

INTERCULTURAL LEADERSHIP: CONTEMPORARY BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

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Abstract: *Contemporary intercultural leadership has emerged as a critical area of study in the context of globalization and multiculturalism within organizations. The literature review synthesizes existing research on intercultural leadership, focusing on main aspects such as cultural competence, adaptability, effective communication, and cross-cultural collaboration. Results indicate that successful intercultural leaders demonstrate a combination of these skills to help them navigate cultural diversity and inclusivity within diverse terms. The paper aims to shed light on how a contemporary company, alongside its key characteristics, integrates diverse cultures and intercultural leadership, in relation to that research provides theoretical insight into the characteristics of contemporary leaders, with the aim of showing the essential qualities and skills required for a person to be recognized as an effective intercultural leader. Drawing on prior research, we aimed to demonstrate that within the realm of international business, leaders who actively embrace diversity are instrumental in fostering an environment conducive to the exchange of diverse perspectives and ideas. This, in turn, serves to cultivate innovation and creativity within their respective teams. Moreover, studies highlight the importance of continuous learning and development in enhancing intercultural leadership*

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capabilities. The need for further research is clear, and the main focus is on the development of effective strategies for leading diverse teams in words that are becoming more globalized each day.

Keywords: *leadership / globalization / intercultural leadership / inclusion / business communication.*

INTRODUCTION

A widely accepted definition of culture is that culture refers to the taught and shared ways that members of a group of people think, feel, and act. Therefore, cultural variety refers to variations in the numerous distinctive qualities people who identify as members of different social groups have in common. Cultural diversity includes deeper psychological traits like personality, attitudes, values, and beliefs, in addition to the more obvious demographic aspects of gender, race, ethnicity, and age. Taking these unseen factors into account makes managing cultural diversity more difficult (Chua et al., 2023). Managing cultural diversity becomes increasingly complex, requiring an organizational and structural approach. This level of complexity reduces the effectiveness of projects and goals. Developing an inclusive atmosphere and addressing corporate culture, structures, and procedures become increasingly important when managing for inclusion (Chua et al., 2023).

Culture significantly influences many aspects of the workforce. For instance, it is not uncommon for people of different nations and cultural backgrounds to disagree on delicate topics like sexism, unfair treatment, income disparities, and glass ceiling difficulties (Kamales & Knorr, 2019). These disagreements often stem from cultural differences in perception and norms. Each of these contributes to an issue of workplace discrimination and creates an overall impression that cultural differences are obstacles to collaborative work and progress. It is the responsibility of leaders to manage these differences. Training should include cultural sensitivity and understanding, as employees should demonstrate that they value each of their coworkers (Kamales & Knorr, 2019).

The leaders of this new era of connection are not just coping with the constant restructuring of organizations, alliances, and collaborations but

also with the seemingly rapid rate of change at the intersection of various expectations and demands. The connective leadership model, significant in this context, considers the various styles that people may bring to a leadership role. It also includes the ability to "identify the most effective leadership strategies" to apply in particular circumstances, evaluate the leadership potential in others and match those skills with particular challenges, and design new types of structures to fit tasks and "the behavioural preferences of participants (Gibson, 2011). It can be noted that culture is a crucial element for reaching set goals that leaders need to achieve, and the connective leadership model provides a framework for effectively managing cultural diversity in these settings.

As the globalized business environment provides many challenges, the business landscape is constantly evolving, and leaders must adapt. This process poses many difficulties for leaders when responding to the demands that intercultural leadership presents. Existing literature addressed some of the main issues related to intercultural leadership and the main aspects associated with it. The following part provides an overview of the current studies and findings, serving as a starting point for future research and emphasizing the importance of continuous learning and development in enhancing intercultural leadership capabilities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Firstly, the terms discussed in this paper are explained within the scope of the analysed topic. According to 38 different countries' leadership scholars, leadership is an individual's capacity to persuade, inspire, and facilitate others' contributions to the success and efficacy of the organisations they are a part of. Even though these experts could not agree on a definition of leadership, cultural differences can result in different perceptions of the terms and practices associated with leadership. However, numerous past analyses have delineated the intricacies of leading across cultural boundaries (Den & De, 2023), providing a substantial body of knowledge for our discussion.

Culture is a meaning system that influences how people perceive and comprehend the world in which they live. It supports group members in

comprehending and reacting to individual experiences and societal, political, and economic developments. New members are instructed in the shared ideas as the proper way to view, consider, and feel about those issues; these beliefs also direct people's actions and responses (Den & De, 2023). The leader is responsible for giving the group members direction and leadership. When plans are being executed, subordinates might benefit from guidance and counselling from their leaders (Rahman, 2019). Employees also tend to follow the example set by their bosses. One of a leader's most important responsibilities regarding diversity is modelling behaviour. The company's diversity policy must be created by its leaders. The company's top official typically drafts equal employment policies to demonstrate the organisation's commitment to fair employment practices (Rahman, 2019). Leading a team with significant cultural diversity is particularly demanding, as cultural variations influence core elements such as values, principles, social norms, and perspectives (Dostanić, 2024). These findings show the existing relationship between the way how culture is addressed and the behaviour of the employees. Nevertheless, it is essential for leaders to approach the challenge with a spirit of continuous learning and improvement, especially when engaging with business partners from diverse cultural backgrounds.

IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP ON DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

What all analysed articles have in common is that they agree that leadership is the most crucial component of any organisation. Yet because of globalisation, technological advancement, and diversity management, leadership is becoming increasingly difficult. Changes and technological advancements that follow the globalisation process create new challenges and require that leadership strategies be adjusted. Managers and employees must improve workplace learning and workforce development as the demand for knowledge-based businesses grows, explains Rahman (2019). Globalisation has brought new rules to the business process, including high-level communication, individual integrity, and harmonised business standards (Gulan, 2021).

Taking that into account, global leaders are expected to overcome barriers and consider diverse viewpoints and life experiences while making choices and engaging with others, notably when overseeing

teams of individuals. Succeeding as a global leader depends on developing more inclusive ways of feeling (emotion), thinking (intellect), and acting (activity). When the world leader and others with whom they collaborate put their minds, hearts, and hands into anything, they put all of them into it. In the post-industrial environment of today, focusing on soft skills is crucial to achieving the immersive development that various societies seek (Nosratabadi et al., 2020). Global leaders play a crucial role in initiating and implementing organizational changes by fostering cooperation among all members. They are expected to recognize the need for changes and take proactive steps to implement them (Dašić, et al. 2011). The characteristic required from contemporary intercultural leaders is the capacity to successfully acclimate to novel cultural contexts, which is referred to as cultural intelligence. The goal of cultural intelligence research is to comprehend the concept of cultural intelligence and the reasons behind the superior performance of specific individuals in adjusting to novel cultural environments (İşletmelerinde & Bir, 2014). Cultural competence is the ability to work in cross-cultural environments while appreciating variety and maintaining awareness of their and others' cultural identities. It is a requirement for influential global leaders. To be able to do this, one must be acutely aware of one's cultural prejudices and possess the skills necessary to control them and actively pursue inclusive behaviour in the workplace (Tanneau & McLoughlin, 2021). In the context of global business, effectively communicating with individuals from different countries presents a multitude of challenges. Every day, company leaders encounter unavoidable challenges, including the necessity to engage in effective intercultural communication with business partners from diverse cultural backgrounds. Embracing challenges with a commitment to continuous learning and improvement is essential for effectively navigating the complexities of cross-cultural business interactions.

CHALLENGES

Hanges et al. (2016) offer an intriguing perspective, focusing on the challenges leaders face when managing a culturally diverse workforce. This underscores the importance of cultural intelligence, an essential skill for effective leadership. Numerous studies have explored the factors

that influence a leader's cultural quotient, or cultural intelligence. It is crucial for organizations to harness their knowledge capacities to respond effectively in this volatile environment, characterized by constant innovations and developments in the political, social, technological, cultural, and economic spheres. The advent of globalization and interconnection among nations heightens organizational competition, while also presenting opportunities for corporate expansion and advancement (Nosratabadi et al., 2020). Gutterman (2023) underlines that culture plays a crucial role in distinguishing how leadership develops and how it may impact other actors. In a recent study, participants from around the world highlighted the importance of global trade. They suggested that future leaders should spend time in different countries to understand how international trade can benefit their organizations. As competitive pressures rise, manufacturers need to manage global teams effectively (Dašić, et al., 2011).

The importance of the topic is manifested by the fact that gaining self-awareness regarding one's interpersonal relationships is a significant objective of leadership education and higher education. Reflective learning frequently occurs in cultural contexts where people are required to act and respond to the norms, attitudes, and values of others. Social experience fosters a greater awareness of one's own culture as well as that of other cultures (Armstrong, 2019). Today's workforce is more diverse than ever before, and this complexity calls on leadership to develop innovative organizational strategies for managing diversity. The modern workforce is looking for an alternative management style that allows employees to feel included and like they belong while still supporting the goals of the company. The promised results (such as creativity and innovation) that the present organizational methods of diversity management still need to meet leadership desires. Developing organizational strategies for diversity management requires strong leadership. The modern method of managing inclusion in leadership is provided by cultural inclusion, explained Chua et al. (2023).

Tomar (2019) underscores a crucial point often overlooked in discussions about leadership and strategy development-the power of diversity. It is diversity that can lead to greater effectiveness and foster more innovation. Companies that bring together employees of different nationalities, sharing the same challenges and crucial decision-making

moments, reap significant benefits from the variety of their approaches (Tomar, 2019). This serves as a powerful reminder of the potential that lies within a diverse workforce, inspiring leaders and educators to embrace diversity in their organizations. Given the fact that successfully managing a diverse team can be challenging due to the significant impact of cultural differences on values, social behaviour, and perceptions. Fostering a shared understanding can facilitate relationship management can promote the efficient and effective implementation of goals. In this regard, several esteemed authors have proposed some effective solutions, which are further discussed.

EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERCULTURAL LEADERSHIP

When organisational diversity management is integrated with organisational learning and development, the strategic, tactical, and operational role of leadership becomes increasingly important. Establishing leadership responsibility is essential to creating an inclusive workplace (Chua et al., 2023).

The task of leadership is to understand the complexity of culture and influence organisational structure that supports diversity and creates an environment that can lead to a greater level of effectiveness. Today's shifting social and cultural landscape necessitates higher accountability from leadership and their organisation's diversity management strategy. Today's organisation's long-term success depends on how leadership ensures that its culturally diverse workforce is empowered to contribute to its outcomes. Moving from diversity management theory to practice requires leadership to consider how they will approach their organisation's diversity management. Chua et al. (2023) examined the different dimensions of how leaders can practically implement their organisation's diversity management approach. It is suggested that three leadership factors (or dimensions) are involved in implementing an organisation's diversity management approach (Chua et al., 2023). Leaders may encourage creativity by giving staff members a safe environment in which they can try new things and take calculated risks, as well as by rewarding their accomplishments (Jerab & Mabrouk, 2023).

The main factor that contributes to the development of intercultural

leadership in the contemporary business environment is the development of leaders who are aware of the complexity of cultural diversity and the impact that it may have on the overall results of the company. Competent leadership is pivotal for fostering innovation, stimulating growth, and creating sustainable value for organisations and “must master the skill of empathy and the ability to perceive the world through the eyes of the interlocutor’s culture.” (Dostanić, 2024). One of the additional benefits that a culturally competent leader can bring to the company is connected to workforce selection. Talented outsiders who value an inclusive atmosphere are drawn to boards with a diverse gender representation. Digital natives, or Generations Y and Z, account for over half of the workforce. They look to leaders who can define a clear goal, grant autonomy in the workplace, foster the development of diverse teams and individuals, and be concerned about the effects on society and the environment (Tanneau & McLoughlin, 2021). According to research, people often react fearfully to differences, but with continued engagement, this anxiety can turn into acceptance. Every leader will experience the phases of intercultural development, which include learning that leads to increased sensitivity to diversity, being colourblind, fairness, access and integration, and reinforcing homogeneity. This may impact the diversity management strategy as a whole.

External variables include the industry in which the organisation operates or the dynamic environments in which it must operate to maintain a competitive edge. In many nations, specific dimensions of diversity are still touchy subjects for organisations, which affects their emphasis on cultural diversity. For some organisations, leadership may need to concentrate on particular cultural diversity traits due to their strategic focus on significant clientele or commercial situations (Chua et al., 2023).

Although diversity fosters innovation, a growth mindset, a wide talent pool, and stakeholder alignment, according to leaders, diversity objectives can be more time-consuming and result in slower decision-making than working with a homogeneous team that shares a common frame of reference. Adopting diversity standards necessitates that leaders make a conscious effort to become culturally fluent and recognise how cultural background affects communications and team interactions (Jerab & Mabrouk, 2023).

Working well with people from diverse backgrounds is a requirement of

leadership, which calls for an awareness of culture's role in leadership. Navigating cultural differences entails purposefully addressing the development of intercultural competence through an integrated approach that includes heightened awareness of one's own and others' communication styles, as well as the capacity to take a step back and evaluate the experiences and interactions to determine what worked and what did not work well (Deardorff, 2018). It is stated that intercultural competency is essential for all leadership relationships. Although speaking across differences presents many problems, this chapter discusses a variety of tactics that can be tailored to particular situations and result in more fruitful encounters. Effectively navigating cultural differences is a crucial talent for anyone aspiring to be a leader in today's world, as explained by Deardorff (2018).

Tsai (2022) elaborates on how leadership behaviour needs to be adjusted to fit the requirements of the business environment better. The focus is on cultural differences that need to be included in the decision-making. The findings made by Tsai (2022) indicate that the whole process needs to be altered to fit the new reality and new demands that the corporate environment needs to fulfil better.

RESHAPED ROLE OF LEADER

Among the other things that have changed, the role of a leader is in the process of reshaping as well. One of the projects that focused on the expectations of a leader, GLOBE, shows the main characteristics a leader should have in the globalised business environment - illustrated in Table I, it assumes that the more traits a person possesses from this list, the more successful that person will be in a leadership role. This project highlights the primary characteristics that a leader should possess in the contemporary business landscape. They are all universally positively endorsed leadership traits that contribute to outstanding leadership (almost) everywhere. Numerous widely accepted traits indicate charismatic, transformative, or ethical leadership philosophies (Den & De, 2023).

Additionally, followers perceive other traits as unfavourable in leaders, which are listed in Table 1. These traits are indicative of more damaging

or abusive leadership styles. These culturally contextual traits may concern risk management, communication, emotionality, power and status, individualism, and conflict. For example, qualities such as empathy, class consciousness, and independence can have significantly varying cultural significance and efficacy ratings, demonstrating the diversity of views among nations (Den & De, 2023).

Table I: *Leadership Traits*

Desirable characteristics of a leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being dependable, just, honest, inspiring, visionary, dynamic, encouraging, upbeat, motivating, confidence builder, team builder, communicator, coordinator, excellence oriented, decisive, intelligent, and win-win problem solver.
Undesirable characteristics of a leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• loner, cruel, impatient, and autocratic.

Source: Adapted by author, based on Den & De (2023).

The expectation of a good leadership strategy to adapt to new demands is also acknowledged. Leaders are fundamental in guiding businesses within multicultural environments. This encompasses decision-making regarding the mission, goals, direction, resource allocation, and establishing support systems. Decisions made in this realm have long-term implications for the company's growth and success (Pravdić & Đorđević, 2022). Nicholson et al. (2020) state that leadership strategies that focus on accepting cultural differences achieve positive results related to performance. All these elements indicate the overall change that results in a leader's reshaped role. Leaders must acknowledge that they must foster an inclusive and diverse work environment. In addition to disparities in learning styles or professional fields, race, gender, and socioeconomic background can also be distinguished. The leader's job in diversity management is to establish communication with staff members (Rahman, 2019). Employees pay attention when a company's leader makes an effort to talk about the advantages of diversity. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of leadership to address diversity and create a strategy plan that embodies the company's diversity philosophies.

Organisational leaders are in charge of organisational strategy. The objectives that upper management develops to create the functional steps necessary to implement the strategy are then shaped by their strategic plan. The company's diversity policy must be created by its leaders. The company's top official typically creates equal employment policies to demonstrate the organisation's commitment to fair employment practices (Rahman, 2019).

CONCLUSION

Understanding how to lead in multiple countries or bring together workers from different countries is vital. "Without a doubt, communication, leadership, and coordination form the modern managerial triad." (Paunović & Radonjić, 2018 in Vuković, et al., 2021). Due to increasing globalization and the rise of international business, this topic has become of interest to management researchers and practitioners.

Managing cultural differences can be difficult because there are many possible dangers, including misconceptions, conflict, and poor communication. Nevertheless, these difficulties also offer chances for development, creativity, and the creation of a genuinely inclusive atmosphere. Leaders who embrace diversity help their teams reach their greatest potential by fostering a diverse exchange of viewpoints and ideas that spur innovation and creativity.

Based on the findings made in the reviewed articles, the following suggestions can be made for the improvement of leadership:

- Leaders need to develop and constantly improve their cultural competence and work on their cultural intelligence. The knowledge they acquire can help develop more effective strategies.
- Leaders need to be able to adjust their leadership styles.
- Leaders need to take into account cultural barriers and try to provide solutions for emerging problems (i.e. language barriers).

- To foster trust, leaders must respect the viewpoints of diverse cultures and act honourably and reasonably in all of their dealings. Effective leadership across cultures is built on trust.

Based on the existing findings, it can be concluded that this issue is vital for the company's overall effectiveness and that leaders have not only the possibility but also the responsibility to develop and adapt strategies to fit the new, diverse, and globalized environment.

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INTERKULTURALNO LIDERSTVO: SAVREMENO POSLOVNO UPRAVLJANJE

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Sažetak: *Savremeno interkulturalno liderstvo se pojavilo kao kritična oblast proučavanja u kontekstu globalizacije i multikulturalizma unutar organizacija. Pregled literature ima za cilj da prikaže postojeća istraživanja o interkulturalnom liderstvu, fokusirajući se na glavne aspekte, kao što su kulturalna kompetencija, prilagodljivost, efikasna komunikacija i međukulturna saradnja. Rezultati pokazuju da uspešni interkulturalni lideri pokazuju kombinaciju ovih veština kako bi doprinele kretanju kroz kulturnu raznolikost i inkluzivnost u različitim okolnostima. Rad ima za cilj da osvetli kako savremena kompanija, pored svojih ključnih karakteristika, integriše različite kulture i interkulturalno liderstvo, s tim u vezi, istraživanje pruža teorijski uvid u karakteristike savremenih lidera, sa ciljem da pokaže suštinske kvalitete i veštine potrebne da bi osoba bila prepoznata kao efikasan interkulturalni lider. Oslanjajući se na prethodna istraživanja, želeli smo da pokažemo da u domenu međunarodnog poslovanja, lideri koji aktivno prihvataju različitost su instrumentalni u negovanju*

okruženja pogodnog za razmenu različitih perspektiva i ideja. Ovo, zauzvrat, služi za negovanje inovacija i kreativnosti unutar njihovih timova. Štaviše, studije naglašavaju važnost kontinuiranog učenja i razvoja u jačanju sposobnosti interkulturalnog liderstva. Potreba fokusa daljeg istraživanja je jasna i glavni fokus je na razvoju efikasnih strategija za vođenje različitih timova koje se svakim danom sve više globalizuju.

Ključne reči: liderstvo / globalizacija / interkulturalno liderstvo / inkluzija / poslovna komunikacija.