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**Emotional intelligence through Leadership and HR
dynamics**

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Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as one of the most essential competencies for leaders operating in today's dynamic and diverse organizational environments. As globalization and workforce diversification continue to reshape modern business structures, leaders are increasingly required to manage not only tasks and resources but also emotions, values, and human differences. Emotional intelligence enables individuals to understand and regulate their own emotions while recognizing and responding appropriately to the emotions of others. This ability fosters trust, empathy, and collaboration—qualities that are fundamental to effective leadership and inclusive organizational cultures. Within human resource (HR) dynamics, emotionally intelligent leaders are better equipped to promote fairness, equity, and psychological safety, thereby contributing to improved performance and overall employee satisfaction.

At the same time, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) have become central priorities for organizations worldwide, reflecting a growing awareness of the need to embrace differences in gender, ethnicity, culture, and background. However, while many organizations have developed formal DEI policies, their successful implementation often depends on the emotional and interpersonal skills of leaders. Emotional intelligence therefore serves as the connecting element between leadership behavior and the realization of inclusive values in practice. Leaders with high EI can navigate cultural sensitivities, mediate conflicts, and inspire cooperation across diverse teams, making them critical agents of social cohesion and organizational transformation.

Despite its growing recognition, the integration of emotional intelligence within DEI and HR practices remains inconsistent across industries and regions. Many organizations continue to view EI as a personal trait rather than a strategic capability that drives inclusivity and innovation. This study investigates the relationship between emotional intelligence and DEI effectiveness within organizations, exploring how emotionally intelligent leadership influences inclusivity, equity, and organizational culture. It also examines comparative perspectives between Hungary and Syria, providing cross-cultural insights into how EI functions as a bridge between leadership effectiveness and inclusive human resource practices.

The aim of this study is to:

- Examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) effectiveness within organizations.
- Analyze how emotionally intelligent leadership influences organizational inclusivity and employee perceptions.
- Compare DEI policy implementation and outcomes across different cultural contexts, particularly between Hungary and Syria.
- Propose recommendations for integrating emotional intelligence into leadership and HR strategies to strengthen inclusivity and organizational performance.

Research Questions

1. How does emotional intelligence among leaders influence DEI effectiveness within organizations?
2. What is the relationship between DEI policy implementation and organizational inclusivity outcomes?
3. Do organizations with higher EI in leadership demonstrate stronger DEI commitment?
4. How do perceptions of inclusivity differ between leadership and non-leadership roles?
5. How do gender and cultural context affect the perception of organizational inclusivity?

Research Hypotheses

Based on the objectives and questions, the study tests the following hypotheses:

- H1: Organizations with more robust DEI policies report higher diversity outcomes.
- H2: Organizations with higher DEI policy scores show stronger DEI commitment.
- H3: Organizations with stronger DEI policies have leaders who demonstrate greater DEI advocacy.
- H4: Leaders perceive greater DEI commitment than non-leaders.
- H5: Gender affects perception of organizational inclusiveness.
- H6: Higher organizational DEI commitment positively influences inclusivity.
- H7: DEI in leadership training enhances inclusivity perceptions.
- H8: Leaders' emotional intelligence positively influences inclusivity.

1. Literature review

1.1. Leadership and Diversity

1.1.1. Leadership

Leadership is a set of mindsets and behaviors that guide individuals towards a common purpose, enabling them to collaborate and achieve shared goals while adapting to changes in their environment. It is not about authority or title but about actions that inspire trust and commitment. Leaders, whether in formal or informal positions, help others accomplish what they could not do alone. Effective leadership is a skill that can be learned, with self-awareness and authenticity as essential components. Leadership effectiveness is largely influenced by behaviors like being supportive, focusing on results, seeking diverse perspectives, and solving problems effectively. Successful leaders understand that different situations require different approaches and adapt their strategies accordingly (McKinsey, 2024).

Leadership also includes the ethical responsibility of valuing diversity, avoiding stereotypes, and ensuring inclusivity. Leaders earn respect by appreciating contributions, providing support, and fostering a sense of shared purpose. Ethical leadership emphasizes collaboration and respect, ensuring that power is not misused, and that people feel valued as part of the team (Thompson, 2021).

1.1.2. Diversity

Diversity, in its simplest form, refers to the existence of a variety or mix of differences, whether among objects, ideas, or people. In society and workplaces, diversity encompasses the unique combination of attributes—such as beliefs, experiences, identities, and viewpoints—that each individual brings to a group. While diversity exists naturally in every setting, organizations often struggle with achieving representation across specific categories, such as race, gender, and sexual orientation. True progress goes beyond attracting diverse individuals—it requires creating environments where differences are respected, valued, and supported, ensuring equitable treatment and opportunities for all (Cabral, 2020; Bika, 2023).

Diversity, which refers to the differences between people, can sometimes lead to discrimination and oppression. Being different from the mainstream can easily be viewed as being inferior, highlighting the importance of responding positively to diversity and valuing differences.

Sensitivity to diversity is crucial because ignoring these issues can lead to alienation, invalidation, missing key issues, or even perpetuating discrimination and oppression (Thompson, 2021).

Additionally, the role of language in fostering or hindering diversity and inclusion cannot be overstated, as it directly impacts cultural identity and social integration (Aithor, 2024).

It is essential to develop skills that allow individuals to deal with diversity effectively, as the lack of such skills can lead to negative outcomes, like alienating others or contributing to systemic issues. Recognizing and valuing diversity is not only about preventing harm but also about actively fostering a more inclusive and understanding environment where everyone feels valued (Thompson, 2021).

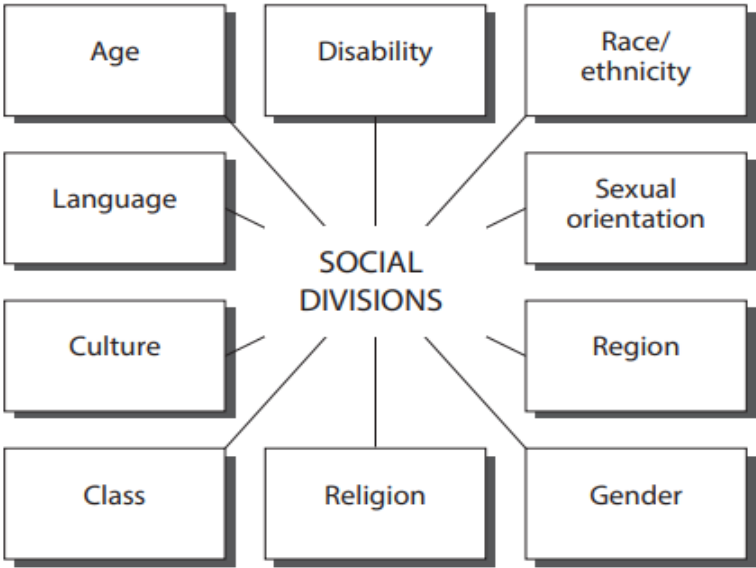
1.1.3. Identity

Identity is the combination of attributes that make each person unique, including factors like age, race, gender, income, sexual orientation, religion, and more. These elements of identity shape how individuals view themselves and how they are perceived by others. While some aspects of identity are visible, many are private and personal, and assumptions made based on appearance are often inaccurate. Everyone has the right to define their own identity, and we must respect their choices without imposing our own labels. Identity is a shared experience, as society often categorizes people based on visible characteristics, but it is deeply personal in how it is shaped and understood. The key to respectful interactions is to honor how others define themselves and to use the names and labels they prefer, understanding that, just as we wish to be recognized for who we are, others deserve the same consideration (Cabral, 2020).

1.2. Aspects of Diversity

As Figure 1 shows, social divisions encompass several interconnected factors—such as class, gender, race, age, culture, and disability—that influence inclusion and opportunity across society.

Figure 1: Social Divisions
(Source: Thompson, N., 2021)



Diversity is both an acknowledgment of the unique qualities of each individual and a reflection of the unequal distribution of power, influence, and opportunities across various social groups in society. These disparities are shaped by social divisions such as class, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, and disability, which all influence people’s lives and experiences (Thompson, 2021).

1.2.1. Class diversity

Refers to the inclusion and representation of individuals from various social-class origins within an organization or institution. It acknowledges the cultural and economic disparities that stem from differences in family income, parental education levels, and occupational backgrounds, which significantly influence opportunities and behaviors in the workplace. Addressing class diversity not only enhances individual career potential and well-being but also contributes to organizational effectiveness and societal equity by enabling a broader range of talent to thrive and innovate (Ingram, 2020).

1.2.2. Race and culture

Are distinct yet interconnected. Race encompasses aspects like nationality, skin color, and ethnicity, defined by shared ancestry, language, or culture, as outlined in equality laws and census classifications. Culture, on the other hand, refers to the broader influences of ethnicity, religion, values, behaviors, and practices, including diet, fashion, and leisure, shaped by beliefs, laws, and customs (Diversity Guide, 2024).

1.2.3. Gender diversity

In the workplace is increasingly important, influencing not only prospective employees' decisions to join an organization but also offering numerous benefits to businesses that prioritize it. By fostering creativity and innovation, organizations can adopt engaging strategies to promote gender diversity. This includes adhering to anti-discrimination laws, implementing inclusive hiring practices, and cultivating a culture of respect and fairness to ensure equitable treatment and representation for all genders (Quintana, 2024).

1.2.4. Sexual orientation

Refers to an individual's emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction to people of a specific gender. It is a fundamental aspect of human identity, shaping how we view ourselves and connect with others (Schmidt, 2024). Professionals in various fields must actively address challenges to ensure that everyone, regardless of sexual orientation, is treated with dignity, respect, and fairness (Thompson, 2021).

1.2.5. Age diversity

involves the inclusion of individuals from various age groups within a workplace or organization, encompassing multiple generations. While age-diverse teams bring valuable perspectives, skills, and networks, they can also face challenges, including mistrust, competition, and resentment between generations. These tensions can lead to reduced collaboration, emotional conflicts, and higher turnover rates, impacting overall productivity. Despite its importance, many organizations fail to address age diversity in their DEI strategies, often overlooking tools that could foster understanding, bridge generational gaps, and encourage mutual learning to harness the benefits of an age-diverse workforce (Harnessing the Power of Age Diversity, 2022).

1.2.6. Disability challenges

include physical, social, and systemic barriers that hinder employment opportunities and workplace inclusion. Disabilities may involve mobility limitations, sensory impairments, or neurodevelopmental conditions (Reid, 2025). Inclusive strategies and self-advocacy are key in enabling individuals with disabilities to thrive professionally.

These various aspects of diversity do not exist in isolation; they intersect and interact to shape an individual's experience. Understanding the complexities of these dimensions is crucial for providing effective support and fostering inclusive environments. By appreciating the social location of individuals and recognizing the ways in which these divisions affect them, we can better understand their experiences and address their needs in a way that is sensitive to their unique social context. (Thompson 2021)

1.3. Allies and Advocates

1.3.1. Ally

An ally is someone who supports and stands with individuals or groups from marginalized communities. They take actions to create a more equitable and inclusive environment, even when it does not directly benefit them. Allies are proactive in educating themselves about the experiences of marginalized groups, listening to and amplifying the voices of those impacted by inequities, and using their privilege to challenge biases, stereotypes, and microaggressions. Allyship is often focused on individual relationships and behavior, involving ongoing learning and humility. Allies take small but meaningful steps to foster inclusivity in their daily actions, demonstrating their commitment to supporting equity (Cabral, 2020).

1.3.2. Advocate

An advocate goes beyond allyship by actively working to create systemic change. Advocates leverage their influence and power to dismantle barriers and ensure equity for marginalized groups. Their work often includes challenging policies, practices, or structures that perpetuate inequality and taking visible, strategic action to promote diversity and inclusion in workplaces or communities. Advocates publicly support DEI efforts and champion underrepresented voices in decision-making spaces. They are consistent and intentional in their efforts, driving long-term change and committing to structural reform. Advocacy often involves a focus on institutional or organizational transformation, taking allyship to the next level (Cabral, 2020).

1.4. Bias

Bias is a natural mental shortcut that helps us process information quickly but can lead to stereotypes that exclude others. Unconscious bias occurs when we make judgments without realizing it. For example, we may associate certain professions with specific genders or races. These biases can create exclusionary behaviors, but by becoming aware of them, we can adjust our actions and perspectives to promote inclusion (Cabral, 2020).

1.4.1. Conformity Bias

Conformity bias refers to the inclination to adjust one's beliefs or actions to align with those of others. Rather than relying on their own judgment, individuals often look to the group they are part of or wish to join for guidance on what is considered right or acceptable, and subsequently modify their behavior to match (Nikolopoulou, 2024).

1.4.2. Similarity Bias

Affinity bias refers to the tendency to favor individuals with traits that are more likable, regardless of whether they are similar to us. On the other hand, similarity bias involves preferring someone because of shared characteristics, not necessarily because they are more likable overall, but because they appear more likable to us personally due to those similarities (Charlotte, 2023).

1.4.3. Halo and Horns Effects

The halo effect is when we view someone more positively based on one redeeming quality, such as their appearance, which leads us to overlook their negative traits, like poor punctuality or communication skills. In contrast, the horn effect is the opposite, where we form a negative perception of someone based on a single undesirable trait, such as their appearance or behavior, and let it influence our overall judgment of them. Both biases impact how we evaluate people in various situations, like hiring decisions (Caccavale, 2020).

1.4.4. Microaggressions

Microaggressions refer to subtle, often unintentional actions or comments that belittle or demean marginalized groups based on race, religion, gender, disability, or sexual orientation. They can be categorized into micro-assaults, where overtly offensive actions or words are used; micro-insults, which are indirect insults or stereotypes about someone's abilities; and micro-

invalidations, where individuals' experiences or identities are dismissed or belittled. Though often unnoticed, microaggressions contribute to discrimination and perpetuate societal biases, making it important to recognize and address them to promote inclusivity and respect (pwsbuilder, 2022).

1.4.5. Equality and Equity

Equality involves giving everyone the same resources or opportunities, assuming that everyone starts from the same place. In contrast, equity recognizes that individuals have different circumstances and therefore requires the distribution of resources tailored to their specific needs to achieve equal outcomes (George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health, 2020).

1.4.6. Language

Language plays a crucial role in the work of inclusion and equity, shaping how individuals communicate, connect, and express their identities within different communities. It is not just a structured system of words but a reflection of identity, culture, and belonging. The terms and language used in these contexts are often rooted in activism, carrying bold and sometimes uncomfortable connotations meant to challenge and provoke change. Allies and advocates must navigate this language with sensitivity, understanding that the same words can have different meanings or implications depending on the speaker and audience. This dynamic requires allies to be attentive to the cultural and community-specific nuances of language, embracing the discomfort it may bring as part of their growth. By learning and using this language accurately and respectfully, individuals contribute to a clearer and more effective dialogue around equity and inclusion (Cabral, 2020).

1.4.7. Privilege

Allyship and advocacy require recognizing one's privilege, without feeling guilt or shame. Privilege varies by perspective and can include financial privilege and White privilege. For example, White individuals may experience advantages like shorter prison sentences, higher wages, or better facial recognition accuracy compared to people of color. Privilege does not mean one's success is unearned, but that systems favor certain groups. Recognizing privilege can be difficult, but it is essential for allies to use their privilege to create more equitable systems for marginalized groups (Cabral, 2020).

1.4.8. Systems

Inclusion and equity focus on "systems," which are policies, practices, and structures that guide societal functioning, often leading to exclusion or privilege for certain groups, such as in education, law, and healthcare (Cabral, 2020). These systems operate behind the scenes, shaping our experiences, often without us realizing they may not work the same for everyone. "Systematic" refers to intentional actions within a system, like a medical school lowering women's entrance exam score or recruiters dismissing resumes based on ethnic names. These deliberate actions can be changed by addressing specific behaviors (Cabral, 2020). "Systemic" refers to deeply ingrained practices that are normalized within institutions, making them harder to identify and change. Systemic issues show how individuals may unknowingly perpetuate oppressive systems, believing they are following normal processes (Cabral, 2020).

1.5. Approaches

The field of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in organizational settings has evolved rapidly, with scholars proposing various frameworks and strategies to foster inclusivity, address systemic barriers, and promote equitable practices. This review synthesizes key works from prominent DEI scholars, including Thompson, Tulshyan, Owyong, Cabral, Fuller, Murphy, & Chow. The review is organized around central DEI themes, including empathy and emotional intelligence, systemic barriers, individual vs. organizational focus, psychological safety, and inclusive leadership practices. By synthesizing the authors' contributions, the review aims to provide a critical perspective on their theories, evaluate their strengths and limitations and highlight areas for future exploration.

1.5.1. Empathy and Emotional Intelligence in DEI

Empathy and emotional intelligence (EI) are central to creating inclusive environments, as they help individuals recognize and address their biases. Thompson (2015) places empathy and EI at the heart of fostering inclusion, focusing on personal growth and emotional intelligence as key to reducing biases. His approach emphasizes self-awareness as an essential tool for individuals to reflect on their actions and promote inclusivity in their interactions.

Similarly, Cabral (2020) highlights the importance of empathy in creating psychologically safe spaces for diverse groups. Cabral focuses on cultural competence and how understanding cultural differences through empathetic interactions can break down barriers in organizations.

However, while Thompson emphasizes EI at an individual level, Cabral broadens this by linking empathy to organizational culture and the creation of safe spaces for marginalized groups.

Tulshyan (2021) also stresses the role of empathy but in a more systemic context. She argues that cognitive and affective empathy are essential for addressing systemic inequities, especially for women of color, by recognizing the intersectionality of identities. In contrast, Owyong (2022) views empathy as a tool to understand marginalized perspectives but insists that empathy alone is not sufficient. He emphasizes that organizations must go beyond empathy and implement action-driven DEI strategies to ensure meaningful change.

Together, these authors show that while empathy is a crucial starting point for inclusion, it must be complemented by systemic action and a focus on both individual and organizational transformation.

1.5.2. Systemic Barriers and Structural Inequities

A central theme across the works of these authors is the recognition and dismantling of systemic barriers that hinder true diversity and inclusion. Tulshyan (2021) offers perhaps the most comprehensive exploration of systemic barriers through frameworks like BRIDGE and ADAPT, which integrate both individual reflection and organizational action. Her focus on intersectionality highlights how systemic barriers disproportionately affect individuals at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities, particularly women of color.

In contrast, Owyong (2022) critiques the gap between organizations' stated DEI intentions and actual outcomes, urging organizations to align their actions with their DEI goals. Owyong emphasizes the implementation gap, where many organizations claim to be inclusive but fail to address the deeper, structural causes of inequality. Fuller, Murphy, and Chow (2020) similarly critique organizational processes, particularly in leadership and hiring practices, noting how unconscious bias plays a major role in perpetuating systemic inequalities in the workplace.

While these authors agree that systemic barriers are a critical issue, they differ in their approaches. Tulshyan offers practical, actionable frameworks, while Owyong and Fuller, Murphy, and Chow focus more on critiquing the disconnect between stated intentions and actual practices.

1.5.3. Individual vs. Organizational Focus

One key distinction in the literature is the balance between individual responsibility and organizational accountability in achieving DEI goals. Thompson (2015) emphasizes the importance of individual responsibility in fostering inclusion. His focus on emotional intelligence as a personal tool for reducing bias reflects his belief that change must begin at the individual level before it can be institutionalized.

On the other hand, Cabral (2020) and Tulshyan (2021) take a more balanced approach, advocating for both individual and organizational change. Cabral discusses the need for leaders to develop personal cultural competence while simultaneously fostering an organizational culture that is inclusive and supportive. Tulshyan argues that addressing privilege and systemic inequalities requires both personal reflection and organizational redesign. This integrated approach ensures that individual actions are aligned with broader structural changes.

Owyoung (2022), while emphasizing organizational change, acknowledges the need for individuals to be aware of their role in perpetuating systemic inequities. He stresses that organizations must provide clear frameworks for accountability and track progress on their DEI goals to ensure that change is not just performative.

1.5.4. Psychological Safety and Inclusive Leadership

The concept of psychological safety is closely tied to creating inclusive environments where individuals feel safe to express their authentic selves. Cabral (2020) and Tulshyan (2021) emphasize that psychological safety is essential for fostering inclusion, particularly for marginalized groups. They argue that without creating an environment where individuals can speak up without fear of retaliation or judgment, inclusion cannot be achieved.

Thompson (2015) connects psychological safety to emotional intelligence, suggesting that leaders must develop EI to foster environments where psychological safety is prioritized. However, he primarily focuses on the emotional growth of individuals, rather than systemic change. Fuller, Murphy, and Chow (2020) critique how unconscious biases and traditional leadership practices can undermine psychological safety, particularly for people of color and other marginalized groups. Their work emphasizes the role of leadership accountability in ensuring that psychological safety is not just a buzzword but a lived experience for all employees.

1.5.5. Inclusive Leadership Practices

In their discussions of inclusive leadership, these authors propose several practices that leaders can adopt to foster a more inclusive workplace. Thompson (2015) advocates for emotional intelligence training and reflective practices to help leaders develop self-awareness and empathy, which are key to creating inclusive environments.

Tulshyan (2021) provides a more structured framework for inclusive leadership, offering BRIDGE and ADAPT as tools to help leaders address privilege, feedback mechanisms, and systemic biases. These frameworks encourage leaders to not only be aware of their own biases but also to challenge the organizational structures that perpetuate inequities.

Cabral (2020) focuses on the importance of leaders embracing cultural competence and psychological safety as part of their leadership practice. She emphasizes that inclusive leadership is not a one-time effort but a continuous process of learning and unlearning. Similarly, Owyong (2022) stresses the need for transparency and accountability in leadership to ensure that DEI goals are not just aspirational but are also measurable and actionable.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) offer diverse perspectives on how to create truly inclusive workplaces. While Thompson (2015) emphasizes individual emotional intelligence, authors like Tulshyan (2021) and Cabral (2020) offer more comprehensive frameworks that integrate individual reflection with organizational action. Owyong (2022) and Fuller, Murphy, and Chow (2020) critique the gap between DEI intentions and actual outcomes, urging organizations to move beyond performative actions and take measurable steps toward inclusivity.

The most significant contributions from these authors lie in their ability to address both the individual and organizational aspects of DEI. Their frameworks and critiques highlight the need for both personal transformation and systemic change in achieving true inclusivity. Future research should explore how these frameworks can be applied in practice and how organizations can move from theoretical frameworks to meaningful action in DEI initiatives.

1.6. Comparison of the Five Authors

As shown in Table 1, the works of the five authors differ in their emphasis on key dimensions of DEI and emotional intelligence.

Table 1: Comparison of the Five Authors on Key DEI and Emotional Intelligence Dimensions

(Source: Author’s own work, 2025)

Dimension	Thompson	Tulshyan	Owyong	Cabral	F, M&C
Key Focus Area	Emotional intelligence, reflective practice, and individual accountability for fostering inclusion.	Addressing privilege, systemic barriers, and intersectionality in creating equitable organizations.	Bridging gaps between corporate intentions and actions for true DEI progress.	Understanding cultural identities and psychological safety in achieving inclusion.	Business strategy and structural innovation to improve equity and diversity outcomes.
Individual vs. Organizational Emphasis	Primarily individual, focusing on personal growth and emotional intelligence.	Balanced focus on individuals (privilege) and organizations (systemic solutions).	Balanced focus, with a strong emphasis on aligning organizational DEI goals with accountability.	Balanced, emphasizing individual cultural awareness and organizational psychological safety.	Primarily organizational, focusing on creating measurable DEI outcomes within corporate systems.

Dimension	Thompson	Tulshyan	Owyong	Cabral	F, M&C
Approach to Bias and Privilege	Stresses self-awareness and challenging personal biases through reflection and emotional intelligence.	Encourages leveraging privilege to dismantle systemic inequalities and drive inclusion.	Focuses on identifying gaps between intent and action in bias reduction efforts.	Advocates for self-awareness of cultural identity and the impact of unconscious bias.	Tackles systemic barriers to equitable hiring, retention, and advancement through organizational accountability.
Role of Empathy	Central to emotional intelligence and inclusion; fosters understanding and reduces biases.	Empathy (cognitive and affective) as essential for addressing workplace inequities.	Encourages empathy as a tool to understand marginalized perspectives but with action-driven outcomes.	Highlights empathy in creating psychologically safe spaces for diverse groups.	Empathy indirectly tied to organizational design and retention strategies.
Perspective on Structural Barriers	Acknowledges systemic issues but focuses on individual-level solutions first.	Strong focus on dismantling systemic barriers, especially for women of color.	Examines systemic barriers but critiques the gap between stated DEI goals and real actions.	Links structural inequities to a lack of psychological safety and cultural understanding.	Addresses structural barriers at every organizational level, from recruitment to leadership diversity.

Dimension	Thompson	Tulshyan	Owyong	Cabral	F, M&C
Inclusive Leadership Practices	Develop emotional intelligence, embrace reflection, and foster personal growth.	Advocates bridge and adapt frameworks for inclusive leadership, addressing privilege, feedback, and structural biases.	Suggests transparency, accountability, and measurable actions for leaders to advance DEI goals.	Encourages fostering a culture of belonging through cultural competence and psychological safety.	Proposes systemic leadership accountability tied to clear metrics and strategies.
Organizational Recommendations	Incorporate emotional intelligence training and reflective practice in teams.	Address systemic inequalities through equitable hiring, psychological safety, and privilege awareness.	Tie DEI strategies to measurable outcomes, ensuring actions match organizational goals.	Build psychological safety and create inclusive policies rooted in cultural understanding.	Structural changes in hiring, retention, and leadership accountability for DEI outcomes.
Unique Contribution	Holistic focus on emotional intelligence as a tool for self-awareness and inclusion.	Prioritizes intersectionality and privilege as core issues in creating inclusive organizations.	Strong critique of performative DEI efforts, urging organizations to close the intention-action gap.	Combines psychological safety with cultural competence for deeper organizational inclusion.	Data-driven approach linking DEI initiatives to measurable business outcomes.

1.7. Analysis of Themes

1.7.1. Empathy and Emotional Intelligence

Thompson places empathy and emotional intelligence at the core of personal growth and inclusion, emphasizing their role in reducing biases. His approach is individualistic, focusing on how self-awareness and emotional intelligence can foster inclusive environments.

Tulshyan and Cabral also highlight the importance of empathy, but within the context of understanding systemic inequities and creating psychologically safe spaces. For them, empathy extends beyond individual growth to influence organizational change.

Owyoung and Fuller, Murphy & Chow focus on the role of empathy in improving organizational outcomes. However, their emphasis is less on emotional intelligence and more on translating empathy into measurable actions and structural changes.

1.7.2. Systemic Barriers

Tulshyan offers the most comprehensive exploration of systemic barriers, with practical frameworks like BRIDGE and ADAPT designed to dismantle these barriers through a combination of individual reflection and organizational action.

Fuller, Murphy & Chow focus on systemic inequities at a macro level, particularly in leadership practices and hiring processes, critiquing how unconscious biases influence organizational outcomes.

Owyoung critiques the gap between an organization's stated DEI intentions and actual outcomes, highlighting that many organizations fail to address systemic barriers effectively despite their claims of inclusivity.

1.7.3. Individual vs. Organizational Focus

Thompson emphasizes individual responsibility for fostering inclusion, arguing that personal reflection and emotional intelligence are key to overcoming biases.

Tulshyan, Cabral, and Owyoung offer a more balanced approach, addressing both individual actions and organizational systems in creating equitable and inclusive workplaces.

Fuller, Murphy & Chow lean heavily into organizational responsibility, advocating for systemic redesign and data-driven accountability to address DEI goals.

1.7.4. Practical Frameworks

Tulshyan provides the most detailed actionable frameworks, such as BRIDGE and ADAPT, which are highly practical for DEI leadership and organizational change.

Thompson's approach is more introspective, encouraging individuals to focus on emotional growth and reflection as the first step toward inclusion.

Owyoung focuses on transparency and accountability, urging organizations to track measurable DEI outcomes.

Fuller, Murphy & Chow advocate for organizational redesign, recommending structural changes to promote diversity and inclusion.

Psychological Safety

Cabral and Tulshyan place psychological safety at the center of their frameworks, arguing that inclusive workplaces must actively foster environments where individuals feel safe to express their authentic selves.

Thompson ties psychological safety to emotional intelligence, while Owyoung critiques the failure of organizations to provide psychologically safe spaces, despite their DEI claims.

2. Methodology

2.1. Overview

The dataset used in this research was collected through a structured survey designed to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) in leadership and the effectiveness of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within organizations. It captures how employees perceive leadership behaviors, emotional intelligence, organizational inclusiveness, and the presence of formal DEI policies across various industries and cultural contexts.

The data consists of both quantitative and qualitative variables, allowing for statistical and thematic analysis of leadership dynamics, emotional intelligence, and organizational inclusion practices. Each row represents a single respondent's answers.

2.2. Variables and Structure

Table 2 presents the demographic and professional background of all survey participants.

Table 2: Demographic and Professional Information

(Source: Author's own work, 2025)

Variable	Description
Country_of_Work	The country where the respondent is currently employed.
Age	The respondent's age group.
Gender	The gender identity of the respondent.
Background	The respondent's cultural or ethnic background.
Industry	The sector or industry in which the respondent works.
Position	The respondent's job role or organizational level (Leader, Non-Leader)
Experience	The respondent's total years of professional experience.

As Table 3 shows, several indicators were used to assess emotional intelligence within organizational leadership.

Table 3: Emotional Intelligence (EI) Indicators

(Source: Author's own work, 2025)

Variable	Description
EI_Importance_Org	Rating (1–5) of how important emotional intelligence is for leadership in the organization.
Leaders_EI_Frequency	How often leaders demonstrate emotional intelligence behaviors (e.g., empathy, self-awareness, emotional regulation).
Leaders_EI_Rating	Respondent's assessment of leaders' overall emotional intelligence.
EI_Helps_DEI_Management	Whether emotional intelligence helps leaders manage diversity effectively.

Table 4 illustrates the main DEI policy areas considered in this study, including gender, racial, and cultural inclusion.

Table 4: Organizational DEI Commitment and Policies

(Source: Author's own work, 2025)

Variable	Description
Org_DEI_Commitment	Rating (1–5) of the organization’s overall commitment to DEI.
Gender_Equality_Policy	Existence or strength of a gender equality policy.
Racial_Cultural_Inclusion_Policy	Existence or strength of racial and cultural inclusion policies.
Disability_Support_Policy	Presence of policies or support systems for employees with disabilities.
LGBTQ_Inclusion_Policy	Existence or strength of policies supporting LGBTQ+ inclusion.
Age_Diversity_Policy	Presence of policies promoting age diversity.
DEI_In_Leadership_Training	Indicates whether DEI is integrated into leadership training or development programs.
Leadership_DEI_Advocacy	Measures how well leaders advocate for DEI principles.
DEI_Consistency_Across_Levels	Assesses whether DEI practices are consistently applied across different leadership levels.

As presented in Table 5, diversity outcomes were measured through indicators covering gender, culture, race, age, and disability inclusion.

Table 5: Diversity Outcome Measures

(Source: Author’s own work, 2025)

Variable	Description
Gender_Diversity	Presence of gender diversity in the organization.
Cultural_Diversity	Presence of cultural diversity in the organization.
Racial_Ethnic_Diversity	Presence of racial or ethnic representation in the workplace.
LGBTQ_Inclusion	Presence of LGBTQ+ employees.
Age_Diversity	Presence of inclusivity across age groups.
Disability_Inclusion	Presence of individuals with disabilities.

Table 6 displays indicators related to organizational inclusivity and perceptions of leadership behavior.

Table 6: Organizational Culture and Leadership Perception

(Source: Author’s own work, 2025)

Variable	Description
Org_Inclusivity_Score	Overall perception of how inclusive the organization’s culture is.
Leadership_Open_DEI_Discussion	How effectively leadership encourages open discussions about DEI.
Leadership_Values_Diverse_Perspectives	Whether leadership values employees’ perspectives, especially from diverse backgrounds.
Leadership_Adaptability_To_Diversity	Comparison of current leadership adaptability to diversity versus previous years.

As shown in Table 7, qualitative variables were included to capture participants' open-ended insights and suggestions.

Table 7: Qualitative and Open-Ended Variables

(Source: Author's own work, 2025)

Variable	Description
Suggestions	Respondent's suggested changes to improve leadership approach toward DEI.
Comments	Additional comments or insights on leadership and diversity management.

2.3. Scale of Measurement

- **Quantitative variables:** Measured using Likert scales (1–5), representing frequency, importance, or agreement levels.
- **Categorical variables:** Represent demographic and role-based attributes such as gender, industry, or country.
- **Binary variables:** Represent the presence or absence of certain DEI policies (e.g., 1 = present, 0 = not present).
- **Qualitative variables:** Capture open-ended responses used for textual or thematic analysis.

2.4. Summary

This dataset enables quantitative and qualitative exploration of how emotional intelligence and DEI policies interact to influence inclusivity and diversity outcomes. It provides a comprehensive basis for analyzing:

- The importance and demonstration of EI in leadership.
- The effectiveness of DEI policies in promoting workplace diversity.
- The link between leadership behaviors and inclusivity perceptions across industries and backgrounds.

2.5. Descriptive Analysis

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Overview

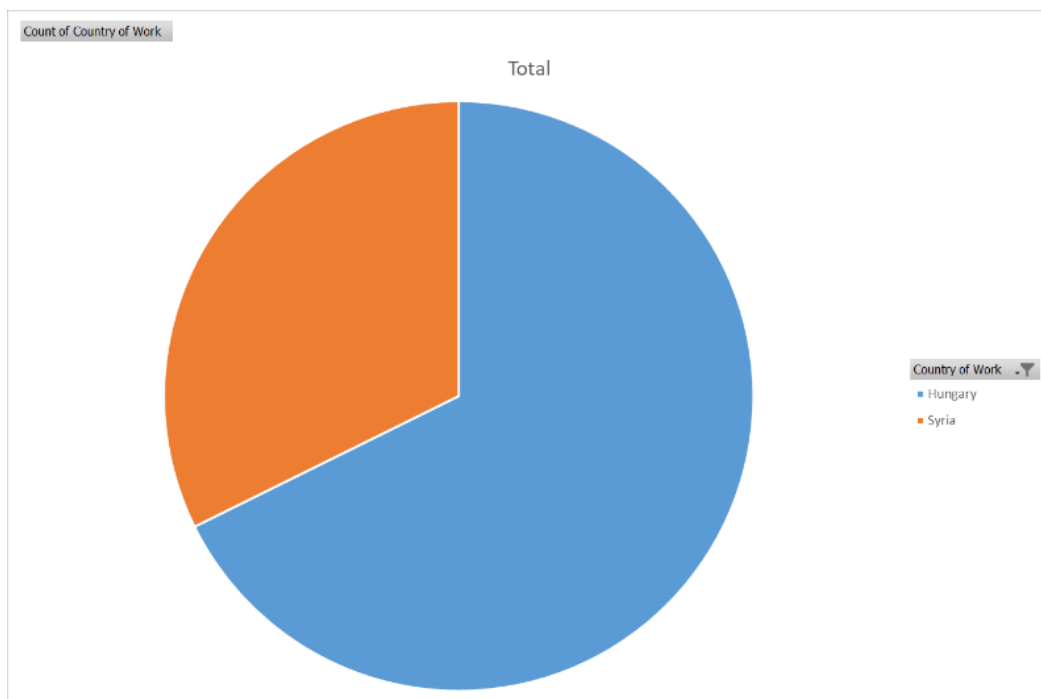
The dataset represents a diverse group of respondents ($N \approx 100$) from various countries, industries, and professional backgrounds. The participants differ in gender, age, nationality, professional experience, and leadership level, providing a rich foundation for analyzing how emotional intelligence and diversity-related factors manifest across cultural and organizational contexts.

2.5.1. Country of Work

As Figure 2 illustrates, the majority of respondents work in Hungary and Syria, reflecting the primary focus of the study's comparative analysis.

Figure 2: Country Of Work

(Source: Author's own work, 2025)



The majority of respondents work in Hungary and Syria, indicating that this is the central context of the study. Secondary representations include, the Philippines, the Netherlands, the USA, the UK, and a range of other countries such as France, Jordan, Turkey, Spain, Sweden, and Vietnam.

This reflects both local and international perspectives, capturing employees and leaders who either work or have experience in multicultural environments.

2.5.2. Age Distribution

Most respondents fall within the 26–35 age group, suggesting a predominance of young to mid-career professionals.

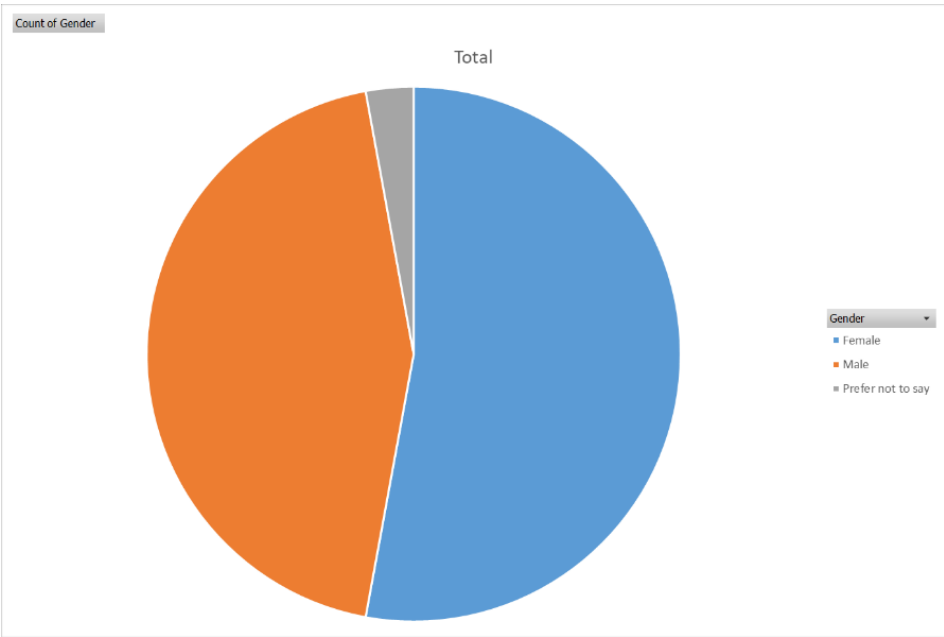
Other notable groups include respondents aged 18–25, representing early-career individuals, and a smaller proportion in the 36–45 and 46–55 ranges, indicating mid- to senior-level professionals. The distribution suggests the dataset is largely composed of employees in the developmental and growth stages of their careers, with enough representation from experienced individuals to reflect leadership viewpoints.

2.5.3. Gender Composition

Figure 3 presents the gender distribution of participants, highlighting the predominance of female respondents in the dataset.

Figure 3: Gender Composition

(Source: Author’s own work, 2025)



The dataset is female-dominant, with women making up the majority of respondents. Males form the second-largest group, while a few participants selected “Prefer not to say” for gender identity.

This balance provides insights into how gender may influence perceptions of emotional intelligence and diversity in leadership.

2.5.4. Cultural and Ethnic Background

Respondents come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, including Hungarian, Syrian, Filipino, Tunisian, Jordanian, Dutch, American, British, Polish, Vietnamese, and others such as Colombian, Mexican-American, and Tanzanian.

A number of mixed backgrounds (e.g., “South American and German,” “Hungarian and Yemeni”) and multi-ethnic identities (e.g., “Senegalo French Italian”) are also present, highlighting the dataset’s multicultural nature.

This cultural diversity is significant for understanding cross-cultural perceptions of emotional intelligence and DEI.

2.5.5. Industry Representation

Participants represent over 20 distinct industries, demonstrating wide sectoral diversity. The most frequently appearing industries included technology and engineering, hospitality and retail, healthcare, education, customer service, administration, and finance.

Other sectors such as Oil and Gas, Construction & Architecture, Research, Marketing, Legal, International Development, and Human Resources are also represented. This diversity provides a cross-sectoral perspective on leadership and organizational culture, rather than a single-industry focus.

2.5.6. Organizational Position

Respondents were classified as either Leadership or Non-leadership positions. The majority hold non-leadership roles, representing employees who experience leadership behaviors from above. A smaller but important portion occupy leadership positions, offering direct insights into how leaders themselves perceive emotional intelligence and diversity management.

This balance allows comparison between leaders’ self-perception and employees’ evaluation of leadership behaviors.

2.5.7. Professional Experience

Work experience among participants ranges from 0–5 years to 21+ years, with the following general trend:

- The largest group: 0–5 years, representing early-career professionals.
- Moderate representation: 6–10 years and 11–20 years, corresponding to mid-level professionals.
- Smaller segment: 21+ years, corresponding to senior or veteran professionals.

This distribution reflects a workforce dominated by younger professionals, balanced by experienced respondents providing insights into leadership and organizational history.

2.5.8. Summary of Demographics

Geographical reach: Primarily Hungary and Syria with strong international representation.

Age: Majority between 26–35 years.

Gender: Predominantly female respondents.

Cultural diversity: Highly multicultural, spanning European, Middle Eastern, Asian, and American backgrounds.

Industry diversity: Broad coverage of technical, service-oriented, and professional sectors.

Organizational role: Mostly non-leadership, with a meaningful proportion in leadership positions.

Experience: Concentrated among early- and mid-career professionals.

Interpretation

Overall, the demographic composition demonstrates a diverse and globally relevant sample, well-suited for analyzing emotional intelligence and DEI perceptions in leadership. The mix of nationalities, sectors, and professional levels enhances the dataset's representativeness and supports meaningful cross-cultural and cross-sectoral insights.

2.6. Indicators Descriptive Analysis

2.6.1. Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Table 8 summarizes the descriptive statistics for emotional intelligence indicators used in the analysis.

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics of Emotional Intelligence (EI) Indicators

(Source: Author's own work, 2025)

	EI_Importance_Org	Leaders_EI_Frequency	Leaders_EI_Rating	EI_Helps_DEI_Management	Org_DEI_Commitment
Avg	4.355769231	3.384615385	3.5	2.807692308	3.625
Std	0.869306936	0.884688441	1.033422065	0.484255471	1.081059351
Min	1	1	1	1	1
Max	5	5	5	3	5

The descriptive analysis of emotional intelligence (EI) indicators shows that respondents perceive EI as highly important for leadership ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.87$), though leaders demonstrate these behaviors only moderately ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.88$). Overall leader EI is rated as moderate ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.03$), with notable variability across organizations. Respondents generally agree that EI supports effective DEI management ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 0.48$), and organizational commitment to DEI is moderate ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.08$) but varies considerably. These findings highlight a gap between the recognized importance of EI and its consistent practice, alongside heterogeneous DEI implementation across organizations.

2.6.2. Organizational DEI Commitment

As Table 9 shows, descriptive statistics highlight the extent of organizational DEI commitment and leadership involvement.

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics of Organizational DEI Commitment and Leadership Practices
(Source: Author's own work, 2025)

	DEI_In_Leadership_Training	Leadership_DEI_Advocacy	DEI_Consistency_Across_Levels
Avg	2.105769231	3.153846154	2.298076923
Std	0.858065891	1.077296425	0.748847758
Min	1	1	1
Max	3	5	3

The descriptive statistics for DEI-related leadership practices reveal that integration of DEI into leadership training is moderate relative to its 3-point scale ($M = 2.11$, $SD = 0.86$), indicating that DEI content is included to some extent in development programs but not comprehensively. Leaders' advocacy for DEI, measured on a 5-point scale, is also moderate ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.08$), with substantial variation across organizations, reflecting differences in how actively leaders promote DEI principles. The consistency of DEI application across leadership levels, again measured on a 3-point scale, is moderate ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 0.75$), suggesting that DEI practices are applied unevenly across hierarchical levels. Overall, these results highlight partial implementation of DEI initiatives in training and leadership behaviors, with variability in both advocacy and consistent practice across organizations.

2.6.3. Organizational Culture and Leadership Perception

Table 10 presents the descriptive statistics for leadership perceptions and inclusivity measures.

Table 10: Descriptive Statistics of Organizational Culture and Leadership Perception Indicators
(Source: Author’s own work, 2025)

	Org_Inclusivity_Score	Leadership_Open_DEI_Discussion	Leadership_Values_Diverse_Perspectives	Leadership_Adaptability_To_Diversity
Avg	3.56730769 2	2.951923077	2.317307692	2.336538462
Std	1.02174819 8	1.135309784	0.839144538	0.770960527
Min	1	1	1	1
Max	5	5	3	3

The descriptive statistics for organizational inclusivity and leadership perceptions indicate that overall inclusivity is moderate (Org_Inclusivity_Score $M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.02$, on a 5-point scale), suggesting that employees perceive their workplace culture as somewhat inclusive. Leadership openness to DEI discussions is slightly lower ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.14$, 5-point scale), reflecting variability in how openly leaders engage on diversity topics. Regarding variables measured on a 3-point scale, leaders are perceived to moderately value diverse perspectives ($M = 2.32$, $SD = 0.84$) and moderately adapt to diversity ($M = 2.34$, $SD = 0.77$). These findings indicate that, relative to the scale, leadership demonstrates a moderate level of responsiveness to diversity and inclusion, highlighting both a positive foundation and opportunities for improvement in actively supporting DEI practices.

2.7. Comparison of Perceptions

2.7.1. Working in Hungary vs. Syria

As illustrated in Table 11, differences in the perceived importance of EI between Hungarian and Syrian respondents are shown.

Table 11: Comparison of Emotional Intelligence (EI) Importance Between Respondents in Hungary and Syria

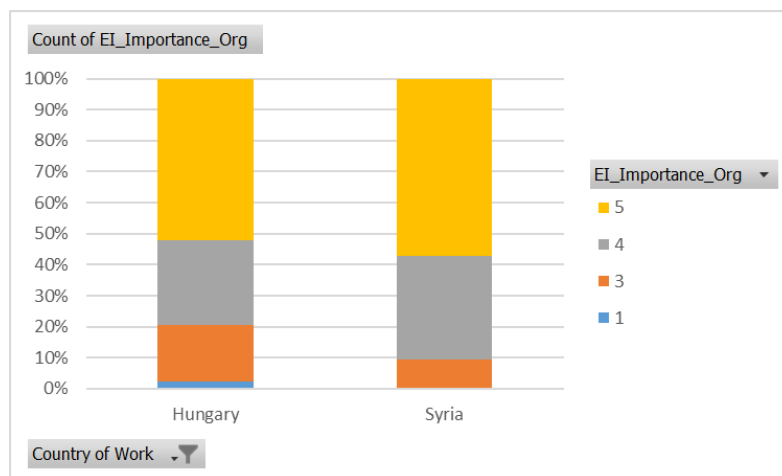
(Source: Author's own work, 2025)

Count of EI_Importance_Org	Column Labels				
Row Labels	1	3	4	5	Grand Total
Hungary	1	8	12	23	44
Syria	0	2	7	12	21
Grand Total	1	10	19	35	65

As shown in Figure 4, respondents from both Hungary and Syria generally regard emotional intelligence as an important leadership trait.

Figure 4: Hungary & Syria - EI Importance

(Source: Author's own work, 2025)

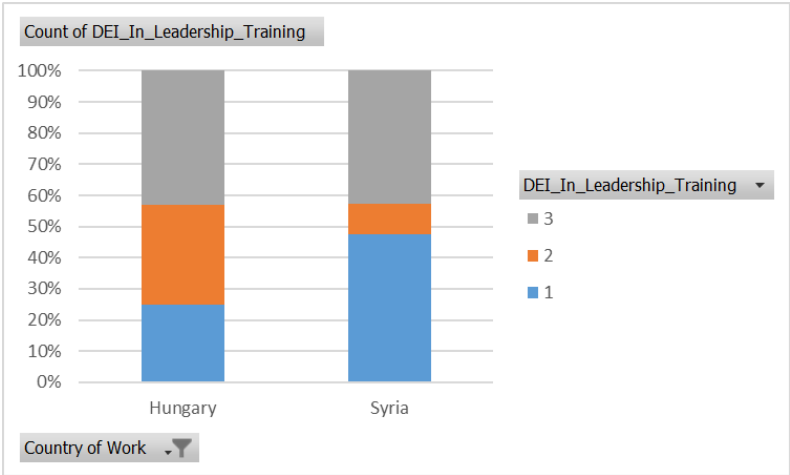


The analysis of emotional intelligence (EI) importance indicates that employees in both Hungary and Syria generally perceive EI as important for leadership. Hungary shows a slightly higher proportion of top ratings, suggesting a stronger perceived emphasis on EI, while Syria displays a similar pattern with slightly fewer maximum ratings. Overall, respondents from both countries recognize the significance of EI, highlighting its relevance across different organizational and cultural contexts.

2.7.2. Intergration in Leadership Training Hungary vs. Syria

Figure 5 illustrates the extent to which DEI principles are integrated into leadership training programs in Hungary and Syria.

Figure 5: Comparison of DEI Integration in Leadership Training: Hungary vs. Syria
(Source: Author’s own work, 2025)



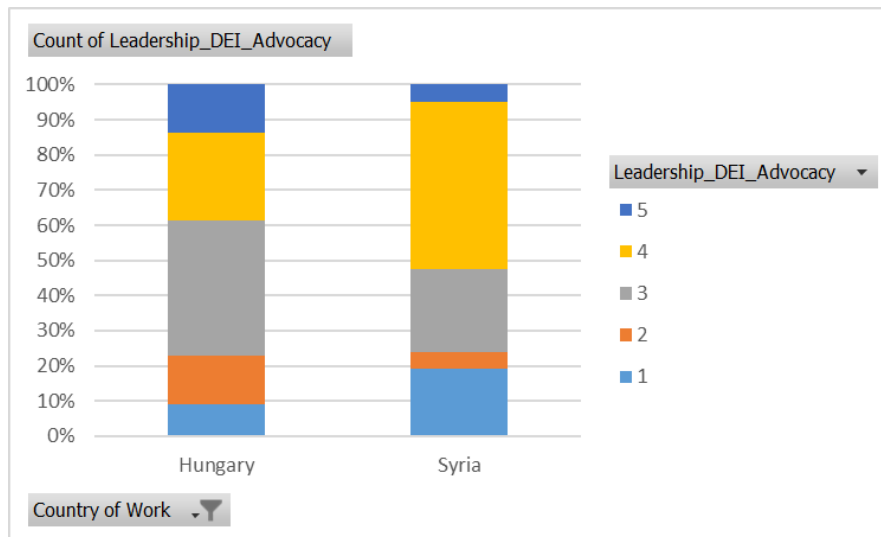
The distribution of responses regarding the integration of DEI into leadership training indicates moderate implementation in both countries. In Hungary, a substantial number of respondents rated DEI training at the highest level (3), while others reported lower levels of integration. In Syria, fewer respondents reported high integration, with a larger proportion indicating minimal DEI content in leadership programs. Overall, the results suggest that while DEI is incorporated into leadership training in both contexts, implementation is stronger in Hungary than in Syria.

2.7.3. Leadership DEI Advocacy: Hungary vs. Syria

As Figure 6 displays, leaders in Hungary and Syria differ moderately in their advocacy for DEI principles within their organizations.

Figure 6: Comparison of Leadership DEI Advocacy: Hungary vs. Syria

(Source: Author's own work, 2025)



The distribution of responses regarding leadership advocacy for DEI indicates moderate variation in both countries. In Hungary, most respondents rated leaders' DEI advocacy at moderate to high levels (3 or 4), with fewer selecting the extremes. In Syria, while some respondents reported high advocacy (4), a larger proportion rated it at moderate or low levels (3 or below). Overall, the data suggest that leaders in Hungary are perceived to advocate for DEI more consistently than those in Syria, though both countries show room for improvement in leadership engagement with DEI principles.

2.7.4. Leadership Openness to DEI Discussions: Hungary vs. Syria

Figure 7 presents the comparative levels of leadership openness to DEI-related discussions across the two countries.

Figure 7: Comparison of Leadership Openness to DEI Discussions: Hungary vs. Syria

(Source: Author's own work, 2025)



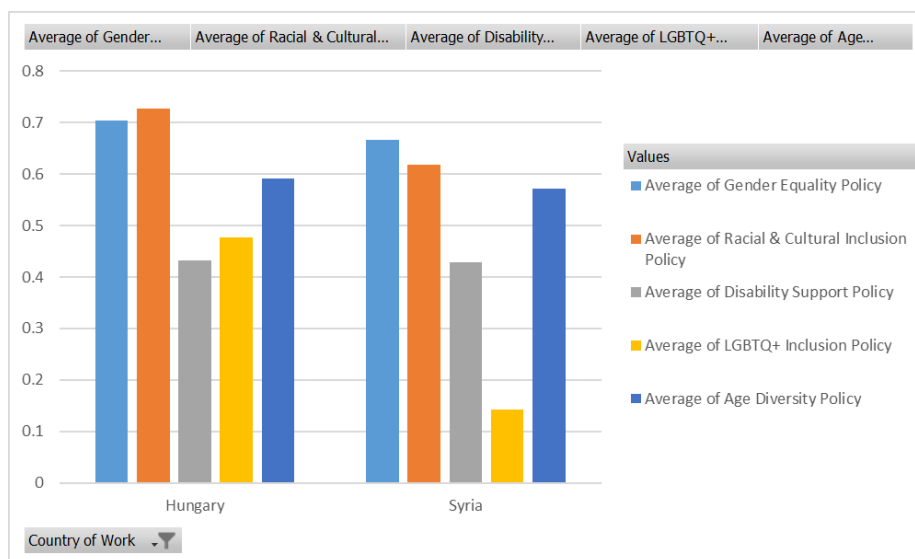
The distribution of responses regarding leadership openness to discussions about DEI shows moderate variation in both countries. In Hungary, respondents' ratings are spread across the scale, with a concentration in the middle values (2–4) and fewer high ratings (5). In Syria, responses are similarly concentrated in the mid-range, with no respondents selecting the highest rating. Overall, leaders in both countries are perceived as moderately open to DEI discussions, with Hungary showing slightly higher instances of openness at the top end of the scale.

2.7.5. DEI Policy Implementation: Hungary vs. Syria

As shown in Figure 8, DEI policy implementation varies between Hungary and Syria, particularly concerning gender and cultural inclusion.

Figure 8: Comparison of DEI Policy Implementation: Hungary vs. Syria

(Source: Author's own work, 2025)



The analysis of DEI-related policies, measured as binary indicators (0 = not present, 1 = present), reveals differences between Hungary and Syria. In Hungary, policies such as Gender Equality (0.70) and Racial & Cultural Inclusion (0.73) show relatively high implementation, while Disability Support (0.43) and LGBTQ+ Inclusion (0.48) are less consistently applied. Age Diversity policies (0.59) are moderately present.

In Syria, Gender Equality (0.67) and Age Diversity (0.57) policies show moderate implementation, but Racial & Cultural Inclusion (0.62) is slightly lower than in Hungary, and LGBTQ+ Inclusion (0.14) is notably minimal. Disability Support policies are similar to Hungary (0.43).

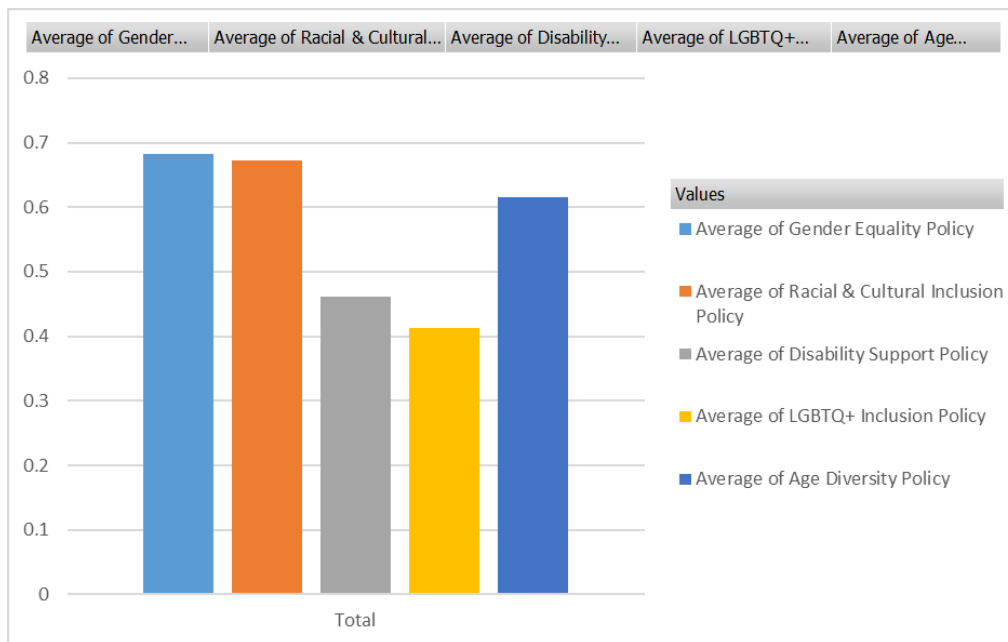
Overall, the data suggest that DEI policy adoption is generally higher in Hungary than in Syria, particularly for LGBTQ+ inclusion and racial/cultural initiatives, while both countries show moderate implementation of gender and age-related policies.

2.7.6. Overall DEI Policy Implementation

Figure 9 summarizes the overall level of DEI policy adoption across organizations in the sample.

Figure 9: Overall DEI Policy Implementation

(Source: Author's own work, 2025)



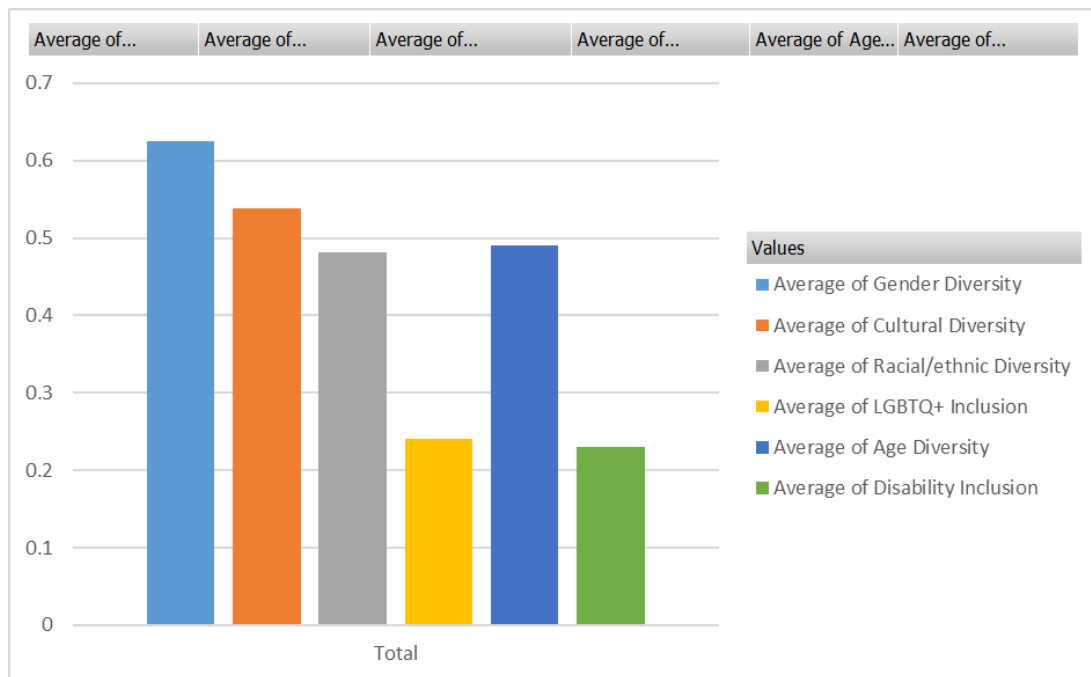
Across the total sample, the presence of DEI-related policies shows a moderate level of adoption. Gender Equality ($M = 0.68$) and Racial & Cultural Inclusion ($M = 0.67$) policies are the most widely implemented, indicating that many organizations have formal measures to support these areas. Age Diversity policies ($M = 0.62$) also show moderate adoption. In contrast, Disability Support ($M = 0.46$) and LGBTQ+ Inclusion ($M = 0.41$) policies are less consistently applied, suggesting that these areas remain underdeveloped across organizations. Overall, the findings highlight a general commitment to DEI principles, with variability in the focus and implementation of specific policy areas.

2.7.7. Overall Diversity Outcomes

As Figure 10 illustrates, diversity outcomes differ across categories such as gender, culture, and disability inclusion.

Figure 10: Overall Diversity Outcomes

(Source: Author's own work, 2025)



Across the total sample, diversity outcomes show moderate variation across dimensions. Gender Diversity ($M = 0.63$) and Cultural Diversity ($M = 0.54$) are the most prominent, indicating that organizations have made some progress in these areas. Racial/ethnic Diversity ($M = 0.48$) and Age Diversity ($M = 0.49$) are moderately represented, while LGBTQ+ Inclusion ($M = 0.24$) and Disability Inclusion ($M = 0.23$) remain relatively low. These results suggest that, although organizations demonstrate some commitment to diverse representation, inclusion for LGBTQ+ individuals and people with disabilities is limited, highlighting areas for further development in workforce diversity.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. General Introduction

This section presents the results of the hypothesis testing conducted to examine the relationships between organizational Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies, practices, and related outcomes. The analyses primarily employ correlation and independent-samples t-tests to determine the strength and direction of relationships among DEI policies, leadership behaviors, organizational commitment, and inclusivity perceptions. The results are discussed in relation to each hypothesis, highlighting both statistically significant and non-significant findings and their implications for organizational DEI advancement.

3.2. Hypothesis 1

H1: Comprehensive DEI policies are positively associated with organizational and leadership outcomes, including diversity results, organizational DEI commitment, and leadership DEI advocacy.

Introduction

This hypothesis examines how the strength and comprehensiveness of organizational Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies relate to both diversity outcomes and leadership behaviors. It proposes that organizations demonstrating a stronger commitment to DEI through well-defined and comprehensive policy frameworks are more likely to achieve greater diversity and inclusivity within their workforce and to cultivate leaders who actively advocate for DEI principles. To test these relationships, correlation analyses were conducted in SPSS between specific DEI policy dimensions—namely Racial & Cultural Inclusion Policy, Gender Equality Policy, and LGBTQ+ Inclusion Policy—and their respective diversity outcomes, including Racial/Ethnic Diversity, Cultural Diversity, Gender Diversity, and LGBTQ+ Inclusion. Additionally, the overall DEI Policy Score, calculated as the sum of all binary DEI policies (1 = present, 0 = not present), was correlated with Leadership DEI Advocacy to assess whether policy comprehensiveness is associated with stronger leadership engagement in DEI efforts.

Racial & Cultural Inclusion Policy and Racial/Ethnic Diversity

Table 12 presents the correlation between racial and cultural inclusion policies and cultural diversity outcomes.

Table 12: Correlations analysis test

(Source: Author's own work, 2025)

		Correlations	
		Racial & Cultural Inclusion Policy	Racial/ethnic Diversity
Racial & Cultural Inclusion Policy	Pearson Correlation	1	.465**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	104	104
Racial/ethnic Diversity	Pearson Correlation	.465**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	104	104

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation:

The correlation between the Racial & Cultural Inclusion Policy and Cultural Diversity was positive and moderate ($r = 0.465$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that organizations with stronger racial and cultural inclusion policies tend to report higher levels of cultural diversity among their workforce.

Racial & Cultural Inclusion Policy and Cultural Diversity

As Table 13 shows, a positive correlation exists between racial inclusion policies and racial/ethnic diversity levels.

Table 13: Correlations analysis test

(Source: Author's own work, 2025)

		Correlations	
		Racial & Cultural Inclusion Policy	Cultural Diversity
Racial & Cultural Inclusion Policy	Pearson Correlation	1	.465**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	104	104
Cultural Diversity	Pearson Correlation	.465**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	104	104

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation:

Similarly, a moderate positive correlation was found between the Racial & Cultural Inclusion Policy and Racial/Ethnic Diversity ($r = 0.465$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that the presence of structured racial inclusion initiatives correlates with increased representation of racial and ethnic minorities within organizations.

Gender Equality Policy and Gender Diversity

Table 14 illustrates the relationship between gender equality policies and gender diversity within organizations.

Table 14: Correlations analysis test

(Source: Author's own work, 2025)

Correlations			
		Gender Equality Policy	Gender Diversity
Gender Equality Policy	Pearson Correlation	1	.496**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	104	104
Gender Diversity	Pearson Correlation	.496**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	104	104

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation:

The relationship between the Gender Equality Policy and Gender Diversity was moderately positive ($r = 0.496$, $p < 0.01$), implying that organizations emphasizing gender equality in policy frameworks are more likely to achieve balanced gender representation across their workforce.

LGBTQ+ Inclusion Policy and LGBTQ+ Inclusion

As presented in Table 15, there is a strong positive correlation between LGBTQ+ inclusion policies and actual inclusion outcomes.

Table 15: Correlations analysis test

(Source: Author’s own work, 2025)

		LGBTQ+ Inclusion Policy	LGBTQ+ Inclusion
LGBTQ+ Inclusion Policy	Pearson Correlation	1	.533**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	104	104
LGBTQ+ Inclusion	Pearson Correlation	.533**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	104	104

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation:

A moderate to strong positive correlation was observed between LGBTQ+ Inclusion Policy and LGBTQ+ Inclusion ($r = 0.533$, $p < 0.01$). This result indicates that formalized support and inclusion measures for LGBTQ+ employees are strongly linked with improved representation and inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals within organizations.

Policy Comprehensiveness and Organizational Commitment

Table 16 shows that broader DEI policy coverage is associated with higher organizational DEI commitment.

Table 16: Correlations analysis test

(Source: Author’s own work, 2025)

Predictor	Outcome	Correlation (r)
Policy Score	Organizational DEI Commitment	0.512

Interpretation

A moderate positive correlation was found between the overall DEI Policy Score and Organizational DEI Commitment ($r = 0.512, p < 0.01$). This indicates that organizations with a higher number of formal DEI policies tend to report greater levels of commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion practices.

Policy Comprehensiveness and Leadership DEI Advocacy

As shown in Table 17, organizations with more comprehensive DEI policies tend to have leaders who advocate more strongly for inclusion.

Table 17: Correlations analysis test

(Source: Author's own work, 2025)

Predictor	Outcome	Correlation (r)
Policy Score	Leadership DEI Advocacy	0.620

Interpretation

A Strong positive correlation was found between the overall DEI Policy Score and Leadership DEI Advocacy ($r = 0.620, p < 0.01$). This indicates that organizations with a greater number of formal DEI policies tend to have leaders who are more actively engaged in advocating for DEI values and practices within their organizations.

Discussion

Across all analyses, the findings provide strong support for Hypothesis 1, confirming that comprehensive DEI policies are positively associated with both organizational and leadership outcomes. The correlations between specific DEI policy dimensions and their corresponding diversity outcomes were all positive and statistically significant, ranging from $r = 0.465$ to $r = 0.533$, indicating that organizations with stronger racial, gender, and LGBTQ+ inclusion policies tend to achieve higher levels of workforce diversity and representation. The strongest relationship was observed for LGBTQ+ inclusion ($r = 0.533$), suggesting that targeted and explicit policies in this area may be particularly effective in promoting inclusivity. Furthermore, the overall DEI Policy Score, reflecting the comprehensiveness of an organization's policy framework, showed a moderate positive correlation with organizational DEI commitment ($r = 0.512, p < 0.01$) and a strong positive correlation with leadership DEI

advocacy ($r = 0.620, p < 0.01$). These results indicate that policy comprehensiveness not only reinforces structural commitment to DEI but also fosters leadership engagement in promoting inclusive behaviors. Collectively, the findings highlight that robust DEI policies act as both structural and cultural mechanisms that advance diversity, strengthen organizational dedication to equity and inclusion, and empower leaders to actively model and sustain inclusive practices across organizational levels.

3.3. Hypothesis 2

H2: Perceptions of organizational DEI commitment and inclusiveness do not significantly differ across leadership roles or gender.

Introduction

This hypothesis examines whether perceptions of organizational DEI commitment and inclusivity differ between leadership and non-leadership roles, as well as between male and female employees. Independent-samples t-tests were conducted in SPSS to compare mean DEI commitment and inclusivity scores across these groups. For the role comparison, the variable `Position_Code` was coded as 1 = Leadership and 2 = Non-leadership, enabling clear identification of group differences in perceived DEI commitment. For the gender comparison, participants were coded as 1 = Female and 2 = Male to facilitate statistical comparison of inclusivity perceptions. This approach ensured that any observed differences in DEI perceptions could be attributed to employees' roles or gender within the organization.

Table 18 presents group statistics comparing DEI commitment scores between leadership and non-leadership roles.

Table 18: Group Statistics for DEI Commitment by Leadership Role

(Source: Author’s own work, 2025)

Group Statistics					
	Position_Code	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Org_DEI_Commitment	1.00	20	3.95	.945	.211
	2.00	84	3.55	1.102	.120

As Table 19 shows, an independent-samples t-test was used to examine differences in DEI commitment perceptions across roles.

Table 19: Independent-Samples t-Test for Leadership and Non-Leadership Perceptions of DEI Commitment

(Source: Author’s own work, 2025)

Independent Samples Test											
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
						One-Sided p	Two-Sided p				
Org_DEI_Commitment	Equal variances assumed	4.747	.032	1.505	102	.068	.135	.402	.267	-.128	.933
	Equal variances not assumed			1.656	32.532	.054	.107	.402	.243	-.092	.897

Interpretation

Levene’s test for equality of variances was significant ($F = 4.747, p = 0.032$), indicating that the variances between groups were not equal. Therefore, the “Equal variances not assumed” row is considered for interpretation. The t -test result shows that leadership participants reported slightly higher perceptions of DEI commitment ($M = 3.95, SD = 0.95$) compared to non-leadership participants ($M = 3.55, SD = 1.10$). However, this difference was not statistically significant, $t(32.53) = 1.66, p = 0.107$.

Table 20 summarizes inclusivity perceptions by gender group.

Table 20: Group Statistics for Gender and Organizational Inclusiveness

(Source: Author’s own work, 2025)

Group Statistics					
	Gender_Code	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Org_Inclusivity_Score	1.00	55	3.47	1.052	.142
	2.00	46	3.67	1.012	.149

As shown in Table 21, the t-test results indicate whether gender significantly influences inclusivity perceptions.

Table 21: Independent-Samples t-Test for Gender and Organizational Inclusiveness

(Source: Author’s own work, 2025)

Independent Samples Test											
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance One-Sided p	Significance Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Org_Inclusivity_Score	Equal variances assumed	.173	.679	-.974	99	.166	.332	-.201	.207	-.611	.209
	Equal variances not assumed			-.977	97.024	.165	.331	-.201	.206	-.610	.207

Interpretation

Levene’s test for equality of variances was not significant ($F = 0.173, p = 0.679$), indicating that the assumption of equal variances was met. The results of the t -test showed no statistically significant difference in inclusivity perceptions between female ($M = 3.47, SD = 1.05^*$) and male participants ($M = 3.67, SD = 1.01^*$), $t(99) = -0.97, p = 0.332$. Although male participants reported slightly higher inclusivity scores, the difference was not significant.

Discussion

The results indicate that perceptions of organizational DEI commitment and inclusiveness are largely consistent across both leadership status and gender, providing support for Hypothesis 2. Although leadership participants reported slightly higher perceptions of DEI commitment than non-leadership employees, this difference was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level, suggesting that hierarchical position does not substantially influence how employees perceive their organization’s DEI commitment. Similarly, no statistically significant differences were found between male and female respondents in their perceptions of organizational inclusiveness, indicating that gender does not meaningfully shape employees’ views of

inclusion within the workplace. The overall consistency in perceptions across both groups implies that DEI principles and communication are being effectively disseminated throughout the organization, fostering a shared understanding of inclusion and equity regardless of gender or leadership level. These findings suggest that DEI efforts are viewed as collective organizational priorities rather than being confined to particular demographic or hierarchical groups.

3.4. Hypothesis 3

H3: Organizational and leadership factors, such as DEI commitment, leadership DEI training, and leaders' emotional intelligence, positively influence perceptions of inclusivity.

Introduction

This hypothesis explores how both organizational and leadership factors contribute to perceptions of inclusivity within the workplace. Specifically, it investigates whether higher levels of organizational commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and greater emotional intelligence (EI) among leaders are associated with stronger perceptions of inclusivity among employees. Organizational DEI Commitment was operationalized as a composite measure encompassing six DEI dimensions—Gender Diversity, Cultural Diversity, Racial/Ethnic Diversity, LGBTQ+ Inclusion, Age Diversity, and Disability Inclusion—while leaders' emotional intelligence was calculated in SPSS as the average of two variables, *EI_Frequency* and *EI_Rating*, using the formula $Leaders_EI = (EI_Frequency + EI_Rating) / 2$. Pearson correlation analyses were conducted in SPSS to assess the relationships between Organizational DEI Commitment, Leaders' Emotional Intelligence, and the Organizational Inclusivity Score, which represents employees' perceptions of inclusiveness within their organizations.

Table 22 illustrates the positive relationship between overall DEI commitment and inclusivity perceptions.

Table 22: Correlation between Organizational DEI Commitment and Organizational Inclusivity Score

(Source: Author’s own work, 2025)

Correlations			
		Org_DEI_Commitment	Org_Inclusivity_Score
Org_DEI_Commitment	Pearson Correlation	1	.643**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	104	104
Org_Inclusivity_Score	Pearson Correlation	.643**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	104	104

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation

A Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between Organizational DEI Commitment and Organizational Inclusivity Score, $r(102) = 0.643, p < 0.001$. This indicates that organizations demonstrating higher levels of DEI commitment tend to be perceived by employees as more inclusive. In practical terms, as organizations strengthen their DEI initiatives and policies, perceptions of inclusivity also increase correspondingly.

As presented in Table 23, a moderate positive correlation was found between DEI training for leaders and inclusivity perceptions.

Table 23: Correlation between DEI in Leadership Training and Organizational Inclusivity Score

(Source: Author’s own work, 2025)

		DEI_In_Leadership_Training	Org_Inclusivity_Score
DEI_In_Leadership_Training	Pearson Correlation	1	.405**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	103	103
Org_Inclusivity_Score	Pearson Correlation	.405**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	103	104

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation

A Pearson correlation analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation between DEI in Leadership Training and Organizational Inclusivity Score, $r(101) = 0.405$, $p < 0.001$. This result suggests that organizations whose leaders have participated in DEI training are more likely to exhibit higher inclusivity scores. In other words, formal DEI education for leaders is associated with stronger perceptions of inclusion across the organization.

Table 24 shows the relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and perceived organizational inclusivity.

Table 24: Correlation between Leaders' Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Inclusivity Score

(Source: Author's own work, 2025)

Correlations			
		Org_Inclusivity _Score	LeadersEI
Org_Inclusivity_Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.458**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	104	104
LeadersEI	Pearson Correlation	.458**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	104	104

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation

A Pearson correlation analysis revealed a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between Leaders' Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Inclusivity Score, $r(102) = 0.458$, $p < 0.001$. This result indicates that leaders with higher emotional intelligence—demonstrating greater empathy, emotional regulation, and interpersonal awareness—tend to cultivate higher perceptions of inclusivity among employees.

Discussion

The results provide strong support for Hypothesis 3, confirming that both organizational and leadership factors significantly influence perceptions of inclusivity within organizations. A strong positive correlation between organizational DEI commitment and inclusivity ($r = 0.643$, $p < 0.001$) demonstrates that organizations with higher levels of DEI engagement are perceived by employees as more inclusive, reflecting the importance of institutional commitment in shaping inclusive workplace cultures. Similarly, a moderate positive correlation between leaders' emotional intelligence and inclusivity ($r = 0.458$, $p < 0.001$) indicates that emotionally intelligent leadership contributes meaningfully to building trust, empathy, and psychological safety among employees. These findings collectively emphasize that inclusivity is strengthened not only through organizational structures and policies but also through the interpersonal capabilities of leaders. By integrating emotional intelligence development into DEI-focused leadership training, organizations can reinforce inclusive behaviors and foster a sense of belonging across all levels, thereby enhancing overall DEI outcomes and creating equitable, supportive workplace environments.

4. Qualitative Data

In addition to the quantitative survey, open-ended responses were analyzed to gain deeper insight into participants' perceptions of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within their organizations. The dataset included comments and suggestions related to DEI policies, leadership behavior, and organizational culture. A thematic analysis approach was used to identify recurring patterns and key perspectives.

Responses were reviewed and coded manually. Similar ideas were grouped under broader categories to identify emerging themes. The analysis focused on recurrent concepts, contrasts, and attitudes expressed across responses.

4.1. Presentation of Findings

Theme 1: Leadership Detachment and Limited Engagement

Many respondents expressed concern that leadership remained distant from everyday inclusion efforts, "Top levels of leadership don't know us very well.", "Leaders should actively support D&I initiatives.", This indicates a perceived gap between policy-level commitment and managerial implementation.

Theme 2: Fragmented Understanding of Diversity

Employees highlighted gender and cultural representation as the most visible aspects of diversity, while others such as disability and religion were perceived as overlooked, "Still hiring mostly male programmers.", "Religion is not touched at all.", This suggests that diversity is conceptualized narrowly, and inclusion policies may not yet address intersectional dimensions.

Theme 3: Meritocracy vs. Inclusion Tension

Several respondents emphasized merit-based selection and opposed what they perceived as "forced diversity.", "Hire based on efficiency and qualifications, not gender or nationality.", "I'm against forced diversity.", This reflects a cultural tension between fairness through equality and fairness through equity.

Theme 4: National and Cultural Context

A number of participants linked organizational DEI challenges to broader societal or political conditions, “It’s more a national policy issue.”, These remarks highlight how external factors can shape internal organizational culture.

Theme 5: Need for Education and Awareness

The most frequent constructive suggestions involved DEI education, leadership training, and open dialogue, “Provide regular training for leaders.”, “More open talks and education to dissolve misconceptions.”, Education appears to be viewed as the most realistic and acceptable path to inclusion.

4.1.1. Conclusion

This study examined the interrelationships among organizational Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies, leadership behaviors, and leaders’ emotional intelligence (EI) in fostering inclusive workplace environments. Drawing upon both quantitative and qualitative analyses, the findings demonstrated that comprehensive DEI frameworks and emotionally intelligent leadership play complementary roles in enhancing inclusivity, organizational commitment, and equity. All three hypotheses were **accepted**.

Specifically, **H1** was supported by significant positive correlations between comprehensive DEI policies and organizational and leadership outcomes ($r = 0.465-0.620$, $p < 0.01$), confirming that strong policy frameworks reinforce diversity representation, organizational commitment, and leadership advocacy.

H2 was accepted as no significant differences were observed across leadership roles or gender in perceptions of DEI commitment and inclusiveness ($p > 0.05$), indicating that DEI values are consistently understood and experienced across demographic and hierarchical levels.

H3 was also accepted, with significant positive relationships identified between organizational DEI commitment, DEI in leadership training, leaders’ emotional intelligence, and inclusivity perceptions ($r = 0.405-0.643$, $p < 0.001$). These findings highlight that DEI success is contingent upon both structural mechanisms and the interpersonal capabilities of leaders who model empathy, self-awareness, and fairness. The qualitative results further supported these conclusions, emphasizing issues such as leadership detachment, fragmented understandings of diversity, and the critical need for DEI education and awareness.

Collectively, the results confirm that emotionally intelligent leadership strengthens the impact of DEI policies by bridging the gap between institutional commitment and everyday practice, ultimately cultivating more inclusive, equitable, and cohesive organizational cultures.

4.1.2. Future Research Directions

While this study provides robust evidence linking DEI policies, leadership behavior, and emotional intelligence to organizational inclusivity, further research could deepen understanding in several ways. Future studies may employ longitudinal designs to examine how changes in DEI policies or leadership training impact inclusivity over time. Expanding the sample to include diverse industries, cultural contexts, and geographical regions would enhance the generalizability of findings. Additionally, qualitative investigations could explore employees' lived experiences of inclusion and belonging in greater depth, providing richer insights into how emotional intelligence manifests in daily leadership practices. Integrating mixed-method approaches and comparative analyses between sectors may also clarify how different organizational structures mediate the relationship between DEI initiatives, leadership, and inclusive outcomes.

5. General Conclusion

Overall, this thesis provides strong evidence that emotional intelligence is a central driver of inclusive organizational culture. The integration of empathy, awareness, and emotional regulation enables leaders to translate DEI goals into daily behaviors that promote equality and belonging. Policies alone cannot create inclusion; they require emotionally intelligent leaders who embody inclusive values in decision-making and communication.

This study contributes to DEI and leadership literature by showing that organizational inclusivity results from the intersection of structure and emotion—where policies provide stability and emotional intelligence provides humanity. The combined quantitative and qualitative evidence confirms that emotional competence strengthens leadership credibility, enhances employee engagement, and sustains diversity outcomes. Therefore, organizations aiming for long-term DEI progress must treat emotional intelligence as both a leadership competency and a strategic priority.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested based on the study's findings to strengthen DEI effectiveness and leadership inclusivity:

Integrate Emotional Intelligence Training: Implement continuous EI development programs for leaders focusing on empathy, self-regulation, and interpersonal communication.

Link DEI Goals to Leadership Evaluation: Include DEI engagement and emotional intelligence indicators in leadership performance assessments.

Promote Awareness and Education: Provide regular DEI and EI workshops that encourage reflection, cultural understanding, and active listening.

Ensure Policy–Practice Alignment: Encourage leaders to model inclusive behavior and connect policy commitments with practical action.

Foster Safe Communication Channels: Create open dialogue platforms that allow employees to share experiences and feedback without fear of bias.

Broaden Diversity Scope: Expand inclusion programs to address not only gender and culture but also disability, religion, and intersectional identities.

Monitor and Evaluate Outcomes: Use measurable DEI indicators and employee feedback to continuously assess progress and identify areas for improvement.

7. Summary

This thesis explored how leaders' emotional intelligence influences diversity, equity, and inclusion within organizations. Using a mixed-methods design, the study combined quantitative correlation analysis and qualitative thematic evaluation to uncover the relationships between leadership behavior, emotional awareness, and DEI effectiveness.

The findings confirmed that emotionally intelligent leaders create more inclusive, equitable, and psychologically safe environments. They bridge policy with practice, humanize DEI initiatives, and foster belonging among employees. The study concludes that the key to sustainable inclusion lies in the alignment of structural DEI frameworks with emotionally competent leadership.

Ultimately, the research highlights that inclusive organizations are not built solely through rules or representation, but through emotionally intelligent leadership that values empathy, fairness, and authentic engagement.

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