., 2015](#)). The WHO-5 was originally derived from the WHO-10 ([Bech et al., 1996](#)), which, in turn, used valid items from [Warr et al.'s \(1985\)](#) research. Additionally, WHO-5 is widely used ([Chan et al., 2022](#); [Nylén-Eriksen et al., 2022](#); [Topp et al., 2015](#)) and has been validated for different contexts such as Saudi Arabia ([Kassab Alshayea, 2023](#)). The WHO-5 contains five items, such as “I have felt cheerful and in good spirits.” Furthermore, it measures the degree of positive feelings experienced in the last two weeks. Cronbach's alpha for the sample was  $\alpha = 0.911$ .

## 4. Data analysis and results

To test our hypotheses, we employed multiple regression using SPSS Process-Macro, Model 4, and 5,000 bootstrap iterations, as suggested by [Hayes \(2018\)](#). Specifically, we examined the direct effects of MAC on PIS and SEW, the effects of PIS on SEW, and the mediating role of PIS.

### 4.1 Descriptive statistics

[Table 2](#) shows the means, standard deviations (SDs), and Pearson correlations ( $r$ ) between the variables, skewness, and kurtosis. MAC with PIS ( $r = 0.655$ ) was found to be significant at 1%, and PIS with SEW ( $r = 0.568$ ) was significant at 1%. Furthermore, MAC was correlated positively and significantly at 1% with SEW ( $r = 0.526$ ). We considered our sample to be normally distributed, since it had a range of  $\pm 1.96$  ([Gravetter et al., 2016](#)).

### 4.2 Common method variance

Since all measures in this study were self-reported, the potential influence of common method variance (CMV) was a concern. To address this issue and minimize the impact of CMV, we followed established guidelines ([Podsakoff et al., 2003](#)). The findings revealed a CMV of 49.488%, which fell below the cutoff point of 50%, indicating that the sample was not significantly affected by CMV. Moreover, we checked for collinearity, and the variance



inflation factor (VIF) for our primary variables was under the threshold of 5, as recommended by [Hair et al. \(2021\)](#). Therefore, we concluded that our data did not experience any collinearity-related problems.

4.3 Convergent and discriminant validity

Convergent validity was evaluated based on two indices: average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR). The AVE values for MAC, PIS, and SEW were 0.678, 0.592, and 0.738, respectively, all exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.50. The CR values for MAC, PIS, and SEW were 0.926, 0.813, and 0.934, respectively, all above 0.70. These results indicate that convergent validity was established. Additionally, the square root of each construct's AVE was greater than the correlation with other variables; for example, the square root of MAC's AVE was 0.823, PIS was 0.769, and SEW was 0.859, which supports the conclusion of discriminant validity.

4.4 Confirmatory factor analysis

*Measurement model:* Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) conducted in this study yielded favorable results. The model fit indices were as follows:  $X^2 [109] = 170.065$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , CFI = 0.973; TLI = 0.966; SRMR = 0.036; RMSEA = 0.054, indicating a good model fit. The CFI, which reflects the extent to which the model fits the data, was greater than 0.90, which is considered a good fit. The TLI was also close to the cutoff of 0.95, indicating good fit, according to [Hu and Bentler \(1999\)](#). The SRMR was below 0.050, which is another indication of a good fit ([Hu and Bentler, 1999](#)). Finally, the RMSEA, which measures the degree of error, was less than 0.08 and was considered an acceptable degree of error, based on [Chen et al. \(2008\)](#). The significant  $p$ -value of the  $\chi^2$  test ( $p < 0.001$ ) also indicated a good model fit, according to [Shi et al. \(2018\)](#).

*Hypothesized model:* CFA demonstrated that the model fit was acceptable, with the following results:  $X^2 [109] = 170.065$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , CFI = 0.973; TLI = 0.966; SRMR = 0.036; RMSEA = 0.054. Therefore, it can be concluded that all the indicators reflected satisfactory levels of fit.

4.5 Hypotheses tests

Before proceeding with multiple regression and hypothesis tests, we used G\*Power to ascertain whether we possessed sufficient data for proceeding with the analysis of variance (ANOVA) or multivariate analysis of variance (MANCOVA). G\*Power's results stipulated that for  $t$ -tests involving two groups, a total of 198 respondents was necessary to achieve an actual power of 0.95%. Additionally, G\*Power indicated a requirement of 400 respondents for cases involving more than two groups. Based on these outcomes, we decided to investigate

Variables	Mean	SD	SEW	MAC	PIS
SEW	2.97	1.173	1		
MAC	5.35	1.369	0.526**	1	
PIS	5.253	1.2576	0.568**	0.655**	1
Skewness	–	–	–0.449	–0.968	–0.965
Kurtosis	–	–	–0.441	0.160	0.719

**Table 2.**  
Correlations (r), mean,  
standard deviation,  
skewness and kurtosis

**Note(s):** Managerial caring (MAC); perceived insider status (PIS); subjective employee well-being (SEW)

\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$

**Source(s):** Authors' own creation

the differences between the two identified groups through the ANOVA. The subsequent findings of our study are as follows. No significant differences were observed concerning gender, denoted as 1 for females and 0 for males, in relation to the variables MAC, PIS, and SEW. When examining the influence of age, particularly focusing on the age range of 35–44 (coded as 1) in comparison to other age groups (coded as 0), no statistically significant difference was evident between the three main variables. The experience of employees within the organization, categorized as below 10 years (coded as 1) and above 10 years (coded as 0), did not yield any significant differences across the three main variables. Lastly, the level of education categorized into “bachelor” (coded as 1) and “others” (coded as 0) revealed no marked significant differences.

Consequently, ANOVA confirmed the absence of significant differences between demographic information and the three main variables. As a result, we excluded them from further analysis and deemed controlling for these variables unnecessary, as they did not impact the three primary variables within our dataset. Then, we moved to hypothesis tests.

First, [Hypothesis 1](#) was supported by the direct association between MAC and SEW, which was found to be positive and significant ( $B = 0.279$ ,  $t = 3.511$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Second, we examined the relationship between MAC and PIS, which was found to be positive and significant ( $B = 0.684$ ,  $t = 11.967$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), thus supporting [Hypothesis 2](#). Third, we found that there was a significant and positive association between PIS and SEW ( $B = 0.390$ ,  $t = 5.130$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), which supports [Hypothesis 3](#). Fourth, the mediation hypothesis was supported by the positive and significant association between MAC and SEW as mediated by PIS ( $B = 0.267$ , bootstrapping SE = 0.071,  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the indirect impact of MAC on SEW through PIS was found to be positive and significant. Additionally, when PIS was added as a mediator, the direct effect of MAC on SEW decreased from ( $B = 0.546$ ,  $t = 8.538$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) to ( $B = 0.279$ ,  $t = 3.511$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

According to the R-square adjusted value ( $R^2 = 36.4\%$ ), variance in our dependent variable (SEW) was explained by MAC and PIS. Furthermore, 42.9% of the variance in our mediator (PIS) was explained by MAC. [Table 3](#) shows the results of the direct path coefficients and R-square values.

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

This research investigated how PIS mediates the relationship between MAC and SEW. Our first hypothesis was supported by similar studies. Specifically, we found evidence supporting the relationship between MAC and SEW. For instance, [Qin and Men \(2022\)](#) identified a positive correlation between organizational trust and SEW. Participation in decision-making is also considered a critical characteristic of MAC, as management is expected to engage employees and impact their well-being. This aligns with a previous study that found a positive and significant association between participation in decision-making and SEW ([UribeTeXbarria et al., 2021](#)). Furthermore, our research findings are also consistent with [Fry et al.'s \(2012\)](#) finding that a caring climate has a significant and positive impact on well-being.

For our second hypothesis, which investigated the relationship between MAC and PIS, we found a significant positive correlation between these two variables, which is consistent with the results of previous studies conducted by [Gu et al. \(2020\)](#), [Guo and Zhu \(2022\)](#), and [Zeng and Xu \(2020\)](#). Specifically, [Guo and Zhu's \(2022\)](#) study revealed a strong positive correlation between organizational compassion and PIS. Furthermore, [Zeng and Xu \(2020\)](#) found a significant and positive correlation between servant leadership and PIS. Additionally, [Gu et al. \(2020\)](#) found that the association between supportive HR practices and PIS was positive and significant. These findings suggest that organizations can improve their employees' PIS through different key enablers, such as compassion, servant leadership, and supportive HR practices.

Perceived insider status (the mediator)				Subjective employee well-being (the dependent variable)							
B	SE	t	p-value	LLCI	ULCI	B	SE	t	p-value	LLCI	ULCI
MAC	0.684	0.057	11.967	0.000	0.571	0.797	0.079	3.511	0.001	0.122	0.436
PIS	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.076	5.130	0.000	0.240	0.540
Constant	–0.012	0.055	–0.226	0.822	–0.120	0.095	0.057	0.040	0.968	–0.111	0.115
				$R^2 = 0.429$							
				$F(1,191) = 143.220 < 0.001$							
<b>Note(s):</b> $N = 193$ . B = beta. SE = standard error. LLCI = lower level of confidence interval. ULCI = upper level of confidence interval											
MAC = Managerial caring; PIS= perceived insider status; SEW = subjective employee well-being											
<b>Source(s):</b> Authors' own creation											

For third hypothesis was supported by other studies indicating a positive and significant correlation between PIS and SEW, which is consistent with the research conducted by Yeh *et al.* (2022). Staff members are likely to develop a sense of insider status when they feel connected to their managers and the organization (Liu *et al.*, 2022). When employees perceive themselves as insiders, their relationships with their direct managers are strengthened, which is likely to enhance their SEW. Our results also align with other empirical studies that have found a noteworthy connection between PIS and employee happiness and satisfaction (Choi *et al.*, 2018; Havig and Hollister, 2018; Yeh *et al.*, 2022).

Our analysis using the mediation model revealed that PIS serves as a mediator between MAC and SEW. This is supported by previous studies that conceptualized PIS as a mediator between effective leadership and SEW (Adams *et al.*, 2020), as well as between managerial coaching and SEW (Zhao and Liu, 2020). Moreover, a recent empirical study found that managerial trustworthiness impacts engagement through the mediating role of PIS (Liu *et al.*, 2022). We contend that employees are more likely to feel like insiders if the manager fosters a climate of caring (e.g. MAC). Furthermore, if an organizational manager has faith in their employees, cares for them well, and involves them in critical decision-making processes, this will enhance PIS and return positively on SEW.

### 5.1 Theoretical and managerial implications

The results of this study mark an important theoretical advancement in the field, as increasing attention is being paid by scholars and practitioners to the significance of SEW. However, research on this phenomenon among UAE employees in various industries has been limited. This study expanded and refined our understanding of caring models in the workplace, resulting in the development of a novel approach for creating theoretical foundations to promote caring in the psychological environment. Since perceptions of insider status are crucial, it is essential for managers to establish a culture that treats employees with respect and care, enabling them to feel like insiders rather than outsiders. Our research underscores the importance of PIS in elucidating how MAC can impact employees' well-being. Therefore, fostering a supportive and caring environment is essential for an efficient workplace. Improving personal PIS and encouraging a culture of care spearheaded by management are two effective ways to transform people's behaviors and enhance SEW.

*Managerial implications:* Our study provides a deeper understanding of how perceptions of MAC and PIS can play crucial roles in enhancing SEW. The findings suggest first that management should implement various strategies in the workplace to promote SEW. This involves collaboration between senior management and direct managers to create a caring atmosphere that improves employee PIS and well-being. Second, managers should demonstrate compassion, respect, and trust toward their staff members to foster their PIS. This is because a central role of management is to comprehend ways to enhance employees' mental health and well-being, all while fostering the creation of healthy work environments (Karanika-Murray and Ipsen, 2022). Third, strategies aimed at enhancing PIS among employees can have a positive impact on their well-being. Healthy, happy, and satisfied employees, in turn, have a reciprocal positive impact on the organization. Managers have been found to express their caring by displaying a sense of presence, maintaining accessibility, exhibiting thoughtfulness, and indicating an interest in both the professional and personal lives of the employees (Andersone *et al.*, 2022). Fourth, HR practices should periodically encourage PIS, and focused tracking observations should be made where appropriate due to the cognitive bias that often motivates insiders to commit to changing the status quo and actively pursue self-worth. This emphasizes the importance of nurturing a supportive and caring workplace environment to improve employees' well-being. Finally, many organizational factors affect employee well-being, such as a workplace culture of health

(Payne *et al.*, 2018), ethical leadership and perceived organizational support (Cheng *et al.*, 2022), and different HR considerations, such as work–life balance, health, and safety practices (Saks, 2022). Therefore, management must take all these factors into consideration. For instance, the direct manager should employ various strategies to influence employees at different levels and processes while consistently conveying signals of care and concern for them.

To sum up, this study adds to the existing literature by examining how perceptions of MAC and PIS can impact employees' ability to promote their subjective well-being, according to SIT. The study employed regression analysis to investigate the effects of MAC and PIS on SEW.

### 5.2 Limitations

The study has some limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the nonprobability convenience sampling strategy used in the study may have resulted in sampling bias; hence, the results may not accurately represent the target population. Second, as this was a cross-sectional study, the findings are limited to describing the conditions during the data collection period. Using time-series data and a probability sampling strategy in future studies can help address these limitations. Third, the sample size was small, and a larger sample size could result in a more representative sample that could be used to validate the proposed model further. Fourth, our study did not involve a pilot study or validate the modified scale. It remains open for future studies to validate the adapted/modified Louis *et al.* (2016) scale for potential use, such as in business settings. Finally, the study focused on the caring model at the individual level, and future studies could consider examining this model at the departmental or organizational levels.

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### Further reading

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### Appendix

- (1) Managerial Caring (MAC), adapted from [Louis et al. \(2016\)](#)
  - My manager develops an atmosphere of caring and trust.
  - My manager ensures wide participation in decision about organization improvement.
  - When employees are struggling, my manager provides support for me.
  - In general, I believe my manager's motives and intentions are good.
  - I feel free to discuss work problems with my manager without fear of having it used against me later.
  - If my manager promised to do something, s/he would follow through.

(2) Perceived insider status (PIS), Adopted from [Stamper and Masterson's \(2002\)](#)

- I feel very much a part of my work' organization
- My work organization makes me believe that I am included
- I feel like I am an "outsider" at this organization (R)
- I don't feel included in this organization (R)
- I feel I am an "insider" in my work organization
- My work organization makes me frequently feel "left-out" (R).

(3) Subjective Employee Well-being (SEW) adopted from the World Health Organization Well-Being Index (WHO-5), [Topp \*et al.\* \(2015\)](#).

Over the past 2 weeks

- I have felt cheerful and in good spirits
- I have felt calm and relaxed
- I have felt active and vigorous
- I woke up feeling fresh and rested
- My daily life has been filled with things that interest me

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