

Exploring the DEI mechanisms linking inclusive leadership and hybrid team effectiveness

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Abstract: With the development of the new type of work arrangement, the way people work together has changed. As hybrid and remote work arrangements become more common, managing geographically dispersed teams will become more complex. Inclusive leadership has attracted increasing scholarly attention as a potential solution to these challenges. Limited research has examined how diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) affect the effectiveness of hybrid teams led by inclusive leaders. This conceptual paper adopts a literature-review approach to synthesize prior studies on inclusive leadership, DEI, and hybrid work. Based on the findings, inclusive leadership can improve the efficiency of hybrid teams by promoting diversity, fostering a sense of fairness among team members, and cultivating a strong sense of belonging. These conditions will promote cooperation among team members and contribute to better outcomes. This paper expands the study of leadership in a hybrid work model by proposing the idea of team DEI. The proposed framework can also help organizations establish high-performing work environments.

Keywords: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), Hybrid teams, Inclusive leadership, Sense of belonging, Team effectiveness.

1. Introduction

With the rise of hybrid work, organizations are changing how employees are managed and how teams work together. With the development of digital technology today, employees are increasingly working remotely using various means of communication. As a result, many enterprises have begun to implement a hybrid work model, integrating remote and office work to enhance flexibility, improve employees' work-life balance, and promote the company's development [1, 2]. Although the above are advantages of hybrid work, there are also new problems. Teams with members in different places often have communication problems, are less sociable, struggle to share knowledge, and feel less connected to one another [3].

Considering these problems, many enterprises have started to build a culture of inclusive work that is free from unfairness and discrimination. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) have been added to the list of priorities by all organizations in recent years; they will attract diverse talent, improve employee satisfaction and drive innovation [4]. In recent years, diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) have started to be viewed as a way for enterprises to do well in times of great change and form stable, high-performing teams. Therefore, more scholars and practitioners have begun to study inclusive leadership. Inclusive leaders are open-minded, available to team members, fair in practice, and receptive to different views. They encourage participation, respect individual differences, and build a supportive and psychologically safe environment for employees [5, 6]. Such leading behaviors are especially needed in a hybrid work mode to address the problems of communication and social support among employees due to distance. All types of positive effects have been achieved under inclusive leadership so far, including enhanced employee engagement, innovative behavior, high job satisfaction, and a sense of belonging to

the organization [7, 8]. Research on the effect of inclusive leadership on team performance in a hybrid work model is also lacking. At the same time, the extent to which this relationship has been used to advance DEI is also unclear. Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) have been frequently discussed in organizational studies, but their respective roles in explaining the impact of inclusive leadership on hybrid teams remain underexplored.

Although there has been a large-scale expansion of research on inclusive leadership, hybrid work and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), these fields have developed largely independently [9]. Most studies of inclusive leadership have focused on individual-level outcomes, such as creativity, engagement, and innovative behavior, and research on hybrid teams has focused more on communication, coordination, and technology-related problems. At the same time, DEI research has generally looked at the composition of the workforce, organizational culture, and employee inclusion. DEI-related mechanisms to help explain the effectiveness of inclusive leadership in a hybrid team model have received less attention compared with other research. This paper addresses the above deficiency by constructing a conceptual framework that connects inclusive leadership with hybrid team effectiveness from a DEI perspective. The three common ways through which an inclusive leader promotes the high performance of a team are workforce diversity, a positive team environment, and a sense of inclusion for employees. Based on the contents of the DEI and leadership literature, this paper intends to offer an in-depth study on how to construct high-performing and integrated hybrid teams in organizations.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Organizations

Over the past decade, with increasing diversity in the workforce and higher demands from society, interest in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) at all levels of the organization has also been growing. The first discussions of DEI were mainly about equal employment opportunities and non-discrimination. However, recent research has shown that DEI now refers to an entire-organization system that affects how employees feel at work, their interactions with other staff, and their ability to work together as a team [10]. Furthermore, establishing this kind of holistic, supportive system is increasingly recognized as essential for enabling employees to genuinely thrive at work, which ultimately drives organizational sustainability. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are often talked about together, but they are different aspects of life at the organization. Diversity refers to the variety of backgrounds, experiences, identities, and other attributes of the people in a workforce. Previous research by Gomez and Bernet [11] suggests that bringing different people together in a team can generate more ideas and potential solutions.

Equity aims to be fair rather than equal. Previous research by Sanchez et al. [12] suggests that employees do not have the same opportunities or face the same problems from the start. Therefore, fair policies aim to remove structural barriers and ensure that all people have access to resources and support for life. Inclusion also affects employees' experiences at work. Previous research by Shore et al. [13] defines inclusion as a sense of belonging in which people feel accepted and respected and can participate in group life without fear of exclusion or negative consequences. Employees who feel included are more likely to participate in group activities and share knowledge. According to the above studies, diversity is no longer enough. The greater the organizational diversity in work, the more likely it is that the organization will foster both an inclusive culture and an equal-opportunity environment [10]. Therefore, DEI is often regarded as an all-encompassing system rather than the three individual concepts.

2.2. Inclusive Leadership and Team Effectiveness

With the rise of demands for diversity and inclusion in recent years, interest in inclusive leadership has also increased. Prior research by Bao and Liao [14] proposes that inclusive leadership should be open, approachable, fair, and respect all kinds of differences in the organization, rather than top-down authority or performance assessment. Inclusive leaders will speak with their staff about various

problems voluntarily, invite the staff to participate in decision-making, and create an open-communication environment where people feel free to speak.

Previous research by Carmeli et al. [5] has found that inclusive leadership increases the psychological safety of staff, and therefore these employees are more likely to put forward ideas or try new experiments without fear of being criticized. Building on this finding, research by Randel et al. [6] suggests that inclusive leaders make employees feel special because of their individual differences and are also part of a large team. The above are useful for improving coordination among different groups and spreading knowledge.

An increasing number of studies have connected inclusive leadership with a favorable work-life balance. Research by Man and Fan [8] has shown that inclusive leadership promotes the all-round development of staff and will increase their enthusiasm for work. Research by Jo and Shin [15] has also indicated that inclusive leadership can create an all-encompassing environment of support and care to promote the sense of well-being among all employees. In short, the above results show that inclusive leadership can help create a good work environment for good cooperation among staff.

2.3. DEI and Hybrid Team Effectiveness

With the change in working mode, people are starting to pay more attention to how to keep the effectiveness of the team when members are working remotely and communicating online. Hybrid teams often include members with different backgrounds, experiences, and ways of life. Although such diversity can provide several benefits, it may also contribute to misunderstandings, poor communication, and reduced participation among team members.

From a DEI perspective, the efficiency of a team is not solely due to the presence of diversity; employees must also perceive the team as fair and feel that they belong to it. Team members who do not feel that they belong or are respected by others will not be willing to present their ideas, even if these ideas are excellent. At the same time, employees who believe that the treatment they receive is fair and that their opinions will be given appropriate weight are more likely to take part in cooperation activities and thus promote the company's objectives [14].

Although studies have been conducted separately on inclusive leadership, DEI, and hybrid work, few have been performed together. Previous studies have explored the impact of leaders on employees' work performance and other factors in detail, but the specific benefits of inclusive leadership for promoting the construction of hybrid teams remain underexplored. This gap demonstrates the need for a DEI-oriented conceptual framework that connects inclusive leadership with hybrid team effectiveness.

2.4. Theoretical Foundations

2.4.1. Social Exchange Theory

Blau [16] has offered a foundation for research on inclusive leadership and team performance. According to this theory, people build a social network by interacting with others and are generally happier when they are well received by these people. When the staff believes that their leaders act in their best interests and have treated them well, they will be more motivated to work hard for the company. In the context of inclusive leadership, leaders are open to communicating with all staff, easily accessible, and respectful of the work performed by people from all backgrounds. The above behaviors indicate that the employees are valued by the company. According to Social Exchange Theory, the employees who have been given positive interactions will be more likely to respond by displaying a high degree of trust, commitment, cooperation, and organizational citizenship behavior [16]. A complementary explanation is provided by Social Identity Theory, which suggests that individuals derive part of their self-concept from group membership and categorize themselves and others as members of in-groups or out-groups [17].

Social Exchange Theory has been used in various ways to explain this phenomenon. Remote workers are farther away from their managers and other employees than the office staff. Therefore, how supported and fair one feels by the company will influence employees' feelings and behavior at work.

Inclusive leaders will promote all-staff participation, create an equal-opportunity environment for everyone, build a high-trust culture, strengthen team cohesion, and improve working efficiency. Therefore, Social Exchange Theory offers a reason for the above connections among inclusive leadership, an equitable team environment, and the effectiveness of a hybrid team.

2.4.2. Social Identity Theory

Tajfel and Turner [17] proposed Social Identity Theory, and this theory can be used to study why inclusive leadership helps to build social identities in hybrid teams. According to this theory, some of a person's self-concept is derived from their affiliation with a social group. People are likely to belong to groups that give them a sense of belonging, recognition, and a good self-image. In an organization, people often feel a strong sense of belonging due to their membership in groups, departments, etc. When employees feel that they are respected and accepted by their colleagues, they will be more motivated to achieve the goals of the team and help the group succeed. On the other hand, those who feel left out or marginalized may not take part in the group's activities any longer [17].

The idea of belonging is also quite relevant to the situation in recent years. Physical distance and infrequent contact with others can lead to a weaker sense of belonging for staff. Employees who work remotely may feel socially isolated and feel less involved in the life of the organization. Inclusive leadership can address the above problems by constructing a platform for all-involvement, recognizing the achievements of every employee individually, and making all employees feel valued at work regardless of their background or life situation. The above practices will enhance the sense of belonging and positive team identity for the staff. Based on the Social Identity Theory, it can be assumed that the increase in team efficiency due to inclusive leadership is due to a sense of belonging among employees. When the employees feel that they belong to the team and are motivated by the common goal, they will be more willing to work together and improve the overall performance of the team.

2.4.3. Inclusion Framework

Shore et al. [18] proposed the Inclusion Framework to provide full-fledged theoretical support for linking diversity, inclusion, and other organizational outcomes. According to the above system, inclusion occurs when employees experience both belongingness and value for uniqueness. Belongingness is the wish of a person to be accepted by others and feel part of a group; uniqueness is the desire to be recognized for one's own qualities, life circumstances, experiences, and achievements.

The system believes that an organization will only be strengthened by diversity if its staff feel they belong and stand out. Increasing the diversity of the workforce will not necessarily have a good effect if some employees are not included in the decision-making process and feel their identity is being suppressed. Not everyone will experience a sense of belonging in the same way, and therefore the full benefits of different perspectives and experiences may not be reached [18].

Therefore, this model will also promote inclusion in leadership. Inclusive leaders will encourage all employees to speak their minds freely, and at the same time, they will make everyone feel respected and valued. By balancing belongingness and value for uniqueness, inclusive leaders can create a favorable environment in which diversity helps the team work better. The above situations are particularly serious for hybrid teams, as the disparity in location, culture, and work arrangement will likely lead to a feeling of exclusion.

Thus, the Inclusion Framework can provide a reason for positioning the diversity of the workforce and an equitable team climate, along with a sense of belonging for the employees, at the center of the proposed conceptual model. Together, the above factors will create an inclusive environment for the hybrid team to work in and achieve high performance through collaboration and innovation.

3. Conceptual Framework Development

The system of ideas in this paper includes Social Exchange Theory [16] and Social Identity Theory [17]. Social Exchange Theory proposes that employees will reciprocate favorable treatment from

managers with positive attitudes and behavior. When leaders are fair, give respect, and support the staff, these employees are more likely to develop a strong sense of belonging and dedication to the company. Therefore, an ideal team environment should provide support for good leaders in motivating their teams well.

Social Identity Theory is another reason that people want to feel that they belong to a group. Employees who feel that their teams value and appreciate them will be more in line with the goals of the team and willing to cooperate. When employees work remotely, they are less likely to interact with colleagues in person, and, as a result, the team may lose some of its spirit and effectiveness. Together, the above theories provide the basis for understanding how inclusive leadership improves the performance of hybrid teams through the DEI-related mechanisms presented in this paper.

3.1. Inclusive Leadership and Hybrid Team Effectiveness

With the rising popularity of the hybrid work model, teams have been collaborating remotely to some extent. Different from traditional co-located teams, hybrid teams must navigate both in-person and digital modes of communication. As a result, fostering collaboration, trust, and effective knowledge sharing becomes significantly more difficult [3]. Consequently, leaders bear a greater responsibility for orchestrating these complex dynamics and ensuring the successful outcome of the team's efforts.

In previous research, Carmeli et al. [5] found that the inclusive leader could build an environment of psychological safety for the employees, allowing them to put forward suggestions and boosting their enthusiasm for working. Instead of using a top-down control model, the leaders are now involving employees in different forms of discussion and giving more weight to different ideas; they have also created an open-door policy for free speech. Such behavior is more likely to occur in a hybrid work setting due to a lack of interaction with other employees.

Inclusive leadership has shown good results for research teams in practice. Research by Randel et al. [6] suggests that inclusive leadership can help employees feel that they belong to the organization and receive respect; thus, they will be more motivated. Research by Man and Fan [8] has also found that inclusive leadership promotes a spirit of innovation by giving employees a chance to participate. Based on the above results, inclusive leadership may be used to enhance the performance of a hybrid team.

P1: Inclusive leadership is proposed to be positively associated with hybrid team effectiveness.

3.2. The Mediating Role of Workforce Diversity

Workforce diversity, the first DEI-related mechanism in the framework, has long been connected to organizational innovation and problem-solving ability. Diverse teams bring together people with different experiences, views, and other strengths, thereby expanding the range of information available for decision-making. The members of a hybrid team are located in different places and cultures, so there may be a wider variety of people.

The benefits of diversity are not achieved by default. Based on previous research, the benefits of diversity to a team are realized only when employees are included in team processes and when this difference is seen as a strength rather than a weakness [10]. Without a leader, there will be all kinds of problems and misunderstandings among the groups.

Inclusive leaders help guarantee that different ideas from various places in society will also be accounted for. By promoting a spirit of participation and tolerance among employees, inclusive leaders can create a safe environment where all talents and ideas from all walks of life can be expressed freely to inspire new ideas [15]. Therefore, workforce diversity is expected to act as a vehicle for the positive effects of inclusive leadership in hybrid teams.

P2: Workforce diversity mediates the relationship between inclusive leadership and hybrid team effectiveness.

3.3. *The Mediating Role of Equitable Team Climate*

With the demand for fairness and transparency in managerial practices among employees rising, equity has gradually been given more attention by the company. There is a team climate among the staff to ensure that the division of authority, responsibilities, and resources is equitable for all members of the team [13].

The perception of fairness is often highly sensitive in a hybrid work model. Remote employees are concerned about receiving less information or participating in fewer developmental activities than those who work in the office. This concern may reduce employees' willingness to participate in team activities.

Inclusive leadership can address the above problems by fostering an open-communication environment, establishing a fair-decision-making system, and promoting all-staff involvement. Leaders who can proactively seek the opinions of all team members and make sure that different views are also heard are more likely to create a sense of fairness among the team [19]. When the employees believe that the team has operated in a relatively fair manner, they will be willing to cooperate better and work together to achieve shared goals.

P3: Equitable team climate mediates the relationship between inclusive leadership and hybrid team effectiveness.

3.4. *The Mediating Role of Sense of Belonging*

A sense of belonging refers to the sense that employees are accepted by and part of the group or organization. Research by Bao and Liao [14] suggests that a sense of belonging is required for inclusion, and otherwise employees may be unable to perform at their best.

The issue of belonging is more noticeable in a hybrid team. There will be fewer informal interactions and less chance for relationship building among the staff, and thus a weaker sense of belonging to the team [3]. Leaders must, therefore, take deliberate steps to maintain a sense of belonging that can foster cooperation and initiative among employees.

Inclusive leaders build a culture of inclusion by appreciating the efforts of all the staff, promoting the participation of employees, and attending to the various demands of different groups [6]. When the employees feel that they have been included in and valued by the organization, they will be more motivated to work for the company. Therefore, a stronger sense of belonging is likely to increase team cohesion and improve the all-around performance of the team.

P4: Employees' sense of belonging mediates the relationship of inclusive leadership and hybrid team effectiveness.

Based on the previous discussion, inclusive leadership and hybrid team effectiveness may be related both directly and indirectly. The effects of inclusive leadership may also occur via several DEI-related paths. In other words, inclusive leaders create a conducive environment for the diversity of the staff, foster a sense of fairness in the team, and boost employees' sense of belonging. The above reasons will thus foster a more cooperative environment among the team members and inspire them to learn and work together with greater enthusiasm. Based on the studies conducted previously, the conceptual framework of this paper is shown in Figure 1.

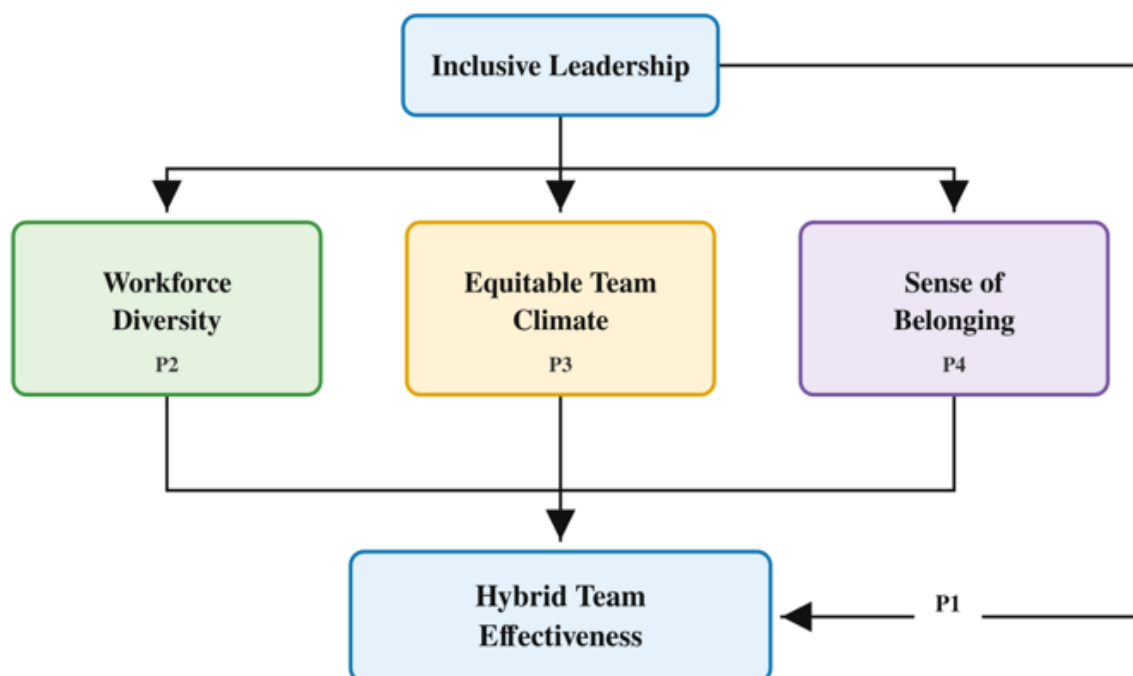


Figure 1.
A DEI-Based Conceptual Framework Linking Inclusive Leadership to Hybrid Team Effectiveness.

As shown in Figure 1, inclusive leadership is used to predict the extent of hybrid team effectiveness. Under the proposed framework, inclusive leadership aims to create a more diverse group of employees and an optimistic work environment that supports all staff members in a hybrid work model. The three theoretical perspectives used in the proposed framework are Social Exchange Theory, Social Identity Theory, and the Inclusion Framework.

4. Discussion and Implications

4.1. Reconsidering Inclusive Leadership in Hybrid Work Settings

With the spread of new working models, many of the conditions that supported traditional leadership practices have changed. In the past, workplace leaders could rely on direct observation and regular face-to-face contact to manage employees and maintain team coordination [3]. Such ways of working are not feasible for employees working remotely and communicating mainly through digital means. Research by Wang et al. [3] has pointed out that in a hybrid work model, high-quality communication among staff and a sense of community are required. Therefore, inclusive leadership is a relatively suitable concept at present because it promotes participation, openness, and respect for individual differences over top-down authority.

Based on the preceding discussion, the influence of inclusive leadership in hybrid teams extends beyond individual leader behaviors to the relational and social conditions those behaviors create. Carmeli et al. [5] and Randel et al. [6] have extended the previous studies by highlighting the role of psychological safety and belongingness and uniqueness, respectively, as important results of inclusive leadership. In a hybrid work mode, these relations may need to be strengthened more because people interact with fewer others informally in the workplace.

4.2. Diversity as a Strategic Resource Rather than a Demographic Characteristic

Early studies often viewed the diversity of the labor force as a type of demographic. Recently, more research has adopted a broader view to highlight the role of all sorts of experiences, knowledge, and other views in supporting innovation and organizational learning [10]. Based on the above reasoning, this paper will consider the workforce diversity of a company as a source of strategic advantages rather than merely a particular feature of its employees.

These diversity-related challenges may be particularly visible in hybrid teams. Geographic dispersion generally means that the employees come from all over the country and all backgrounds. Although the changes may be good, if they are made improperly, there will be problems with communication and other difficulties. Inclusive leadership can help to use all the diversity of employees to move the entire organization forward. Inclusive leaders encourage the whole team to actively share their perspectives and, when appropriate, factor in some differences of opinion so that everybody is willing to solve the problem with the assistance of all sides [8, 15].

4.3. The Importance of Equity and Fairness in Hybrid Teams

Previous research suggests that diversity alone does not necessarily lead to the expected improvements. Employees would like to be treated equally by the company and have the same opportunities as other employees [13]. The problems are more serious in a hybrid working model because people are exposed to and interact with the company in different ways under this arrangement.

In recent years, discussions of DEI have increasingly highlighted the difference between equality and equity. Equality is concerned with giving all people the same treatment, but equity means providing different kinds of support and opportunities to enable people in different situations to do well [10]. A fair team climate is required for both inclusive leadership and high-performing teams at present. Such a climate can address the demand for greater attention to fairness and inclusion in contemporary organizations [14].

4.4. Belonging as a Foundation for Team Effectiveness

Among the three dimensions of DEI in this study, a sense of belonging may be more pronounced in a hybrid work model. Belonging is a person's sense that they are accepted, valued, and involved in the group. Research by Bao and Liao [14] suggests that employees will be reluctant to take part in the organization due to a feeling of exclusion from relevant communication or decision-making.

The hybrid work model may inadvertently reduce the feeling of belonging for employees by limiting opportunities to interact with others informally. Therefore, although the employees can communicate with others over the network, they may still feel isolated. Inclusive leaders can promote participation by recognizing the contributions of employees and providing them with chances to engage in the work at the company [6]. The above measures will help the team work more cohesively over time.

4.5. Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study has added to the research in the following ways. First, it adds to the existing research on inclusive leadership by studying whether it is applicable in the new environment of hybrid work. Second, it integrates research on DEI and leadership theory to build an all-encompassing conceptual system for explaining team performance. Third, workforce diversity, equitable team climate, and sense of belonging should be regarded as interconnected mechanisms rather than independent causes.

This system will help the company reduce its workload in areas of regulatory compliance and execution of HR. At the same time, organizations can introduce DEI principles into managerial training and modify the organisational environment. Managers who can lead inclusively are more likely to build a strong team, keep employees motivated, and improve the way the team works in a distributed-work system [5, 15].

5. Illustrative Case Discussion

The discussion below is only for illustration purposes and should not be considered an empirical case study. To show the practical value of the framework, the development team for a joint venture in China and Europe will serve as an illustration. The team has employees in all corners of Asia, Europe, and North America, and people from different professional backgrounds, such as software engineers, data scientists, user experience designers, product managers, etc. Team members alternate between remote and in-person work, and, through digital communication tools and collaborative technologies, they coordinate their work efforts.

The structure of this team is typical for many modern companies. As companies have been recruiting talent from all over the world increasingly often, the culture, skills, and work experiences of hybrid teams are also more diverse. Although the team possesses varied forms of knowledge and a broad range of ideas, communicating and coordinating them may be difficult [3]. The members of the team come from various fields of study and have different backgrounds; therefore, while many ideas to solve the problem may arise, cooperation will be difficult.

A typical problem with a hybrid team is the combination of various ideas. Employees from various educational backgrounds and professions may need to choose different paths to deal with the same problems in the company. For example, the technical staff focuses on improving the efficiency of the system, and the designers are more concerned with user experience and convenience. Based on the above studies, diversity is likely to enhance the performance of a team only when there is open communication and effective cooperation among all members [10]. Without effective leadership, a diverse team may struggle to work effectively and creatively.

The proposed framework suggests that inclusive leadership can help solve this problem. Leaders who actively seek the opinions of all members and motivate them to participate build platforms for the sharing and application of various knowledge in decision-making. Research by Carmeli et al. [5] has shown that an inclusive leader will make employees feel safer, and as a result, be more willing to participate actively in their work. Research by Jo and Shin [15] has also indicated that respect for the differences among people should be an indispensable attribute of inclusive leadership, and the full advantages of diversity need to be realized.

A second problem is also a lack of fairness. Hybrid work arrangements may lead to unequal experiences for different employees. Remote employees may be less visible to managers, rarely have informal contact with these managers, and often only hear about work from other people in the office. Therefore, there will be a decline in trust and effort by the team. Recently, studies on DEI have found that both the diversity of employees and fair and inclusive day-to-day work conditions in an organization affect the performance of employees [13, 14].

These practices can help make the team more equitable. Inclusive leaders can help to alleviate a sense of division by maintaining accessible and open communication channels for employees, supporting remote work and allowing for participation across locations, thus promoting the transparency of decision-making. Social Exchange Theory [16] suggests that employees who perceive fair and supportive treatment are more likely to reciprocate with greater commitment and cooperative behavior. Given that the employees' contact with leaders and colleagues will differ in a hybrid work arrangement, the construction of trust and cooperation in hybrid teams requires fair practices.

Belonging is another important issue illustrated by this case. Digital technologies have made remote cooperation more convenient, but they have not generated a sense of togetherness among the staff spontaneously. Team members may attend meetings and complete their work but still feel isolated from the rest of the team socially. This problem has been widely discussed in the literature on hybrid work, and the need for people to maintain close relationships and social support in a virtual setting is also a focus [2, 3].

Inclusive leadership may help to address the problem by creating conditions in which all staff are acknowledged and appreciated. Research by Randel et al. [6] suggests that inclusive leaders can help employees feel special and part of the group at the same time. As teams have become more diverse over

time, employees have been able to offer a wider range of ideas and insights when their opinions are valued. Research by Bao and Liao [14] suggests that belonging is necessary for inclusion, and employees' motivation for work generally relates to their sense of belonging.

Collectively, the scenario offers examples of how the three DEI-related mechanisms proposed in this study may function in hybrid work settings. Diversity in the staff includes many different sets of knowledge and life experiences; an inclusive team makes people feel welcome; thus, it can boost their morale and motivation. Inclusive leadership serves as a link to promote the collaboration of the above elements and drive the performance of the team [20]. Leadership may influence outcomes both directly and by building a positive organizational atmosphere that supports cooperation among all staff.

Although the discussion in this paper does not employ actual data, the scenario illustrates the potential applicability of the proposed conceptual framework. The above is an example of how, in the future, empirical research will also study the relationships among inclusive leadership, diversity, equity, and inclusion in different organizations and cultures. Such studies would help us better understand how leadership performs in contemporary work arrangements.

6. Conclusion and Future Research

With the increase in the spread of hybrid work arrangements, new problems have arisen in how to keep the efficiency of cooperation and the motivation of employees in teams unchanged when they are working in different places. Based on the above, this paper examines how inclusive leadership may improve the effectiveness of hybrid teams through diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

Based on the review of the literature, inclusive leadership is not limited to a few kinds of interpersonal leadership behavior. With the spread of various work models, face-to-face communication among team members has decreased in some parts of the company; thus, inclusive leadership can help to build a cooperative team environment. By encouraging voluntary participation, considering all staff members' opinions, ensuring fairness, creating a safe environment for expression, and supporting work toward shared business goals, managers can foster responsibility and cooperation among staff [5, 6].

The main relationships proposed in this paper are explained through several DEI-related factors associated with inclusive leadership. The new model for promoting high performance in the future will emphasize team diversity, a healthy team atmosphere, and a feeling of belonging for employees. Rather than having separate initiatives, diversity, equity, and inclusion are all related in the framework, and together they will affect the work outcomes of hybrid teams. In recent years, many scholars have pointed out that a variety of certain types of traits is not enough unless people are also treated fairly and included in the organization [10, 20].

Theoretically, this study will add to the existing body of research on hybrid work by combining insights from inclusive leadership and DEI scholarship into a unified concept. Research has frequently addressed those issues separately. By doing so, the current study will expand the range of research on the effect of leadership on team performance in a varied and decentralized work model. The framework has also been updated to meet the new demand for research on leadership in contemporary forms of work organization [2, 3].

There are some other applications of this study. With the spread of various work models in recent years, leaders have begun to focus more on building a high-quality talent pool that supports such models. Organizations can establish a system to encourage all employees to express their opinions and to treat everyone fairly so that more people feel a sense of belonging. The efforts may increase the team's work efficiency and also promote innovation, improve the well-being of employees, and ensure the long-term stability of the organization [13].

Several limitations should be acknowledged, which also point to directions for future research. First, as a conceptual study, although this paper proposes theoretical propositions, it does not empirically test the relationships between inclusive leadership, the effectiveness of hybrid teams, and DEI. Future research could employ surveys, interviews, case studies, or mixed-methods approaches to examine these relationships across different organizations and industries. Longitudinal studies would also help

determine whether the impact of inclusive leadership remains stable as hybrid teams develop over time. Second, this framework is primarily designed for hybrid teams. Comparative studies of hybrid teams, fully remote teams, and fully on-site teams could determine whether the proposed mechanisms for diversity, equity, and inclusion differ depending on work arrangements. Finally, future research should examine potential contextual factors such as organizational culture, industry conditions, national culture, and digital infrastructure, which may strengthen or weaken the proposed relationships.

Although this study has made some contributions, many problems have yet to be solved. First, the framework in this paper is conceptual and has been based on previous research. The relationships are based on theory, and it needs to be empirically verified whether they hold as expected in different organizations. Future studies can be conducted using various methods, such as surveys, case studies, long-term observation, or other mixed-methods designs, to explore the model of inclusive leadership in a hybrid team more comprehensively.

In addition, the discussion has only focused on hybrid work arrangements. Given the continuing changes in the work model, it has not been verified whether the relationships proposed in this study will hold true for both fully remote teams and traditional co-located teams. Based on previous research, the types of communication patterns, social environments, and employee experiences are generally different across modes of work [3]. Therefore, comparative studies can be used to develop a clearer understanding of the boundaries of the above-mentioned framework.

Finally, organizational and cultural contexts may also shape these relationships. The reasons for changes in employees' feelings of inclusion, fairness, and belonging may be linked to differences among organizations, different regions in the country, and other circumstances. For example, people in a highly collectivist culture will likely have a different response to inclusive leadership in a more individualistic setting [21]. Future research should explore these contextual factors to improve the framework and extend its application across organizational settings.

With the continuous expansion of hybrid work, further research is needed to learn more about how to build inclusive, high-performing teams remotely as well. Further studies in this direction can enhance the theoretical basis of leadership and offer practical references for organizations that have widely dispersed workers at home and abroad. With the continued development of hybrid teams, a problem that has not been solved yet is how to cultivate an inclusive, fair, and cooperative culture in the new form of working. The framework introduced in this paper will be used as the foundation for the following research, and new perspectives on the impact of hybrid work models will also be provided.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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