



# A Systematic Literature Review: Exploring The Impact Of Inclusive Leadership On Diversity, Equity, And Inclusion (DEI) In Hybrid Teams

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## ABSTRACT

*Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), the concepts and practices that organizations use to recognize and value differences among people, ensure that everyone has fair opportunities, and create a work environment where everyone feels welcome and respected, have become strategic imperatives across industries. Hybrid teams are work-groups composed of office employees and remote employees. As the rise of hybrid teams presents opportunities and challenges for organizations committed to promoting DEI, this systematic literature review explores one solution: inclusive leadership and its role in promoting DEI in hybrid teams—a timely intersection of research that is particularly prominent in the post-pandemic era. This study synthesizes and evaluates current academic research based on social identity theory and leader-member exchange theory. This review follows a structured approach based on PRISMA guidelines, including planning, screening, and analysis stages. Research shows that inclusive leaders can bridge the physical and psychological gaps between employees, ensure that team members feel valued and engaged no matter where they are, and enable both remote and on-site members in hybrid teams to have a fair voice and enhance a sense of belonging, effectively promoting the achievement of DEI goals. This review contributes to the literature by constructing a conceptual framework that links inclusive leadership practices to DEI outcomes in hybrid teams.*

## INTRODUCTION

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), specifically referring to the respect, inclusion, and equal opportunities that employees of different backgrounds, such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and ability, can get in an organization, has been valued by many modern organizations (Kiradoo, 2022). In recent years, digital transformation and talent globalization have significantly accelerated the transformation of the work environment. One of the most notable results of this shift is the widespread adoption of hybrid teams, which combine remote and on-site work arrangements. Although hybrid teams provide organizations with greater flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and a diverse talent pool, they also bring new complexities related to team dynamics and inclusion (Zakaria, 2017). For example, communication differences, uneven resource allocation, and reduced visibility of remote employees can hinder inclusion and engagement. This requires a leadership style that not only tolerates differences, but also actively supports equitable participation and psychological safety in different work environments.

As traditional leadership mechanisms (such as face-to-face interactions and informal social networks) are disrupted, organizations must adopt new leadership styles that actively promote fair participation and belonging. Inclusive leadership, characterized by openness, accessibility, and positive recognition of individual contributions, is considered an effective way to address these challenges (Shore & Chung, 2022). Inclusive leadership promotes trust-based relationships, acknowledges individual differences, empowers all team members, and encourages employee



engagement in both physical and virtual environments (Nishii & Leroy, 2022). This paper explores how inclusive leadership influences DEI outcomes in hybrid teams through a systematic literature review. By analyzing peer-reviewed empirical and conceptual studies, this review aims to: (1) assess the current state of knowledge; (2) identify key themes and gaps in the literature; and (3) propose a conceptual framework that links inclusive leadership practices to DEI in hybrid team contexts.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts the method of systematic literature review. Referring to the mature methods in leadership management research, this study adopts the domain-based systematic literature review method. When organizing the literature review, we adopted the scientific procedures and basic principles of systematic literature review. According to the requirements of SLR, the organization of this study includes three stages: literature collection, organization and evaluation. The SLR process is rigorous and structured, and the review process follows the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines, which were developed from the QUOROM protocol and widely adopted by academic research to improve the rigor and reliability of systematic reviews. In order to ensure transparency and adopt a repeatable systematic approach, this study strictly follows the PRISMA guidelines to identify and select literature for a systematic literature review. By using the SLR method, the literature is screened according to pre-defined criteria, and the objective research analysis focuses on peer-reviewed journal articles and conference proceedings from well-known academic databases such as Scopus and Web of Science, ensuring that the source of academic insights is extensive and comprehensive. This section mainly includes literature search strategies, screening criteria, data extraction and analysis, etc.

## Data Sources

This study used National University of Malaysia electronic resources to collect data, which enabled comprehensive searches across multiple academic databases. These resources ensured access to reputable, high-impact academic and scientific sources, which increased the reliability and credibility of the review process. Web of Science (WOS) and Scopus were selected as primary databases for this study due to their broad coverage of high-quality peer-reviewed publications and their relevance to the fields of management, organizational behavior, and leadership. This selection ensured that the most relevant and recent research on the topic was included. One limitation of this study is that the research focus was on indexed English publications, which may exclude valuable insights from non-English sources. Second, hybrid team research spans multiple disciplines, including management, psychology, and information technology. However, this study may not fully capture interdisciplinary perspectives in areas such as digital communications. Despite certain limitations, the combination of these data sources enabled a robust and systematic review of the literature, met the research objectives, and supported a rigorous analysis of inclusive leadership in hybrid teams.

## Search Strategy



To ensure the rigor and relevance of the literature base, this review adopted a systematic and transparent search strategy aimed at selecting high-quality peer-reviewed journal articles covering the fields of inclusive leadership, diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), and hybrid teams. The search covered two major academic databases, Scopus and Web of Science, to ensure the disciplinary breadth and comprehensiveness of management, organizational behavior, and human resources literature. The search scope was limited to studies published between January 2015 and December 2024, reflecting the rise of hybrid work arrangements and the growing attention to DEI in academia and practice during this period. We carefully selected keywords to capture relevant concepts and combined them using logical operators to ensure the accuracy and breadth of the search. The core search terms included: "inclusive leadership" AND ("diversity" OR "equity" OR "inclusion" OR "DEI") AND ("hybrid team" OR "remote work" OR "virtual team").

To ensure academic quality and relevance, this study only included peer-reviewed English journal articles. Studies were first screened by title and abstract, followed by a full-text review. Inclusion criteria prioritized empirical and conceptual studies that directly addressed at least two of three core concepts: inclusive leadership, DEI, and hybrid teams. Articles that focused on purely technical issues or were not relevant to the organizational context were excluded. To increase objectivity, a structured screening protocol was used to assess the relevance of each article based on clarity of research focus, contextual fit, and theoretical or practical contributions. Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the inclusion and exclusion criteria used in this systematic literature review.

**Table 1.**  
**Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

Criteria	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Timeline	2015 - 2024	Before 2015 and after 2024
Document type	Journal articles, conference proceedings, books	Literature reviews, commentaries or meta-analysis
Peer Review	Modified by peers/ Peer-reviewed	Non-peer-reviewed sources
Database	Articles indexed by Scopus or Web of Science	Duplication across databases
Language	Written in English	Written in other languages

### Data Extraction and Analysis

To ensure that the selected studies were consistent with the research objectives, a structured and transparent approach was used in the data extraction and analysis process. Based on the initial reading and theoretical positioning, three analysis themes were constructed: (1) the relationship between inclusive leadership and DEI outcomes; (2) mediating variables, such as psychological safety, organizational justice, and social



isolation; and (3) moderators, including leader-member exchange quality and digital technology adoption. The selection and screening process of the articles followed the PRISMA 2020 framework. First, studies were retrieved from the Scopus and Web of Science databases using predefined search terms. After removing duplicates, the titles and abstracts were screened for relevance. Then, the remaining studies were reviewed in full text, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria developed according to the scope of the study were applied.

During the review process, we identified and removed several duplicate articles, especially due to the overlap between the Scopus and WOS databases, which also enhanced the reliability of these articles and their coverage of the topic. For each selected article, main metadata and thematic content were extracted into a standardized coding sheet, including year of publication, research context, methodology, theoretical framework, and findings related to DEI and inclusive leadership. A thematic analysis was then conducted to identify patterns, recurring mechanisms, and conceptual gaps. This iterative process allowed us to inductively refine the categories and ensure that theoretical and empirical contributions were systematically captured. The result was an integrated evidence base that informed the thematic findings and supported the construction of a conceptual framework on how inclusive leadership influences DEI in hybrid teams. A PRISMA flow chart was used to document the screening process and ensure transparency of article inclusion. Figure 1 displays the PRISMA obtained based on the research objective.

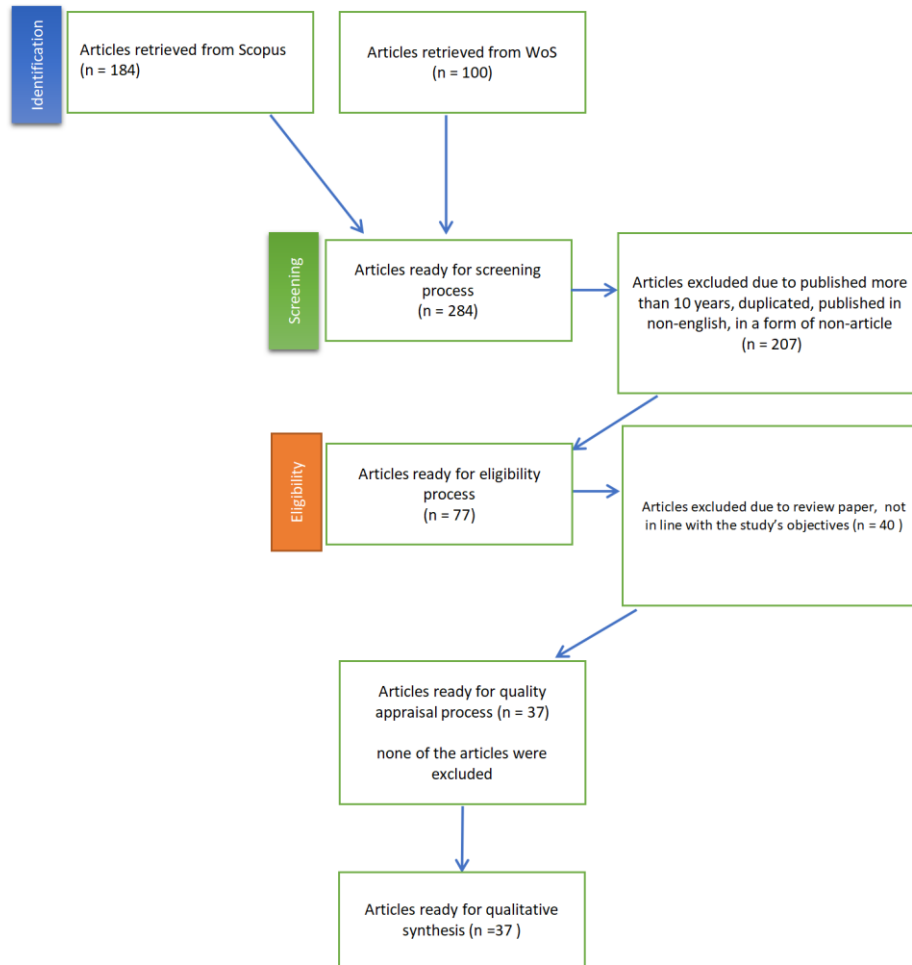


Figure 1. Displays the PRISMA that were obtained

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

This section presents the main findings from a systematic review of 37 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2024. After thematic analysis, the findings were organized into four main themes that correspond to the research questions and objectives outlined in Section 1.2 Each theme synthesizes existing literature on the relationship between inclusive leadership and DEI outcomes in hybrid teams. The role of inclusive leadership in DEI in hybrid teams is clarified. The findings are based on a comparative interpretation of the research objectives, background, theoretical framework, and empirical findings of the selected literature. The analysis shows that inclusive leadership helps members build psychological safety and organizational justice, reduce social isolation, and cultivate a stronger sense of diversity, equity, and inclusion in hybrid teams.



## **Inclusive Leadership and DEI**

Inclusive leadership is consistently associated with positive DEI-related outcomes in the studies reviewed, particularly in terms of team cohesion, psychological safety, and employee engagement (Randel et al., 2018; Nishii & Leroy 2022). Recent empirical findings suggest that teams led by inclusive leaders can achieve 15-30% higher levels of perceived equity and trust (Carmeli et al., 2022). Inclusive leadership demonstrates openness, accessibility, and engagement, which can reduce workplace inequality and foster an environment where diverse voices are valued (Seijts & Milani, 2022). In hybrid teams, where physical separation can lead to unequal opportunities for communication and decision-making, inclusive leadership practices (e.g., transparent information sharing, participatory decision-making, and recognition of individual contributions) have been found to counteract bias and exclusionary tendencies (Shore & Chung, 2022). Multiple studies report that inclusive leaders mitigate identity-based fragmentation by promoting a sense of belonging and visibility for remote or underrepresented employees. Inclusive leaders encourage members to form a shared team identity that transcends differences and emphasizes the organization's shared goals (Hincapie & Costa, 2024). This can ease tensions between teams, foster a sense of belonging, and promote a cohesive team culture, which can help achieve DEI.

## **Mediating Mechanism**

In the literature reviewed, mediating variables emerged as a major explanatory dimension. Three main mediating variables were identified: Psychological safety - Edmondson pointed that often considered a bridge between inclusive leadership and voice behavior; organizational justice - Colquitt highlight that related to fair treatment in hybrid teams; social isolation - particularly enhanced in hybrid environments. Inclusive leadership behaviors, such as active listening and openness, can increase team members' willingness to express concerns without fear of being judged, thereby enhancing psychological safety (Zeng et al., 2020). Inclusive leaders have been found to be effective in achieving equal participation of remote and on-site team members. For example, leaders who proactively include remote employees in meetings and feedback loops can reduce perceived marginalization, thereby enhancing perceived equity. Hybrid teams face increasing feelings of isolation, which inclusive leaders mitigate through communication and recognition (Contreras et al., 2020).

Inclusive leaders foster a safe and supportive environment where team members can openly voice concerns and share ideas (Shore & Chung, 2022). For example, Li et al. (2020) showed that inclusive leaders foster psychological safety by inviting feedback and modeling humility, especially in virtual interactions. In hybrid environments, remote employees tend to interact less frequently with their leaders, which can undermine psychological safety if not addressed proactively. Research shows that inclusive leaders are able to create psychologically safe spaces where members feel valued and respected regardless of their position or role. This psychological safety not only reduces stress and alienation, but also promotes innovation and collaboration by encouraging open communication and the free exchange of ideas (Lee, 2021). Additionally, teams with higher levels of psychological safety are more likely to demonstrate greater collaboration and creativity because members feel safe to challenge



norms and come up with novel solutions without fear of judgment or retaliation ([Lateef, 2020](#)). This highlights the critical role of inclusive leadership in fostering a culture of trust and openness that helps develop diverse talent, promote organizational diversity, and drive collective success ([Nishii & Leroy, 2022](#)).

Inclusive leadership significantly improves organizational justice, including distributive, procedural, and interactional justice ([Qi et al., 2023](#)). Inclusive leaders create organizations that address inequality and ensure transparent and consistent decision-making processes (procedural justice), fair distribution of resources and opportunities (distributive justice), and respectful and dignified interactions (interactional justice). Organizational justice not only reduces workplace conflict, but also promotes trust, collaboration, and a sense of common purpose in the team ([Hoang et al., 2022](#)). Other studies (e.g., [Lee, 2021](#)) have found that when inclusive leaders ensure equal access to resources (such as promotion opportunities or mentoring) regardless of location, the sense of equity is enhanced. In addition, organizational justice can enhance employees' sense of equity, thereby improving employee engagement and organizational commitment ([Jang et al., 2021](#)). Research shows that when leaders actively demonstrate inclusive behaviors, they are able to lay the foundation for equity and mutual respect, which drives individual and collective success ([Mor Barak et al., 2022](#)). Inclusive leadership practices can create equitable, cohesive, and high-performing teams in hybrid organizational environments.

Inclusive leadership can effectively alleviate social isolation ([Van Knippenberg & van Ginkel, 2022](#)). This is particularly important in hybrid teams, where geographic and digital divides can hinder connections and collaboration among employees. Social isolation is a common challenge in hybrid teams, which often undermines relationships, trust, and inclusion across the organization. However, inclusive leaders are able to bridge these gaps by cultivating a culture of open communication, trust, and belonging ([Gotsis & Grimani, 2017](#)). They value active listening, encourage different perspectives, and ensure that all team members feel valued, both in real life and online. Research shows that inclusive leadership can significantly reduce social isolation by strengthening relationships among team members and building a sense of community ([Contreras et al., 2020](#)). By addressing these challenges, inclusive leaders can not only enhance team cohesion and inclusion, but also improve employee engagement and well-being in an increasingly decentralized work environment ([Rogozińska-Pawelczyk, 2023](#)). Conversely, when leaders fail to compensate for the lack of informal face-to-face contact, social isolation weakens the effectiveness of DEI. This highlights the mediating role of relationship dynamics in shaping inclusive outcomes.

### **Moderator Variable Mechanism**

Several studies have identified moderators that amplify or attenuate the effects of inclusive leadership on DEI outcomes. A crucial moderator is the quality of leader-member exchange, which influences how inclusion is perceived and implemented across work modes. Research has found that high-quality LMX relationships characterized by trust, mutual respect, and frequency of communication can enhance the effects of inclusive leadership on psychological safety and equity. In contrast, technical and contextual factors related to digital technology adoption – such as digital



overload, low digital literacy, or asynchronous communication – may weaken these leadership effects. For example, the effectiveness of inclusive behaviors (e.g., inclusive communication) depended on whether teams had tools and norms that supported real-time feedback and equitable digital access. Taken together, these findings suggest that the effects of inclusive leadership on DEI are not one-size-fits-all but rather context-specific. Therefore, leaders must adapt their inclusion strategies to both interpersonal and technical conditions in order to achieve equitable outcomes in hybrid environments.

High-quality leader-member exchange relationships significantly enhance the positive impact of inclusive leadership on DEI outcomes. This relationship, characterized by mutual trust, respect, and open communication, plays a significant moderating role in the link between inclusive leadership and DEI. When leaders build strong LMX relationships, they create personalized and supportive environments that meet the individual needs of team members and foster a sense of belonging and inclusion (Brimhall et al., 2017). This relational approach not only fosters trust and collaboration, but also strengthens team cohesion and allows different perspectives to flourish. Conversely, low-quality LMX relationships may limit trust and open dialogue, thereby weakening the effectiveness of inclusive leadership and, in turn, DEI outcomes. Inclusive leadership relies heavily on relational dynamics, and LMX amplifies its impact by ensuring that all team members feel valued and empowered to contribute. By prioritizing high-quality employee-team collaboration, leaders can enhance the relational dimension of inclusion and make meaningful progress in driving equity and collaboration within their teams (March et al., 2023). High-quality employee-team collaboration relationships significantly enhance the positive impact of inclusive leadership because they promote trust and open communication. However, if employee and teamwork are unevenly distributed among team members, it may inadvertently create in-group and out-group disparities, exacerbating DEI challenges (Brimhall et al., 2017).

Digital technology adoption emphasizes the integration of digital technology into work processes to enhance connectivity and teamwork in hybrid teams. High digital technology adoption helps promote seamless communication and collaboration in hybrid teams, while weak digital technology adoption can exacerbate isolation and weaken teamwork. Inclusive leaders use digital technology adoption to bridge the gap between on-site and remote members and ensure that technology is effectively integrated into team management practices (Rysavy & Michalak, 2020). By promoting equal use of digital tools and cultivating inclusive digital interactions, leaders create an environment where all team members can fully participate, thereby reducing differences and enhancing the cohesion of hybrid teams (Hincapie & Costa, 2024). In addition, inclusive leaders value clear communication, encourage the use of collaborative technologies, and provide support to ensure that team members are proficient in using digital platforms (Cortellazzo et al., 2019). This strategic approach not only enhances collaboration and efficiency, but also strengthens the inclusive, innovative, and trusting culture of hybrid teams.



## Theoretical Application

Analysis of the 37 studies included in this review showed that one of the most commonly used theories was social identity theory, which was originally proposed by Tajfel and Turner. About one-third of the surveyed studies adopted social identity theory to explain how inclusive leadership can mitigate in-group/out-group differences and enhance team members' sense of belonging. The use of SIT has grown significantly since 2018, reflecting the growing academic interest in identity-based inclusion, especially in environments such as hybrid work arrangements, where physical separation may exacerbate exclusion dynamics. Leader-member exchange theory also features prominently, appearing in about 10 selected studies. LMX theory is often used to analyze the quality of dyadic relationships between leaders and followers, emphasizing how inclusive leaders can build trust, equity, and personalized support in decentralized team structures. Its use has remained stable over time, but it has been more explicitly applied to hybrid teams in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over time, the field is moving toward more theory-driven analyses, with SIT and LMX emerging as the dominant lenses for interpreting the impact of inclusive leadership on DEI in hybrid teams.

Some studies have also drawn on Edmondson's concept of psychological safety. This concept is not always considered a standalone theory, but is widely considered to be a mechanism by which inclusive leadership promotes voice behaviors and openness. Notably, the use of psychological safety as a conceptual anchor has increased dramatically in recent years, especially in studies focusing on virtual and hybrid teamwork. Other theoretical frameworks include social exchange theory, which is used to explain the reciprocal nature of trust and fairness between leaders and followers and constructs inclusive leadership as a relationship-building tool. Fewer studies have applied transformational leadership theory or servant leadership, although these frameworks are occasionally cited to contrast leadership styles or emphasize complementary attributes of inclusion, such as empathy and empowerment. Notably, some of the early studies, especially those published before 2015, lacked a clear theoretical foundation. These studies tended to be exploratory or practice-oriented, focusing on inclusive leadership behaviors rather than linking them to formal theory.

While most of the literature supports the positive role of inclusive leadership in advancing DEI, the theoretical frameworks used are varied and unevenly applied. Social identity theory and leader-member exchange theory are the two most frequently cited frameworks. Research using SIT focuses on the psychological processes of group identification and belonging, while research using LMX emphasizes relationship quality and individual treatment. However, few studies have explicitly linked these theories to the unique structural conditions of hybrid teams, resulting in insufficient theoretical application. In addition, some articles rely on conceptual discussions and lack empirical validation, highlighting methodological gaps. In particular, studies rarely use multilevel or longitudinal methods to examine the dynamic effects of inclusive leadership over time in hybrid contexts. These findings reveal theoretical fragmentation and practice disconnects, with many inclusive strategies not well adapted to the challenges unique to hybrid teams. Through this synthesis, it has become increasingly



clear that an integrative framework is needed to connect identity, leadership behavior, and digital-physical structures.

### ***Discussion***

This section discusses the findings in relation to the three research questions and the broader literature on inclusive leadership, DEI, and hybrid teams, illustrating how inclusive leadership works in hybrid teams. It integrates theoretical insights from social identity theory and leader-member exchange theory with the thematic results, highlighting the role of moderators including leader-member relationships and digital technology adoption. Based on the theoretical framework and insights from the systematic review, the discussion section critically examines how inclusive leadership behaviors affect psychological safety, organizational justice, and social isolation, which in turn shapes DEI outcomes. In addition, this section outlines the practical implications, theoretical contributions, and research gaps of this systematic review. The discussion section situates the findings in the broader literature, providing practical insights for leaders and organizations on the future of hybrid teams.

### **Mechanism Linking**

Inclusive leadership is widely emphasized in the reviewed literature as a fundamental mechanism that directly affects DEI, through which inclusive leaders create a common team identity that transcends physical boundaries and reduces the salience of group divisions. This shared identity weakens in-group/out-group bias, a challenge that hybrid team structures often exacerbate. These findings reaffirm that inclusive leadership does more than just deliver equity; it also shapes the social reality for achieving inclusive innovation. Second, the study shows that inclusive leadership can effectively influence positive outcomes, such as improving team performance, satisfaction, and retention in hybrid environments, and significantly enhance and promote DEI positivity.

Inclusive leadership promotes DEI outcomes in hybrid teams primarily by building psychological safety, promoting organizational justice, and reducing social isolation. These outcomes are achieved through inclusive leadership behaviors such as participatory decision-making, transparent communication, and fair recognition. Inclusive leadership enables all team members to feel equally valued, thereby reducing bias associated with group differences (Randel et al., 2018). Individuals can feel empowered to express themselves even in a remote environment without fear of being marginalized. Creating equal opportunities for diverse team members and valuing their unique perspectives helps organizations improve DEI. By addressing various challenges through mediating effects, this study provides a comprehensive framework for organizations to improve DEI through inclusive leadership, demonstrating its practical significance for hybrid teams.

### **Situational Factors as Moderators**

This study also shows that the impact of inclusive leadership is moderated by situational factors, such as the quality of leader-member relationships and the degree of digital technology adoption in the team. According to LMX theory, high-quality dyadic



relationships can enhance the transmission of inclusive work, while low-quality communication can inhibit such transmission. In hybrid environments with limited face-to-face interactions, leaders' efforts to maintain trust and frequent communication become more important. Digital technology adoption brings both opportunities and constraints. While digital tools can promote inclusion by enabling asynchronous communication and broader participation, they can also exacerbate exclusion when access channels are uneven or leaders fail to compensate for the lack of informal interactions. These findings emphasize that inclusive leadership must be technologically adaptable and focus on interpersonal coordination, through positive communication relationships between leaders and members and the creation of a high digital technology adoption environment, in order to maintain its role in promoting DEI in hybrid teams.

### **Theory-Practice Gap**

Although the literature supports the positive impact of inclusive leadership on DEI outcomes, there is a significant fragmentation in the application of theory. SIT and LMX are the most commonly used frameworks, but few studies have integrated or effectively extended them to hybrid team contexts. For example, the identity process described in SIT—where individuals define their place in a group—has rarely been examined in hybrid teams, despite its theoretical relevance. Similarly, while LMX is often cited, few studies have explored how the quality of digital interactions affects exchanges between leaders and members. From a practical perspective, this research reveals a disconnect between theoretical models and real-world leadership challenges in hybrid settings. Many organizations adopt inclusive leadership practices developed for co-located teams but fail to apply them to remote or flexible work arrangements. This limits the effectiveness of DEI efforts and highlights the need for leadership models that are both structurally and socially responsive.

### **Comparison with Existing Reviews**

While this review uniquely explores the intersection of inclusive leadership and DEI in hybrid teams, it also builds upon and extends prior systematic literature reviews in related domains. For instance, Makupa et al. (2023) conducted an SLR on workplace inclusivity from a strategy-as-practice perspective but did not explore the structural implications of hybrid work or the behavioral mechanisms of leadership. Similarly, Arsel et al. (2022) reviewed DEI in consumer research, focusing on organizational policies rather than leadership behaviors. In contrast, this review explicitly centers on leadership as a dynamic driver of DEI outcomes, integrating both social identity theory and leader-member exchange theory—an analytical approach not found in most existing SLRs. Compared to Newman et al. (2017), which systematically reviewed psychological safety across general workplace contexts, our review uniquely identifies psychological safety as a mediating variable within hybrid teams and links it to leadership behaviors.

Moreover, reviews by Cortellazzo et al. (2019) addressed leadership in digital or flexible workplaces but did not focus on inclusion nor incorporate equity-focused outcomes. Our findings contrast with theirs by identifying equity—often overlooked—as a critical



component requiring leadership intervention, especially in hybrid settings where digital marginalization and visibility gaps prevail. By comparing across these studies, this review fills a clear theoretical and contextual gap by mapping inclusive leadership strategies directly to DEI outcomes in a hybrid team context—an area that remains underexplored in existing literature.

## CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review explores the role of inclusive leadership in promoting DEI outcomes in hybrid team settings. By encouraging open dialogue, embracing different perspectives, and combating bias, inclusive leaders promote psychological safety, enhance team cohesion, and a sense of belonging in hybrid teams. Implementing inclusive policies and practices, such as transparent decision-making, equitable resource allocation, and structured feedback systems, can promote organizational equity and reduce social isolation. By building strong leader-member exchange relationships, digital technology adoption organizations can ensure equal access to digital tools, enhance real-time communication, promote resource accessibility and collaboration, and address the DEI dilemma of hybrid teams. Based on 37 peer-reviewed articles published between 2015 and 2024, this study synthesizes empirical findings and theoretical applications to better understand the mechanisms, contextual factors, and knowledge gaps at the intersection of leadership, DEI, and hybrid teams.

### Summary of Findings

This review found strong and consistent evidence that inclusive leadership helps promote DEI outcomes in hybrid teams, primarily through mediating mechanisms, promoting psychological safety among team members, organizational justice, and reducing social isolation. Psychological safety enables employees to contribute ideas and increase diversity, while perceptions of equity promote a equitable culture. Reduced social isolation ensures that all employees, regardless of location or status, feel connected and valued. These effects are particularly important in hybrid environments, where physical and digital divides may exacerbate exclusion or marginalization. The analysis identified moderators, including the quality of leadership-member communication and the catalyst role of digital technology adoption, and this integration highlights the importance of high-quality relationships and digital technology environments in promoting inclusion and collaboration in hybrid teams.

### Theoretical and Practical Contributions

In theory, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how social identity theory and leader-member exchange theory can be applied and extended to hybrid team contexts. Inclusive leadership promotes the co-enhancement of team identity and mitigates intergroup bias (Randel et al., 2018). Leader-member exchange theory emphasizes the importance of trust-based relationships in amplifying the impact of inclusive leadership on DEI. By linking leadership behavior to identity dynamics and relationship quality, this study clarifies how inclusive leadership promotes DEI in hybrid teams with spatial and technological fragmentation. In practice, the findings of this study have important implications for organizations, leaders, and human resources practitioners. The results of the study emphasize that organizations can develop inclusive leadership training and development programs, and leaders need to adjust



inclusive strategies according to social and technological conditions to ensure that remote and co-located employees have equal access to voice, resources, and recognition. For organizations, this study emphasizes that inclusive leadership that actively creates an environment of trust, respect, and belonging can help bridge the physical and digital divides of hybrid teams.

### **Research Limitations**

Some limitations need to be acknowledged. First, this study focused only on English peer-reviewed journal articles, which may have missed relevant grey literature, practitioner reports, or non-English studies. Second, although this study strives to be comprehensive, differences in research methods, contexts, and definitions of "inclusive leadership" across studies may limit direct comparisons. For example, more cross-cultural studies, standardized measurement tools, and longitudinal analyses are needed to deepen the understanding of the impact of inclusive leadership on hybrid work. Third, as this review focuses on secondary data, its scope and quality are limited by the original research. This study also revealed a lack of theoretical integration and contextual adaptability in the current literature, limiting its explanatory power and practical utility. The generalizability of the findings may be limited due to differences in hybrid team configurations and leadership practices across organizations.

### **Future Research Directions**

Future research should adopt longitudinal and multi-level designs to better capture the evolving impact of inclusive leadership over time and across organizational levels. In addition, there is an urgent need to develop hybrid leadership models that incorporate digital dynamics, such as communication platform design, digital fatigue, and asynchronous engagement. In addition, more research is needed in non-Western contexts, as cultural interpretations of leadership and inclusion may differ in these countries. Future research could also explore how cultural differences influence the effectiveness of inclusive leadership in hybrid teams. Future research could continue to explore other mediating and moderating factors, such as emotional intelligence, team climate, or leadership style, to enrich the understanding of the impact of inclusive leadership. Finally, future research should explore how inclusive leadership interacts with other leadership styles (e.g., transformational leadership or servant leadership) to have synergistic or conflicting effects on DEI outcomes in hybrid teams.

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