

REVIEW ARTICLE

Inclusive leadership and its impact on talent retention in diverse teams

Liderazgo inclusivo y su impacto en la retención del talento en equipos diversos

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Received: 04 January 2024 / Accepted: 18 March 2024 / Published online: 21 July 2024

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Abstract This review article critically analyzed the scientific literature published between 2022 and 2025 on inclusive leadership and its impact on talent retention in diverse teams. A qualitative approach was used through a thematic narrative review, selecting seven empirical and theoretical studies from high-impact international scientific journals. The methodology included thematic content analysis focused on psychological safety, vigor, organizational commitment, perceived inclusion, and team resilience. The results showed that inclusive leadership favored the development of work environments where employees perceived greater meaning in their work, emotional well-being, and recognition of their uniqueness. It was also found that this leadership style strengthened affective organizational commitment and retention intentions, especially when accompanied by a diverse organizational climate and quality interpersonal relationships. It was also highlighted that inclusive leadership enhanced resilience in multinational teams and active participation in organizations with high levels of diversity. In conclusion, it was established that inclusive leadership constitutes a strategic factor for talent retention. However, its effectiveness depends on contextual, cultural, and organizational variables that should be considered in future research.

Keywords inclusive leadership, talent retention, diverse teams, organizational commitment.

Resumen El presente artículo de revisión analizó críticamente la literatura científica publicada entre 2022 y 2025 sobre el liderazgo inclusivo y su impacto en la retención del talento humano en equipos diversos. Se utilizó un enfoque cualitativo mediante una revisión narrativa de alcance temático, seleccionando siete estudios empíricos y teóricos provenientes de revistas científicas internacionales de alto impacto. La metodología incluyó el análisis de contenido temático enfocado en categorías como seguridad psicológica, vigor, compromiso organizacional, inclusión percibida y resiliencia de equipos. Los resultados evidenciaron que el liderazgo inclusivo favoreció el desarrollo de entornos laborales donde los empleados percibieron mayor sentido del trabajo, bienestar emocional y reconocimiento de su singularidad. Asimismo, se constató que este estilo de liderazgo fortaleció el compromiso organizacional afectivo y la intención de permanencia, en especial cuando estuvo acompañado por un clima organizacional diverso y relaciones interpersonales de calidad. También se destacó que el liderazgo inclusivo potenció la resiliencia en equipos multinacionales y la participación activa en organizaciones con altos niveles de diversidad. En conclusión, se estableció que el liderazgo inclusivo constituye un factor estratégico para la retención del talento, aunque su efectividad depende de variables contextuales, culturales y organizacionales que deben ser consideradas en futuras investigaciones.

Palabras clave liderazgo inclusivo, retención del talento, equipos diversos, compromiso organizacional.

How to cite

Guerrero, A. A., & Marín, C. M. (2024). Inclusive leadership and its impact on talent retention in diverse teams. *Journal of Management and Human Resources*, 2(2), 29-35. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15368958>



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Introduction

Performance appraisal has been a fundamental practice in orIn recent decades, the world of work has undergone an unprecedented transformation in its demographic, cultural, and functional composition. Globalization, international mobility, technological advancement, and new generations have given rise to highly diverse workforces regarding gender, age, nationality, sexual orientation, cognitive skills, physical abilities, and career paths (Li & Tang, 2022; Kim et al., 2025). Although potentially enriching, this growing heterogeneity poses considerable challenges to traditional leadership and talent management models. Among the emerging responses to this organizational complexity, inclusive leadership has established itself as a relevant, innovative, and necessary approach to fostering equitable, resilient, and sustainable work environments (Sun et al., 2024; Lee & Shin, 2024).

Inclusive leadership is defined as a style that manifests itself through behaviors of openness, accessibility, and availability, through which leaders foster a sense of belonging and, at the same time, value the uniqueness of each collaborator (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Carmeli et al., 2010). Randel et al. (2018) point out that this type of leadership recognizes diversity and turns it into a strategic asset by creating psychological safety, trust, and mutual recognition conditions. This form of leadership has demonstrated a positive effect on critical variables such as innovative performance (Li & Tang, 2022), workplace well-being (Liu et al., 2024), the resilience of multinational teams (Hundschell et al., 2024), organizational commitment (Ly, 2024), and especially, on talent retention (Kim et al., 2025).

From a theoretical perspective, inclusive leadership has been analyzed mainly from social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). According to the former, when leaders offer tangible or symbolic resources (emotional support, respect, participation), employees develop a relationship of reciprocity that translates into greater commitment, loyalty, and organizational permanence (Li & Tang, 2022; Ly, 2024). On the other hand, self-determination theory argues that the satisfaction of the basic needs of autonomy, competence, and social connectedness strengthens intrinsic motivation and a sense of purpose at work (Shafaei & Nejati, 2023; Liu et al., 2024), which directly influences employees' decision to stay in their position and contribute to the development of the organization.

In this sense, recent research has identified that inclusive leaders act as catalysts for well-being and productivity and as protective factors against job turnover. Liu et al. (2024) demonstrated that inclusive leadership increases job vigor,

understood as the cognitive and emotional energy that drives sustained engagement in tasks, improving subjective well-being and reducing burnout. In turn, Kim et al. (2025) highlighted that the perception of inclusion, mediated by positive interactions with leaders and colleagues, enhances the meaning of work and strengthens the intention to stay, a key indicator in talent retention.

Likewise, research by Shafaei and Nejati (2023) highlights that inclusive leadership influences the creation of meaningful work, implying that employees perceive value, purpose, and alignment between their daily work and personal principles. In contexts where the meaning of work is high, commitment, satisfaction, and organizational loyalty tend to rise significantly, thereby decreasing voluntary turnover. For their part, Sun et al. (2024) argue that the evolution of leadership from a superficial vision of diversity to a practice of genuine equity requires leaders to develop deep relational competencies capable of integrating all team members equitably, regardless of their differences.

Inclusive leadership has proven effective in multicultural and multinational environments, where language barriers, cultural frameworks, and divergent working styles can generate tensions. Hundschell et al. (2024) point out that this leadership style, coupled with an organizational climate conducive to diversity, promotes team resilience, understood as the collective ability to adapt, learn, and overcome adversity. This capacity is essential for sustaining the commitment and retention of employees who might otherwise feel isolated or marginalized in contexts dominated by exclusionary organizational cultures.

On the other hand, specialized literature has emphasized that inclusive leadership enhances active participation, intergroup collaboration, and continuous innovation, which enriches organizational performance and strengthens the worker's professional identity (Lee & Shin, 2024; Ly, 2024). The perception of relational justice, equitable access to resources, and the possibility of personal development are key dimensions that contribute to a satisfactory work experience, and that, when promoted by inclusive leaders, significantly reduce the intention to leave (Kim et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2024).

Despite this emerging body of evidence, significant analytical gaps persist. Most existing studies focus on analyzing the effects of inclusive leadership on innovation, satisfaction, or performance, while the direct connection with talent retention in diverse teams remains fragmented. In particular, few studies address this relationship from a multivariate perspective that integrates dimensions such as work meaning,

self-efficacy, organizational commitment, psychological safety, and emotional vigor as mediators or modulators of the link between leadership and retention intention (Kim et al., 2025; Sun et al., 2024).

In this context, this scientific review article aims to critically analyze recent academic production (2022–2025) on inclusive leadership, emphasizing its impact on talent retention in diverse teams. It seeks to integrate empirical findings and theoretical developments from an interdisciplinary perspective that articulates organizational psychology, human talent management, and diversity and inclusion studies. Through this review, we hope to contribute to a more robust understanding of the strategic role of inclusive leadership in contemporary work environments and offer theoretical and practical foundations to guide more inclusive and sustainable management policies adapted to the human plurality that characterizes 21st-century work.

The main objective of this scientific review article is to critically analyze the impact of inclusive leadership on talent retention in diverse teams, based on the scientific literature published between 2022 and 2025. It aims to identify the main theoretical approaches, empirical findings, and explanatory mechanisms that link inclusive leadership with variables such as work meaning, psychological safety, vigor, organizational commitment, and intention to remain. Additionally, it seeks to highlight current research gaps to propose future lines of study and practical recommendations for organizations interested in fostering inclusive and sustainable work environments.

Research on inclusive leadership has gained traction in recent years in response to the challenges arising from increasing workplace diversity. Beginning with the seminal work of Nembhard and Edmondson (2006), inclusive leadership has been conceptualized as a style based on openness, availability, and the appreciation of individual contributions. Subsequent research has delved into its implications for organizational well-being, performance, and team cohesion (Carmeli et al., 2010; Randel et al., 2018).

Shafaei and Nejati (2023), from a perspective based on self-determination theory, demonstrated that inclusive leadership facilitates meaningful work experiences by generating psychological safety and promoting learning from mistakes. Their study revealed that these factors mediate the relationship between inclusive leadership and a sense of purpose at work, directly impacting organizational commitment and, consequently, talent retention.

For their part, Liu et al. (2024) confirmed that inclusive leadership positively influences workplace well-being by sti-

mulating work vigor and meeting employees' basic needs. In this model, the feedback provided by inclusive leaders reinforces employees' internal motivation, strengthening their willingness to remain in the organization. The connection between leadership, well-being, and retention is especially relevant in environments characterized by high competitiveness and emotional demands.

In the context of multinational teams, Hundschell et al. (2024) highlighted that inclusive leadership improves the team's resilience, understood as the collective ability to face challenges, recover from adverse situations, and adapt to change. This resilience, mediated by an organizational climate favorable to diversity, is associated with better performance outcomes and greater group cohesion, contributing to avoiding talent attrition, especially in complex intercultural contexts.

Kim et al. (2025) provided evidence from the hotel sector, demonstrating that inclusive leadership and inclusion among colleagues influence perceptions of inclusion, work meaning, and intention to stay. Their findings reveal that relational capital—the quality of interpersonal relationships—is critical to consolidating organizational cultures that retain diverse talent. This study also highlights the moderating role of self-efficacy, which suggests the need for inclusion strategies tailored to individual characteristics.

From a complementary perspective, Ly (2024) investigated the mediating role of affective organizational commitment between inclusive leadership and employee engagement. The results indicated that inclusive leaders generate greater emotional identification with the organization, increasing engagement and reducing turnover intentions. This approach revisits the postulates of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) by highlighting reciprocity in the leader-employee relationship.

Sun et al. (2024) proposed an evolution of inclusive leadership beyond superficial diversity management toward a practice of genuine equity, capable of transforming organizational structures into spaces where all members feel valued. This critical vision urges organizations to develop leadership frameworks that not only tolerate differences but also integrate them as a strategic resource for the sustainability of human talent.

In short, although recent studies have documented multiple benefits of inclusive leadership in key dimensions of organizational behavior, there are still theoretical and empirical gaps regarding its direct and sustained impact on talent retention in diverse teams. This review aims to help close this gap by articulating the available evidence from an inte-

grative and updated perspective.

Methodology

This study employed a narrative review with a thematic focus to systematize and analyze recent scientific literature on the role of inclusive leadership in talent retention across diverse organizational contexts. Following Snyder's (2019) methodological guidelines, the review combined qualitative depth with an exploratory approach to identify conceptual trends, gaps, and convergences. Using a documentary analysis within a qualitative paradigm, it examined empirical and theoretical studies published between 2022 and 2025—a period marked by the rise of inclusive leadership, digital transformation, and intensified DEI policies. Inclusion criteria focused on peer-reviewed articles addressing inclusive leadership and its influence on retention-related variables in diverse or multicultural settings, while non-peer-reviewed, duplicated, or unrelated works were excluded. The final sample included seven high-impact journal articles, analyzed using Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic content analysis. Key dimensions included definitions of inclusive leadership, mechanisms of influence on talent, mediating/moderating factors, and implications for retention. A comparative synthesis matrix highlighted patterns, divergences, and research gaps.

Given the narrative nature of the review and the targeted selection of documents analyzed, this study is not intended to be exhaustive or to represent all available perspectives on the topic. However, it offers a critical and up-to-date approach, based on recent and relevant scientific research, which contributes to constructing a robust theoretical framework to guide future empirical research.

A comparative table was created to synthesize key insights from seven peer-reviewed articles (2022–2025) on inclusive leadership and its influence on talent retention in diverse teams. Selected for their methodological rigor and thematic relevance, the studies were compared across core elements: authorship, publication year, journal, methodology, and main findings. The table highlights recurring empirical patterns, such as the mediating role of psychological resources (e.g., vigor, work meaning, commitment). It emphasizes a shift in theory from basic diversity management to more equitable and transformational leadership models. It also illustrates the varied contexts in which inclusive leadership is examined, ranging from multinational teams to public and hospitality sectors. This structured comparison provides a foundation for deeper analysis by revealing convergences, contradictions, and gaps that point to future research directions.

Results and discussion

The literature reviewed offers converging evidence on the role of inclusive leadership as a strategic factor in retaining human talent in diverse organizational contexts (Table 1). In the seven studies analyzed, inclusive leadership consistently appears to be a positive predictor of individual and group outcomes, directly or indirectly impacting employees' decision to remain in their organizations. These outcomes include psychological safety, meaningful work, affective organizational commitment, team resilience, vigor, and perceived inclusion.

One of the most relevant findings is that inclusive leadership facilitates the development of meaningful work experiences. Shafaei and Nejati (2023) demonstrated that psychological safety and a climate of learning from mistakes, promoted by inclusive leaders, mediate the perception of meaningful work. This sense of work is directly linked to retention by strengthening professional identity, intrinsic motivation, and emotional commitment to the organization. Similarly, Kim et al. (2025) showed that in the hotel sector, inclusive leadership and inclusion among colleagues positively impact perceived inclusion, increasing both the meaning of work and the intention to remain. These results underscore the importance of the relational dimension of inclusion in highly diverse environments with high turnover rates.

Liu et al. (2024) explore the psychological mechanisms linking inclusive leadership to retention in depth. They argue that this leadership style satisfies employees' basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—stimulating their vigor and well-being at work. These findings, supported by self-determination theory, confirm that retention is not only a structural issue but also a psychological process derived from how leaders shape their employees' daily experiences.

Beyond the individual level, several studies highlight the systemic and collective impact of inclusive leadership. Hundschell et al. (2024) demonstrated that, in multinational teams, this leadership style strengthens the group's resilience, understood as the collective ability to adapt and recover from adversity. This resilience, mediated by an organizational climate favorable to diversity, acts as a buffer against turnover and improves group cohesion and performance. Their study also introduces the concept of resource caravan alignment (Caravan alignment), stating that the interaction between inclusive leadership and diverse climate enhances resilience and, consequently, talent stability.

The mediating role of affective organizational commitment is also highlighted by Ly (2024), who demonstrates that inclusive leaders generate stronger emotional bonds between employees and the organization, which translates into higher engagement and lower intentions to quit. These results are consistent with social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), in

Table 1. Research on inclusive leadership: methods, contexts, and key findings

Reference	Study title	Journal	Methodological approach	Key Findings
Shafaei & Nejati (2023)	Creating meaningful work for employees: the role of inclusive leadership	Human Resource Development Quarterly	Quantitative – structured survey	Inclusive leadership increases work meaningfulness through psychological safety.
Liu et al. (2024)	Inclusive leadership and employee workplace well-being	BMC Psychology	Quantitative – structural equation modeling	Inclusive leadership improves well-being through vigor and feedback.
Hundschell et al. (2024)	Leader inclusiveness and team resilience capacity in multinational teams	Journal of Organizational Behavior	Quantitative – multinational team study	Inclusive leadership enhances team resilience in multicultural contexts.
Kim et al. (2025)	Hotel employees' workplace inclusion and its outcomes	International Journal of Hospitality Management	Quantitative – hotel employee survey	Perceived inclusion increases work meaning and retention intention.
Ly (2024)	Inclusion leadership and employee work engagement	Asia Pacific Management Review	Quantitative – PLS-SEM	Organizational commitment mediates the link between inclusive leadership and engagement.
Sun et al. (2024)	Inclusive leadership: beyond diversity to true equity	International Journal of Science and Business	Theoretical–conceptual review	Inclusive leadership must evolve toward actual equity practice.
Lee & Shin (2024)	Effects of inclusive leadership on diversity climate and change-oriented OCB	Behavioral Sciences	Quantitative – mediation analysis	Inclusive leadership boosts diversity climate and change-oriented behaviors.

which leaders who offer respect, recognition, and equity generate reciprocity through commitment and retention.

From a conceptual perspective, Sun et al. (2024) argue that inclusive leadership must evolve from superficial diversity management to an authentic practice of equity. Their theoretical review says that truly inclusive leaders must challenge structural biases and generate institutional conditions that allow all employees to belong, thrive, and develop. This critical view aligns with current debates on transformational leadership, institutional equity, and organizational justice.

For their part, Lee and Shin (2024) found that inclusive leadership strengthens the organizational diversity climate, promoting organizational citizenship behaviors oriented toward change. Although these behaviors are not directly linked to retention, they reflect psychological states of commitment, organizational identification, and a willingness to contribute beyond the minimum role requirements, indirectly reinforcing talent retention.

The reviewed studies confirm that inclusive leadership is a multidimensional construct capable of influencing multiple psychological, social, and structural factors that support talent retention. However, it is also evident that this impact

is neither automatic nor homogeneous. Contextual variables such as organizational climate (Hundschell et al., 2024), peer support (Kim et al., 2025), and employee self-efficacy (Kim et al., 2025) play key moderating roles. Furthermore, cultural differences in the perception and application of inclusive leadership invite the development of culturally sensitive and adaptive models.

In short, inclusive leadership contributes to talent retention by building environments of trust, commitment, and psychological flourishing. Future research should investigate its longitudinal effects, applicability across different economic sectors, and connection with power, reward, and career mobility organizational systems.

Conclusions

This review analyzed recent literature (2022–2025) on inclusive leadership and its influence on talent retention in diverse organizational settings. Drawing from seven empirical and theoretical studies across sectors such as hospitality, the public sphere, and multinational teams, the findings highlight inclusive leadership as a vital resource for fostering meaningful, safe, and engaging work environments. Rather

than a direct causal link, it enhances retention through psychological and relational mechanisms, such as increased purpose, emotional vigor, perceived inclusion, commitment, and resilience. The review emphasizes that true inclusion extends beyond tolerance, requiring active equity practices and institutional support for individual development. However, the effectiveness of inclusive leadership is influenced by factors like organizational climate, peer dynamics, employee self-efficacy, and cultural context, underscoring the need for strategic, culturally sensitive implementation aligned with broader DEI policies.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Author contributions

Conceptualization: Guerrero, A. A., & Marín, C. M. **Data curation:** Guerrero, A. A., & Marín, C. M. **Formal analysis:** Guerrero, A. A., & Marín, C. M. **Research:** Guerrero, A. A., & Marín, C. M. **Methodology:** Guerrero, A. A., & Marín, C. M. **Supervision:** Guerrero, A. A., & Marín, C. M. **Validation:** Guerrero, A. A., & Marín, C. M. **Visualization:** Guerrero, A. A., & Marín, C. M. **Writing the original draft:** Guerrero, A. A., & Marín, C. M. **Writing, review and editing:** Guerrero, A. A., & Marín, C. M.

Data availability statement

Not applicable.

Statement on the use of AI

The authors acknowledge the use of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies to improve the readability and cla-

rity of the article.

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