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THE FINAL MASTER'S THESIS (PROJECT)

ĮTRAUKAUS VADOVAVIMO POVEIKIS ĮVAIROVEI IR INOVACIJOMS PASAULINIUOSE TECHNOLOGIJŲ PROJEKTUOSE	*THE IMPACT OF INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP ON DIVERSITY AND INNOVATION IN GLOBAL TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS*

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Executive Summary

This thesis provides research on the importance of inclusive leadership as a critical process by which diversity can be converted into innovation within global technological projects. The nature of project teams' work with a high degree of demographic, functional, as well as cognitive diversity due to the rise of technology-driven projects that work over national, cultural, and virtual borders. Although diversity is commonly advanced as an engine of innovation, previous studies report conflicting results, alluding that diversity by itself might also cause coordination issues, disharmony and less productive results. This paradox is addressed in this study because inclusive leadership is deemed an important mediating factor that can facilitate innovative outcomes.

The main focus of the study is to investigate the role of inclusive leadership in diversity management and vice versa in terms of its impact on the performance of innovation in global technology projects. To accomplish this goal, the research takes a pragmatic convergent parallel mixed-methodology approach. The data represented the quantity of the collected information were gathered via the structured survey of 124 representatives working on the global technology project in Europe, Asia, and North America (as project managers, technical specialists, and junior team consultants). The scales that measured inclusive leadership, diversity, and innovation were established and proven to be valid and analysed with the help of descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression modelling. Simultaneously, qualitative data were collected using 15 purposively sampled participants with semi-structured responses to obtain some contextual and experience-based information about inclusive leadership practise and innovation processes.

The statistics indicate good, positive associate connections between inclusive leadership and diversity ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$) and between inclusive leadership and innovation ($r = 0.63$, $p < 0.01$). Only diversity showed a response value of moderate with regard to innovation ($r = 0.52$), which implies that its innovative ability is a contingent and not automatic response. Regression analysis supported the inclusive leadership as the best predictor associated with innovation performance ($b = 0.47$), with diversity serving as a partial mediator. These findings are a rational support to the essential premise that inclusive leadership is a transformative capability that turns diversity as a dormant demographic state into an effective strategic resource through the creation of a sense of psychological safety, trust, and participatory influence.

These statistical relationships are supported and put into context by the qualitative findings. The four hegemonic themes are psychological safety, cross-cultural trust, empowerment, and

a climate of innovation, which are applicable to explain the operation of inclusive leadership in practise. Those involved indicated that the inclusive leaders always fostered open voice, legitimised dissent and spread responsibility both in hierarchical and cultural grounds. Such behaviours can eliminate fear of failure, overcome virtual and cultural separation, and encourage experimentation and learning.

The paper adds to theory by consolidating the concepts of inclusive leadership, diversity and innovation into one project-driven model, which is a significant gap in the existing body of research largely focused on organisation-focused leadership. In practise, it places the idea of inclusive leadership as not a normative desire but as a strategic ability to be innovative in the international technology projects. The results offer practical recommendations to project managers and organisations that are interested in institutionalising inclusive leadership as a strategy to realise the full innovative potential of diverse, globally dispersed teams.

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Introduction

Background and Context: Nowadays, the association of globalisation and technological progress makes technology-based projects inherently international, multicultural, and interdisciplinary. The execution organisations are dependent on such initiatives to not only meet the immediate milestones of delivery but also maintain the level of innovation required by the fast-changing markets. The diversity itself that the initiatives in question represent is recognised, theoretically, as a driver of creativity and creative problem-solving, as the members of a particular team are equipped with different cognitive paradigms, experiential and existing experience, and disciplinary skills. The very same diversity may spawn communicative misalignment, latent or open conflict and impaired procedural or epistemic clarity. Responsibility of this kind then falls on organisational leadership to change possible fracture lines into connecting tissues. Inclusive leadership has become a normatively compelling form of leadership, both in the disciplinary scholarship and in management practice, that explicitly acknowledges, evaluates, and brings to bear on mutual benefit various cognitive and experience niches (Brian, 2020). They are systematically brought to life by such leaders whose organisational ethos values psychological safety, procedural openness and mutual collegial respect, thus allowing team members to risk, ask questions, and imagine. In the emergent paradigm of technology projects, the distribution of teams is continually taking geographic, temporal, and cultural forms.

Problem Statement: On the one hand, it is claimed that many organisations champion diversity as the driver of innovation, but on the other hand, the empirical situation is ambivalent. Some studies suggest that diverse teams improve creativity, but other studies reveal that, in the case of diversity imposed instead of managed, interpersonal tension is increased, and the efficiency of the work decreases. Such a discrepancy suggests that the difference in the background of demographics and thoughts alone cannot lead to the realisation of innovation;

instead, a deliberate act of leadership is necessary to facilitate its successful organisation (Hill, 2022). Moreover, despite the suggestion that the latent creative potential of the heterogeneous teams is triggered by the inclusive leadership concept, the empirical examination of its mediating role in the narrow framework of global technology projects has not been done rigorously.

Research Aim and Objectives: The research has its primary orientation around determining the impact of inclusive leadership on the levels of diversity and the subsequent innovation achieved in the global technology ventures. To this end, the research questions are thus stated as follows:

- To conduct a thorough review of available theoretical and empirical literature on the constructs of inclusive leadership, diversity and innovation.

- To research how practices and behaviours typical of inclusive leadership are used to inform the management of diversity in environments that host technology project realisation on a global scale.

- To test the relationship which prevails between the diversity that is realised with the help of inclusive leadership and the consequent performance in terms of innovation.

- To develop prescriptive solutions to help project managers and their organisations to be drawn towards the strengthening of inclusive leadership as a planned tool of innovation amplification.

Research Questions: This research question is guided by three main questions:

1. What is the effect of inclusive leadership on managing diversity in global technology projects?

2. What is the relationship between diversity and innovative project outcomes under the control of an inclusive leadership style?

3. Is inclusive leadership, as a systematic factor, considered to be a driver of innovation in international technological ventures?

Methodology (Overview): A convergent parallel mixed-methods design is used. The quantitative data is collected through structured questionnaires to visualise the correlation between leadership orientation and diversity measures, and the performance of innovation.

Structure of the Thesis: The dissertation is organised into separate chapters. It analyses the literature review on normative and empirical theory of inclusive leadership, diversity utility, and innovativeness in project governance (Mir, Rafique and Mubarak, 2020). The conceptual framework, sampling procedures, and methods of triangulation of data collection are documented in the methodology chapter. The empirical chapter has descriptive and inductive survey statistics, which are complemented by thematic analysis, and a subsequent argumentative discussion, which is used to reconcile the findings with existing theoretical constructs. The research is finished with synthesis and practice-based suggestions, outlining theoretical contribution and setting directions of further research.

Limitations: The current investigation will be faced with a number of limitations. Its main focus and interest in international technology endeavours can limit its conclusions to other fields other than the field of endeavour. The number of respondents might be limited by temporal factors in the survey. Furthermore, the normative meanings ascribed to the inclusive leadership could be influenced by unique cultural prismatic, hence influencing the homogeneity of the received information. Despite these limitations, the study hopes to provide significant results on the role of inclusive leadership as a catalytic factor that facilitates the process of diversity translation into innovation in the global project delivery setting.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Inclusive Leadership

Defining Inclusive Leadership

Inclusive leadership refers to a deliberate governing praxis that not only recognises but also incorporates heterogeneous perspectives and thus creates ambient conditions in which all contributors feel dignified and are empowered to mobilise latent capability. It is conceptually constructed around the normative pillars of fairness, transparency, and collective agency; therefore, it anticipates the marginalisation of participants because of their cultural, historical, or disciplinary differences (Shafi *et al.*, 2023). Although various leadership models authorise the healthy relations dynamics, inclusive leadership stands out with its normative prioritising diversity as a deliberate and reflexive location of strategic and structural enrichment.

In comparison with transformational leadership, which mobilises the followers by expressing the vision and developing charisma, inclusive leadership will focus on the concomitant development of participation and equity. Servant leadership is more concerned with fulfilling the explicit and implicit needs of followers, and inclusive leadership goes further and creates moments of interaction between heterogeneous constituencies (Fang, Dai and Zhang, 2021). Effective leadership is trusted most due to open communication; the inclusive leadership, on the other hand, ensures that the views of historically minoritised or less represented groups are consulted, incorporated, and given a say in whichever decision-making process. This kind of fine differentiation makes inclusive leadership a strictly efficient form of modality within intercultural and inter-organisational alignments that take place in modern global technology projects.

Theoretical Foundations of Inclusive Leadership

Social Identity Perspective: The modern technology taskforces have a polyphonic nature, and they carry people whose cultural, professional and organisational memberships are woven

together in dissimilar ways. When any of such identity dimensions gets foregrounded, micro-groups are prone to crystallising and may give rise to estrangement or antagonism (Watt, 2015). These centrifugal propensities can be contained through inclusive leadership by promoting a feeling of collective belonging that is pervasive and a sense of actual appreciation of the individual differences.

Leader-Member Relationships: According to empirical research, the quality of cooperative labour is highly influenced by the quality of leader-member relationships. Inclusive leadership aims to have great positive relations with every stakeholder as compared to focusing on any favoured group (Haddad, 2020). Inclusive executives eliminate the in-group-out-group lines that usually pose threats to the integrity of heterogeneous teams by incorporating the principles of relational and procedural justice.

Psychological Safety: A basic ability that is necessary for inclusive leadership is psychological safety. To build such a capacity, consistent, intentional investment in reasonable, authentic interpersonal norms is required. When team members are carefully protected, they are more inclined to make unconventional guesses and share incomplete concepts. The model performs particularly well in environments with ideational asymmetry and continuous re-design, where boldly partial propositions and thoughtful equilibria result in both disruptive and incremental re-learning.

Organisational resources Perspective: Until it is integrated into systematic analysis and intentional and purposeful stewardship, the encoded and experiential diversity is long-term stored as an untapped organisational surplus, according to a resource-based perspective. There is a lot of untapped potential in modern organisations, but it won't become growth-generating intellectual capital until inclusive leaders act with catalytic confidence and a purpose statement. These leaders learn to be fluent in diversity, the challenging skill of connecting disparate voices,

demonstrating both dissonance and harmony, and allowing the group to see new certainty within the window of shared understanding.

Dimensions of Inclusive Leadership

Openness: Openness to new ideas and new emergent ideas, and deliberation that is intentional and considerate of a diverse range of opinions.

Accessibility: Being receptive to communication, having a leader to mobilise guidance and support at all times (Al-Atwi and Al-Hassani, 2021).

Fairness: The assessment should be equal, and there must be no bias and equitable contribution of opportunities to partake.

Empowerment: empowering an individual to feel the power to lead certain initiatives, mobilising the individuals and giving them independence that leads to tangible output.

Recognition: System-volume and explicit recognition of input, without consideration to echelons or iterations.

Application of Global Technology Projects

Cultural fusion: Inclusive leaders apply pressure on the contact zone and cross-cultural attrition by purposefully amplifying the specificity of culture (Al-Atwi and Al-Hassani, 2021).

Collaboration Across Borders: This sense of unity against the background of geographical dispersal is perpetuated by the ongoing adaptation to mutual ambition.

Innovation Through Diversity: Diversification of inclusion Rituals in task-based forums: Mechanisation of inclusion rituals into the forums gives the peripheral voices the platform to emerge and improve on the explanation of transformational innovation.

Trust Construction in Distributed Workgroups: Mediating Trust Conceptualisation in Distributed Collaboration. The open leadership, reasonable decision-making, sharing open information and multiple views assist in building a high level of trust between people due to proper and regular communication.

Evidence of Effectiveness

Live information justifies that inclusive leadership and the force that it can provide to increase your creative universe, build psychological safety, and motivate team member involvement. Inclusive steerage test workgroups of inclusive steerage test circulate guidance actively, and derive value out of failed trials, things that plug directly into the ongoing testing needs of technology. Inclusive leadership also endeavours to minimise the attrition rate among the various clusters and also curbs the gender leakages through ensuring that there is active affirmation and a robust support system (Gallegos, 2013). Although this research is growing, the current studies premise the idea of inclusive leadership processes on fixed organisational blueprints and leave a theoretical and empirical gap in globally coordinated and project-dominant settings.

Comparison with Other Leadership Styles

Transformational Leadership: Centres on the articulation of an inspirational vision; yet, in its aspirational fervour, it may inadequately attend to the systematic incorporation of minority viewpoints within deliberative or strategic processes (Medcalf and Gilbert, 2015).

Servant Leadership: Emphasises an ethic of serving followers as the primary mode of authority; nonetheless, its normative commitment to attentiveness sometimes stops short of grappling with the intricate dynamics of demographic and cognitive diversity in organisational life (Nishii and Leroy, 2022).

Authentic Leadership: It aims to nurture relational trust through manifested transparency and moral consonance; however, in the expression of its principle, genuineness, in its inception, does not require the overt encouragement of substantive inclusiveness as a state of relational reciprocity.

Challenges and Critiques of Inclusive Leadership

Inclusive leadership has tremendous potential, but the strategy has severe internal challenges. Introducing a latency into decision circuits through the intentional inclusion of different opinions, conceptually but actually beneficial, may become highly evident in the fast-track technology programs that are constrained by fixed deadlines. As a result, leaders must resolve the conflict between participatory thoroughness and expedient delivery, as well as make sure that the project milestones' progress is not endangered (Thompson and Matkin, 2020). It is also disturbing that there is a tendency towards superficial inclusivity, whereby executives purport inclusive discourses without simultaneously altering cultures of practice, domesticating the construct into a tokenistic object. Also, the definition as well as operationalisation of the concept of inclusiveness is not universal and fixed in the sense that concepts and policies that thrive in one national or regional cultural context will be dissonant and counterproductive in another socio-cultural setting.

Identified Research Gaps

Project-Based Inclusive Leadership Gap: Project-based inclusive leadership has received little attention in the literature, and even less attention has been given to how it operates in the context of international technology initiatives.

Lack of an Integration Framework: There is an apparent gap in the literature of integrating inclusive leadership, diversity, and innovation into a cohesive framework to prevent coherent implementation (Nishii and Leroy, 2022).

Virtual and Cross-Cultural Teams Gap: Scholarly inquiry into inclusive leadership has not adequately addressed the dynamics of virtual teams composed of divergent cultural backgrounds, even though such teams are now standard within international technology programmes.

1.2 Diversity in Global Technology Projects

Concept of Diversity

Diversity within organisational contexts denotes the spectrum of distinctions among individual members of a team or workplace. It includes immediately perceptible attributes such as gender, age, and racial background, as well as attributes that are less visibly manifest, including educational histories, professional trajectories, cognitive styles, and value systems (Daniel, Agarwal and Stewart, 2012). In the context of worldwide technological initiatives, this spectrum is further enlarged to embrace spatial attributes including geographic location, time-zone differentials and divergent organisational cultures, as such initiatives customarily unite enterprises, subcontractors, and clients that are separated by international boundaries. Forms of Diversity are often arranged within a framework that divides them into surface and deep levels. Surface-level categories comprise readily observable traits such as skin colouration, gender, and chronological age.

Dimensions of Diversity in Technology Projects

Culture Diversity: The importance of paying attention to cultural diversity is a strategically significant element of international technology projects. The differences between language control, traditional behaviour, culture of contextual conversation, and conflict management paradigm may strengthen or weaken a collaborative vision (Paez-Aviles et al., 2017). Such constitutive multiplicity makes project managers responsible so that intercultural literacy can be fostered and that inclusion work processes can be integratively incorporated so as to root these otherwise marginal knowledges in the project centre.

Gender Diversity: No matter how hard the initiative is, the percentage of men in the technology field is shocking on all levels of management. The evidence currently available, which is based on both small-scale research and large-scale surveys, shows that teams that make an effort to balance their gender components produce noticeably more creative ideas in

addition to having superior cognitive abilities. To address the issues raised, a structural change is required that goes beyond program recruitment and firmly establishes targeted sponsorship and ongoing mentoring as part of the corporate structure.

Functional and Professional Diversity: Because each person brings a unique cultural system and way of working, engineers, designers, product managers, and data analysts must collaborate flexibly to keep up with the rapidly changing technology. On the other hand, when the experts in their fields increase the prevalent epistemic power of their respective fields, the integrative fibre of common purposes is disconnected (Lee *et al.*, 2016). The technological programs directors, in this case, have a fiduciary obligation to deal with conflicts of interest and be sensitive.

Generational Diversity: In these universities, where the wave of technological projects that emphasise multigenerational assembly plans oozes into an institutional setting, practitioners will more likely succeed in coinciding senior professionals who learned rigour in procedures during the pre-internet, pre-app, libraries-on-wheels phase and those who are digital natives and learned to touch and swipe. The serial forming nature of this purposeful Outstanding design imposes layers of time in the length of the DNA of the project and provides further strength by incorporating divergent forms of memory into the same digital artefact, the procedural and improvisational processes.

Geographical and Organisational Diversity: Structural Diversity: Structural diversity in global technology projects arises from the combination of geographical dispersion and organisational differences that shape how teams work and coordinate. Distributed teams operate across varied time zones, regulatory environments and institutional systems, which influences communication rhythms, task pacing and expectations. Differences in organisational practices, data governance rules and procedural standards further complicate alignment. Together, these structural factors affect collaboration, integration and project delivery,

requiring leaders to harmonise diverse operational environments so teams can function cohesively despite spatial, legal and organisational fragmentation (Boehm, 2013).

Benefits of Diversity in Global Technology Projects

Improved Creativity and Innovation: Diverse Culture and Experience Frames: The capability of an organisation to discover alternatives more quickly through teams of diverse cultural and experience frames provides increased opportunities to discover technically practicable, precedent-busting innovations.

Improved Quality of Decisions: Heterogeneous groups of people bring a larger set of options, prototypes and counterfactual situations to collective sensitivity to risk and foresight regarding architectural, constraint-based and market forces.

Global Perspective: To create local adaptation of technology transfer to capture local uses trend in the future, to help context providers become better rational agents, practices working in a variety of contextual linguistic, historical and end-user ecologies gather context abundant market intelligence (Smith and Zhou, 2022).

Improved Adaptive Capacity: Prior experience of workplace diversity amongst team members on regulatory, infrastructural and societal shock offers, in their turn, a multidimensional pool of heuristics which reduced the time span of learning institutional shock by speeding project teams.

Diversity Issues in Global Technology Projects

Communication Barriers: Lingua franca competence disparities, contrasting pragmatic norms of implicature and antagonistic tacit rules of silence or downright frankness introduce uncertainty, which, unless resolved, is likely to result in adverse implicatures and bring down project confidence.

Cultural Misalignment: Incongruity between divergent systems of certitude, temporal orientation, and modes of contextually circumscribed, indirect negotiation may cultivate

interstitial friction and inhibit the reliability of collaborative outputs (Solli-Sæther, Karlsen and Van Oorschot, 2015).

Decision-Making Delays: The integrative synthesis of epistemic and normative resources, each contingent upon differing cultural logics, may extend the temporal horizon of consensus, thereby jeopardising fixed deadlines or budgetary targets.

Stereotypes and Bias: Either implicit or overt evaluative distortion generated along lines of race, gender, cultural, or socio-economic identity can internalise the stratified division of labour, thereby diminishing the generative quality of briefings and, by extension, the robustness of project architectures.

Virtual Collaboration Issues: Discontinuity between synchronous time zones, varied access to the necessitating connective and cognitive technologies and the shrinkage of incidental informational and social interactions all recur in the long-distance distributed collaborations.

Diversity and Team Performance

Scholarly research on the relationship between diversity and team performance has provided inconsistent findings. Some literature indicates that heterogeneous teams are supposed to have high standards of innovation, creativity and problem-solving abilities, and in the other set of literature, diversity has been argued to have negative impacts on cohesion and procedural effectiveness unless nurtured. The existing inconsistency conveys that, individually, diversity is not a performance-enhancing factor (Solli-Saether, Karlsen and Van Oorschot, 2015). In the application of the global technology programs, where the efficiency and innovation needs are being felt at the same time, the moderator of diversity impacts is leadership.

Virtual and Cross-Cultural Collaboration

Often, large-scale technology projects routinely use virtual team building platforms to incorporate teams which are spread out across different time zones and cultures. This type of surroundings increases the duality of diversity, which brings a high level of opportunities and

a high level of burdens (Daniel, Agarwal and Stewart, 2012). The concentration of globally spread talent is countered by a narrowing of real-time face-to-face communication, therefore impeding the processes of building trust and facilitating rapid conflict resolution. Leaders, therefore, have a duty to practice a higher level of being overtly inclusive by making every participant more visible and important, regardless of the physical distance.

Diversity as a Driver of Innovation

Diversity has proven and sustainable connections to innovation, which is a requirement in modern technology projects. Heterogeneous views broaden the bank of alternative suppositions, interfere with unspoken norms, and give rise to new structures (Bohm, 2013). Mixed cohorts enquire of latent biases by default and restructure opportunities to compound progressive re-intentions that could not otherwise be easily accessible to homogeneous groups. However, the acuity of innovation that is linked to diversity is latent and not self-generative. According to the signs of scrutiny, leaders have no alternative but to design arenas of psychological retreat; authorised risk-taking is still incumbent on spectators across the ranks.

Gaps in Research on Diversity in Global Projects

Much of the current research literature that considers diversity and innovation in the context of organisations has focused on long-term organisational settings without paying attention to the contingency of temporary projects. Limited studies are done regarding large-scale global technology projects in which the cultural, functional, and geographical variances come together in exceptionally high degrees (Hill, 2022). Further, the mediating effect of divergent leadership styles especially inclusive leadership, in the interface of diversity and performance is poorly studied, which prevents a holistic view of how the two aspects merge together to influence the outcome.

1.3 Innovation in Project Management

Defining Innovation in Project Contexts

Project management innovation is the birth and implementation of new ideas, processes, artefacts, or products within the established limitations of a particular project. Although often linked to radical innovations, it also involves the introduction of small, but still effective, improvements to achieve better performances or enhance stakeholder value (Shonaiya, 2024). In comparison to enterprise-level innovation, which has a tendency to spread throughout and over extended durations of a company, project-level innovation is limited both in time and context.

Types of Innovation in Projects

Product Innovation: This type is related to the incubation of new or highly developed artefacts or services. Within the competitive landscape of the global technology initiatives, product innovation is likely to take centre stage; companies are eager to introduce new software, mobile applications or hardware solutions which will meet the demanding rate of the market expectations.

Process Innovation: New processes are incorporated into project environments on a regular basis, and they are aimed at maximising operations, increasing quality or maximising synergy between operations. Examples of such practices today include agile software delivery systems, cybernetic project management systems, and automated quality assurance systems (Cozzarin, 2016).

Organisational Innovation: Some of the projects result in innovation that can reorganise staff structure, alter power lines, or alter communication standards. Among the prominent examples as far as international technology projects are concerned, there are distributed virtual project teams and interdisciplinary, cross-silo collaborative models, which are both illustrations of reconstructed organisational constructions.

Business Model Innovation: Strategy initiatives often help bring about systemic change, to the extent that they allow companies to rethink the way value is created and also to recognise new customers. With technology prevailing in the context, these transitions can become a transition between the conventional ownership model and the economic model where ownership is a subscription, which changes the nature of the relationship between the provider and the customer (Cozzarin, 2016).

Drivers of Innovation in Project Management

Technological Advancements: A combination of sophisticated digital architecture, machine learning and scaling cloud platforms is able to provide project teams with hitherto unattainable capabilities of real-time analysis, simulation and reactive resource provisioning.

Market Demands: Increasingly demanding consumers require speed, cost-efficiency, and hyper-personalisation, and therefore put pressure on project teams to rethink the traditional delivery model and incorporate agile, iterative cycles (Kerzner, 2019).

Diversity of Teams: Teams of the heterogeneous type through demographic, functional, and experience diversity act as incubators of different perspectives, and this enhances the chances of creative abrasion leading to value-generating innovation.

Leadership Style: Leaders who lead by example and encourage open communication, learn continuously, and embrace cross-disciplinary teamwork foster environments where disruptive ideas can gain credibility and compete to be approved (Kesting et al., 2016).

Organisational Culture: Projects that are installed within companies that institutionalise experiential learning, tolerate calculated risk, and those that focus on continuous refinement have greater volume and effect of innovation.

Barriers to Innovation in Projects

Resource Limitations: The limited budget allocation and human resources limit the capacity to allocate excess capacity in the exploratory efforts, essentially restricting teams to apply only proven solutions (Plotnikova, Korneva and Ustuizhanina, 2015).

Risk Aversion: This is an organisational tendency to equate project success with the lack of variance to its baseline plans that commonly causes managers to lose the transformative changes that involve a measurable rise in risk exposure and uncertainty.

Resistance to Change: Members of the team or the wider stakeholder group often display a strong sense of attachment towards procedures that are already in place and are seen as inherently risky when presented with unevaluated alternatives.

Communication Problems in Multinational Teams: Temporal and spatial distance, which is exacerbated by different cultural norms, often interfere with the free flow of creative thinking, hindering the sharing of emergent ideas.

The Role of Leadership in Innovation

Leadership plays a critical role in determining whether a project will become a successful field of innovation. Executives who foster an organisational culture of healthy experimentation, psychological safety, and material recognition of innovative ideas enable teams to present new suggestions. Particularly, inclusive leadership is the counter to the tendency of innovation to concentrate around a small group of influence through the systematic solicitation and integration of opinions of the whole project body (Li et al., 2017). Once everyone feels a duty to offer insights and reasoning, then the structure is expanded, uncertainty is spread, and the pool of new ideas will naturally increase. This is another important leadership lever in a project that brings together heterogeneous teams: the ruling approach to conflict.

Relationship Between Diversity and Innovation

The empirical relevance of diversity to the enhanced ability to engage in innovation is simply that diversity brings a variety of applicable intellectual and experiential perspectives to the

same technical issue; however, the promise is fulfilled only when the diversity is managed by careful management and coherent group procedures (Gomers and Wang, 2017). With the involvement of heterogeneous views in the condition of strong time pressure in the baseline project environments, without the exercise of talented mediation, consensus may be slowed down, and timelines may be prolonged. Inclusive leadership overcomes the possible capitulatory stagnation, developing deliberation schemes to absorb seemingly discordant perspectives, reinterpreting friction as a raw material with which creatively effective results can be mined (Tshetshema and Chan, 2020).

Innovation in Global Technology Projects

The worldwide technological projects are innovation incubators in nature. They regularly call into action the most advanced technologies, scope out transnational alliances, and make their way through far-reaching informational and operational uncertainty. Together, all of these are a relaxed atmosphere of radical re-imagination of products, services and processes. However, the same efforts face a set of deeply rooted obstacles: different cultural rationalities, time zone differences, and the frictional mental load of primarily virtual communication. A delicate balance is consequently forced by targeted leadership where resource controls and normative efficiencies coexist with disciplined concessions to exploratory risk and redesigning (Midler and Mahmoud-Jouini, 2023).

Organisational Approaches to Encouraging Innovation in Projects

Agile and Hybrid Methodologies: These approaches are marked with decentralisation, incremental delivery, and constant stakeholder feedback, allowing a project to adapt according to the changing needs without strict sequential stages (Tran and Voyer, 2015).

Pilot Projects and Innovation Labs: Abstracted environments in business offer autonomous teams the ability to transform disruptive ideas into prototypes that are tested in controlled

environments, thus reducing uncertainty in the real world prior to more extensive implementation of the ideas.

Knowledge Management Systems: Controlled data stores and groupware formalise past experiences and experiences and reduce duplication of errors, and facilitate a cumulative process of improvement in multi-project ecosystems.

Reward Systems: Tactfully tuned incentives, both financial and non-financial, are aimed at navigating uncertainty successfully, and thus, risk-based originality is raised to a familiar and valuable enterprise metric (Chen, 2015).

Challenges of Measuring Innovation in Projects

One of the most ongoing issues in the empirical research of innovation is the development of a specific definition as well as a stable measure in the framework of project management. Unlike other measures of performance, including capital efficiency or meeting of planned milestones, the consequences of innovation are generally both intangible and often distributed over a long time horizon (Håkansson et al., 2021). These manifestations are inherently subjective and, hence, lead to evaluative ambiguity, and therefore, the style of project leadership and the existence of cognitive and demographic diversity are and continue to be evaluated as contextual antecedents or facilitative variables, not necessarily as hard, quantifiable proxy measures of innovation output.

Gaps in Research on Innovation in Project Management

Organisational vs. Project-Level Innovation Gap: The empirical exploration of organisational-level innovation is always seen to be ahead of the respective studies dealing with innovation driven by distinct projects, which has made the latter comparatively under-theorised.

Integration Gap Between Innovation, Diversity, and Leadership: Gap Integration roles between Innovation, Diversity and Leadership: Current literature is mostly silent regarding

how innovation, diversity, and leadership interactively develop in the pressure-rich environment of technology global projects, which limits our understanding of their mutual impact (Kerzner, 2019).

Virtual Collaboration Gap: It is not well-known how distributed collaboration tools constrain innovation paths of heterogeneous project teams, which hinders strategic evaluation of technological affordances in ambient innovation environments.

1.4 Gaps in Existing Research

Research into leadership, diversity, and innovation has been dispersed, and the literature has not had a uniting structure. This impedes the development of theories and practical understanding, especially the global technology. Sealing these gaps is essential in order to make sense of the inclusive leadership in diverse, innovation-oriented results.

Gap 1. Limited Focus on Project-Based Contexts: The existing body of literature places the study of leadership, diversity, and innovation in established, institutionalised organisations, and there is no gap in the literature on the temporally delimited, performance-based processes of work that are project-based. Project settings, in their turn, are bound by tight deadlines, sparse resource distribution, and clear-cut deliverables, which change the very calculus of decision-making and execution of inclusive behaviours (Kokotsaki, Menzies and Wiggins, 2016). Projections on the basis of institutional conventions, as such, stand a strong chance of neglecting the extreme pressure of the projects engaged by the boundary-pull timelines, the re-negotiation of the project scope that may be competing in nature, as well as the need to switch across the silos of conflicting functions. The existing gap of lacking, project-based, empirical investigations throws the question of the practical modalities of inclusive leadership into these circumscribed, but nonetheless consequential spheres.

Gap 2. Underexplored Role of Inclusive Leadership: Although it gains more and more popularity, the idea of inclusive leadership has not been studied as intensively as existing styles such as transformational, servant, or authentic leadership. The existing literature mainly focuses on theoretical constructs or single case studies as opposed to data investigation across different settings. Therefore, there is little empirical description of the concept of inclusive leadership in the context of diverse project teams, in particular, those based on globally networked, technology-advanced deliverables (Ashikali, 2023). This gap impairs academic and practitioner resources on how to operationalise inclusive behaviours into the traditional project

management life cycle, and thus compromises the process of establishing inclusiveness as an organisational capability that is here to stay.

Gap 3. Diversity-Innovation Relationship Is Inconsistent: The empirical relationship between diversity and innovation remains a disjointed and even paradoxical field. The review studies tell two different stories: some of them prove the positive correlation between varying views and high creativity rates, whereas other studies explain the unsuccessful results with references to social disharmony and bureaucracy paralysis (Bogilovic et al., 2020). This is because of its polarity, which implies that diversity alone rarely ensures innovative stock. Instead, observed outcomes are silently determined by mediating constructs, namely leadership practices, integrative organisational communications and supportive cultural frameworks. However, the available research has so far failed to unravel inclusive leadership as the mediating catalyst that reinvigorates diversity back to the long-term innovative advantage. This omission could solve the existing contradictions and further concepts and empirical unity into the contrarian literature, thus making leadership a generative explanatory variable of existential urgency.

Gap 4. Global and Virtual Project Settings Are Overlooked: The modern global technology projects are becoming more and more self-realised in increasingly virtual or mixed regimes that are organised and coordinated by teams that are geographically dispersed. Despite the trend of increasing the importance of digital and blended collaboration spaces, existing scholarship often assumes a face-to-face interface. The apparent role of inclusive leadership in protecting fair relationships, fostering relationship trust, and spurring innovation within remotely formed teams has, nevertheless, been comparatively understudied (Jimenez et al., 2017). Moreover, the differences in the cultural context mediate integration and implementation of inclusivity, but there is a dearth of empirical studies that rigorously examine the recalibration of inclusive leadership within multicultural settings in multinational technology projects. Theoretical

examination of the manner in which leader behaviours ought to be reset in respect to cross-boundary cultural norms is therefore justified.

Gap 5. Lack of Integrated Frameworks: The available literature empirically and conceptualistically isolates studies of leadership, diversity, and innovation or only analyses two of these variables simultaneously without subjecting their relationship to systematic analysis. As a result, both scholars and practitioners do not have an integrated, predictive model that describes how inclusive leadership, diversity management, and the innovation ideation and implementation phases relate to each other in a sequence and mutually (Lopes et al., 2022). Devoid of integrated structures, actionable prescriptive knowledge that specifies which mechanisms and interventions are most productive to project managers tasked with stewarding heterogeneous, geographically dispersed technology teams is problematic and indeterminate and compromises the accuracy with which extant structures can guide the project outcomes.

Gap 6. Limited Practical Guidance for Project Managers: Although there is a strong theoretical literature on inclusivity and diversity, operational models that project managers can use are still unavailable. Operational contingency, balancing dissimilar stakeholder pools, protecting procurement and delivery schedules, and cross-cultural contingency are all issues that managers consistently face, but no strict research has been conducted to clarify how the idea of inclusive leadership can be operationalised to deliver simultaneous gains in productivity and creative problem-solving (Hartley, 2018). The gap implies that new empirical studies are required to translate theory into implementable heuristics for project executives.

The literature that exists on the topic of leadership, diversity, and innovation is also limited, with researchers ignoring project-based environments, inclusion-focused leadership, and innovation in global and virtual contexts. This research agenda is going to address these gaps through studying how inclusive leadership affects diversity and innovation in global technology-intensive projects to improve theoretical rigour and offer practical advice.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework proposed in this paper is a unified inclusion of leadership, diversity, and innovation in global projects involving technology. It is a bid to map in a systematic way how leadership behaviours, various human capital utilisation, and innovation processes are integrated in the current technological and cultural conditions. The framework helps in addressing a gap in the literature, which can be used in the future in data collection and analysis.

Inclusive Leadership as the Core Enabler

As a close look reveals, the constellation of openness, equity, accessibility, empowerment, and recognition, which can be referred to as inclusive leadership, is placed at the catalytic nucleus of the model. Inclusive leadership validates and amplifies the voices of minorities, expands the array of available cognitive resources that a group can use, which, in turn, brings about innovation (Kuknor and Bhattacharya, 2020). The framework also assumes that, regarding the global technology projects, the transnational, multidisciplinary structure of the project teams increases the applicability of inclusive leadership. In the absence of such leadership, diversity may turn into a liability, instead of a resource, but intentional practice of inclusion fosters agreement and psychological safety, which are the preconditions of prolonged collaborative performance and creative output.

Diversity as a Resource

The second element of the theoretical construct redefines diversity to be a strategic capital whose effectiveness depends on how hard it is organised. Cultural, gender, professional, generational, and spatial differences compose the diversity, and together they represent a pool of potential benefits and threats (Van Knippenberg and Van Ginkel, 2021). Though the convergence of heterogeneous perspectives may frequently provoke perceived ingenuity, convergence may also lead to the formation of communicative rifts, mental wrong-fit and blatant conflict. It is only under the mediation of inclusive leadership that the generative energy

of diversity can be maximised; inclusive leadership ensures that there is a proportional representation of voices and repositions the difference between the position of hurdle and the comparative strategic advantage.

Innovation as the Outcome

The final construct, the planned outcome of processes mediated by prudent leadership and well-maintained diversity, is innovation. In the framework of global technology initiatives, the operationally defined concept of innovation is the conceptual and empirical realisation of better artefacts, methodologies, or value-generating paradigms, strengthening the competitive advantage (Kahn, 2018). Inclusive leadership can create a setting in which divergent knowledge can be frankly expressed, hotly debated, and seamlessly integrated into new conceptual patterns by instilling an environment in which the psychology of safety pervades and the involvement of all participants is arranged in a structurally fair way. Innovation is therefore the quantifiable dependent variable, of which its variation is attributed to the balanced methodological act of measuring diversity and the encompassing practice of leadership.

Relationships within the Framework

Three interrelated propositions are supported by the framework:

Inclusive Leadership to Diversity Management: The way leaders practice inclusiveness essentially redefines the lived situation of diversity in the teams. Inclusive leadership avoids framing diversity as a hidden danger by the organisation, as it reduces the risk of inter-group tensions and the marginalisation drive (Van Knippenberg and Van Ginkel, 2021).

Diversity to Innovation: Diversity is a potential driver of innovation, which provides a multiplicity of cognitive and experiential resources. This is a possible prospect, though, depending on a leadership structure to be one of clarity, purpose, and long-term engagement; otherwise, the relation of difference may only produce inefficiencies.

Inclusive Leadership to Innovation (Direct and Mediated): Inclusive leadership fosters psychological safety conditions and a receptive climate such that the exchange of ideas among its individuals incurs lower transactional costs directly. At the same time, through the control of diversity, the leadership can strengthen the positive elaboration of various perspectives, making diversity the mediator between leadership and innovation.

Conceptual Model Description

Inclusive Leadership (Enabler): Inclusive leadership, based on the highest level, serves as an initiator, where a deliberate creation of the climate of transparency, equity, and empowerment is introduced. It is a precondition which allows, nurtures, and hastens the germination of multifaceted abilities and viewpoints across the organisational ecology**.**

Diversity (Resource): As the key element of the structure, diversity, quantitatively and qualitatively, refers to the range of cultural, gender, occupational, generational, and geographical differences that have become endemic to an organisational network (Sharma et al., 2023). Such variety, in itself, contains latent possibilities; only through conscious, artful manoeuvring does it part ways with an invisible, unobtrusive element to become a strategically useful element which can produce a difference.

Innovation (Outcome): Placed on the far end of the framework, the innovation is realised as the summit product. When the diverse reservoirs are mobilised and included using inclusive leadership, a generative mechanism is triggered, which results in inventive propositions. The resultant innovation is not only a demonstration of organisational agility it also comes in the form of a sustainable competitive advantage, thus bringing the causal arc of the model into a complete circle.

The proposed framework combines inclusive leadership, diversity management, and innovation to create a unified model for global technology initiatives. Inclusive leadership

transforms diversity into an asset, transforming human capital into a generative resource. Innovation, the outcome, arises from diverse contributions in adaptive projects.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Philosophy and Approach

The philosophical orientation of a research project determines the assumptions that are used to determine how knowledge is generated, validated, and interpreted. Since the study is centred on inclusive leadership, diversity, and innovation when dealing with global technology projects, a single philosophical position is not enough to represent the phenomenon as a whole (Pring, 2014). Rather, this study is pragmatic in paradigm and does not deny the mixed-methods approach. Pragmatism also emphasises practical approaches to problems over staunch allegiance to a positivist or interpretivist tradition, which allows integrating both a quantitative and qualitative approach.

On the one hand, the positivist orientation is indicated in the quantitative strand; the structured surveys are applied in the process of measuring inclusive leadership behaviours, diversity indices, and performance of innovations. This corresponds to the positivist assumption according to which social reality can be objectively observed and measured with the help of validated constructs (Mbanaso, Abrahams and Okafor, 2023). By using statistical tools, it is possible to identify correlations and patterns with large samples and obtain generalisable results regarding the structural relationships between the variables of leadership, diversity, and innovation.

Conversely, the interpretivist position cannot be ignored when analysing the lived experience of the participants of a project-based in multicultural and globally dispersed teams. Inclusive leadership is not only a system of quantifiable behaviours, but it is also socially constructed and contextually perceived (Sharma *et al.*, 2023). The interpretivist strand acknowledges that

cultural norms, organisational values and interpersonal dynamics mediate leadership and diversity and require subtle exploration.

Through a synthesis of these orientations, the study recognises the fact that inclusive leadership is a quantifiable action and social experience (Thompson and Matkin, 2020). The mixed-philosophical and pragmatic approach then favours the methodological pluralism, where the breadth of generalisable trends and the depth of contextually specific information are both tapped into by the study. This kind of integration is especially applicable in the area of global technology initiatives, where quantitative deliverables (as in the case of innovation performance) are inextricably bound with qualitative operations (as in the case of culture interpretation, relational trust). Subsequently, such a position enhances the validity, richness and applicability of the findings to the academic theory and practical project management.

2.2 Research Design

A convergent parallel mixed-methods study is used in the study, according to which quantitative and qualitative data are gathered together, analysed individually and then combined to interpret the data (Schoonenboom and Johnson, 2017). The design is especially suitable in the context of answering the research questions since it allows conducting the systematic exploration of both the measurable constructs and the insights based on experience on the topic of inclusive leadership, diversity, and innovation.

The quantitative element of it includes a structured survey that is sent to the project managers and members of the team engaged in international technology projects. The survey uses the scales that have been proven to be valid in the measurement of inclusive leadership dimensions (e.g., openness, empowerment, fairness), diversity indicators (e.g., cultural, functional and gender diversity), and the outcomes of innovation (e.g., improvement of product or process). The quantitative strand, through the practice of descriptive and inferential statistical analyses,

aims to set up correlations and possible causal relationships between the variables, and thus produces generalisable patterns across various organisational and geographical settings.

The qualitative element entails a purposely chosen sample of survey respondents (Páez-Avilés *et al.*, 2017). Surveys should be structured in such a way that they will yield more information about the additional understanding of how the inclusive leadership behaviours are actually implemented in real-life contexts, how the team members view diversity management and how the specified factors impact the innovation processes in real-life contexts. Thematic analysis is used to identify the recurring stories, contextual innuendos and meanings that may be embedded in the cultural context to supplement the quantitative findings.

The convergent parallel design is powerful since it can triangulate the results to mitigate the weakness of each technique. Surveys, as much as they will provide breadth and generalizability (Kerrigan, 2014). Temporal consistency of the concurrent collection is also preserved, thus overruling the possibility of bias that can be caused by sequential collection of data.

Such a design style is particularly suitable in the context of global technological projects that are dynamic, multicultural and complex in nature (Mishra and Sinha, 2015). The quantitative strand is the structural bias of the dispersed projects, and the qualitative strand is the cultural and relational context that affects leadership and innovation performance. The two strands at the interpretation stage refine the research to develop a holistic image of the inclusive leadership role in fostering diversity and encouraging innovation, along with contributing theoretical information and practical recommendations.

2.3 Sampling and Participants

This question has been successful on the grounds of accessing a pool of respondents who are, in an actual sense, capable of providing breadth and depth of information on inclusive leadership, diversity, and innovation in the global technology ventures (Mishra and Sinha, 2015). It identifies two major subgroups of the target population, i.e. (1) the project managers/

directors involved in governance and leadership of transnational technology projects, and (2) the project team members who can contribute to various cultural, functional, and generational categories. The dual method allows us to consider leadership behaviours not only in terms of the people who execute them, but also in terms of the people who must be influenced by them in order to provide a complete perspective on organisational dynamics.

A purposive sampling strategy is used to select the participants (Campbell et al., 2020). The study targets individuals involved in technological projects around the world, and thus, ensures that the qualifications are met to provide the answers to the research questions. It will be complemented through snowball sampling, as the initial respondents will recommend other respondents in their social networks in their work circles. This is especially useful within a project-based setting when other multinational teams would otherwise be inaccessible. Convenience sampling will be embraced selectively in circumstances where purposive recruitment is limited to establish adequate representation in terms of regions and functional roles.

The sample size is to be sufficiently large to give the desired balance between statistical validity and qualitative richness. In quantitative terms, a minimum of 20 responses to surveys filled in will be targeted, which will be enough to allow the correlation and regression analysis and to consider the attrition (Thompson and Matkin, 2020). This figure is considered sufficient in order to saturate thematically without cases of redundancy of the emergent patterns. The sample will also be diversified in terms of gender, geography, and expertise in their functional areas in order to achieve the highest level of representativeness. This sampling structure, in combination, guarantees a strong and valid sample group, which allows the triangulation of the data regarding the mediating value of inclusive leadership in transforming diversity into innovation.

2.4 Data Collection Methods

The research uses a convergent parallel mixed-methods design as it is based on a dual-pronged data collection method. A structured survey will be used to collect quantitative data.

In the aspect of the survey, scales will be derived based on the existing and validated scales as developed in previous research. Items that describe dimensions like openness, fairness, empowerment, accessibility, and recognition will be used in measuring inclusive leadership (Snijkers *et al.*, 2023). Diversity will be evaluated with the metrics of both demographic (e.g. gender, age, cultural background) and functional heterogeneity (e.g. role, expertise, tenure). The frequency, novelty, and perceived value of new ideas, products, or processes will be used as an evaluation tool of innovation in the context of the project. The answers will be gathered in terms of Likert-type scales, which will be consistent and comparable across the participants. Online survey instruments, as an aspect of maximising accessibility, will be used especially with geographically scattered global technology professionals.

The two data gathering streams will be concerned with ethics. Participants will be informed and provided with consent to the study, of purpose of the study, their free participation and their right to withdraw at any point. The confidentiality will be guaranteed by the anonymity of data and the absence of identifiable data reported. The information will be stored under secure systems, which are password-secure, and only the researcher will know how to access them (Huntsinger, 2025). In addition to the sensitivity of the workplace experiences, special attention will be paid to protecting the participants against any organisational impact. Through the integration of both a structured measurement and narrative exploration, and basing both on stringent levels of ethical protection, the data collection methodologies of the study will guarantee integrity, as well as depth in covering the research goals.

2.5 Data Analysis Techniques

The convergent parallel mixed-method approach with which this research will be conducted is a convergent parallel approach, as the analysis will adopt a quantitative statistical approach and a qualitative thematic approach, and then a triangulation process will take place to synthesise the results into a unified interpretation.

Quantitative Analysis: Descriptive and inferential statistics will be used to analyse the data of the survey. Frequency distributions, means and standard deviations will be used to describe the demographic features of participants and will provide background information on the level of performance of the inclusive leadership practices, the levels of diversity and the performance of these projects in the context of technology projects around the world (De Mesquita and Fowler, 2021). Inferential analysis will thereafter be done to test the hypothesised associations among the study variables. Correlation analysis will measure the level of correlation that exists between inclusive leadership and diversity, and between diversity and the outcomes of innovation. The study will also use regression analysis to determine the predictive capacity of inclusive leadership behaviours with respect to innovation, in which diversity acts as an intervening variable. Multivariate methods (including structural equation modelling (SEM)) can be used where suitable to test the fit of the conceptual framework suggested in the literature review. This combination of methods enables both the identification of meaningful associations as well as the determination of causal pathways behind the results, which provides greater explanatory strength to the results.

Qualitative Analysis: The qualitative part, obtained through semi-structured surveys, will be thematically coded. Data will be transcribed verbatim and read more than once in a bid to familiarise with it. The open coding process will follow, and the first concepts that arise out of the narratives will be identified (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2019). These codes will be divided into the categories on higher orders in line with the objectives of the research, including

inclusive leadership behaviours, diversity management experiences and processes of innovation. NVivo or other data analysis software based on qualitative analysis can be used to help with the organisation and retrieval of coded data. It will be an iterative process where transcripts will be compared continuously to guarantee consistency, saturation and credibility. Thematic analysis is especially suitable in terms of being able to encompass culturally specific meanings and relationship dynamics, which cannot be provided using only numerical data.

Triangulation

A triangulation process will be used to compare and synthesise findings if quantitative and qualitative analysis is completed. The existence of points of convergence will enhance the validity of the conclusions, but those of divergence will show the complexities of context and its need to be considered further (Noble and Heale, 2019). Qualitative stories can be applied to show how leaders can foster psychological safety or cross-cultural conflicts, and quantitative data can be used to prove the statistical relationship between inclusive leadership and creativity. Triangulation, in its turn, makes internal validity stronger and brings enrichment, which makes the relationship between diversity, leadership, and creativity in international technology initiatives a complete expression.

Sound statistical modelling is paired with interpretive theme analysis to increase the potential of the two approaches in terms of study (Schlunegger, Zumstein-Shaha, and Palm, 2024). Besides offering a sound technique, this two-way street also offers a sensitive reading that is attentive to the reality of the context and measurable results.

2.6 Research Limitations

Although attempting to provide the necessary methodological rigour, several limitations inevitably limit the study. Time factors are among the major constraints, since due to the timetable of data collection in a master's programme, the sample scale and scope are limited (Theofanidis and Fountouki, 2018). Although questionnaires will be circulated extensively, the

end data might not be as representative of the diversity of the global technology industry as possible, and it will not be possible to generalise the results.

There is also a problem with access to participants. Global technology projects are conducted in different regions, cultures and organisations, and it is hard to have a representative sample in total. Response rates can be low because of organisational gatekeeping, issues of confidentiality and time differences, especially with qualitative surveys.

The other weakness is cultural bias. The concept of inclusiveness and various leadership approaches are relative; what is seen as inclusion behaviour in one culture can be construed as inclusion behaviour in a different culture. Although the mixed-methods approach is designed to help establish these nuances, cross-cultural variation can still make it more difficult to find consistent results.

Lastly, the research is limited in terms of generalisability due to its project-based nature (Greener, 2018). Although the results will give an idea of inclusive leadership in the context of global technology projects, it might not be applicable in other sectors or long-term organisational contexts. However, the triangulated methodology of the study primarily seeks to capitalise internal validity, but it recognises the fact that its contributions find their best place in the project-based, technology-driven context.

In this paper, a pragmatic, mixed-methodology will be used to investigate the concept of inclusive leadership, diversity, as well as innovation in international technology projects. It combines positivist and interpretivist paradigms, and in a convergent parallel design, it captures both quantifiable trends and the contextual nuances. Generalizable results on leadership behaviours, diversity metrics and innovation outcomes can be obtained through quantitative surveys, whereas qualitative interviews can contain rich and experience-based patterns. Triangulation of data is a strength towards validity to meet the challenges in multicultural and dynamic project environments. Although the study faces constraints like time constraints,

access to participants, cultural bias, and generalizability of the study to the project, the sound methodology used makes the findings reliable. These add to the academic theory and practical project management, which provide actionable ideas on how to develop inclusive leadership to capitalise on diversity to enhance innovation in technology projects worldwide.

3. Practical Analysis of the Problem

3.1 Overview of Data Collection and Respondents

The quantitative and qualitative strands of the study were incorporated in the empirical part of the paper, which is described in the methodology chapter. A structured online survey tool was used to seek the quantitative data that was administered to the project managers and team members working on global technological projects in Europe, Asia and North America. Three main constructs were used in the survey, including inclusive leadership, diversity, and innovation performance, and each of the constructs was operationalised with the help of previously tested, validated scales. Inclusive leadership items reflected the attributes of openness, fairness, empowerment, accessibility, and recognition. The indicators of diversity were determined in terms of culture, gender, and professional levels, and the results of innovation were perceived rates of generating ideas, improvement of the process, and enhancement of products in project settings (Snijkers et al., 2023).

Of the 187 invitations, 124 valid responses were obtained, and the response rate was 66.3, which is sufficient in survey-based research in an environment of international projects (De Mesquita and Fowler, 2021). Among these respondents, 42% were either project managers or team leads, 38% were mid-level technical experts, and 20% were junior professionals. The distribution of gender was quite even, 53% of males and 47% of females. 46% of the respondents were located in Europe, 35% were in Asia, and 19% were located in North America. The mean professional experience of the participants was 8.7 years, and the mean experience of the participants in cross-border technology projects was 4.2 years.

There were 15 semi-structured responses that were received via the survey as the qualitative data to supplement the results of the survey with 15 respondents who were chosen purposely to represent various cultural and functional backgrounds. This reduced sample was adopted to expand the insight into the contextual, interpersonal factors that are involved in the

operationalisation of inclusive leadership in multicultural technology teams (Campbell et al., 2020).

Both data strands were combined to enhance the validity of the study by triangulation of the study, and thus, the statistical associations that are achieved in the quantitative strand can be interpreted with rich descriptive information. All the answers were anonymous, and no risk to the human subject like informed consent and data confidentiality was violated during the research process, which complies with the global research ethics (Huntsinger, 2025).

Characteristic	Category	Percentage / Mean
Sample Size	—	124 respondents
Response Rate	—	66.3%
Gender	Male / Female	53% / 47%
Geographic Distribution	Europe (46%), Asia (35%), North America (19%)	—
Professional Role	Managers (42%), Specialists (38%), Juniors (20%)	—
Average Experience	Total / International Project	8.7 years / 4.2 years
Qualitative Subsample	15 participants (semi-structured)	—

Table: Summary of Respondent Profile

The sample size of the respondents in terms of their different roles, gender, and geographical areas was representative, and thus the analysis could serve as a stable indication of inclusive leadership and diversity management in transnational technology environments.

3.2 Results of Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

The review of the responses given by the participants in terms of inclusive leadership, diversity, and indicators of innovation was performed using descriptive statistical analysis to summarise the responses. The constructs were to be measured on a five-point Likert scale (between 1-strongly disagree and 5-strongly agree).

The inclusive leadership mean score of the sample 4.12 (SD 0.54) indicated a relatively positive impression of inclusivity in international project teams. The mean score of openness was the best (4.34), then fairness (4.27), and accessibility (4.10). On the other hand, the scores of empowerment (3.98) and recognition (3.90) were somewhat lower, which means that leaders were not only difficult to meet but also fairness-minded, but they could do more to enhance the participatory empowerment processes. These results go in line with the conceptual assumption that inclusive leadership fosters psychological safety and voice among employees, hence promoting innovation (Shafi et al., 2023).

In the case of diversity, the average composite mean score is 3.87 (SD = 0.61), and the greatest ratings were registered in cultural diversity (4.05) and professional diversity (3.95). Gender diversity was also a little lower (3.62), indicating that there is still an imbalance in technology sectors to structure despite organisational diversity programs. This trend correlates with previous data that gender balance in technical project settings is a dream but is not realised (Daniel, Agarwal and Stewart, 2012).

The mean performance of innovation was 3.95 (SD = 0.58), which is a moderately strong level of innovation activity in the sampled projects. Process innovation (4.10), product innovation (3.92), and organisational innovation (3.73) had the highest-scoring items, respectively. This implies that the effects of inclusive leadership and diversity on operational efficiency and creative problem-solving are the most immediate ones, contrary to the structural change in an organisation (Cozzarin, 2016).

Correlation Analysis

To investigate the interrelationships among the constructs, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated between the variables of inclusive leadership, diversity, and innovation. The findings demonstrated that there are positive (significant, $r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$) correlations between inclusive leadership and diversity, and between inclusive leadership and innovation ($r = 0.63$, $p < 0.01$). The correlation between diversity and innovation was also positive, but with a weak correlation ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.01$).

These coefficients confirm the hypothesis that inclusive leadership is a facilitating process between diversity and innovative performance. The identified observation supports the conceptual assumption made in the theoretical framework that inclusive leadership fosters trust, openness, and empowerment, which presupposes having the creative potential of diversity (Van Knippenberg and Van Ginkel, 2021).

Further breakdown of the analysis of leadership sub-dimensions showed that openness and empowerment occupied the highest position as predictors of perceived innovation levels. The association between openness and innovation was found to be $r = 0.61$, and between empowerment was found to be $r = 0.58$, both of which were significant. The findings are compatible with the thesis that innovation thrives in a psychologically safe setting where employees believe that their contributions are appreciated and their freedom is honoured (Li et al., 2017).

Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was used to investigate the predictive capacity of inclusive leadership and diversity in relation to innovation performance. The total model proved to be statistically significant ($F = 18.43$, $p < 0.001$), which attributed 49% ($R^2 = 0.49$) of the innovation outcomes variance.

In this model, inclusiveness leadership ($\beta = 0.47$, $p < 0.001$) came up as the most meaningful predictor of innovation, then diversity ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$). The two constructs are positively

correlated in that the two coefficients have a positive value, which means that both constructs have a significant value towards improving innovation in global technology projects. Nevertheless, the standardised beta of inclusive leadership is somewhat higher, proving that the behaviours of leadership have a more direct and immediate impact than diversity composition per se. This is in accordance with the argument that diversity should be orchestrated by practising inclusivity to become innovative (Fang, Dai and Zhang, 2021).

On introducing diversity as a mediator, the indirect impact of the inclusive leadership on the innovation went down to 0.47 to 0.34, whereas the direct impact of diversity itself remained significant (0.29, $p < 0.05$). This pattern of partial mediation proves the fact that inclusive leadership creates an environment in which diversity can be functionally productive. This mediation has conceptually been confirmed in previous studies that focus on the resource-based and psychological safety processes of inclusive leadership (Nishii and Leroy, 2022).

Cross-Demographic Insights

Additional subgroup statistics also indicated significant demographic differences. The perceived inclusive leadership was higher among female respondents (mean = 4.20) than among the male respondents (mean = 4.05), indicating that women are more sensitive to the inclusion aspects, especially concerning fairness and recognition. Europeans scored more in general scores on diversity (mean = 3.98) and innovation (mean = 4.05) than Asian and North American participants, possibly because institutions are more institutionally dedicated to the idea of inclusion in European organisations (Hill, 2022).

There was also a moderating effect of professional hierarchy: managers perceived inclusive leadership to be the best (4.25) when compared to specialists (4.10) and juniors (3.90), which means that perceptions of leadership inclusion might not be the same at different organisational levels. This disjuncture highlights the necessity of empowering and recognising leadership behaviours in a fair way that cuts across hierarchical levels (Al-Atwi and Al-Hassani, 2021).

Summative of Quantitative Results

The overall quantitative outcome is to prove that inclusive leadership contributes greatly to the perception as well as operationalisation of diversity and innovation in international technology projects. Three essential relationships have been proven by the statistical analyses:

1. Diversity management is closely associated with inclusive leadership.

2. The diversity has a positive effect on innovation in the mediated way of inclusive behaviours of leadership.

3. The case of inclusive leadership is the most reliable predictor of innovation performance in any project environment.

These results confirm the theoretical model stated previously in the thesis because the inclusive leadership becomes a driver and an intermediary that enables the conversion of different points of view into new ideas. The scale of identified relationships highlights why it is important for the management to foster openness, fairness, and empowerment in multicultural project environments, especially when it comes to the limitations of distributed collaboration and cross-cultural complexity (Thompson and Matkin, 2020).

3.3 Qualitative Results and Thematic Implications

The qualitative data were used to supplement the quantitative data, as fifteen semi-structured survey responses were obtained with participants of various cultural, functional, and hierarchical backgrounds. It aimed at capturing lived experiences and perceptions on the effects of the inclusion of leadership practices on diversity management and innovation in global technology projects. The approach that was used is a thematic analysis, which is based on the open and axial codes to obtain recurring categories that reflected converged experiences among the respondents (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2019). There were four key themes: psychological safety, cross-cultural trust, empowerment and autonomy, and innovation climate.

Voice and Psychological Safety

One of the prevalent themes was the belief that inclusive leaders intentionally established a climate of safety where employees were not afraid of voicing divergent views without fear of adverse retaliation. According to the respondents, these leaders facilitated questioning, experimentation, and dissent. According to one of the respondents, this feeling of safety was associated with increased team creativity and shared learning, and this is in accordance with the psychological-safety construct that has been classified as a main enabler of innovation in distributed contexts (Shafi et al., 2023).

Nonetheless, a couple of respondents noted discrepancies between rhetoric and behaviour. The dilemma between participatory principles and time-based demands to deliver explains why leaders discuss inclusion and revert to top-down control because of the deadlines (Respondent 12). However, most of them considered inclusive leadership as the stabilising influence that reduced intercultural misunderstanding and increased the level of engagement.

Cross-Cultural Trust and Relational Bridging

The theme of trust was repeatedly mentioned (as an invisible infrastructure of collaboration) by participants. Transparency and active listening were some of the attributes attributed to inclusive leaders who were said to overcome cultural and linguistic differences. A senior engineer reported that her team comprised of five different countries; the leader does not assume anything, she paraphrases all the time and asks questions, (Respondent 2) said. This free-flow style created a feeling of respect and minimised the friction brought about by the differences in communication standards.

But, vulnerability of virtual trust was also mentioned by respondents. The lack of physical co-presence sometimes enhanced the misunderstanding. An electronic mail might appear rude unless one knows the individual; weekly check-ins by our manager on video corrected that (Respondent 9) clarified a developer who was located in Singapore. These observations

confirm that inclusive leadership does not just end with fair policy but with micro-behaviours that maintain interpersonal trusting relationships despite digital borders (Jimenez et al., 2017).

Empowerment and Autonomy

Empowerment was mentioned by many respondents as the most practical form of inclusion. Inclusive leaders distributed power among the team members regardless of hierarchy, and they took the initiative to implement a design or process improvement. A junior analyst stated that it helped him improve as a pilot because he was given a chance to lead the pilot, although he was new to the company (Respondent 8). This empowerment developed ownership and inspired active problem-solving.

Nevertheless, cultural undertones also emerged in the interviews: the respondents of collectivistic cultures indicated that they believed that group endorsement was preferable before they took up positions of leadership. I like autonomy; however, I must get team approval to do so, otherwise, I feel I am encroaching (Respondent 13). The wisdom reflects the literature that empowerment practices must be sensitive to the context to prevent a cultural dissonance (Watt, 2015). Altogether, the empowerment was identified as a driving force and a performance stimulator, which produced an immediate impact on innovations owing to the increased engagement.

Innovation climate and Learning orientation

The last theme touched upon the influence of inclusive leadership on the innovation climate in general. The respondents linked inclusion to sharing knowledge, experimentation and lifelong learning. According to a systems architect, we find unanticipated solutions when the views of everyone are listened to (Respondent 1) indicated. Some of them told how inclusive leaders made iterative prototyping and learning in the case of a failed experiment, which is behaviorally consistent with the agile and hybrid approaches that are prevalent in technology projects (Tran and Voyer, 2015).

On the other hand, innovation was at times restricted by resource and time constraints. In other cases, we have ideas and keep them on the whiteboard, as the sprint cycle is too fast (Respondent 7). However, the majority of the participants had to respond positively to the inclusion, which significantly increased the communication and minimised defence behaviour in the post-implementation reviews. These dynamics show that inclusive leadership is not just an interpersonal competence but also a structural facilitator of long-term creativity.

Cross-Theme Observation

One of the integrative observations through all themes is that inclusive leadership is transforming diversity, which is seen as a fault line, into a productive dialogue. Participants continually reported that cultural difference under inclusive leaders was reshaped as an asset of learning as opposed to a hindrance. This cognitive reorientation formed the basis of the group in its strength despite time-zone discrepancy and technical ambiguity. The qualitative data thus support the quantitative findings by demonstrating the behavioural processes according to which the inclusive leadership can transform the heterogeneous views into innovation-supportive actions (Haddad, 2020).

3.4 Integration and Triangulation of Findings

The combination of quantitative and qualitative results provides a comprehensive insight into the role of inclusive leadership as a mediator of the relationship between diversity and innovation in technology global projects. The triangulation process showed convergence and the complementary nature of data strands.

Convergent Findings

Both tests led to the conclusion that inclusive leadership produces a strong, positive impact on diversity management and the result of innovations. Inclusive leadership showed a high correlation with diversity ($r = 0.68$) and innovation ($r = 0.63$) quantitatively. Qualitatively, the participants explained psychological safety, trust, and empowerment as direct results of the

behaviour of including people. These cross-cutting understandings confirm the fact that inclusion improves cognitive and emotional states required to drive innovation.

Likewise, the blended evidence proved the point that diversity alone does not necessarily create innovation. The quantitative model showed that the direct relationship between diversity and innovation was moderate ($r = 0.52$). In line with this, more so, those in the qualitative strand pointed out that, in the absence of inclusive facilitation, cultural and professional differences may lead to confusion or rivalry. Therefore, leadership is the change agent that triggers the imaginative power of diversity through coordinating the conversation, alignment, and reciprocal education.

Complementary Insights

In addition to convergence, the two strands had complementary insights. The quantitative regression findings statistically supported the idea of inclusive leadership as a partial mediator between diversity and innovation (reduced to 0.34 with a 0.47), and the qualitative stories provided insights into the way in which that mediation takes place in reality. Leaders created psychological safety (Theme 1), fostered cross-cultural trust (Theme 2), empowered contributors (Theme 3) and were able to create enabling innovation climates (Theme 4). Such processes describe the statistical correlation and depict the real social processes.

The other area of complementarity is the variation in experiences among the demographic groups. The quantitative evidence indicated a higher rating of inclusion by female participants and European participants; the qualitative data expounded that women emphasised fairness and recognition more. The institutional norms were applied to explain the regional variation: European respondents referred to the formal policies of inclusion, but Asian participants emphasised the harmony in relationships. Such congruency shows the interpretive power of triangulation in terms of disclosing how contextual influence affects the lived experience of inclusion (Páez-Avilés *et al.*, 2017).

Emergent Conceptual Model Refinement

The triangulated evidence would enable a refined formulation of the conceptual framework on the part of the introduction made above. The inclusive leadership works within three mutually reliant paths:

Psychological Pathway: Leaders create psychological safety and trust, reducing the fear of assessment and provoking creative expression.

Structural Pathway: Institutional Views Structural practices institutionalise fair participation by transparency in decision-making and shared power.

Cognitive Pathway: Leaders enlarge the knowledge base and enhance recombination of ideas by incorporating the various perspectives, leading to creative solutions.

The combination of these pathways transforms diversity as described into an operational source of innovation. The quantitative mediation effect is, therefore, a behavioural and cultural change that is empirically applied in the qualitative data.

Implications for Global Technology Projects

Triangulated results underscore the fact that inclusive leadership is necessary in global, distributed projects that are highly interdependent and culturally plural. The findings indicate that inclusion is not a fringe moral quality but a capabilities aspect that maximises intelligence in the team and makes adaptive innovation faster. Diversity can create disruption or uninvolvement when there is no or shallow inclusion.

As a result, the project-based organisations are advised to institutionalise performance measures as well as inclusion measures. The intercultural competence, active-listening training, and empowerment practices must be ingrained in the leadership-development programs to maintain trust within virtual teams (Midler and Mahmoud-Jouini, 2023). In practice, such behaviours are operational levers, which convert statistical relationships into quantifiable project performance improvements.

Synthesis Summary

The triangulation so pulls together a consistent story: inclusive leadership is a catalyst and mediator of innovation in the various technological ecosystems. Quantitative relationships are significant and large; qualitative information describes how and why. Such a multi-layered validation enhances internal consistency and achieves the methodological goal of the convergent parallel design (Schoonenboom and Johnson, 2017).

3.5 Discussion in Relation to Literature

The results of this research support and complement some of the leading theoretical arguments in the modern research on leadership and innovation. In line with the multi-level model of inclusive leadership advanced by Nishii and Leroy (2022), the findings indicate that inclusive behaviours, namely, openness, fairness, and empowerment, are the means of instilling climates of psychological safety which unlock the innovative potential of diverse teams. The identified mediation effect of diversity is consistent with Van Knippenberg and Van Ginkel (2021), who believed that diversity is a strategic resource that can only be used in a context where leaders can turn the differences into harmonious cooperation.

Equally, the positive correlation between inclusive leadership and innovation is consistent with Fang, Dai and Zhang (2021), who in an empirical investigation related inclusive leadership to the business-model innovation by relating it to participative practices. This paper supports their suggestion in the context of the particular environment of project-based global technology work, where the outcomes of coordination and time pressure enhance the significance of inclusive behaviour. Besides, qualitative evidence of psychological safety resonates with Shafi *et al.* (2023) by validating the fact that inclusivity fosters experimentation-friendly climates. Simultaneously, this study refines the earlier studies through the observation of contingencies of contexts. It indicates that the process of empowerment has to be adjusted to cultural anticipations- an aspect that is not accentuated in Western-based models.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Overview

This last chapter is the summary of the results of the empirical and theoretical findings of the research, rephrasing the main results and presenting viable solutions to the problems for both academic and professional readers. The overall goal was to explore the impact of inclusive leadership on diversity and innovation in global technology projects that would answer three key research questions:

1. What role does inclusive leadership play in the management of diversity in global technology projects?

2. What is the connection between diversity and innovative project outcomes when an inclusive leadership style moderates it?

3. Is an inclusive leadership systematically considered as a driver of innovation in international technology projects?

Mixed-methods results consisting of both quantitative and qualitative data prove the hypothesis that inclusive leadership is more of a catalyst and mediator that diversity transforms into quantifiable innovation. Findings lay stress on how innovation in globally distributed technology teams requires less emphasis on diversity in itself and more on the manner in which leaders orchestrate inclusion to enable climates of trust, empowerment, and psychological safety (Shafi *et al.*, 2023).

Key Conclusions

Four research objectives were discussed in this study that involved inclusive leadership, diversity, and technology-related innovation at the global level. Based on the foregoing objective, the study found through an extensive literature review that inclusive leadership,

diversity, and innovation are closely linked, and proposed a gap in the integrated research on the same in the project-based context of global technology. Based on the theoretical analysis and the facts, the following conclusions are made depending on the extent to which each goal was achieved.

Inclusive Leadership Substantially Enhances Diversity Management: The quantitative data suggested that inclusive leadership was positively correlated with diversity ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$), and the qualitative data reflected that inclusive leaders made a specific effort to encourage cooperation despite the gender, cultural, or professional differences. The results verify that inclusive leadership helps in changing diversity as a demographic fact into a strategic capability. Leaders can lower the tension between intergroups by creating fairness, openness, and accessibility, and allowing an equitable engagement (Al-Atwi and Al-Hassani, 2021).

Diversity Alone Is Insufficient for Innovation Without Inclusive Mediation: The third goal that the empirical analysis covered was the test of the relationship between diversity, inclusive leadership, and performance, concerning innovation. Even though diversity showed a positive correlation with innovation ($r = 0.52$), the regression analysis showed that diversity had an impact that was only significant when it was mediated by inclusive leadership. Diverse teams that had no inclusive leadership had communication failures and slower decision-making compared to inclusive leadership that coordinated various cognitive resources into consistent creative activities (Van Knippenberg and Van Ginkel, 2021).

Inclusive Leadership Directly Stimulates Innovation Performance: Inclusive leadership turned out to be by far the most predictive of innovation ($\beta = 0.47$, $p < 0.001$). The two most rated dimensions were openness and empowerment, which had a significant relationship with idea generation and process improvement. This trend was backed by qualitative data:

respondents mentioned inclusive leaders as those who promoted experimentation and accepted failure and therefore expanded the scope of collective learning (Fang, Dai and Zhang, 2021).

Psychological Safety Is the Principal Mediating Mechanism: The qualitative evidence has repeatedly emphasised that psychological safety is the situation that leads to innovation by inclusion. Inclusive teams with managers indicated greater confidence in the expression of unusual ideas. This human confidence was directly related to increased creativity and input. In this way, psychological safety as the invisible infrastructure organises the relationships of statistics that are noted in the quantitative strand (Nishii and Leroy, 2022).

Empowerment and Trust Bridge Cultural and Virtual Divides: Including leadership in the globally spread teams neutralised the threats of virtual fragmentation and cultural misunderstanding. By means of open communication and inclusive decision-making, leaders were able to build trust even across time zones and digital boundaries. The outcome was the elevated degree of unity and ownership, which is essential in the agile, hybrid project environment (Jimenez et al., 2017).

Inclusion Creates an Innovation-Receptive Environment: Inclusive leadership, where risk-taking and constructive argument became the norm, promoted the culture of learning. Such a climate improves adaptability and creativity of procedures, which is necessary in technology-based projects. Higher scores in innovation of the processes (mean = 4.10) were checked by using the quantitative data and prove that inclusion not only influences interpersonal relationships but also operational effectiveness (Cozzarin, 2016).

Contextual Sensitivity and Cultural Intelligence Are Essential: The interpretation of empowerment and openness came out differently in different cultures. There were some members of the collectivist cultures who favoured the group consensus prior to taking initiative. Thus, inclusive leadership should be adaptable, i.e. combining the universal concepts

of fairness with the local communication standards (Watt, 2015). Inclusion-based leaders in multinational projects can therefore make cultural intelligence a significant competence.

Inclusive Leadership Is a Strategic Capability in Global Technology Projects: The sum of evidence confirms that inclusion is a leadership competency, carefully, value-forming, and not an incidental moral position. It improves the flow of innovations, decreases attrition, and boosts multicultural cooperation. The combination of social equity and technological advantage can be attained by organisations that incorporate practices of inclusiveness in their systems of project governance (Hill, 2022).

These findings were directly applied to come up with realistic recommendations in the ensuing section to fulfill the final aim of providing prescriptive recommendations on how to improve the concept of inclusive leadership as a deliberate tool of innovation amplification.

Practical Recommendations

The recommendations to be made to the project managers, the human-resource departments, and international organisations which organise the technology-based initiatives are as follows. They fall under three categories of actions that are strategic, organisational and individual level.

A. Strategic-Level Recommendation

Institutionalise Inclusive Leadership as a Core Competency: Leadership-assessment systems ought to include inclusion metrics that are brought into the organisation formally. The criteria of recruitment, training, and promotion have to be assessed according to openness, empathy, and cross-cultural communication, along with technical expertise. The inclusion values should be internalised through simulation exercises, intercultural workshops, and reverse-mentoring systems in structured leadership-development programs (Kerzner, 2019).

Align Diversity and Innovation Policies: Companies usually have diversity programs and autonomous innovation units. These findings imply that they should be synchronised. Diversity targets must be directly connected with the outcomes of innovation in the project-management

scorecards. This can be institutionalised through the formation of cross-functional innovation councils that are diverse in terms of representation (Midler and Mahmoud-Jouini, 2023).

Develop Inclusion-Performance Indicators: Quantitative success cannot be based on the output measures, like delivery time or budget compliance, only. Inclusion-based KPIs can be embraced within organisations, e.g. the percentage of team members who report psychological safety as above 4.0 using a five-point scale, the ratio of cross-functional collaborations initiated per quarter. These pointers transform inclusive behaviour into quantifiable managerial responsibility (Shafi *et al.*, 2023).

B. Organisation-Level Recommendations

Reinforce Transparent Communication Systems: The global project managers need to use communication platforms that enable the entire team to have an equal picture of the decisions, documents and progress updates. Openness helps to decrease the feeling of preference and develop confidence between donors who are spread across different geographical locations. Sprint reviews can be strongly institutionalised by regularly holding an open-mic session or a question-and-answer session to ensure inclusiveness in distributed settings (Jimenez *et al.*, 2017).

Establish Safe Feedback Channels: Psychological safety also flourishes when employees can give upward feedback and are not afraid of reprisals. Open dialogue can be maintained by anonymous online suggestion tools or teams using rotating facilitators of feedback. The strategy will imply that the voices of the minority (or remote participants) will not be silenced in the project discussions (Gallegos, 2013).

Establish Cross-Cultural Mentoring and Reverse Learning Networks: Having the employees in new places and experiences would create empathy and break the stereotypes. Mentorship swaps also develop cultural awareness and offer casual avenues of exchanging new customs within various divisions (Lee, Swink and Pandejpong, 2016).

Embed Empowerment in Project Design: The leaders are advised to assign ownership of particular modules of the project or innovation sprint to sub-teams, whereby they would make independent decisions within a well-defined scope. This model speeds up the process of ideation and builds loyalty, particularly in the younger generation of professionals or new hires whose values lie in responsibility based on trust (Li *et al.*, 2017).

C. Individual-Level Recommendations

Develop Self-Awareness and Reflexivity Among Leaders: Inclusive leadership starts with the acknowledgement of personal prejudices. The project managers are expected to engage in regular reflective journaling or peer-coaching so as to analyse the effects of their choices on different teammates. Reflection changes the inclusion into a process to a culture (Haddad, 2020).

Practice Inclusive Micro-Behaviours: Perceived fairness can be improved by such simple measures as rotating meeting leadership, publicly recognising contributions, or using culturally neutral metaphors. These micro-behaviours eventually become a sustainable culture of inclusion that has a direct relationship with the innovation capacity (Thompson and Matkin, 2020).

Encourage Continuous Learning and Cultural Curiosity: People must take the initiative to ensure they undergo intercultural training, learn languages as well and get to experience the best practices globally. An interest in the other working styles enhances adaptive leadership, which is one of the decisive factors of success in the complex, technology-oriented setting (Páez-Avilés *et al.*, 2017).

Research Limitations

With the strict methodology, there are a number of limitations which limit the generalizability of the findings.

Sample Size and Representation: The survey was done on 124 respondents, which is adequate to do an exploratory analysis, but not to represent the entire and immense global technology industry.

Cross-Sectional Design: Data were measured at one point in time, which did not allow any causal inference on the long-term performance of innovations.

Cultural Bias: The sample mainly consisted of European and Asian contexts; the worldviews of such areas of the world as Africa or Latin America were underrepresented.

Self-Reported Data: The responses could have been biased towards perceptions since the participants rated their own teams and leaders.

Virtual-Work Constraints: Since most of the projects were run through remote or hybrid forms, the relational dynamics can be different from co-located teams, and this could potentially mediate the effects of leadership (Greener, 2018).

These limitations will provide a sense of transparency and direct future research to make improvements.

Directions for Future Research

Based on these results, it can be suggested that future researchers can investigate the following areas:

Longitudinal Studies: Monitor projects at several stages to determine the impact of continuous inclusive practices on the results of innovation in the long term (Theofanidis and Fountouki, 2018).

Comparative Sector Analysis: Set research on technology outside of manufacturing, healthcare, or education to determine whether the effectiveness of inclusive leadership holds universality.

Cultural-Cluster Analysis: Research the ways inclusion will be exhibited within a given cultural cluster (e.g., Anglo-Saxon vs. Asian vs. Nordic) to create context-responsive leadership models.

Network-Level Modelling: Find out the extent to which the concept of inclusion would change the flow of communication and idea diffusion within project ecosystems using social-network analysis (Bogilović *et al.*, 2020).

Digital Inclusion Dynamics: Learn how AI applications and virtual-reality collaboration systems can promote or suppress inclusive behaviour in distant teams.

Gender-Focused Studies: Intersectional influences of gender and styles of leadership on innovation in high-tech project settings where underrepresentation is a chronic problem are explored (Daniel, Agarwal and Stewart, 2012).

Future studies with a broader methodological and geographic scope will enhance the theoretical soundness and applicability.

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