



A Scoping Review of the Impacts of Organizational Culture on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Efforts

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Abstract

The following paper aims to discuss the multifaceted interaction of organizational culture and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). This paper investigates the impact of organizational culture on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives through a scoping review. Using the Arksey and O'Malley framework, enhanced by Levac et al., and adhering to the PRISMA-ScR checklist, this review systematically identifies, selects, and synthesizes literature from 2016 to 2023. A comprehensive search across PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and AJOL yielded 169 articles. After removing duplicates, 152 articles were screened for relevance, and 105 were excluded based on title and abstract. Of the 47 full-text articles assessed, only 15 met the inclusion criteria, focusing on the intersection of organizational culture and DEI. Key findings highlight that leadership commitment and active employee engagement are essential for embedding DEI into organizational culture. Transparent and inclusive policies significantly influence workforce satisfaction and organizational performance. Cultural dimensions, such as power distance and collectivism versus individualism, shape the effectiveness of DEI strategies, while societal norms and regulatory frameworks critically affect their success. The review underscores the importance of aligning leadership practices and organizational culture with external influences to foster sustainable DEI outcomes. This study provides actionable recommendations for organizations, emphasizing the integration of leadership-driven DEI strategies, culturally sensitive practices, and compliance with societal and regulatory expectations. These insights aim to guide organizations in cultivating equitable, inclusive workplaces while enhancing performance and workforce satisfaction.

Keywords: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), Organizational Culture, Leadership Commitment, Employee Engagement, Workplace Policies

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Motivation

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) is an approach and a number of measures aimed at promoting equal treatment of every individual as well as getting the attention and distribution of the necessary resources (Arsel et al., 2022; Iyer., 2022). Each component of DEI has been discussed below: 1) Diversity: It means the presence of variety including parameters like the colour, sex, age, sexual orientation, origin, disabilities, the income, religion, and others (Gill et al., 2018; Iyer., 2022; Bright., 2022). Diversity deals with the component of presence and affirms that the variations in people always improve the conditions in an organization (April., 2021; Bright., 2022). 2) Equity: It endeavours on eradication of discrimination, fairly and equally opportunities, and encouragement of formation of equality as well as striving to understand the challenges that may have led to some groups to be considered as the outcasts (April., 2021; Edmans., 2023). Equality entails combating and overcoming prejudice and bias at the organizational level while equity entails identifying where people are and how the organization can assist them do what they are meant to do and this in essence means that different people require something different (April., 2021; Corsino & Fuller., 2021; Ferraro et al., 2023) 3) Inclusion: It refers to developing environments as well as interactions for each individual student or a set of students so that they can easily accept the kind of diversity they possess. Inclusive organisation is one in which every individual within that organisation can participate and be given opportunity to the best of his potential (April., 2021; Edmans., 2023).

Hence, the objective of DEI is to create a non-prejudiced and socially just socio-political landscape by aiming at the policies, strategies and practices as well as the cultures that cater to the principles of diversity and leverage on the strength of diversity (Arsel et al., 2022; Iyer., 2022). Thus, DEI in organizations refers to the act of bringing change to do away with prejudicial and discriminative practices in business organisations, enhance workforce satisfaction and organisational performance with the help of use of diversity (Iyer., 2022; Bright., 2022). It has begun to grow popular within the last ten years or so across a variety of fields and organizations due to numerous and overwhelming pieces of research stating that the representatives of an organization must be diverse and included in order to see better results of their work (Corsino & Fuller., 2021; Ferraro et al., 2023). However, in this age of activism and learning from organisations' attempts and efforts to pursue meaningful DEI practice and formation of organisational culture, that will create an encompassing culture of inclusiveness and equity in the workplace, the question of organisational culture has emerged and identified as one of the essential factors and determinant that define success and sustainability of DEI initiatives (Gill et al., 2018; Arsel et al., 2022; Iyer., 2022). Therefore, DEI is a byproduct of the culture of an organisation, which includes values, beliefs and practices that are adopted in the process of implementing DEI measures and its impact on DEI at the organisational level (April., 2021; Edmans., 2023; Ferraro et al., 2023).

Thus, DEI initiatives are very much dependent on the culture in which they are placed. Various previous studies have shown that commitment to DEI by leadership and management represent an organizational culture by expressing the importance of DEI through actions and policies. CEOs and executive, therefore, set the tone for DEI and the organizational culture on its implementation hence resource provision, policies formation, and DEI objectives advancement (Ware et al., 2020; Davis et al., 2022; Bunn., 2023).

Whereas enhanced DEI work as a core company function, stays in line with growth projections, and increases effectiveness, engagement and participation of employees assist in the expansion and reinforcement of the DEI approach (Davis et al., 2022; Bunn., 2023).

Organizational participation in DEI suggests that the culture of the organization promotes involvement of the organizational employees in DEI, hence better performance since the employees feel that they are the ones being listened to and their contribution is essential. Since some organizations encourage talking about diversity and inclusion in the workplace, forming groups for employees of different backgrounds, and engaging employees in decision making regarding diversity, equality, and inclusiveness, the feeling like people belong and are devoted to their organizations would be boosted (Arsel et al., 2022; Bunn., 2023; Edmans., 2023).

Furthermore, organizational culture policies and practices also have the role of practical representations of certain standards of values of organizational culture which regulate behaviours and decisions (Waters et al., 2023; Walters., 2023; Dueland., 2023). An organisation that protects and endorse fairness in affairs is most definitely proactive in incorporating DEI policies, especially in hiring, promoting, handling employee complaints and discriminations. For example, in the case of the transparency organization, the clear and non-discriminatory rules for promotions can be established; besides, the worker may be given a fair opportunity to be promoted (Witwer., 2021; Hunter., 2023; Harriot et al., 2023).

Knowledge of cultural dimensions and their relations with DEI is critical in determining the constraints and facilitators in the organisational context. Thus, the framework of cultural dimensions like power distance, individualism/collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance might affect DEI initiatives. For instance, cultures that have a low score on the power distance can easily establish anti-hierarchical prejudice and establish structures that will enable the integration of diverse people into the leadership team while cultures with collectivism as one of its dimensions will be easily introduced to the implementation of inclusive practices since they are regarded as a team rather than individuals (Holcombe et al., 2024; Pompper., 2024).

1.2 Research Aim

This study aims to examine how organizational culture influences the development, implementation, and success of DEI initiatives. By exploring the interplay between cultural dimensions, leadership behaviors, employee engagement, and external societal factors, this study seeks to uncover the mechanisms through which organizational culture can either enable or obstruct DEI efforts.

1.3 Research Objectives

- To investigate the role of leadership commitment and management strategies in driving DEI initiatives.
- To analyze how employee engagement and participatory practices shape the effectiveness of DEI programs.
- To evaluate the impact of organizational policies, such as hiring practices and grievance mechanisms, in promoting or impeding DEI.
- To explore how cultural dimensions, including power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance, affect the design and implementation of DEI initiatives.
- To assess the influence of external factors such as societal norms, legal mandates, and regional cultural contexts on DEI strategies.

1.4 Research Contribution

This scoping review provides a comprehensive synthesis of existing literature on the intersection of organizational culture and DEI initiatives. It identifies key facilitators and barriers that influence DEI success, offering actionable insights for practitioners and policymakers. For organizations, this study highlights strategies to align DEI efforts with cultural practices, ensuring sustainable and impactful outcomes. For academia, it advances the theoretical understanding of DEI by integrating cultural, organizational, and societal perspectives into a cohesive framework. By bridging these gaps, the study aims to guide organizations in cultivating inclusive cultures that not only prioritize equity and diversity but also leverage them for competitive advantage. Ultimately, the findings of this study underscore the importance of embedding DEI into the fabric of organizational culture, moving beyond surface-level commitments to foster genuine inclusion and equity at every level of the organization. By aligning internal practices with external influences and cultural sensitivities, organizations can create resilient systems that support their workforce and drive long-term success.

In addition, societal expectations and the legal environment influence organizational culture and, thus, DEI strategies' success. Companies situated in areas where legislations prohibit discrimination based on gender, race or any other attribute and where the general population is embracing diversity are more likely to have DEI as part of their fundamental strategic business models (Harriot et al., 2023; Dueland., 2023; Holcombe et al., 2024).

In this scoping review, it is the intention to report on specific areas of the literature to expand knowledge on the effects of organizational culture and understand how DEI can be optimised and how changes in organizational culture may facilitate improvements to DEI plans and activities. As this review will be mainly focused on the literature review of DEI research and presenting the components of organizational culture, which affects DEI initiatives, this paper will conclude with specific recommendations and practical suggestions for organisations to enhance DEI efforts.

2 Methodology

This study employed a scoping review protocol described by Endalamaw et al. (2021), adhering to the scoping review framework developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) and subsequently refined by Levac et al. (2010) and the Joanna Briggs Institution framework (Peters et al., 2020). The framework consists of five sequential steps: (1) identification of research questions, (2) identification of relevant studies, (3) study selection, (4) data charting, and (5) data collation, summarization, and reporting of results. To ensure a structured and transparent process, the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) checklist (Tricco et al., 2018) guided the review.

2.1 Identification of Research Questions

Key research questions were formulated to explore the interplay between organizational culture and DEI initiatives. These included:

1. How does commitment from leaders and managers affect DEI initiatives in organizations?
2. What is the role of employee engagement and participation in achieving DEI objectives?

3. How do organizational policies and practices influence DEI efforts?
4. What are the consequences of variations in cultural dimensions (e.g., collectivism vs. individualism, power distance) on DEI operations?
5. To what extent do external factors, such as societal standards, legislation, and industry context, shape organizational culture and DEI approaches?

2.2 Identification of Relevant Studies

The literature search was conducted using databases such as PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, covering studies published in English from 2016 onward. Keywords included "organizational culture," "diversity," "equity," "inclusion," "leadership," "employee engagement," "policies," "cultural dimensions," and "external factors." To supplement this, backward reference searching of bibliographies of selected articles was performed.

2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were included if they met the following criteria:

- Focused on the relationship between organizational culture and DEI within organizational contexts.
- Provided empirical data or systematic reviews relevant to the research questions.
- Published in peer-reviewed journals or reputable conference proceedings.

Studies were excluded if they:

- Addressed organizational culture in a broader context without specific reference to DEI.
- Focused on DEI outside organizational settings (e.g., community initiatives).
- Were purely theoretical without empirical validation.
- Lacked relevance to the defined timeframe (2016–2023).

2.4 Quality Assessment Procedures

The quality of included studies was assessed using a tailored appraisal checklist considering study design, clarity of objectives, appropriateness of methods, robustness of analysis, and relevance to research questions. Two reviewers independently evaluated each study to ensure consistency, with discrepancies resolved through discussion or referral to a third reviewer.

2.5 Study Selection

The selection process involved two stages:

1. Initial screening of titles and abstracts based on inclusion/exclusion criteria.
2. Full-text review of eligible articles for final inclusion.

A PRISMA-ScR flow diagram was utilized to document the selection process, ensuring transparency and reproducibility.

While the study follows a rigorous systematic approach, certain limitations must be acknowledged. First, potential **publication bias** may have influenced the selection of studies, as academic literature tends to highlight successful DEI implementations while

underreporting failures. Additionally, the review primarily includes English-language publications, which may exclude valuable perspectives from non-English-speaking regions where DEI practices differ. Finally, the study selection process, despite being comprehensive, may have overlooked gray literature or industry reports that offer practical insights beyond scholarly discourse. Addressing these limitations in future research could enhance the generalizability and applicability of findings.

2.6 Data Charting

Data extraction was conducted using a standardized charting form that captured details such as authorship, publication year, country, research design, sample characteristics, key findings, and their alignment with the research questions. The charting form underwent pilot testing to ensure clarity and consistency.

2.7 Data Collation, Summarization, and Reporting of Results

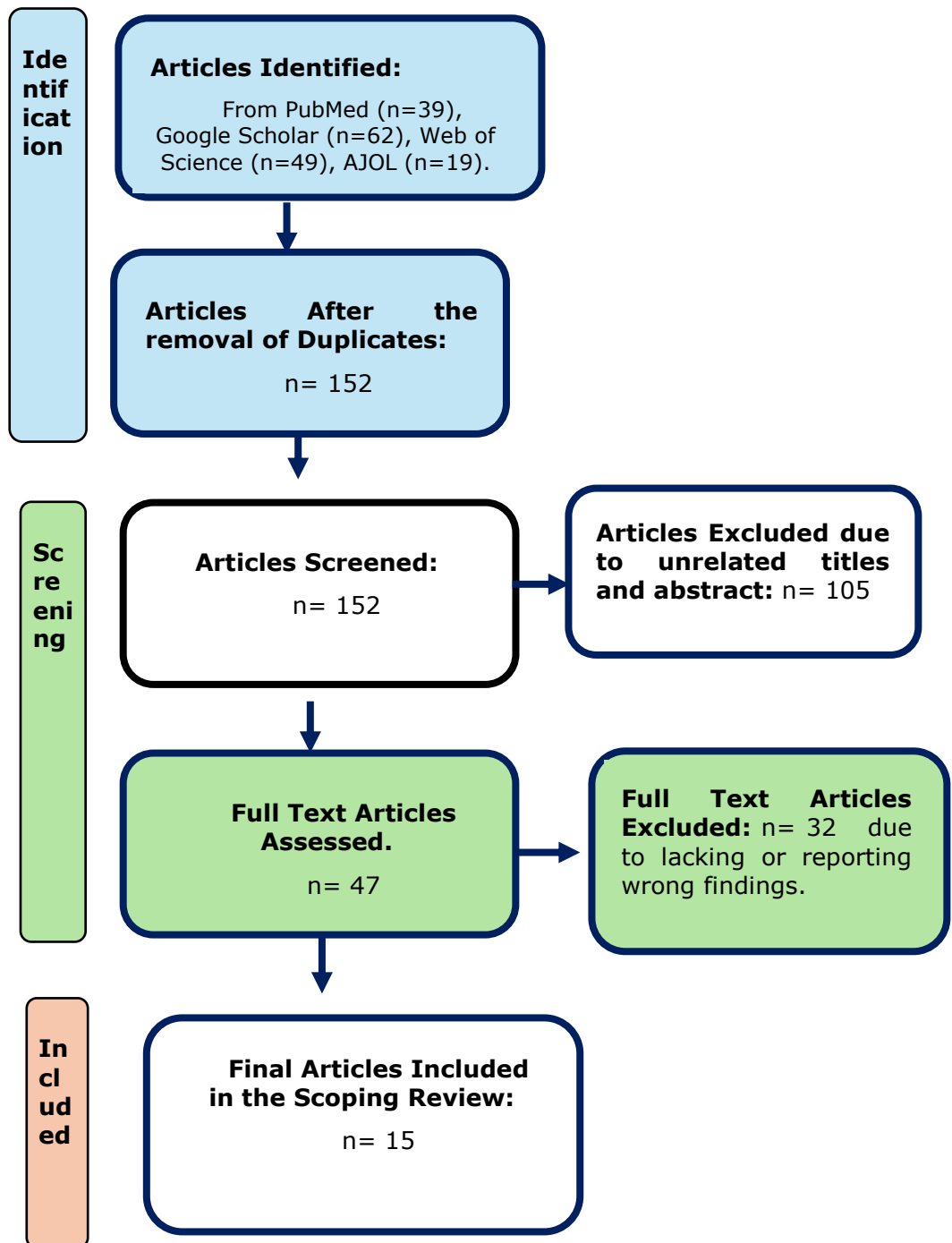
Data were collated and synthesized thematically, focusing on key themes identified in the research questions: leadership commitment, employee engagement, organizational policies, cultural dimensions, and external influences. A narrative synthesis approach was employed to integrate findings, while PRISMA-ScR items were used to systematically report results and highlight key insights.

3 Results

3.1 Search results

A total of 169 articles were identified, 39 from PubMed, 62 from Google Scholar, 49 from Web of Science and 19 from AJOL. After the removal of duplicates, the total number of articles was down to 152. 105 articles were excluded due to unrelated title and abstract findings and only 47 passed on to reach the full text analysis stage as shown in figure 1 below. Out of these 47 articles, only 15 were included in the scoping review as the remaining 32 were excluded due to lack of appropriate findings.

Figure 1: PRISMA-ScR Flow Diagram for Article Selection Process



3.2 Data Extraction Template

The selected 15 articles were assessed, and data was extracted and reported in the form of data extraction tool as shown in table 3 below.

Author	Dimensions	Objective	Main findings
Cooper et al., 2023	Leadership strategies and DEI	To better understand and assess the feasibility and impact of leadership on DEI in organizations, especially through the positions of CDOs and diversity plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership development therefore has to progress beyond short term programmes and has to be ongoing in order to support and enhance the experience of DEI leaders. • Decision-makers tend to employ minorities and women in the leadership positions during some problematic situations and that means higher risk. • It is honourable to note that culture review prior to DEI staff procurement is incredibly important due to the need to share expectancies and goals. • Workplace diversity and workplace inclusion confer considerable utilitarian value to any organization that is willing to embrace them as values; this automatically means that leadership mindsets have to change in the process. • Measuring the outcome of diversity plans is generally done poorly, and further analysis of the troubling trends of segregation by race is needed to clarify the efficacy of these plans.
Sonnino et al., 2016	Leadership strategies and DEI	Health care leadership development and training: In this chapter the issue under investigation as well as the findings will be discussed in terms of progress and pitfalls.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main finding was to look into the health care leadership development programs and the level of achievement met. It also stresses on the issue that for leadership development there must be training and development on leadership skills on an ongoing basis and leadership training must become a part of organizational culture.
Carboni and Chen., 2022	Leadership strategies and DEI	To decide upon the effective methods of handling and preventing bias incidents as observed from the leadership practices in a more natural and anonymous setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified six effective strategies: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Safe 2. Speak Out/Stand up 3. Share Your Story 4. Hide the Threat 5. Change the Lens, 6. Look Beyond the Action.
Dueland., 2023	DEI Policies and	Analyse DEI policies and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The total DEI policies were not linked to perceived justice. The findings also show

	organizational culture	organisational effects on racial/ethnic and gender diversity, employees' perceived belonging, and perceived justice	that latino employees perceived less justice than the white workers. The analysis showed that there were differing perceptions of justice by gender, where male participants recorded a higher mean on perceptions of justice than the female participants and employees who identified as gender-diverse. The results indicated that self-produced justice was lower for contributors as compared to managers. The main and interaction effects between DEI policies and race/ethnicity and Gender were not significant, this implies that DEI policies and Gender and Race/Ethnicity do not have an interaction effect on each other.
Oswal et al., 2023	DEI initiatives and performance metrics	It establishes that organisations have to assess the impact DEI has on the performance of the firm, employees' perceptions, and innovation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Therefore, from the literature review, it can be inferred that DEI possesses anetic effects on organizational performance, employee engagement, and creativity. DEI in this case leads to the selection of the best talent as well as their retention through the efforts of the organization.
Laferty et al., 2023	Organizational culture and DEI	In order to design JEDI as the working culture in higher learning institutions/tutorial factory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JEDI must be promoted by faculty, eliminate prejudice for marginalised populations and accept structural shifts.
Witwer., 2021	Organizational culture and DEI	To understand DEI and belonging, specifically in the nonlinear sector, and generate models for change and principles of belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Power relations, particularly in the leadership hierarchy; trust and integrity as main concerns; work-life balance dilemma; and the proposed tactics that may help improve organisational belonging in nonprofits.
Lyer., 2021	DEI Policies and organizational culture	It seeks to identify what could make DEI policies implementation adverse for some privileged populations from the threats' viewpoint.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified three main threats causing opposition: The three threats are; Resource threat, symbolic threat, and ingroup morality threat. The means of minimising these threats and assess the drawbacks of each.
Knox., 2022	Organizational culture	To analyse the language of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Triangular Marginality Communications Model was presented.

	and DEI	minorities' prejudice within the social gender culture in organizational context and suggest a novel communication model.	Identified that targeted groups endure vocational disadvantages on the sociopolitical and economic stages, and suggested that subdominant groups who mimic the language of the dominant group can achieve some. 6 Stressed on the role of diversity, equity, and inclusion in closing the gaps between the dominating and the oppressed.
Hunter et al., 2023	Organizational culture and DEI	To analyse the correlation between culture, leaders, and OCB on clinicians' perception about the DEI endeavours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate to high level of correlations reported between organizational culture, ethical leadership, and organisational perceptions of DEI initiatives. The main research question where organizational culture is the independent variable and DEI perceptions is the dependent variable, is answered with the moderation of sociocultural identity.
Bateh et al., 2023	Leadership strategies and DEI	the aim is to formulate a DEI impact model and analyse how organisations can get outcomes by achieving DEI.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DEI, therefore, needs executive sponsorship, clear connection with organizational goals, and the use of analytics. Effective implementation can result in better results and positive impacts on the clients.
Feitosa et al., 2022	DEI structure, strategy and measurement	In order to contribute to the literature on DEI with having an acceptable conceptual progress of cross-cultural performance (CCP).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CCP was defined as an aspect of utilizing more than one cultural orientation, behavior patterns related to CCP were described as well as some of the implications for theory and practice.
Razante and Boss., 2022	DEI structure, strategy and measurement	To discover the effects of DEI in the legal field and institutions of learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity is critical for DEI; institutions must embrace required diverse perspectives; DEI efforts require leadership involvement; learning environments represent small-scale DEI discourse; legal education may lack DEI but should progress for marginalized people's benefit
Axelsson., 2022	DEI structure, strategy and measurement	To determine the application of Diversity Management in organisations, specifically, on DEI initiatives, processes, and evaluations in staffing, employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a wide range of DEI strategies and practices applied at the organisational level; nonetheless, they are not accompanied by a systematic approach to their assessment. The main aspects addressed are gender and ethnicity, while other areas are less developed with calls for more specific DEI goals and data frameworks.

		turnover, and advancement.	
Williams et al., 2023	DEI structure, strategy and measurement	The research subject for this purpose is the conditions and factors that relate to DEI in organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified five key themes: planned way, organization structure, human resource, work flow, and IT system. These are findings related to details such as the impact of executive sponsorship, the use of technology in hiring and data, and the effects of social and economical environments on DEI.

3.3 Articles characteristics and main findings summary

The majority of articles were published during the period from 2016 to 2023, with a significant focus on the year 2023, making up 40% of the total. It is worth noting that there were no articles identified between the years 2017 to 2020. Moreover, reviews comprised 64.28% of the papers that were examined. The findings of the articles were organized and presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Characteristic Article and Data Summary Table

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Publication Year		
2016	1	6.67%
2021	2	13.33%
2022	5	33.33%
2023	7	46.67%
Study Approach		
Scoping Review	3	20.00%
Qualitative Study	7	46.67%
Conceptual Study	1	6.67%
Quantitative Study	1	6.67%
Multi-level model	1	6.67%
Survey-based Study	2	13.33%
Dimensions		
Leadership strategies and DEI	4	26.67%
DEI structure, strategy and measurement	4	26.67%
Organizational culture and DEI	4	26.67%
DEI Policies and organizational culture	2	13.33%
DEI initiatives and performance metrics	1	6.67%

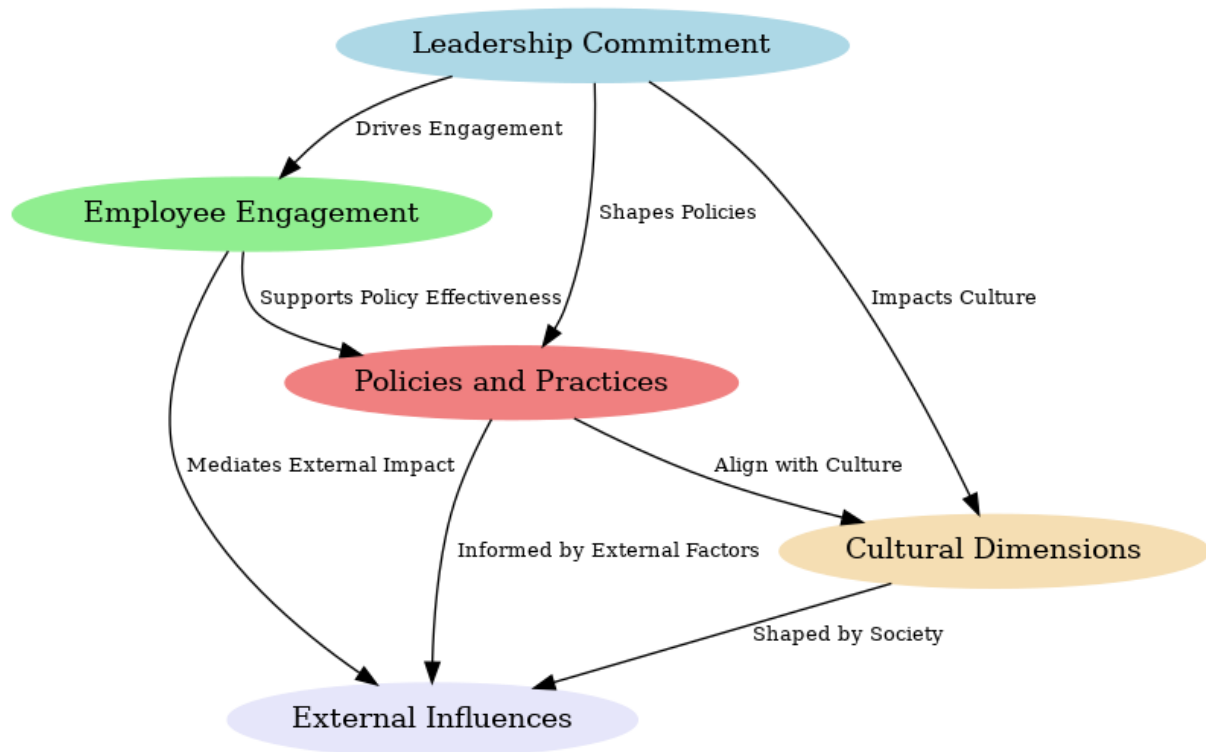
4 Thematic analysis

The selected 15 articles underwent a thorough thematic analysis with the help of NVivo software. Many themes were identified in the literature which are simplified through the formation of categories explained below.

Fig. 2. represents the thematic linkages identified in the findings section of the study. It highlights the interplay between five key themes: Leadership Commitment, Employee Engagement, Policies and Practices, Cultural Dimensions, and External Influences. Leadership commitment acts as a driving force, shaping policies, influencing cultural dynamics, and fostering employee engagement. Employee engagement, in turn, supports the effectiveness of policies and mediates the impact of external influences. Policies and practices align with cultural dimensions while being informed by external factors such as

societal norms and regulations. Cultural dimensions, like power distance and individualism, are shaped by societal and external influences. This interconnected structure emphasizes the integrated nature of DEI strategies within organizational and cultural contexts.

Figure. 2. The flow chart of thematic analysis linkage



4.1 Leadership and Management Commitment

Organizational culture is shaped by leaders and managers through their actions, decisions, and communication, making their role pivotal in fostering DEI initiatives. Leaders influence culture by setting standards across organizational levels and integrating DEI into hiring, safety, wellbeing, and communication policies. They communicate DEI values through mission statements, goals, and memos, signaling that these principles are embedded in the organization’s fabric. Effective DEI initiatives often involve leaders actively participating in DEI training, events, and providing tangible support such as financial resources, dedicated DEI staff, and training programs (White et al., 2022; Harris, 2022; Moreno et al., 2024).

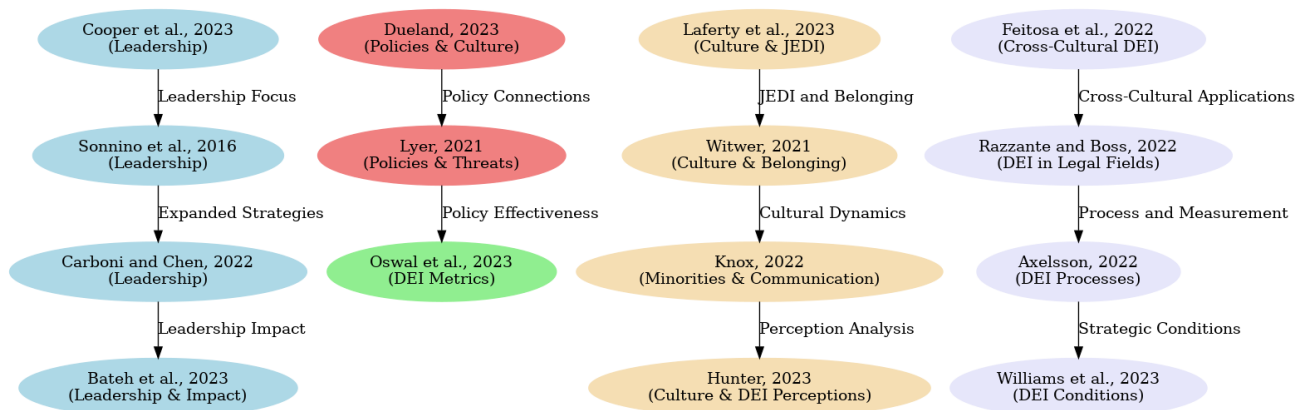
Leadership modeling reinforces DEI by promoting equality and recognizing employees’ rights through consistent actions and communication. Leaders’ visible commitment to DEI fosters employee trust and encourages broader participation, reinforcing an inclusive organizational culture. Employees are more likely to engage with DEI initiatives when they perceive fairness and genuine leadership commitment, resulting in higher motivation and performance (Beach & Segars, 2022; Minneyfield, 2024). Sustained leadership engagement ensures that DEI efforts become integral to the organizational culture rather than temporary measures. By embedding DEI into the organization’s long-term vision, leaders facilitate culture transformation over time, delivering lasting positive results (White et al., 2022; Pirinen, 2023).

4.2 Employee Engagement and Participation

Employees’ engagement in DEI efforts varies based on organizational culture. In organizations with strong DEI commitments, employees are actively involved in DEI programs through debates, diversity practices, and inclusive structures. Conversely, organizations with low DEI prioritization often experience poor engagement, and DEI measures may be perceived as superficial (Dueland, 2023; Wavre et al., 2024). Employee commitment to DEI strengthens organizational culture, fostering a sense of belonging and communal support, essential for DEI success. Engaged employees can positively influence organizational perception and help drive DEI initiatives (Pompey, 2021; Sreedhar & Nayak, 2024). Organizations can enhance employee participation in DEI through various approaches. Creating employee resource or affinity groups allows staff to focus on DEI issues, share experiences, and contribute to initiatives. Engaging employees in designing DEI policies through surveys, interviews, or DEI sub-committees improves the relevance and effectiveness of these initiatives (Tucker, 2023; Shugart, 2024; Dueland, 2023).

Training and development programs are also crucial for introducing DEI concepts, equipping employees with tools to support DEI initiatives, and fostering an inclusive environment. Incentives like awards, recognition programs, and promotions further motivate employees to participate actively in DEI efforts (Tiwari, 2022; Wang et al., 2024; Hussain et al. 2024). Employee engagement plays a leading role in the success of DEI initiatives, making them more effective and enduring. Engaged employees actively promote DEI and build inclusive organizational cultures, improving satisfaction, retention, productivity, and overall performance and reputation (Chukwudi & Eusebius, 2023; Wells et al., 2023). The flowchart depicts the thematic linkages among authors, highlighting their contributions to key themes like leadership, policies, cultural dynamics, and DEI strategies within the study.

Figure. 3. The flowchart depicts the thematic linkages among authors, highlighting their contributions to key themes like leadership, policies, cultural dynamics, and DEI strategies within the study.



4.3 Policies and Practices

DEI policies are critical for creating organizational conditions that enable individuals to excel. These policies cover areas such as employment practices, management training, promotions, and codes of conduct, ensuring equal treatment and opportunities. Practices like blind hiring, diversity hiring panels, and group-specific staffing help eliminate biases, enhance reliability, and increase organizational diversity. DEI training programs further raise

awareness about prejudice, stereotypes, and inclusiveness, while mentorship models and professional development opportunities aid in retaining and promoting diverse talent (Beach & Segars, 2022; Dueland, 2023; Gill et al., 2018; Lyer, 2022; Brancaccio-Taras et al., 2022).

Organizations incorporating DEI in performance management ensure fair treatment and equitable pay based on performance. Impartial performance metrics, anti-discrimination policies, and harassment guidelines provide a protective and inclusive environment for employees and stakeholders (April, 2021; Boulware et al., 2022). Hierarchical organizations often implement DEI policies through top-down governance, which can face power dynamics and resistance. These systems rely on strict adherence to policies, promoting diversity through top-management directives. In contrast, egalitarian organizations embrace bottom-up approaches, fostering employee participation in policy development and encouraging cooperation and inclusiveness. Egalitarian systems prioritize constant feedback and development, while hierarchical systems focus on numerical representation and policy adherence (Adams, 2023; Dueland, 2023; Lyer, 2022; Brancaccio-Taras et al., 2022).

Ultimately, the effectiveness of DEI initiatives is measured by metrics like representation, employee satisfaction, and retention rates. While hierarchical structures excel in enforcing adherence, egalitarian cultures focus on qualitative feedback and sustained improvement, making DEI strategies more adaptive and participatory.

4.4 Cultural Dimensions and DEI

Every company culture impacts employees' perceptions of DEI initiatives, influencing their success and evolution. In collectivist cultures, which prioritize group preservation and interdependence, DEI measures often focus on fostering teamwork and shared responsibility for diversity. However, these cultures may overlook individual diversity and differentiation due to their emphasis on group cohesion (Knox, 2022; Abrams, 2022; Lyer, 2022; Hunter, 2023). Conversely, in individualistic cultures, DEI initiatives emphasize fairness, individual performance, and equal access to resources. These policies often promote competition and view diversity as a functional asset. However, the focus on individual goals may undermine organizational support for collective DEI efforts (Colón-Aguirre & Bright, 2022; Lye, 2022; Dueland, 2023).

Power distance also plays a critical role in shaping DEI. In high power distance cultures, leaders often dictate DEI changes through structured policies and procedures, ensuring compliance but limiting participation from lower-level employees. Conversely, low power distance cultures encourage delegation and employee involvement, fostering co-creation of DEI policies. This inclusive approach enhances ownership and engagement across all organizational levels (April, 2021; Faruqi et al. 2024; Koenig & Naughton, 2023; Pompey, 2021; Lyer, 2022; Hunter, 2023).

4.5 External Influences

External factors, including societal expectations, norms, legal mandates, and business standards, significantly influence organizational culture and DEI. These forces shape the strategic direction, development, and maintenance of inclusivist policies and practices (Razzante & Boss, 2022; Lyer, 2022). Societal culture plays a vital role in shaping DEI policies. Liberal societies often pressure organizations to adopt progressive DEI strategies, driven by civil activism around gender and racial equality. Conversely, conservative societies may resist change, leading to slower adoption of DEI practices (McCandless et al., 2022; Zheng, 2022; Minneyfields, 2024).

Legal mandates also heavily influence DEI. Equal employment opportunities, anti-discrimination laws, and affirmative action provide a framework within which organizations operate. Companies in regions with strict DEI-related legislation often establish robust DEI structures to comply with laws and maintain favorable perceptions, sometimes exceeding legal requirements (Martinez, 2022; Ayeni & Eden, 2024; Montoyo, 2024). Organizations also adapt DEI initiatives to societal cultural norms, revising policies, introducing new programs, and aligning with stakeholder expectations. Global companies often ensure DEI policies respect local cultures. In societies with strong employee collectives, organizations tend to take a collaborative approach, involving employees in DEI development. Conversely, in environments with weaker external pressures, organizations may implement DEI initiatives gradually as part of a broader cultural shift (Ashley et al., 2022; Conway et al., 2021; Feitosa et al., 2022).

5 Discussion

Organizational commitment and leadership behavior are pivotal in fostering DEI initiatives. Research by Cooper et al. (2023) and Sonnino (2016) highlights the challenges in embedding DEI leadership practices beyond standard training programs, suggesting that efforts often remain superficial without deeper structural changes. This aligns with Dueland (2023) and Moreno et al. (2024), who emphasize that cultural audits and leadership reconditioning are essential for integrating DEI into organizational structures. Unlike traditional leadership training, which focuses on short-term skills, these studies highlight the need for a sustained commitment to DEI through cultural shifts. These findings contribute to a growing body of literature that underscores leadership's role in setting the tone for inclusive practices, as previously identified by Gill et al. (2018) and April (2021).

Employee engagement is another cornerstone of DEI effectiveness. Organizations that create avenues for open dialogue, establish employee resource groups, and involve staff in DEI-related decision-making report higher levels of belonging, morale, and performance (Tiwari, 2022; Wang et al., 2024; Sreedhar & Nayak, 2024). This is consistent with earlier findings by Corsino and Fuller (2021), who noted that participatory approaches foster stronger alignment between DEI goals and employee expectations. However, this study extends the discourse by emphasizing the importance of active engagement across all organizational levels, not just management, highlighting the interplay between policies and employee perceptions.

Policies and practices are crucial determinants of DEI success. Clear guidelines on hiring, promotions, and grievance handling, as advocated by Dueland (2022) and Laferty et al. (2023), play a fundamental role in promoting fairness and transparency. While these findings are in line with Brancaccio-Taras et al. (2022), who highlighted the significance of anti-discrimination policies, this review suggests that regular updates to these policies are critical to address evolving workforce diversity. Furthermore, the cultural dimensions of power distance, individualism-collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance significantly impact DEI implementation. Low power distance cultures, for instance, support anti-hierarchical structures that facilitate diverse representation, as noted by Lyer (2022) and Hunter (2023). This aligns with Hofstede's cultural framework but adds specificity by linking these dimensions directly to DEI practices, thus advancing theoretical understanding.

External factors such as societal norms and regulatory frameworks also shape DEI strategies. Organizations in regions with strong anti-discrimination laws and societal support for diversity tend to integrate DEI more effectively into their business models (Razzante & Boss, 2022; Minneyfield, 2024). This is consistent with McCandless et al. (2022), who observed that external pressures often drive organizational innovation in DEI. However, this

study broadens the scope by highlighting how such external influences necessitate the alignment of internal practices with societal expectations, ensuring both compliance and organizational adaptability.

This study contributes to DEI literature by integrating cultural dimensions with organizational practices, offering a framework for understanding how internal and external factors converge to shape DEI outcomes. The findings expand on Hofstede's and Schein's cultural theories by linking cultural dimensions to specific DEI strategies, such as participatory decision-making in low power distance cultures or collectivist approaches to inclusivity. Additionally, the emphasis on continuous policy adaptation challenges the static nature of traditional policy frameworks, suggesting a dynamic model where policies evolve alongside societal changes.

This study provides a deeper understanding of how organizational culture interacts with DEI efforts by demonstrating that leadership commitment, policy alignment, and employee engagement must be contextually adapted. Unlike previous research, which primarily focuses on individual DEI components, this review synthesizes cultural dimensions with structural and external influences, offering a holistic framework for sustainable DEI integration. These findings emphasize that cultural transformation requires an ongoing, multi-layered approach rather than isolated policy changes.

To further bridge the gap between research and practice, organizations can implement structured DEI frameworks tailored to industry needs. For instance, multinational corporations can adopt AI-driven recruitment tools to reduce hiring biases, while universities can introduce mentorship programs that actively promote diversity among faculty and students. Additionally, case studies from tech firms such as Microsoft and Google have demonstrated that embedding DEI into leadership development programs significantly enhances long-term cultural transformation. By integrating real-world applications, organizations can ensure that DEI is not just a compliance initiative but a foundational element of their operational strategy.

By bridging leadership theories with DEI practices, the study also highlights the need for a new leadership paradigm—one that prioritizes long-term cultural transformation over short-term training outcomes. This adds to transformational and ethical leadership theories by emphasizing the role of inclusive leadership in driving organizational change.

6 Recommendations

Organizations should ensure leadership development programs remain relevant throughout employees' careers by incorporating DEI competencies. This includes raising leaders' awareness of hate speech, promoting equality in leadership, and fostering a favorable environment for DEI. Strategic initiatives to design, deliver, and assess leadership programs are essential (Beach & Segars, 2022; Moreno et al., 2024). Employee involvement is critical in discouraging workplace discrimination. Organizations should create a context that encourages open dialogue and contributions to DEI through employee resource groups, common forums, and consistent dialogue. This improves employee well-being and enhances DEI implementation and oversight by incorporating workers' input (Wang et al., 2024; Sreedhar & Nayak, 2024).

DEI policies must be clear, non-discriminatory, and aligned with DEI goals. Employment, promotion, and grievance policies should be equitable and regularly updated to reflect workforce diversity. Transparent policies build employee trust and demonstrate

organizational commitment to DEI, resonating with justice critical to DEI initiatives' survival (Adams, 2023; Dueland, 2023). DEI initiatives must align with socio-cultural contexts, such as power distance, individualism, collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance. For example, low power distance cultures may favor anti-hierarchical structures that support diverse managerial profiles. Understanding cultural characteristics enables organizations to tailor DEI strategies for better workforce acceptance (Pompey, 2021; Lyer, 2022; Hunter, 2023). DEI should align with societal expectations and legal frameworks. Organizations must integrate community groups and regulatory bodies into DEI objectives. In societies with strong anti-discrimination laws and growing tolerance for diversity, organizations are more likely to incorporate DEI into their business models. Such external factors enhance organizations' compliance and receptivity to DEI initiatives (McCandless et al., 2022; Zheng, 2022).

6.1 Practical Implementation Strategies for Organizations

Organizations can enhance their DEI strategies by adopting tailored approaches based on industry, size, and workforce composition. The following table provides concrete actions that businesses, academic institutions, and government agencies can implement to strengthen DEI outcomes.

Sector	Recommended DEI Strategy
Corporate Sector	AI-based hiring tools to eliminate bias, leadership DEI training, pay transparency policies.
Higher Education	Inclusive curriculum design, targeted faculty mentorship programs, scholarship opportunities for underrepresented groups.
Public Sector	Policy-driven DEI mandates, community engagement initiatives, diverse hiring panels.
Technology Firms	Data-driven workforce analytics, bias audits in algorithmic decision-making, employee resource groups.

By implementing industry-specific strategies, organizations can foster a DEI culture that is both sustainable and measurable. Future research should explore how these strategies evolve over time and assess their long-term impact.

7 Conclusion

The literature on organizational culture and DEI emphasizes the importance of aligning cultural values, leadership strategies, and external influences to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion. Cultural variables such as power distance, individualism-collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance significantly shape the success of DEI interventions. Effective DEI programs align with organizational realities, are culturally sensitive, and actively promote affirmative practices. Leadership commitment and adaptive policies are critical, while external factors like societal expectations and legal frameworks play a pivotal role in shaping DEI strategies.

7.1 Recommendations for Practice

- Organizations should implement continuous training programs for leaders to embed DEI principles in their decision-making processes, addressing biases and promoting inclusivity through actions and policies.

- Policies on hiring, promotion, and grievances should be transparent, regularly reviewed, and aligned with DEI goals. Accountability frameworks and measurable targets should ensure tangible outcomes.
- Encourage active participation through resource groups, structured forums, and feedback mechanisms, fostering a culture where employees feel valued and invested in DEI initiatives.
- Tailor DEI strategies to organizational and regional cultural characteristics, such as emphasizing team-oriented DEI efforts in collectivist cultures or fairness in individualistic settings.
- Adapt to societal expectations and comply with regulatory frameworks. Collaborating with community groups and adhering to anti-discrimination laws enhances credibility and drives DEI success.

7.2 Recommendations for Future Research

- Conduct longitudinal research to assess the sustainability and organizational benefits of DEI initiatives over extended periods.
- Investigate how cultural dimensions influence DEI implementation across different regions and industries, identifying best practices adaptable to various settings.
- Develop metrics to measure the impact of DEI initiatives on outcomes such as innovation, employee satisfaction, and financial performance.
- Explore the overlapping effects of race, gender, and other identity factors on DEI experiences, tailoring initiatives to meet diverse needs.
- Examine how digital tools and AI-driven systems influence DEI, particularly in reducing biases and automating processes like hiring and performance reviews.

By addressing these recommendations, organizations can enhance their DEI practices and foster more inclusive workplaces, while future research can provide the evidence base to refine and sustain these initiatives.

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