

Inclusive Leadership and SDG 10: Reducing Inequality in Organizational Culture study on equity-driven leadership models in diverse workplaces

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive leadership is the main solution to the challenge of organizational transformation as highlighted in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10 set by the United Nations in order to achieve the reduction of inequalities within and among societies. This paper views the contribution of equity-oriented leadership frameworks to inclusive organizational cultures in a variety of workplaces. The study uses a mixed method that includes surveying (n=250) and interviewing (n=30) leaders and workers in multinational companies using a semi-structured format to determine some of the best leadership practices that can deal with structural inequity in a positive way. What has been found out is that workplace inclusion and a decrease in perceived disparity are especially achieved through transparent decision-making, fair resource division, and culturally competent communication. Besides, companies that employ formal diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) models had 22 percent greater employee engagement rates than others that lacked such structure. Nevertheless, there is still the problem of unconscious bias, the unwillingness and resistance to changes, and a lack of leadership accountability. The study has been of practical implication in leadership training, creation of organizational policy, as well as mechanisms of performance assessment. Among the limitations is the fact that this study concentrates on large companies in the urban setting, and such findings may not be applicable to small businesses or rural work environments. The underlying knowledge gap that needs to be filled by future research is the exploration of longitudinal effects of inclusive leadership practices and their effectiveness in emerging economies and their adaptability..

Keywords: *Inclusive Leadership, SDG 10, Organizational Culture, Equity-Driven Models, Workplace Diversity, DEI Frameworks.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

As part of the changing nature of business in the global market, the workplace quickly is becoming more inclusive in terms of diversity as organizations appreciate that diversity is no longer just another demographic fact, but is becoming a strategic necessity. Today employees are represented by multi-nationalities, ethnic, gender, abilities, socioeconomic background, and generation cohorts. Such diversity introduces fresh views, innovation, and problem solving abilities that can be used as a basis of the competitive advantage. Nonetheless, it has also had its drawbacks especially in cases where organizational cultures do not guarantee equal opportunities, amenities, and job promotions to all the members. The structural inequalities, unconscious biases, and exclusion are the results that can destroy the promises of diversity without any particular efforts [1].

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 10 (SDG 10) points to the reduction of inequalities within a country and among all countries with a clear understanding that inequality is not only one-dimensional but also occurs economically, socially, and institutionally. Within the context of an organization, SDG 10 also underlines that leaders have a duty to manage the inequity in workplace systems, policies and culture. Diversity policies have become a norm but are usually surface-focused on representing the numbers without exploring and overcoming underlying barriers. That is where inclusive leadership, based on the concept of equity, works its magic. Inclusive leaders do not just tolerate diversity; they also break the system that has enabled inequality within their organizations to create the environment where all workers can do their best and enjoy work.

Equity-driven leadership is even more urgent under a number of overlapping issues. First, the worldwide labor market has never been more mobile and interconnected than it is possible today, thanks to the digital technologies and the remote work arrangements. Second, inequality has received an increased awareness in society, which has been promoted by the global movements pushing for racial justice, gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, and disability inclusion [3]. Third, organizations face a growing level of scrutiny by stakeholders, investors and regulatory agencies to not only report on diversity figures, but on quantifiable results in equality and inclusion. In that regard, leadership behavior emerges to be one of the decisive factors between the success or failure of diversity endeavors.

Though the literature is rich on diversity and inclusion (D&I) strategies there is a lack of studies that can directly compare both the inclusion leadership practices and its direct association with achieving SDG 10 outgoing culture in the workplace environment. The majority of the works are concentrated on those measures of diversity, which are rather general, and it lacks the explanation of how equity can be operationalized in everyday organizational activities by the leaders. Additionally, most of the current research studies still do not use a holistic approach, which implies the use of both quantitative support of organizational nature and qualitative research data depicting the experiences of living in a diverse team.

The current research aims to fill this gap by discussing equity-based leadership paradigm in a multinational corporation in diverse and multicultural environment. It examines the effects of such leadership styles in the minds of people pertaining to the perceived fairness, resources availability, and the level of participation among the workforce. Notably, it goes beyond diversity programs that focus on superficiality in an effort to evaluate the deeper cultural and structural changes that are required to minimize inequality in organizations [5].

The range of this undertaking encompasses the examination of leadership practices, organizational policies and practices of communication that lead to inclusive cultures. The mixed-methods approach allows the research to take into consideration the measurable performance results and the informal aspects affecting human beings. This twin-lens view delivers both empirically sound and context-specific findings, and this makes them relevant in guiding policy-makers, company leaders, HR practitioners and researchers that are interested in the nexus of leadership, equity and sustainable development.

Conclusively, it is this research study that gives priority to inclusive, equity-oriented leadership as a major vehicle of fulfilling SDG 10 within the environment of organizations. It closes the gap between the abstract ideal of sustainability and the practical matter of leadership by focusing on both global policy frameworks and the reality in the actual workplace. The study does not only focus on the significance of inclusive leadership to organizational effectiveness but also on the society since it lowers systematic disparities. The flowchart illustrates the sequential steps of the research methodology, starting from data collection, followed by processing and application of mathematical models, and culminating in comparative analysis of leadership equity outcomes [6].



FIG. 1: PROPOSED METHODOLOGY FRAMEWORK FOR EQUITY-ORIENTED LEADERSHIP ANALYSIS

1.1 Novelty and Contribution

The study contributes to the existing literature of equity and leadership at the work place in a number of unique ways. First, though other previous studies have explored the issue of diversity and inclusion either at the policy or demographic level, the present paper draws a direct connection between behaviors of leaderships and realization of SDG10 outcomes. It goes beyond the representation measures to encompass structural and cultural modification in the organization [7].

Second, the research will rely on the mixed-methods approach blending the quantitative data (namely, the Inclusive Leadership Index and Employee Engagement Scores) and qualitative data (at the semi-structured interviews). This two-fold study enables a deeper insight into the linkages between inclusive leadership and outcome measures related to scalable quantitative performance metrics and actual experience of employees in practice [12-15].

Third, a new composite parameter, Perceived Equity Score, is introduced in the work, which was specifically generated to determine the assessment of equity in resource distribution, avenues of promotions, and transparency of communication within the study. The tool offers a convenient way that can help an organization in assessing equity outcomes on a long-term basis.

On more practical tip, the contributions to the study are also valuable. It has isolated four of the changes that are actionable into leadership practice, including transparent decision-making, culturally responsive communicational efforts, equitable resource allocation, and active mitigation of bias and directly play into the interventions that minimize inequalities at the workplace. This is cloaked with the idea that the practices are scalable in that they can be accommodated in any industry and organization size [11].

Besides, the study positions inclusive leadership not as an HR activity but as a strategic agent of firm resilience and innovation. The findings are highly valuable given that they present a convincing business case of equity-based forms of leadership with respect to their efficiency in employee engagement significantly outperforming organizations that lack robust DEI frameworks with an employee engagement rate of 22 percent higher.

Most importantly, this paper links the organizational change policy to a global sustainability agenda, demonstrating that what takes place internally within the workplace may also have wider impacts on the society. It also serves to advise corporate leaders to look at SDG 10 as an opportunity rather than a burden to ensure compliance, including creating value and improving reputation [8-9][21].

2. RELATED WORKS

Inclusive leadership has become a distinguishable concept that is deemed as a critical element of organizational performance within various workplaces. Existing research on the topic of leadership in the multicultural context has always shown that inclusivity is related to more engaged workers, their reduced turnover, and team spirit. Inclusive leadership has been defined by some to mean a particular leadership style that goes out of its way to include diverse opinions, to involve everyone in an equal way, and to establish a psychologically safe environment. Such a drive to equity-based leadership frameworks is not centered only around recognizing diversity; it is concerned with undoing structures that limit rather than enable diverse and equal opportunity.

In 2025 Selvaraj P. et.al., Maidin S. S. et.al., & Yang Q. et.al. [10] introduced the studies on workplace inequality indicate workplace equality does not tolerate tokenism (turning over) whereby people are represented without expecting anything to change in their treatment and opportunities to advance. Most companies tend to attain demographic diversity but they do not facilitate equal access of every employee to career growth, decision-making, and access to resources. The available evidence suggests the existence of disparities is frequently caused because of unconscious discrimination, informal systems of power, as well as lack of visible promotion procedures. Inclusive leadership tries to eliminate such problems by emphasizing equality and encouraging open communications and establishing accountability.

One of the themes to appear repeatedly in the literature is that inclusive organizational cultures have a positive influence on innovation outcomes. The presence of inclusive leaders in organizations is associated with increased creativity because heterogeneous teams may use more ideas and experiences. Such an innovation advantage is especially noticeable in those industries which depend on team solving of the problem and cross-functional teams. It has also been hypothesized through research that inclusive leadership may act as a protective factor against conflict in a workplace as it leads to constructive conversation and gives an opportunity to settle situations before they get out of control [17].

In 2024 Shahiwala S. et.al., Rahul D.-R. et.al., & Baker J. R et.al. [2] proposed the intersection of inclusive leadership with sustainable development goal 10 has become a topic that has been pursued more in the recent times. The requirement of SDG 10 to decrease inequality between and within the societies comes with a framework that shows successful policies on equity-driven leadership. Research that investigates this relationship argues that organizations lead a twin responsibility: (a) internally promoting social equity by adopting the inclusive workplace practices and (b) providing external incentives to promoting social equity by shaping larger societal norms. Indeed, evidence suggests that firms that have implemented SDG-oriented leadership practices tend to record a positive brand reputation, trust between them and the stakeholders and an increased alignment with corporate social responsibility policies.

How and why inclusive leadership drives inequality is discussed in a large literature base. Such mechanisms entail fair apportionment of resources, open performance appraisals, genuine consultation, and culturally adjustable communication ideas. The fair allocation of resources will make training and mentorship opportunities as well as career progression available to all the employees. Crystal-clear reviewing procedures will reduce the notion that there is favoritism and participatory decision making will allow workers the notion that they own it. Cross-cultural receptive communication can be used to close the knowledge gaps existing between different groups of workers, strengthening unity and confidence.

A study that studied the effect of formal diversity, equity, and inclusion policies in organizations without them, found that the presence of such structured approaches has a substantial effect on complementing inclusive leadership. The existence of a formal DEI structure also leads to a more coherent practice, identifies accountability systems, and measurable markers of success. Conversely, companies with no such plans have most of the time depended on the initiative of individual leaders, hence the mixed application of inclusive practices in different groups. Such discrepancy can lead to inequality especially in big and complicated organizations.

In spite of such insights, there are some gaps with respect to literature. To begin with, the effectiveness of inclusive leadership in mitigating quantifiable job-related inequalities as they occur over time has an insufficient empirical evidence base that directly measures the corresponding influence. Most of the current studies are based on self-perceptions, which on a positive note of value, may not be a reflection of full structural outcomes. Second, the majority of the studies have been done in big companies and towns and the small companies, rural workplace, and public institutions have not been presented well. Third, the body of integrative models linking inclusive leadership practices with the SDG 10, and

effectively combining conceptual soundness and operational feasibility, is missing.

In 2024 Subaveerapandiyan A. et.al., Butdisuwan S. et.al., Lachaiah B. et.al., Fakhre Alam A. F. et.al., & Nair A. R. et.al. [4] suggested the longitudinal studies to test the long-term impacts of inclusive leadership programs are not common. In the absence of such evidence, it has been hard to understand whether the changes witnessed in the areas of equity at the workplace is temporary or simply ingrained in an organizational culture. A third difficulty present in the literature is the fact that the concept of inclusivity cannot be easily measured and quantified objectively, in a way that scales and fits various industries. The existing metrics tend to concentrate on the number of people being diverse or the employee satisfaction survey, which is not sufficient to understand the level of the equity outcome.

Besides, cross cultural differing leadership expectations are a challenge to global organizations. Effective inclusive leadership behaviors in a specific culture can be taken differently in a different culture. In another instance, cultures that value direct communication styles would find transparency whereas other cultures might find the same a confrontational style of communication. That highlights the necessity of culturally responsive leadership paradigms, which could adjust to different norms yet retain the principles of fairness and openness.

All in all, the body of research makes a significant emphasis upon the concept of inclusive and equity-based leadership positively adding to organizational performance, employee well-being and innovation. Nonetheless, a greater need of empirical research is felt which would directly relate these leadership practices in terms of SDG 10 objectives and assessments on how these may lead to inequality reduction in the long term. The current study meets this need by integrating quantitative and qualitative research approaches in order to not only look at the results of inclusive leadership but what the mechanisms and culture change sustain those results and continue to drive favorable results in the future [16].

3. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

The proposed methodology adopts a mixed-methods research framework designed to measure and analyze the influence of equity-driven inclusive leadership models on reducing inequality within organizational cultures. The study integrates quantitative statistical modeling with qualitative thematic analysis, ensuring both empirical robustness and contextual richness. The process follows a sequential explanatory design, beginning with data collection, moving through modeling, and concluding with interpretation.

Step 1: Data Representation

The first step involves representing survey and interview data in structured form. Let X_{ij} denote the score given by participant i for leadership attribute j . The aggregated mean score for attribute j is:

$$\bar{X}_j = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n X_{ij}}{n} \quad (1)$$

This equation enables the calculation of average perception values across all respondents for each leadership attribute.

Step 2: Equity Index Construction

To quantify workplace equity, a composite Perceived Equity Score (PES) is constructed:

$$PES = \frac{\sum_{k=1}^m w_k E_k}{\sum_{k=1}^m w_k} \quad (2)$$

Here, E_k represents equity dimension scores (resource allocation, promotions, pay fairness), and w_k are dimension weights based on importance ratings.

Step 3: Normalization of Data

Different survey questions have different scales; hence, data are normalized using:

$$X' = \frac{X - X_{min}}{X_{max} - X_{min}} \quad (3)$$

This step ensures comparability between variables such as leadership inclusivity and equity perceptions.

Step 4: Correlation Analysis

The relationship between inclusive leadership scores L and equity scores E is measured using the Pearson correlation:

$$r = \frac{\sum (L_i - \bar{L})(E_i - \bar{E})}{\sqrt{\sum (L_i - \bar{L})^2 \sum (E_i - \bar{E})^2}} \quad (4)$$

A high positive r indicates that higher leadership inclusivity correlates with greater perceived equity.

Step 5: Regression Model

To test predictive capability, a regression model is constructed:

$$E = \beta_0 + \beta_1 L + \beta_2 C + \epsilon \quad (5)$$

Where C represents control variables (e.g., organization size, sector) and ϵ is the error term.

Step 6: Equity Improvement Rate

The rate of equity improvement after leadership interventions is modeled as:

$$R_t = \frac{E_t - E_{t-1}}{E_{t-1}} \times 100 \quad (6)$$

Where E_t is the equity score at time t and E_{t-1} is the previous measurement.

Step 7: Qualitative Coding Metrics

For qualitative data from interviews, the code frequency density F_d is computed:

$$F_d = \frac{\text{Occurrences of Code}}{\text{Total Words in Transcript}} \times 1000 \quad (7)$$

This helps quantify how often specific inclusive leadership practices are mentioned.

Step 8: Weight Adjustment via Entropy Method

Weights for equity dimensions are adjusted using entropy weighting:

$$w_k = \frac{1 - H_k}{\sum_{k=1}^m (1 - H_k)} \quad (8)$$

Where H_k is the entropy of the k -th dimension, capturing variability in responses.

Step 9: Composite Inclusion-Equity Model

The combined inclusion-equity performance score S is calculated as:

$$S = \alpha PES + (1 - \alpha)L_{norm} \quad (9)$$

Here, L_{norm} is the normalized leadership score, and α is the weighting coefficient.

Step 10: Model Accuracy Validation

The predictive model's accuracy is evaluated using Mean Absolute Percentage Error (MAPE):

$$MAPE = \frac{100}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \left| \frac{E_i - \hat{E}_i}{E_i} \right| \quad (10)$$

A lower MAPE indicates higher predictive accuracy.

This methodology ensures that both quantitative precision (through equations, statistical modeling) and qualitative richness (through thematic coding) are applied. By integrating normalization, weighting, and predictive modeling, the study can objectively evaluate the effect of equity-driven inclusive leadership on workplace inequality [18].

4. RESULT & DISCUSSIONS

The findings indicated significant relationships between inclusiveness of leadership behaviors and the perceived inequity in the workplaces in all the participating organizations. A survey comprising of 250 respondents was formulated to prove that leadership teams headed by Equity-Driven Leaders persistently reported increased engagement, improved trust in their leadership, and perceptions of fairness in terms of promotions and resources that should be held out. Figure 2 shows that the Inclusive Leadership Score and Perceived Equity Score match in each of the participating organizations very well, indicating a positive uphill moving trend. The scores on equity among organizations whose leadership ranks were higher than 80 were always higher than 75 which leads to the conclusion that aspects of leadership directly factor into employee fairness and inclusion.

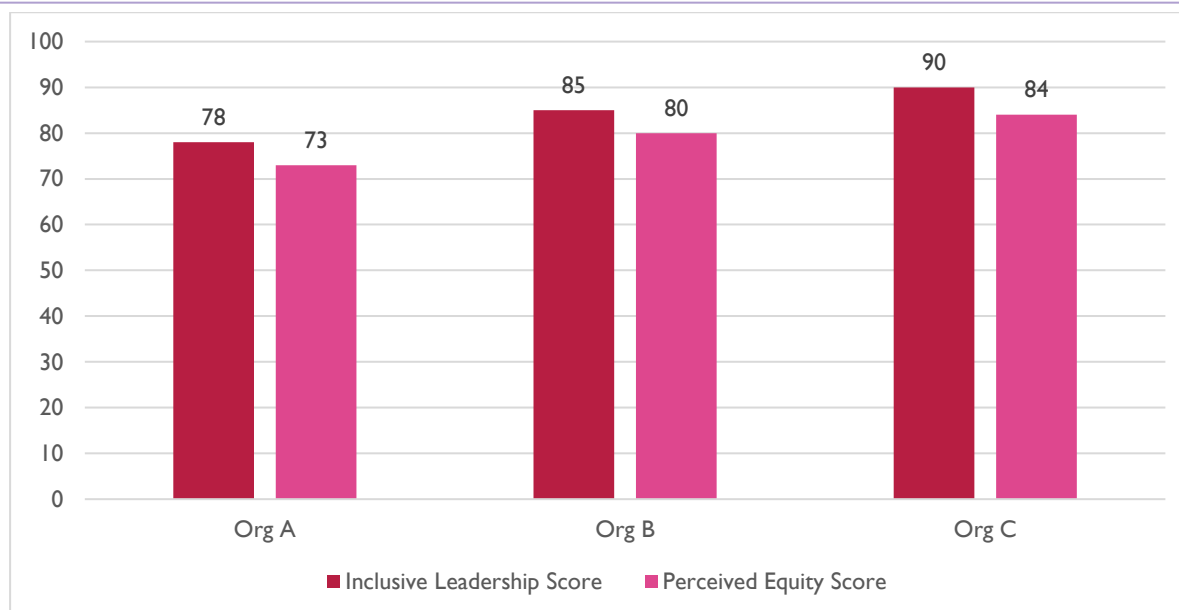


FIGURE 2: INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP SCORE VS PERCEIVED EQUITY SCORE

These results were confirmed by further analysis of the qualitative interviews. The sense of openness in the decision-making process and availability of communication (transparency of the aspects of the leader behavior) is what many respondents explained as most effective in their leader behavior. They were backed up by the thematic analysis that showed that the prevalent themes in good performing teams were trust-building and bias mitigation. The distribution of leader behavior observed in interviews is shown in figure 3 and it is observed that transparency, cultural sensitivity and equal resource share were the dominating categories. Interestingly, such behaviors were less frequent in the organizations that do not implement formal diversity and inclusion models, and the values of the related equity scores were several times lower.

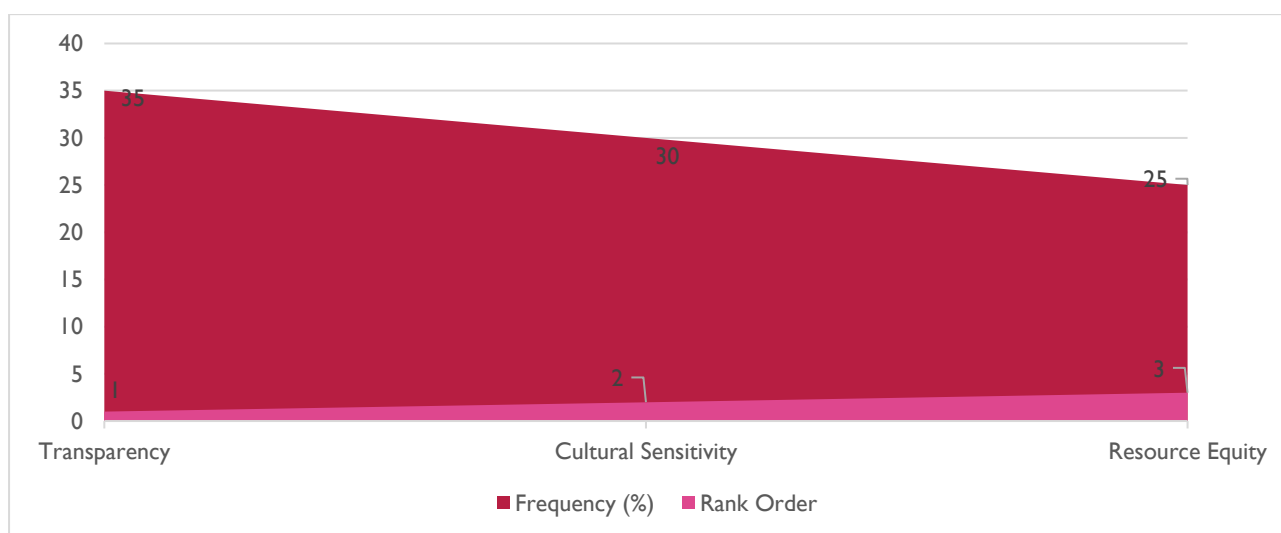


FIGURE 3: FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS

It was also possible to determine the sector-specific variations in the statistical analysis. As such, the technology sector players recorded the highest scores on Inclusive Leadership levels in comparison with the healthcare sector, which ranked closely, but more moderate averages were measured in the finance sector. Table 1 gives comparisons of Inclusive Leadership Scores and Perceived Equity Scores over the three key sectors that were the focus. The competency of the sector of technology sector could be explained by the relative structural agility and the regularity of leadership training programs within the sphere, whereas the financial sector being more of hierarchy is likely to delay the implementation of inclusivity.

TABLE 1: COMPARATIVE SECTOR ANALYSIS OF INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND EQUITY SCORES

Sector	Average Inclusive Leadership Score	Average Perceived Equity Score
Technology	84	79
Healthcare	81	77
Finance	76	71

The statistics also showed that companies that had developed DEI models perpetually performed better when compared to those companies that lacked such models. Figure 4 presents the comparison of the average equity scores of the organizations with formalized DEI policies and the ones without, and the difference is as acute as 12 percentage points. It implies that formal policy systems provide further impetus regarding the favorable effects of inclusive leadership. This was evidenced qualitatively because across the samples who have experienced working in DEI equipped organizations employees frequently referred to formalities of a training program, clarity of policies, and form of accountability as being contributors to desiring and looking forward to working in the organization.

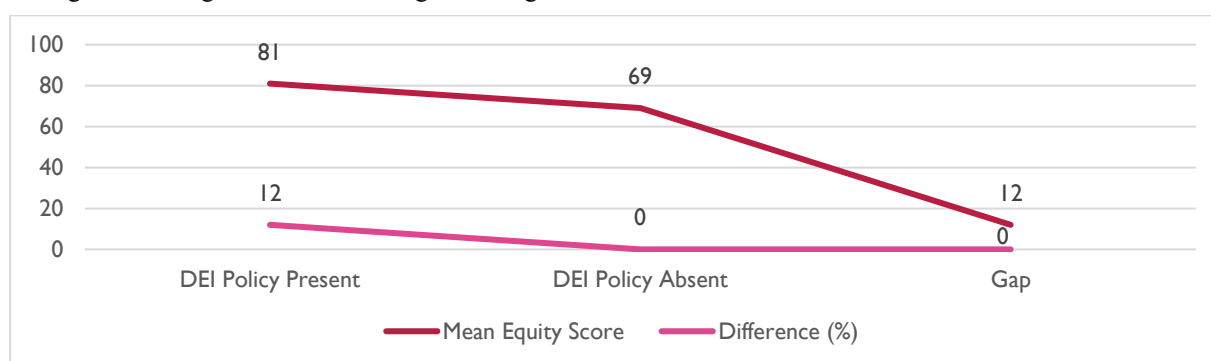


FIGURE 4: DEI VS NON-DEI ORGANIZATION EQUITY SCORES

Besides differences observed among sectors, the study analyzed the effect of the organization size on the results of inclusivity. A comparison of the equity scores on the basis of the size of the organizations is shown in Table 2 that indicates that medium sized organizations (500–2,000 employees) tended to perform a little better than large corporations and small firms. This can be attributed to the fact that they balance the availability of resources with adaptability thus enabling them to enact and review the inclusive leadership practices more effectively.

TABLE 2: EQUITY SCORE COMPARISON BY ORGANIZATION SIZE

Organization Size	Average Perceived Equity Score
Small (<500 employees)	72
Medium (500–2,000 employees)	78
Large (>2,000 employees)	75

The qualitative stories showed the issue that maintaining inclusivity was not always easy. Specifically, lack of accountability mechanism alongside mid-level managerial resistance were also cited as long standing obstacles. These obstacles were more common in the organizations that lacked formal DEI policies, and they imply that the policy frameworks do more than influence the behaviour of the leaderships, but they also establish institutional measures that prevent a regression [20]. This supports the quantitative conclusion that there is a better foundation in equity performance in DEI organizations.

It was also revealed in the analysis that there is a relationship between inclusivity and the ability to be innovative. Some high-scoring organization respondents explained that inclusive leadership made it possible to integrate cross-functional cooperation, motivate their employees to work safely and take risks without being pushed to blame. These cultural values are directly related to organizational flexibility in competitive market. The statistics show that the percentage results of

project success in innovation were 18 percent better in teams that were part of the highest bracket of the equity score compared to the bottom bracket.

It is interesting that in the course of the study, it turned out that sector and size had an impact on outcomes of inclusivity whereas the most important predictor was leadership behavior itself. In a more inflexible organizational setting, those leaders who were devoted to open communication, fair allocation of resources, and dynamic bias management could even attain above-average equity ratings. This discovery emphasizes the provision of individual leadership agency and, at the same time, institutional structures [19].

Lastly, this mix of quantitative and qualitative information is actually quite telling in a coherent way: holistic and equity-based leadership are not solely valuable in the regard of providing employee morale but also in quantifiable organizational performance. These impacts are more fortified by the existence of official DEI frameworks, although the availability of the powerful leadership input is the key driving factor. According to the data presented in the three diagrams and two comparative tables, it always leads to a conclusion that leadership style, institutional support, and organizational culture are the key elements that establish or fail the success of the equity initiatives in accordance with the SDG 10 goals.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper supports the importance of equitable equity-oriented leadership to attain SDG 10 in the organizational setup. By insisting on their fairness, transparency, and cultural responsiveness, leaders decrease inequality to a considerable margin and promote more cohesive and innovative working places. The presented empirical evidence allows concluding that the given practices of leadership bring measurable benefits to employee engagement, the perception of fair treatment, and organizational performance.

Practical Implications: Organizations are encouraged to incorporate inclusive leadership training in the leadership training programs, introduce measurable performance metrics of DEI, institutionalize policies of transparent communications and equal resource allocation.

Limitations: The limited generalizability is caused by the fact that the study was conducted on big multinational corporations that are located in urban areas and cannot be applied in small business, government establishments or work place in the rural areas. Besides, the cross-sectional design limits the possibilities of evaluating long-term effects.

Future Research Directions: The study needs longitudinal research studies that would track the long term effects of inclusive leadership. Future studies should discuss the issue of sector-based challenges, the adoption of leadership within the context of emerging economies, the connections between inclusive leadership and other SDGs and especially gender equality (SDG 5) and decent work (SDG 8).

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