

Intercultural Management and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policies: Mapping the Terrain

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Abstract

The authors explore the relationship between diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and intercultural management. They focus on the evolution of DEI and its implementation in organizational practice, highlighting cultural differences in the interpretation of these concepts. They identify cultural values that support DEI and review research in the field of intercultural management related to DEI. They also highlight research gaps and propose potential directions for future studies on DEI from an intercultural management perspective.

Keywords: DEI; cultural dominance; ethnocentrism; feminism; formal institutions; informal institutions; social capital; cultural models; polycentrism; equal rights; diversity; social movements; super-diversity; inclusion; intercultural management

Introduction

The theme of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), which has been developing for over 50 years, is gaining increasing attention from both researchers and practitioners. This growing interest is driven by changes in the economic, social, and regulatory environments of organizations (Morfaki & Morfaki, 2022; Newbury et al., 2022). Recognizing the importance of this issue, the authors aim to position DEI within the scope of research conducted in the field of intercultural management and to highlight the cultural challenges associated with implementing DEI in business and organizational practice.

To achieve this goal, the first part of the paper introduces intercultural management as a field of knowledge. The authors then present the concept of DEI, its origins, the development of knowledge in this area, and the current state of its implementation in organizational practice. In the following section, they emphasize that the core ideas of DEI are subject to different cultural interpretations, which may pose barriers to the effective dissemination of this concept, both in organizational declarations and in actual practices. They identify cultural values that align with DEI principles. Finally, they review research in the field of intercultural management that addresses DEI or

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its components, identify research gaps, and suggest future directions for studying DEI from an intercultural management perspective.

1. Situating Intercultural Management

One of the key issues in the development of the management discipline was the recognition of the human being as a resource that, when properly managed, should bring specific benefits to the organization (Dachner et al., 2021). Peter Drucker believed that modern management is about people working together in a way that enables the full use of their talents and knowledge to achieve increased labour productivity (Drucker, 2007). With the advancement of globalization and the accompanying migration and expansion of international enterprises, greater attention began to be paid to how individuals function in intercultural environments as a factor in gaining a competitive advantage. This approach was popularized, among others, by Geert Hofstede, who studied how people from different cultural groups operate within organizations (Hofstede et al., 2010). His research showed that specific patterns of feeling, thinking, and behaviour are characteristic of representatives of particular national cultures, and he proposed one of the most widely recognized models of cultural dimensions (Table 1).

Table 1. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Dimension	Description
Collectivism vs Individualism	In collectivist countries, the individual is part of a group that defines their identity; in individualist cultures, the individual is seen as independent, and the group is a collection of individuals.
Power Distance	Determines the relationships between superiors and subordinates and the degree of acceptance of social inequalities.
Goal Orientation	Indicates the division of social roles based on gender and the importance of various societal goals.
Uncertainty Avoidance	Defines the tendency to accept uncertainty and ambiguity.
Long-Term vs Short-Term Orientation	Determines the importance of the past, present, and future.
Indulgence vs Restraint	Describes the extent to which needs are regulated by social norms.

Source: Based on Hofstede et al. (2010)

Research on cultural differences has continued over the years and remains ongoing. For example, within the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness Research Program) project, researchers built upon Hofstede's work, critically revising and expanding the model of cultural dimensions. The GLOBE model emerged from studies on regional and transnational cultural diversity, in contrast to national differences. As a result, researchers identified so-called cultural clusters, whose boundaries did not necessarily align with geographic borders. Ten cultural clusters were distinguished: Anglo, Nordic, Eastern Europe, Latin Europe, Germanic, Latin America, Middle East, South Asia, Confucian Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa (Javidan & House, 2002).

One of the more recent contributions to the study of cultural differences is the framework proposed by Erin Meyer (see Table 2).

Table 2. Culture Maps

Dimension	Description
Communication: low-context vs high-context	The amount of implicit vs explicit communication in a given culture.
Evaluation: direct vs indirect feedback	The way people deliver feedback.
Persuasion: deductive vs inductive	The method of reasoning, either from general to specific or from specific to general.

Leadership: egalitarian vs hierarchical	The way power and authority are organized.
Decision-making: consensual vs top-down	The approaches to making decisions.
Trust: task-based vs relationship-based	How trust is built.
Disagreement: confrontational vs avoidance	How conflict is approached.
Scheduling: linear-time vs flexible-time	How time is perceived and managed.

Source: Based on Meyer (2014)

The brief overview of cultural difference models presented above highlights the importance of intercultural competence and intercultural management. The value of intercultural management lies in interpreting classical management functions through the lens of cultural differences (Sułkowski & Ignatowski, 2017). Research in this area provides companies with valuable tools for managing people effectively, without limitations stemming from factors such as gender, age, religion, or ethnic background. As a result, organizations can enrich their managerial toolkit by adopting methods proven to be most effective in specific circumstances. It is no coincidence that the literature emphasizes the priority of intercultural competence in the 21st century (Aggarwal & Wu, 2021). A lack of knowledge and skills in this area may lead to negative business consequences.

The aim of research focused on the cultural aspect of management is to identify potential problems that may arise in intercultural business environments and to develop preventive strategies (Rozkwitalska et al., 2017). Moreover, managing cultural differences does not apply solely to ethnically diverse environments; it also encompasses dilemmas related to differences in gender, age, and other factors that imply heterogeneity in norms, values, leadership styles, and other aspects that significantly impact organizational effectiveness. Thus, intercultural management is a natural response to the contemporary challenges faced by organizations seeking to achieve a competitive advantage in a global environment. Intercultural management draws on the achievements of other disciplines, such as anthropology, which studies the influence of culture on human behaviour in organizations. Its domain includes identifying common traits among international managers, distinct cultural characteristics that may contribute to gaining a competitive advantage, and potential cultural barriers to success. In practice, this means seeking patterns that account for ethnic similarities and differences within organizations and using them to implement solutions that enhance management effectiveness, while striving to achieve cultural synergy (Rozkwitalska, 2012).

2. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policies in Organizations

Equality is a fundamental social principle that requires consideration of the interests of all members of society, especially those who are most vulnerable and marginalized (Przybyła, 2006). The concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion are sometimes used interchangeably, but they carry distinct meanings (Beavers, 2018). *Diversity* refers to the range of identities and characteristics within a group, including gender, race, national culture, sexual orientation, and many others. *Equity*, on the other hand, is based on the principle of providing individuals with fair access, opportunities, resources, and prospects for development. *Inclusion* embodies proactive efforts to understand, leverage, and utilize the strengths and aspects of individual identity, enhancing a sense of belonging, value, and support for all individuals (Espinoza & Horn, 2022). According to Verna Myers (2015), DEI is somewhat like dancing. If the difference between diversity and inclusion is analogous to being invited to a party (i.e., diversity) versus being asked to dance (i.e., inclusion), then belonging to a group or team can be achieved by having the opportunity to dance to your own rhythm or soundtrack.

It is widely accepted that numerous social movements and legal changes that occurred in the United States in the mid-1960s were driven by activists fighting for equal rights, particularly in the workplace. These efforts had a direct impact on the corporate world at the time, changing perceptions of employees in areas such as equal treatment, fair employment conditions, and equal pay for equal work (Jackson, 2007). One of the leading social activists was Martin Luther King Jr., who dreamed of freedom for African Americans and political and economic equality. His active efforts led to the fight against racial segregation and discrimination, laying the foundation for policies and attitudes that promote equality and diversity. The emerging pop culture of that era provided a direct expression of opposition to racism. For example, The Beatles refused to perform in front of a racially segregated audience in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1964 (BBC News, 2011). Pop culture movements advocating for equal rights found ways to use music to convey messages of support or strong opposition.

Women also played a significant role in the fight for gender equality, particularly through suffragette activist movements. A milestone in this struggle was the first public convention, attended by 300 women and supportive men, at the Seneca Falls Convention in July 1848 (Dumenil, 2012). This and subsequent gatherings helped spread the idea of women's suffrage across many countries in both the old and new continents. This movement contributed to the recognition and importance of gender equality, as well as the inclusion of women in various spheres of

society. The most significant changes in the perception and treatment of women as equals to men occurred during World War II. Due to the widespread mobilization of men sent to the front lines, women began to fill the many vacant jobs, assuming roles previously held primarily by men (Sandua, 2023). Numerous examples of women entering the workforce helped break down gender-related barriers and stereotypes, paving the way for later feminist activism. Feminism has played, and continues to play, a significant role in raising awareness about gender, women's rights, and personal issues related to racism and sexism, while also drawing attention to all minorities, including the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals.

Among contemporary approaches to DEI, it is worth highlighting the work of Tormos-Aponte (2017). He observed that implementing DEI policies for marginalized groups enhances the agency and influence of international social movements. While the diversity of movement supporters presents additional challenges, inclusive practices allow movements to leverage the political resources offered by diversity, expand their constituencies, and benefit from new ideas and greater creativity. Tormos-Aponte argues that social movements characterized by diversity are more resilient to challenges and better equipped to solve problems, which increases their effectiveness in shaping international norms. Conversely, failing to embrace diversity by adopting exclusive or limiting approaches can alienate existing members and hinder the development of coalition-building and broader support networks. However, it was mass migration that truly transformed the fabric of modern societies, particularly in terms of racial and ethnic composition, leading to the emergence of *super-diversity*. This concept encompasses various perspectives on diversity, focusing attention on areas of management and policy that aim to enhance corporate competitiveness and social cohesion among migrants (Kothari et al., 2022). Super-diversity among migrants is a key concept in understanding equity and social inclusion. It demonstrates that when migrants relocate from one country to another, they bring a range of skills and perspectives, enriching human resources through diversity and supporting innovation and economic growth.

Already in the previous century, it was noted that implementing diversity policies could be one of the most significant challenges for those leading in the health sciences, namely in education, research, and services. These observations remain relevant today. Many faculty members in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields avoid engaging with DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) topics, fearing their lack of knowledge or training in this area (Johnson, 2019). Nevertheless, it is precisely academic staff, who have direct contact with students, that hold significant influence over shaping attitudes toward DEI policies. The role of education is to demonstrate that diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts should be applied not only to colleagues in diverse teams but also to other stakeholders of the organization. Universities have a responsibility to educate and promote behaviors that foster a positive, inclusive educational environment (Killpack et al., 2016). Diversity and inclusion are broadly and fundamentally important to institutions and the social system, and institutions striving for excellence must integrate diversity and inclusion into their core activities (Nivet, 2015).

DEI policies are being implemented in organizations across many parts of the world, although to varying degrees (Newbury, 2022). Nevertheless, they are mainly limited to human resource management. Few organizations have successfully integrated DEI policies at both the educational and strategic levels (Ely & Thomas, 2020). Similar conclusions can be drawn from the Culture Amp platform report (2023), which indicates that, according to most surveyed employees, DEI policies have not yet become a core value within their organizations. This is reflected in the lack of training in this area and the absence of clear sources of information about DEI within companies. According to the report, many firms are willing to invest in attracting more individuals from marginalized groups. However, they often hesitate to allocate resources to ensure positive experiences for these employees or to retain them. HR decision-makers believe that much more can be done to make DEI a fundamental value embedded throughout the organization and across all its processes.

3. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion – Cultural Interpretations

At the core of discussions surrounding concepts such as diversity, equity, and inclusion in an intercultural context lie the processes of globalization and migration. As a result of these phenomena, businesses, educational institutions, organizations, and entire societies must confront issues such as cultural, linguistic, and religious differences. However, diversity can be understood differently across cultures. In some countries, the concept goes beyond the classical binary division typical of societies rooted in Christian traditions, recognizing more than just male and female genders. Examples include: Hijras (India), Muxes (Mexico), Virgjinësha (Albania), Kathoey (Thailand), Berdache (Indigenous peoples of North America and Canada), Whakawahine or Whakatāne (Māori) (Majcherek, 2023). There are also differences between countries in how diversity is defined. For instance, in the United States, diversity includes race, gender, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, organizational role or function, age, physical and mental abilities, and religion. In Germany, the focus is primarily on gender, migration status, age, work-life balance, family situation, and sometimes sexual orientation and disability (Morfaki & Morfaki, 2022).

In international business operations, cultural dominance may be observed when a company imposes its own cultural model, often stemming from a belief in the superiority of its own culture over others. This reflects *cultural*

ethnocentrism. The opposite approach, *polycentrism*, is based on the belief that cultures can coexist and that international business should consider the cultural conditions of the host country where a subsidiary is located. Depending on how organizations approach the host country's culture, they may choose one of two strategies: a *convergence strategy* (linked to ethnocentrism), in which diversity is viewed as a problem that the organization seeks to eliminate by replicating solutions used in the parent company. These are implemented uncritically across all foreign subsidiaries, without considering cultural differences outside the headquarters' country. A *divergence strategy* (linked to polycentrism) involves adapting local practices to the specific cultural context of the host country (Prendke, 2023). Ethnocentrism can also be observed in attitudes toward migrants, manifesting not only in the belief in cultural superiority but also in preferences for interacting with members of one's own culture, pressure to maintain community cohesion and loyalty, and negative attitudes toward closer relationships with people from other cultures (Rosiak-Zięba, 2020).

Stereotypes and the country of origin of migrants also pose barriers to DEI efforts in organizations. For example, research has shown that an acceptable immigrant, someone the surveyed group would be willing to work with, was one from a country with a higher level of economic development than their own. The group also rejected the idea of having a supervisor from countries located east of Poland. This phenomenon is known as the country-of-origin effect (Misiura & Rozkwitalska, 2017).

In Table 3, previously described Hofstede dimensions are evaluated in terms of whether they support or hinder DEI efforts. Indicators for each dimension are provided for selected countries. Where a dimension supports DEI, the country receives 1 point. The higher the total score, the more likely the culture is to foster conditions favorable to DEI across various areas.

Table 3. Analysis of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions and Their Relationship to DEI Practices

Dimension	Feature	DEI	Index	Poland	Sweden	South Korea	USA
Individualism	Equal treatment of individuals regardless of differences	+	IDV	60	87	58	91
	Score			1	1	1	1
Collectivism	Division into "us" vs. "them" groups	–	IDV	47			
	Score			0			
High Power Distance	Inequality and a clear hierarchy are acceptable	–	PDI	68		60	
	Score			0		0	
Low Power Distance	Inequality and hierarchy are unacceptable.	+	PDI		31		40
	Score				1		1
Masculinity	Public and professional life is dominated by men.	–	MAS	64			62
	Score			0			0
Femininity	Public and professional life is accessible to all genders	+	MAS		5	39	
	Score				1	1	
High Uncertainty Avoidance	Aversion to difference may lead to ethnic prejudice and intolerance.	–	UAI	93		85	
	Score			0		0	
Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Tolerance for cultural differences	+	UAI		29		46
	Score				1		1

Short-Term Orientation	Religious fundamentalism	–	LTO	49	50
	Score			0	0
Long-Term Orientation	Religion is not a central issue	+	LTO	52	86
	Score			1	1
Restraint	Moral discipline, lack of acceptance for deviation from norms	–	IND	29	29
	Score			0	0
Indulgence	Acceptance of needs, kindness toward outsiders	+	IND	78	68
	Score			1	1

Note: Total DEI Alignment Score: Poland: 0, Sweden: 6, South Korea: 3, USA: 4

Source: Own elaboration based on Hofstede et al. (2010) and Country Comparison Tool (n.d.)

The results of the comparative analysis indicate that, among the countries compared, Poland exhibits the weakest correlation with cultural dimensions that are favourable to DEI. This difference is significant; Poland did not score a single point in any of the dimensions. In contrast, Sweden demonstrates predispositions in every dimension of the model, suggesting a favourable environment for diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. However, it is worth emphasizing that the use of classical cultural models, such as Hofstede's dimensions, is purely illustrative. Although these models are often criticized for oversimplification and reinforcing stereotypes, they still serve as a helpful point of reference in the analysis of cultural differences. The relationships presented are indicative and require further empirical verification.

Collaboration in multicultural environments offers many opportunities but may also encounter barriers stemming from individuals, groups, or organizations. Barriers to interculturality and to implementing a DEI culture can be directly linked to individual traits such as a lack of openness, low cognitive motivation, or low cultural intelligence. These may also result from ethnocentric beliefs, which can predispose individuals to racist behaviours or attitudes. Group-level barriers often involve trust and communication, which can be particularly problematic when working across different locations. In addition to language-related misunderstandings, cultural context can influence how messages are interpreted. The final category of barriers stems from the organization itself, such as cultural dominance or ethnocentrism (Przytuła & Krysińska-Kościańska, 2017).

Institutions, understood as the external environment shaping conditions for economic activity, can act as either barriers or enablers of DEI, in line with the assumptions of New Institutional Economics. Formal institutions are established and codified, and can be changed relatively quickly (e.g., through legislation). In contrast, informal institutions, including culture, emerge organically, and changing them requires time to reshape social consciousness. Introducing foreign solutions into the functioning of formal institutions may provoke resistance from informal institutions. Such a situation occurred in Poland, where the inconsistency between formal and informal institutions persists, leading to public distrust toward government actions (Gruszeńska, 2017). Imposing specific solutions in the formal sphere, such as DEI policies, can therefore lead to resistance in the informal sphere (Gruszeńska, 2012), especially if society lacks natural predispositions toward openness, trust, and tolerance for diversity.

The concept of social capital is closely linked to trust in formal institutions. Social capital is defined as a cultural phenomenon that represents the collective legacy of a community. It consists of elements such as civic attitudes, existing norms, interpersonal trust, and the trust citizens place in state institutions (Czapiński, 2008). Two types of social capital are distinguished based on the nature of the relationships involved. *Bonding social capital* refers to exclusive ties characterized by strong emotional connections, like those found in family relationships or other homogeneous groups. These ties are characterized by resistance to alternative cultures or, more broadly, to difference. The primary concern is maintaining the status quo. *Bridging social capital* is typical of heterogeneous groups and reflects openness to others, forming the basis for mutual relationships despite differences in values or life experiences. This type of tie promotes tolerance and openness, enabling access to the resources of other groups (Meng, 2018). A natural conclusion follows that when bridging ties are present in society, they are likely to support DEI.

4. Cultural Differences and DEI Policies and Practices – A Review of Research

The phrase “diversity, equity, and inclusion” appears relatively frequently in the titles, keywords, or abstracts of academic publications. Interestingly, these are most often works from the fields of medical sciences and health sciences, followed by a significant number from social sciences. The business and management domain ranks third. The most commonly addressed topics include diversity, equity, inclusion, and DEI, as well as leadership. Articles listing DEI among their keywords cover a wide range of issues, such as marketing (Morse, 2021; Williams-Sanchez, 2023), the relationship between ethnic and gender diversity among employees and organizational financial performance (Smith & De Leon, 2023), DEI declarations, including their use in employment policies at universities (Ficht & Levashina, 2023), DEI reporting (Campbell & Helleloid, 2023), and equity in diverse schools from the ground up (Mawhinney et al., 2023). Publications by authors from the USA and within the American cultural context clearly dominate (93% of all). A similar trend is observed in articles specifically addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace, with 85%, 91%, and 83% respectively, originating from the USA. The studies most closely related to intercultural management focus on employee, team, and managerial diversity, as well as their impact on organizations. These works emphasize that diversity can bring both positive and negative effects (Rozkwitalska et al., 2017; Stahl & Maznevski, 2021). However, it is worth noting that these studies more often address demographic diversity, primarily in terms of ethnicity, race, gender, and age, rather than cultural diversity (Yadav & Lenka, 2020). There is a lack of comparative research conducted across different cultural contexts, especially in developing countries. This does not diminish the value of existing diversity studies, but it raises questions about the reasons behind this imbalance. One explanation is the dominance of U.S.-based authorship in a country where ethnic and gender differences are particularly prominent in research. Most diversity-related articles have been published in the *Academy of Management Journal*, a journal that recognizes diversity as a research area. Within the Academy of Management, the journal’s publisher, a Gender and Diversity in Organizations division has been active since 1988 (Yadav & Lenka, 2020).

A team led by Loi Anh Nguyen (2023) conducted an integrative literature review on inclusion, demonstrating that one of the most frequently addressed contexts in research on inclusive work environments and practices, alongside disability and gender differences, is cultural diversity. It was observed that cultural barriers negatively affect the sense of inclusion, particularly in multinational enterprises. At the same time, there is a lack of studies that interpret the findings in relation to the cultural context.

The relationship between national culture and DEI was analysed by Judy Tsui and Gaoguang Zhou (2023). The authors concluded that, regardless of cultural differences in defining these concepts, they are interdependent and should be treated as such. They also observed greater activity on the part of organizations from Western countries, mainly Anglo-Saxon ones, in implementing DEI policies. They further demonstrated that individualism strongly supports DEI, while distance from power correlates negatively. Karen Loon (2023) analysed the extent to which accounting firms in the Asia-Pacific region implement the concept of gender equality in their foreign subsidiaries. She demonstrated that local managers perceive DEI policy as a Western concept, and that not all of its elements align with the more collectivist markets in the region. According to Loon, companies therefore adapt their DEI policies to suit local cultural conditions better.

Jennifer Feitosa, Spencer Hagenbuch, Banshi Patel, and Alicia Davis (2022) noted the need to look at intercultural management from a DEI perspective. Although developed separately, both areas of knowledge share many common elements. Feitosa et al. (2022) therefore propose that culturally diverse organizations focus on intercultural outcomes, which they define as “the integration of multiple cultural perspectives of people working together to achieve a diverse, inclusive, and equitable work environment” (p. 433). The authors argue that organizations should strive to improve intercultural outcomes through emotion management, in which cultural differences are valued and leveraged, employees are encouraged to engage in open communication, and alliances are formed to remove barriers in the workplace. They view cultural competence or cultural sensitivity as factors that contribute to intercultural outcomes, with results including cultural adaptation, a sense of belonging, improved performance, increased knowledge, and an innovative climate.

The team led by William Newbury (2022) highlights the pressure exerted on multinational enterprises by various stakeholder groups, at the global, regional, national, partner, and internal levels, to implement DEI policies, as well as the complexity of this process within such entities. Multinational companies face diverse expectations from local communities and partners, which complicates the implementation of a uniform DEI policy and the development of a DEI-based identity. These organizations must decide how much to adapt DEI policies to local conditions. The authors point out that multinational corporations can act as agents of change in the regions where they operate, promoting DEI values. They also list examples of recent research emerging from the growing interest in DEI in international business, including the social construction of gender differences, language strategies and social categorization, the stigmatization of LGBT+ expatriates, and types of diversity in multinational enterprises, such as neurodiversity.

Madlene A. Minassian (2023) undertook a review of the literature on DEI in the context of multinational companies. She noted that diversity as a Western concept requires national solutions in terms of DEI policies, and

interventions aimed at their implementation should be designed locally, considering cultural differences in the understanding of diversity. The US clearly has an advantage in implementing DEI, as reflected in the numerous works on this topic by US authors. However, Minassian (2023) cites several studies from other markets that address the effectiveness of DEI training in multinational companies, noting that they have contributed to better cultural adaptation among expatriates, increased task efficiency and cultural intelligence among expatriate employees in the IT industry, and a deeper understanding of internal communication. However, the content of the training and contextual factors were important.

Another, less well-researched area of study at the intersection of DEI and intercultural management is the motives behind why employees and organizations are willing to build an inclusive and equitable work environment for a diverse workforce. Minassian (2023) cites only a few studies in this area. They indicate that the best results in diversity management occur when interest in implementing DEI in an organization stems from recognizing the benefits that a diverse workforce brings to the organization in terms of skills, knowledge, and perspectives. Minassian (2023) also refers to research on how diversity should be treated, noting that Western concepts are based on tolerance, while Eastern concepts value treating differences with civility and dignity.

Another area of research at the intersection of intercultural management and DEI, cited by Minassian (2023), is studying how individuals experience diversity, equity, and inclusion. This research has highlighted personal experiences, the role of institutions, group identity, including favoritism toward one's own or other groups, and transformative learning, which requires consciously challenging one's own values and assumptions and is a social process. Transformative learning can be an important means of effectively implementing DEI in culturally diverse organizations.

Cristina Morfaki and Alexandra Morfaki (2022) conducted a literature review on diversity and inclusion in the workplace, noting a growing interest in the topic among HR professionals and companies. However, they point out a lack of evidence regarding the effectiveness of DEI programs and a noticeable gap between corporate declarations and actual practices. They also highlight the varying scope of the term “diversity” across different countries. Early research on diversity focused on ethnic and racial discrimination in HR practices, as well as racial differences in job satisfaction, engagement, motivation, and leadership. Similar to studies on cultural diversity, these investigations did not yield conclusive results regarding the expected outcomes of diversity. A key area of research has been the examination of gender differences, including the gender pay gap. However, this line of inquiry has also failed to produce indisputable findings on the relationship between gender and performance. The same applies to studies on age differences and their effects on individuals and organizations. Notably, older employees tend to experience more discrimination than younger ones, for example, through negative stereotypes, fewer training opportunities, and lower performance evaluations. Research on people with disabilities and LGBTQ+ groups still focuses primarily on discrimination and remains less developed than studies in other areas of diversity. The authors also cite studies showing that implementing diverse and inclusive work environments brings measurable business benefits. Another research stream explores actual DEI practices and their effectiveness. The authors advocate for studying diversity in an integrated way, as many contextual variables influence the outcomes of diversity for organizations.

Conclusions

This paper contributes to the academic discourse by integrating the concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion with the intercultural management domain, two areas that have traditionally been studied separately. It demonstrates their interdependence and highlights the cultural challenges that arise when implementing DEI policies across different national contexts. The paper also applies the framework of New Institutional Economics to explore how formal and informal institutions influence the success or failure of DEI initiatives. Furthermore, the discussion of social capital, particularly the distinction between bonding and bridging ties, provides a theoretical basis for understanding societal openness to DEI. Empirical insights from recent global studies enrich the paper's perspective. The paper critically reviews the state-of-the-art knowledge about cultural differences and DEI policies and practices.

Practically, the paper suggests a necessity to adapt DEI policies to local cultural conditions. The application of Hofstede's cultural dimensions and social capital theory offers a diagnostic tool for evaluating DEI readiness and identifying barriers in diverse cultural contexts. The effectiveness of DEI policies requires more than just formal provisions. It is crucial to align actions with the local cultural context, develop intercultural competencies among leaders, and genuinely involve employees in shaping the rules that affect them. It is also important to monitor the actual outcomes of implementation, rather than relying solely on declarations of success. Such an approach increases the likelihood that DEI will become more than a slogan and will become an authentic part of the organizational culture.

Despite its contributions, the paper has several limitations. It is based primarily on a review of existing literature and does not present original empirical research or case studies. The use of cultural models, such as Hofstede's dimensions, may oversimplify complex cultural realities and risk reinforcing stereotypes. Another limitation lies

in the challenge of measuring the effectiveness of DEI. Although prior research acknowledges this issue, the paper does not propose a concrete methodology for evaluating DEI outcomes. Additionally, the definitions of diversity, gender identity, and intersectionality are evolving, and the frameworks used may require ongoing revision to remain relevant in dynamic social and organizational environments.

To recap, although research on diversity, equality, and inclusion has often been conducted independently of research on intercultural management, it is not difficult to see their close connection and mutual overlap. However, even when combining both areas of knowledge, it is possible to identify the fragmentary nature of existing studies, significant gaps in knowledge, and directions for further research. For example, studies should be developed on what factors influence the sense of inclusion of diverse employees in multinational companies, especially those from the LGBTQ+ group, what drives organizations and individuals to build an inclusive and equitable work environment, how to stimulate transformative learning in organizations, how to reduce the gap between DEI declarations and actions in the context of DEI practices in different countries, and how to localize DEI policies according to cultural values. Research should involve diverse stakeholder groups and be conducted in different cultural contexts.

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