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The Effect of Gender-Diverse Teams on Team Effectiveness: Cultivating the Value of Diversity through Inclusive Leadership

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Resumo

A diversificação da força de trabalho decorrente da globalização exige orientação na gestão das diferenças individuais no seio das equipas, desafiando as organizações a implementar medidas estruturais, como quotas e políticas de inclusão, bem como a promover formações sobre preconceitos inconscientes. Esta dissertação investiga os efeitos da diversidade de género na eficácia das equipas e o papel do fator contextual da liderança inclusiva, que poderá mitigar ou potenciar a relação em estudo. Com base numa análise abrangente da literatura existente, sustenta-se que as equipas percecionadas como mais diversas em termos de género demonstrarão maior eficácia. Adicionalmente, é hipotetizado que os comportamentos de liderança inclusiva reforçarão esta relação. Recorreu-se a uma amostra de 29 equipas, às quais foi aplicado um questionário para captar as percepções de membros e líderes relativamente à diversidade de género, a diversos resultados de equipa e aos comportamentos inclusivos dos líderes, sendo os dados analisados ao nível da equipa. Os resultados não evidenciam suporte para a relação positiva esperada entre diversidade de género e eficácia das equipas. Contudo, a liderança inclusiva revelou ser um forte preditor direto da eficácia, sugerindo que tais comportamentos funcionam mais como um indicador geral do que como um fator condicional. Estes resultados oferecem um contributo valioso para a literatura, ao sublinhar a posição influente dos líderes na orientação das suas equipas e, simultaneamente, ao enfatizar a contínua imprevisibilidade da diversidade e a complexidade inerente à sua gestão.

Palavras-chave: Diversidade, Diversidade de género, Eficácia das equipas, Liderança, Liderança inclusiva, Equipas.

Classificação JEL:

O15 - Recursos Humanos

D23 - Comportamento Organizacional

Abstract

The diversification of the workforce due to globalization requires guidance in managing individual differences within teams, challenging organizations to impose structural measures such as quotas and inclusion policies, as well as providing unconscious bias training. This dissertation investigates the effects of gender diversity on team effectiveness and the role of the contextual factor, inclusive leadership, that may mitigate or enhance the tested relationship. Based on the comprehensive dissection of existing literature, the study argues that teams perceived as more gender diverse will demonstrate higher team effectiveness. Additionally, it is hypothesized that inclusive leadership behaviors will strengthen this relationship. Using a sample of 29 teams, a survey was distributed to capture the perceptions of team members and team leaders in terms of gender diversity, several team outcomes, and the leaders' inclusive leadership behaviors to be analyzed at the team level. The findings show no support for the expected positive relation between gender diversity and team effectiveness. However, inclusive leadership does prove to be a strong direct predictor of team effectiveness, suggesting that such behaviors act more as a general indicator rather than a conditional one. These results make a valuable contribution to the literature by underscoring the influential position of leaders at the head of their team while emphasizing the continuous unpredictability of diversity and the difficulty in managing its complexity.

Keywords: Diversity, Gender diversity, Team Effectiveness, Leadership, Inclusive Leadership, Teams.

JEL Classification codes:

O15 - Human Resources

D23 - Organizational Behavior

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Glossary of Acronyms

CEM - Categorization Elaboration Model

DEI – Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

GD - Gender Diversity

HR - Human Resources

IL - Inclusive Leadership

WEF – World Economic Forum

Introduction

Globalization is progressing rapidly, pushing for the integration of people, cultures, and expertise across organizations and countries. This development demands diverse team compositions and calls for adaptive and culturally aware approaches to teamwork and leadership. Research has consistently shown that diverse teams composed of individuals with differences in demographic characteristics, knowledge, and perspectives hold the potential of boosting organizational performance by increasing creativity, problem-solving, and innovation (Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007; Dixon-Fyle et al., 2020). As work becomes increasingly team-based, organizations are adopting best-practice models to manage diversity effectively. Yet diversity alone does not guarantee instant success. The ability to turn differences into strength and high performance depends on how teams are managed and led (Hinds et al., 2011; Gross-Golacka & Martyniuk, 2024).

Ongoing debates about gender bias, pay gaps, gender identities, and discrimination have brought more attention to research on gender diversity. Female empowerment, especially in the corporate world, leads the ethical agenda (Kim & Shin, 2017). For decades, outdated gender roles kept women out of boardrooms by creating a seemingly indestructible glass ceiling. As a result, gender equality has become a priority for organizations through the implementation and advocacy of gender ratios, equal pay policies, and unconscious bias training. Recently, measures like board-level gender quotas (e.g., Directive (EU) 2022/2381 - EN - EUR-LEX) have been installed to promote representation in leadership roles and address long-standing inequalities. However, such quota-based approaches alone are insufficient for generating meaningful change at the team level. Accordingly, the debate around diversity has slowly shifted from representation at the top to the quality of inclusion in daily organizational life, particularly within teamwork (Nishii, 2013; Shemla et al., 2016; World Economic Forum & McKinsey & Company, 2023). At the same time, DEI initiatives are facing serious political and social opposition. For instance, after the re-election of President Donald Trump, new policies led to the dismantling of DEI structures, based on his beliefs that the initiatives are unnecessary or polarizing. Ng et al. (2025) argue that his anti-DEI agenda has already had a profound impact, creating uncertainty and concern among minority groups and DEI supporters, and increasing inequalities within organizations. Despite these challenges, globalization is an inevitable process that comes with significant consequences for teams and organizations, making it essential to have effective strategies in place to manage the outcomes.

According to statistical data from McKinsey's report "Diversity Wins" (2020), organizations with higher gender diversity outperform their competition. However, also pointed out in the report and by other researchers (Bell et al., 2011; Piña et al., 2008; Harrison et al., 1998; Homan et al., 2020;

Koslowski & Ilgen, 2006; Post & Byron, 2015), leadership commitment and an inclusive organizational climate are essential for organizations to fully harness the benefits of diversity. Rather than relying solely on structural representation, the perceived value of gender diversity within teams and the role of leaders in fostering this perception are key factors in determining whether diversity enhances or hinders team effectiveness.

While numerous studies have pointed out the potential benefits of gender diversity, factors affecting this relationship remain underexplored (Bell et al., 2012). Thus, this research focuses on two interconnected issues: the impact of a team's gender composition on its effectiveness and the extent to which leaders can influence this impact. By fostering value-in-diversity beliefs, leaders may enable teams to capitalize on the cognitive and experiential advantages of gender diversity, turning differences into strengths. At the core of this dissertation is the question of whether and how the power of gender diversity can be harnessed ethically and efficiently to enhance team effectiveness.

The relevance of researching these effects of gender diversity on team effectiveness and the moderating effects of leadership is twofold. Theoretical and practical relevance can be distinguished. First, the theoretical relevance lies in addressing a notable gap in existing diversity literature (Van Dick et al., 2008). Diversity research is extensive, covering a wide range of demographic and functional attributes. To contribute to a better understanding of how specific forms of diversity relate to team outcomes, this study focuses on a single aspect of diversity, i.e., gender diversity. Additionally, previous studies have explored the potential of diverse teams and their impact on both team and organizational outcomes (Nishii, 2013; Van Dick et al., 2008). However, less attention has been given to how contextual factors, such as inclusive leadership, may foster value-in-diversity beliefs and could cultivate the value-in-diversity, shaping team processes and effectiveness (Leroy et al., 2022). This dissertation aims to fill that gap by examining how inclusive leadership moderates the relationship between perceived gender diversity and team effectiveness. Second, from a practical perspective, organizations often lack the understanding of how to enhance team dynamics that optimize team effectiveness, particularly as workplaces become more diverse (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; World Economic Forum & McKinsey & Company, 2025). Understanding how gender diversity impacts different team outcomes can guide organizations in for example, in fostering inclusive environments and leveraging the full potential of their teams.

Accordingly, the study is guided by the following research question: *“What is the effect of gender diversity on team effectiveness, and to what extent does inclusive leadership moderate this relationship?”*

To address this question, this study draws on existing literature and employs a quantitative research design, using two complementary surveys. It is proposed that gender diversity is positively

related to team effectiveness. It is further expected that inclusive leadership strengthens this relationship through actively promoting value-in-diversity beliefs and cultivating the value-in-diversity.

The structure of this dissertation is as follows: Chapter 1 presents the literature review, delineating the key constructs of this study, including gender diversity, team effectiveness, and inclusive leadership, and explores their development through empirical findings over the years. Chapter 2 defines the methodology. Chapter 3 outlines the data analysis. Chapter 4 discusses the findings, including the study's limitations, suggestions for future research, and both theoretical and practical implications. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes the dissertation, which is followed by bibliographic references, sources, and an appendix.

CHAPTER 1

Literature Review

This review explores the relationship between gender diversity, inclusive leadership, and team effectiveness, focusing on the moderating role of leadership. Many studies have explored the impact of diversity on organizational outcomes, with findings suggesting its potential benefits in fostering creativity, innovation, and improved problem-solving (Guillaume et al., 2017; Joshi & Roh, 2009; Mannix & Neale, 2005; Stahl et al., 2010; Van Dijk et al., 2012). However, these benefits are not guaranteed and depend on factors such as team dynamics, leadership, and diversity beliefs (Homan et al., 2007; Van Knippenberg et al., 2013). To bring the relationship between gender diversity and team effectiveness into a comprehensive model, it is crucial to formulate and define the concepts first. Ensuring a simplification of the components and, with that, the comprehension of the complex analysis of their relation to one another is key to a structured examination of this relationship.

1.1 Diversity

Diversity has been defined in various ways within organizational studies. Still, most definitions align with the idea that it refers to the existence of differences among members of a workgroup in terms of attributes that may influence their attitudes, behaviors, or performance (Harrison & Klein, 2007; Milliken & Martins, 1996). A commonly used categorization differentiates between surface-level and deep-level diversity. Surface-level diversity, also known as bio-demographic diversity, includes easily noticeable features such as race, gender, age, and ethnicity. These are often used as demographic indicators in research. Conversely, deep-level diversity, also referred to as task-related diversity, concerns less apparent characteristics like values, knowledge, skills, personality traits, and expertise, which typically surface through interactions over time (Bell et al., 2011; Harrison et al., 1998; Harrison & Klein, 2007; Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007; Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). This classification is based on the visibility and immediacy with which individual differences can be observed and the assumption that surface-level and deep-level diversity influences teams in distinct ways (Harrison & Sin, 2006; Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). Additionally, Van Knippenberg and Schippers (2007) emphasize that the impact of diversity, be it beneficial or detrimental, is influenced by the degree to which teams engage in the consideration and discussion of various perspectives. This phenomenon is captured in the Categorization-Elaboration Model (CEM), which outlines how diversity can improve team outcomes when differences are clarified and understood (Homan et al., 2007; Kearney et al., 2009; Van Knippenberg et al., 2004).

Modern research on diversity emphasizes its complexity, which is influenced not only by individual perceptions of differences but also by team dynamics and the broader societal and organizational context in which work takes place (Guillaume et al., 2013; Shemla et al., 2016; Nishii, 2013; Barak, 2005; Roberson, 2019; Shore et al., 2011; Van Knippenberg & Mell, 2016). This view signifies a shift from simply demographic definitions of diversity to approaches that consider how diversity is perceived, understood, and addressed in daily organizational life. Research suggests that the perception of diversity might be a more significant predictor of interpersonal interactions and team effectiveness than demographic composition alone (Guillaume et al., 2013; Shemla et al., 2016).

The potential impact of diversity on organizational performance has been well reported in evidence-based research. A variety of studies connect diverse teams to improved creativity, problem-solving abilities, and decision-making, due to their wider range of perspectives and cognitive resources (Bell et al., 2011; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007; Mickan & Rodger, 2000; Nishii, 2013; Shemla et al., 2016; Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). The CEM (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004) provides a theoretical framework that explains performance by encouraging the discussion of task-relevant information among team members. Nonetheless, the CEM further highlights that the advantages of diversity are not guaranteed. They rely on contextual and psychological factors, such as team climate, leadership style, and members' diversity beliefs.

In today's global business landscape, diversity has gained increasing significance amid global efforts toward equal rights and inclusivity (Gross-Golacka & Martyniuk, 2024). Organizations are under growing pressure from stakeholders, policymakers, and employees to ensure fair representation across all levels of the organization. The increasing presence of diversity and management efforts in organizations demonstrates not just a theoretical engagement but also its strategic and ethical relevance in practice (Roberson, 2006). The revocation of DEI initiatives by Trump's administration through the recommendations by Project 2025 undermines these organizational efforts to tackle systemic inequalities and foster inclusive environments, emphasizing the resistance by numerous influential parties (Ng et al., 2025). Nevertheless, both the importance and difficulty of effectively managing diversity have been noted (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Kalev et al., 2006; Van Dijk et al., 2012). For instance, the World Economic Forum (WEF) and McKinsey & Company (2023) showcase ten "DEI lighthouse" organizations that have adopted measures like transparent career progression, inclusive hiring practices, and equitable leadership development, leading to measurable improvements in innovation, teamwork, and employee satisfaction. Likewise, Dixon-Fyle et al. (2020) associate greater diversity with stronger financial performance, reinforcing the idea that diversity is both a moral and competitive necessity in modern organizations. These cases underscore

why diversity continues to be a key area of focus in both research and practice, as organizations aim to harness its benefits while managing its complexities.

Despite the growing organizational commitment to DEI, both professionals and researchers warn that the initiatives do not always yield positive outcomes (Guillaume et al., 2013; Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Van Dijk et al., 2012). The effectiveness of DEI policies has been questioned, especially when enforced as firm, compliance-driven actions. According to the Financial Times (2024, 2025), programs driven by quotas or compulsory diversity training often face resistance or are seen as mere token efforts instead of producing meaningful change. Dobbin and Kalev (2016) also suggest that diversity programs focused on control may fail unless voluntary, accountability-based practices accompany them. This vision is supported by Nishii (2013), who finds that feelings of inclusion, rather than simply having diversity policies in place, are the true predictors of increased engagement, satisfaction, and performance.

Among the most visible and commonly studied aspects of surface-level diversity is gender, which acts as the central focus in this dissertation. Previous research mainly concentrated on the presence of women or men in teams and looked for direct correlations to effectiveness. However, current studies have shifted toward exploring the psychological and relational processes that influence whether gender diversity leads to improved team effectiveness (Guillaume et al., 2013; Nishii, 2013).

1.2 Gender diversity

Gender diversity refers to the composition of a team or organization in terms of the number of women to men (Bell et al., 2011; Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007). Being a bio-demographic characteristic, it is immediately observable and often socially relevant, influencing how people perceive and interact with one another from the very beginning (Harrison et al., 1998). Researchers have measured gender diversity in various ways, including the proportions of women or men, heterogeneity indices like Blau's index (Blau, 1977), classifications of teams as male-dominated, female-dominated, or gender-balanced, and subjective evaluations of perceived gender diversity (Avery et al., 2008; Shemla et al., 2016). These approaches reflect different aspects of the construct: objective measures indicate structural composition, while perceived measures take into account psychological significance and are considered more indicative of interpersonal dynamics and results (Avery et al., 2008; Guillaume et al., 2013; Homan et al., 2007; Jansen et al., 2014).

Several theoretical frameworks provide insights into how gender diversity may impact team effectiveness. Social categorization theory indicates that observable demographic differences can lead to the formation of in-groups and out-groups, which may result in bias, stereotyping, and conflict

(Tajfel & Turner, 1979). These distinctions can disrupt communication and collaboration within teams, especially when diversity is not actively managed.

Relational demography offers a more personalized approach, focusing on the impacts of demographic differences between an individual and those of their colleagues. This suggests that employees who view themselves as demographically different from their team members, such as being the only woman in a male-dominated team, might experience lower identification with the team, lower psychological safety, and decreased satisfaction or performance (Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989). These effects are results stemming not from diversity itself, but from the uneven distribution of diversity within the team, which can strengthen the awareness of personal differences between members and cause feelings of isolation or exclusion. This view emphasizes that it is not just the presence of gender diversity that matters, but also how team members differ from one another in visible ways and how these differences are perceived and interpreted by the group, which could affect how the team functions and performs.

On the contrary, the perspective of information and decision-making argues that gender-diverse teams gain from a broader pool of perspectives, skills, and experiences, potentially boosting creativity, adaptability, and decision-making abilities (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Thus, a wider range of information shows potential advantages when tackling complex problems. The challenge, however, lies with the success rate of teams that integrate effective communication and teamwork.

The CEM integrates these views by claiming that diversity leads to improved performance when teams actively engage in the exploration of differing perspectives, and that this process is influenced by contextual factors such as leadership task type and diversity beliefs (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). According to this model, demographic diversity leads to better team outcomes only when teams are motivated and capable of processing diverse information. Importantly, this knowledge exchange is once again moderated by situational factors.

Lastly, the role congruity theory (Eagly and Karau, 2002) proposes that gender norms and expectations shape how individuals are assessed within teams, particularly in the case of leadership and competence. When a member deviates from prescriptive gender roles, for example, when women assert authority in male-dominated domains, they may witness bias or resistance, which could have consequences for both personal efforts and overall team effectiveness (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010).

Empirical research underlines this dual potential of gender diversity. Research has documented positive effects of gender diversity, illustrating a connection between balanced gender makeup and increased innovation, enhanced problem-solving abilities, and higher quality of decision-making (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Homan et al., 2020; Hoogendoorn et al., 2013; Woolley et al., 2010). Gender-diverse teams have been shown to display higher collective intelligence in problem-solving

tasks, greater customer focus, and better adaptability in changing environments (Woolley et al., 2010; Leroy et al., 2022).

However, other research has identified some potential downsides. Gender diversity might lead to increased relationship conflicts, lower cohesion, and decreased member satisfaction (Guillaume et al., 2017; Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007). In specific settings, it has been associated with reduced performance, particularly in cultures with low levels of gender equality where diversity seems to obstruct collaboration (Joshi & Roh, 2009; Schneid et al., 2015).

The contrasting findings emphasize that the relationship between gender diversity and outcomes depends on the specific context (Bell et al., 2011; Guillaume et al., 2017; Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007; Nishii, 2013; Schneid et al., 2015; Thatcher & Patel, 2011). Meta-analyses have indicated that the effects differ based on factors like task complexity, team tenure, cultural norms, and industry type (Bell et al., 2011; Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007; Joshi & Roh, 2009). Leadership style and diversity beliefs have emerged as particularly significant moderators (Homan et al., 2007; Nishii, 2013; Randel et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2017). For example, Nishii (2013) and Holmes et al. (2020) reveal that only in teams with a strong inclusive environment, gender diversity was positively related to performance and citizenship behaviors, while in low inclusive environments, the same diversity is predicted to result in less favorable results. Similarly, Pieterse et al. (2013) illustrated that the impact of cultural diversity on performance was dependent on the goal orientations of team members, with a learning-oriented environment leading to more positive results. Correspondingly, it was found that positive beliefs about diversity can promote the integration of various perspectives and mitigate relational conflict, thus increasing the chance that gender diversity leads to effective teams (Guillaume et al., 2017; Holmes et al., 2020). Moreover, these findings align with the intersectional and multilevel approach proposed by Özbilgin et al. (2011), who pose that outcomes related to diversity cannot completely be understood without taking into account the interaction of multiple identity categories and the wider organizational and societal contexts they exist within (Özbilgin et al., 2010; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). From this perspective, the impact of gender diversity is influenced not only by numerical representation but also by the recognition, acceptance, and management of various intersecting forms of differences, such as gender, ethnicity, race, and socioeconomic status, within the team and the broader organizational context. These interconnected identity categories influence each person's unique experiences and contributions, which can consequently impact team dynamics, inclusivity, and performance results.

These theoretical perspectives are reflected in practical situations. While the meta-analysis by Mickan and Rodger (2000) on the characteristics of effective teams suggested that relevant team composition, in terms of (e.g.) size and diversity, can facilitate innovation and problem-solving

through a range of perspectives, empirical evidence presents a more nuanced picture. Gender-diverse teams are more likely to excel in environments marked by complex, non-routine tasks that demand high levels of information processing and creativity (Apesteguia et al., 2012; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Hoogendoorn et al., 2013; Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). On the other hand, they may face challenges in environments that are routine or execution focused unless they are supported by inclusive behaviors that facilitate psychological safety and knowledge exchange (Nishii, 2013; Guillaume et al., 2017; Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). This implies that inclusive climates generally lead to greater satisfaction among gender-diverse teams (Nishii, 2013), while exclusive climates tend to diminish team morale. Similarly, achieving a balanced representation of genders and fostering positive beliefs about diversity can improve the long-term team viability, whereas unresolved conflicts may prevent team members' willingness to work together in the future (Van Dick et al., 2008).

A significant development in the diversity literature is the shift toward investigating perceived gender diversity, the degree to which team members view their team as gender-diverse (Shemla et al., 2016). Perceptions may differ from actual gender ratios due to factors like role significance, visibility, and past experiences. However, they are closely linked to interpersonal interactions as they reflect team members' cognitive framing of the relevance of gender in their work. Studies show that perceived gender diversity can more effectively predict collaboration, trust, and satisfaction than objective measures of diversity, which makes it an important area for comprehending team dynamics (Guillaume et al., 2013).

To better understand how diversity affects team dynamics, it is important to consider its ability to influence the overall effectiveness of a team, based on the notion that the impact of gender diversity goes beyond merely the composition of a team, often influencing its functioning and overall performance over time. These effects become especially prominent in fast-paced team environments such as consultancies, where teams are often formed on short notice to address client problems. In these situations, gender-diverse teams can offer remarkable collaboration efforts and problem-solving, if the climate fosters open communication and mutual respect (Guillaume et al., 2017; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Stahl et al., 2010). Nonetheless, findings remain mixed and context-dependent, calling for a more concentrated approach on specific, measurable outcomes (Horwitz & Horwitz, 2020). An example of such an outcome that has gained more attention from researchers is team effectiveness, a broad measure of team performance and success, which not only includes goal achievement but also relational and future-oriented dimensions such as member satisfaction and team viability (Hackman, 1983; Mickan & Rodger, 2000).

1.3 Team Effectiveness

Team effectiveness is a key focus in both organizational behavior and team research, meaning the degree to which a team is able to achieve its goals and maintain positive interpersonal relationships (Hackman, 2002; Kolowski & Ilgen, 2006; Mathieu et al., 2008). Expanding on Hackman's (1983) important contribution to literature, team effectiveness is commonly conceptualized as a multidimensional construct comprised of three key dimensions: task performance, satisfaction, and team viability. In Hackman's original framework, he defines task performance as the extent to which the team meets its objectives, member satisfaction as the positive experience of team members while working together, and team viability as the team's ability and desire to work together in the future. This distinction is supported by Mickan and Rodger (2000), who emphasize that effective teams are those that not only deliver results but also ensure interpersonal satisfaction and support continued teamwork.

This multidimensional view has been widely embraced in prior studies (e.g., Buljac-Samardzic et al., 2010; Mathieu et al., 2019). For instance, Lemieux-Charles et al. (2002) employed a mediation model to illustrate how quality improvement initiatives affect team effectiveness via internal processes. Likewise, Mathieu et al. (2019) stress that effectiveness encompasses not only goal achievement but also the ability to maintain team functioning over time, referring to team viability. These aspects are especially important when assessing the effects of diversity and leadership, as both factors can influence performance results, the quality of team members' experiences, and the long-term sustainability of teamwork (Piña et al., 2008; Doolen et al., 2003).

Task performance signifies the degree to which a team produces high-quality results and meets its defined objectives (Hackman, 1983; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006; Mathieu et al., 2008; Mathieu et al., 2019). This includes both efficiency and effectiveness in executing assigned responsibilities and is normally the most apparent indicator of a team's success. Other studies indicate that diverse teams, when managed effectively, can surpass homogenous teams in handling complex tasks due to their wider range of knowledge and perspectives (Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007; Homan et al., 2020), further underscoring the earlier-mentioned benefits of diversity in organizational teams. However, realizing this potential benefit once again relies on the team's ability to effectively leverage these differences, highlighting the need for inclusive processes and leadership (Mathieu et al., 2019).

Member satisfaction refers to the emotional and interpersonal experiences of team members (Hackman, 1983; Lemieux-Charles et al., 2002; Mathieu et al., 2008). It involves feelings of being valued, supported, and engaged among team members, which can affect retention, teamwork, and motivation (Cohen & Ledford, 1994; Mickan & Rodger, 2000). In particular, gender-diverse teams may struggle with social cohesion if inclusion is not prioritized, leading to lower levels of satisfaction.

In contrast, when supported by inclusive leadership and psychological safety, gender-diverse teams can register higher levels of satisfaction as a result of meaningful interactions and mutual respect (Nishii, 2013).

Team viability pertains to the team's potential for the future or its ability and willingness to continue working together over time (Hackman, 1983; Lemieux-Charles et al., 2002; Mathieu et al., 2008). This dimension captures the degree to which teams foster effective processes, shared norms, and working relationships that maintain ongoing collaboration. Viability is a crucial element in environments that require continual collaboration and adaptability, such as project-based or client-oriented settings, like consulting. In these situations, teams must not only perform effectively under stress but also keep unity and shared commitment needed to regroup and operate efficiently across various projects (Piña et al., 2008). Diversity can improve team viability by promoting flexibility and adaptive learning if teams establish their own ways of constructively managing their differences (Guillaume et al., 2017).

Importantly, the interdependence of these dimensions implies that task performance alone cannot adequately reflect team success. Both member satisfaction and team viability must be considered to offer a broad understanding of teams and their functioning. As Koslowski & Ilgen (2006) propose, effectiveness is best understood as an interrelated system of factors influenced by context, team composition, and processes.

1.4 Inclusive Leadership

In response to increasing workplace diversity, the importance of leadership in creating inclusive team environments has been the growing focus in both research and organizations (Homan et al., 2020; Leroy et al., 2022; Shore et al., 2017). As the literature on diversity effects developed, it became clear that gender diversity does not always yield consistent positive or negative results (Benschop, 2001). Rather, its effects are dependent upon psychological or contextual elements, such as the climate within the team, the style of leadership, and the diversity beliefs held by members (Bell et al., 2011; Harrison & Klein, 2007; Homan et al., 2020; Leroy et al., 2022; Nishii, 2013; Van Dick et al., 2008). These findings emphasize the significance of leadership that not only oversees but also harnesses the potential of diversity within its team.

Inclusive leadership is characterized by a style that actively promotes, values, and exploits the various backgrounds, identities, and perspectives of team members (Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Bourke & Titus, 2019). In contrast to traditional leadership approaches that often prioritize task execution or authoritative control, inclusive leadership enables teamwork through openness,

psychological safety, and mutual respect, each of which is crucial in diverse teams (Carmeli et al., 2010; Homan et al., 2020).

According to Bourke & Titus (2019), inclusive leadership encompasses behavior that fosters environments where individuals feel valued, empowered, and safe in sharing their thoughts, which results in higher levels of engagement, learning, and innovation (Carmeli et al., 2010). In diverse teams, where social cohesion and a shared understanding do not naturally emerge, such environments are essential for realizing the full potential of diversity (Van Dick et al., 2008; Shemla et al., 2016). Following the research of Leroy et al. (2022), inclusive leadership is often viewed through two interconnected dimensions: (1) harvesting the benefits of diversity, which includes encouraging members to share their unique perspective and ensuring that diverse perspectives are included in team discussions; and (2) fostering a belief in the value of diversity, which entails promoting the idea that diversity is an asset contributing to improved decision-making and team learning rather than a challenge. Leaders who advocate for these beliefs help their teams develop what Van Knippenberg et al. (2013) describe as a diversity mindset, namely, ways of thinking of diversity as an opportunity rather than a liability.

Research supports the significance of these leadership behaviors. For instance, Leroy et al. (2022) discovered that leadership behaviors designed to cultivate a belief in the value of diversity play a key role in transforming diversity from a potential source of conflict into a catalyst for synergy and creativity. Homan et al. (2020) add that leaders are not simply facilitators of harmony but are proactive participants and drivers of interactions and thereby influence the interpretation and application of team diversity. Their theory of functional leadership suggests that inclusive leaders develop team processes that support information-sharing and mutual integration, key drivers of team effectiveness in diverse settings.

From a practical perspective, inclusive leadership can boost psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999), allowing team members to voice differing opinions, acknowledge mistakes, and suggest unconventional ideas without fear of negative consequences. These behaviors are closely linked to team learning, problem-solving, and innovation, all outcomes that are particularly relevant in dynamic, project-driven settings (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Guillaume et al., 2017). Empirical findings support these theoretical insights. Nishii (2013) indicates that in inclusive team environments, gender diversity is positively related to performance and citizenship behaviors. Alternatively, low-inclusion environments often undermine the potential benefits of diversity or may even reverse them. Similarly, Van Dick et al. (2008) showcase that leaders play a pivotal role in strengthening team identification in diverse groups by encouraging that differences are appreciated, which helps prevent the emergence of subgroups or feelings of exclusion.

1.5 Conceptual Model

The previous section focused on the exploration of the three primary constructs of this study: gender diversity, team effectiveness, and inclusive leadership, highlighting their definitions, theoretical foundations, and empirical support. The integration of these findings serves as the foundation of the conceptual model tested in this dissertation (Figure 1), which proposes that gender diversity within teams affects team effectiveness, while inclusive leadership moderates this effect by influencing the environment in which diversity is perceived and leveraged.

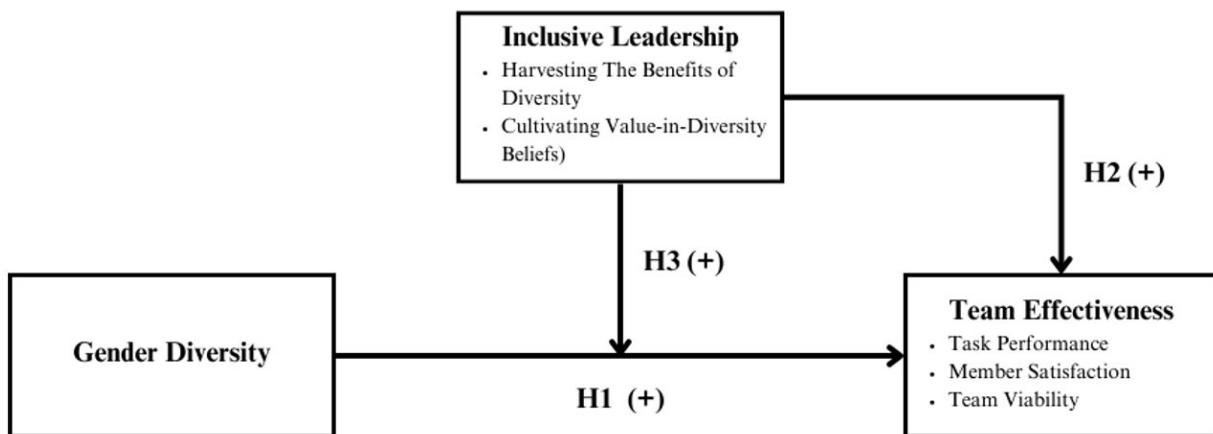


Figure 1 - Conceptual Model

Research findings regarding the connection between gender diversity and team effectiveness are varied. Certain studies suggest that gender diversity positively correlates with team performance, especially for complex and creative tasks (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Hoogendoorn et al., 2013). Other studies report negative or neutral effects, often caused by greater conflict or lower cohesion when inclusive practices are absent (Van Dick et al., 2008; Guillaume et al., 2017).

These inconsistencies are in line with the idea from the CEM (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004) such that although diversity can promote team functioning when it encourages the sharing of relevant task information, it can also obstruct performance if it triggers social categorization and in-group or out-group separation (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). As previously mentioned, team effectiveness, which includes task performance, member satisfaction, and team viability (Hackman, 1983; Mickan & Rodger, 2000), can thrive from diverse perspectives when they are effectively combined (Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007). However, unmanaged diversity can weaken relational trust, effective teamwork, and the willingness for collaborations in the long run (Van Dick et al., 2008). Based on this rationale,

the first hypothesis posits a positive correlation between perceived gender diversity and team effectiveness:

H1: Teams that are perceived as more gender diverse demonstrate higher levels of team effectiveness.

Inclusive leadership is recognized as an essential factor that enables diverse teams to reach their full potential (Homan et al., 2020; Shore et al., 2011). Leaders who embody this leadership style actively encourage, value, and use diverse perspectives (Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Bourke & Titus, 2019), fostering an environment of psychological safety and mutual respect that supports both task-specific and relational outcomes (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2013). Empirical research associates these behaviors with higher levels of engagement, satisfaction, and performance (Leroy et al., 2022; Nishii, 2013).

This study primarily focuses on the moderating influence of inclusive leadership, assessing its direct relationship with team effectiveness, and enhancing the model's comprehensiveness and reliability. Determining whether inclusive leadership itself predicts team effectiveness, independent of gender diversity, forms an important foundation for interpreting moderation effects. This reasoning leads to the second hypothesis:

H2: Inclusive leadership results in higher levels of team effectiveness.

The relationship between gender diversity and team effectiveness is complex and influenced by the manner in which differences are acknowledged and managed. In the absence of supportive leadership, diversity can increase interpersonal conflicts, reduce cohesion, and hinder performance (Guillaume et al., 2017). However, inclusive leaders shift the focus from demographic variances to the contributions of team members, minimizing in-group or out-group divisions and promoting effective teamwork (Homan et al., 2020; Van Dick et al., 2008).

From the CEM standpoint, inclusive leadership enhances the elaboration pathway, promoting open dialogue and the integration of different perspectives, while reducing the categorization pathway that may lead to conflict (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Leaders who explicitly value diversity and create psychologically safe environments enable gender-diverse teams to transform their broad experiences into innovative ideas, improved problem-solving, and stronger relationships (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Leroy et al., 2022).

Thus, the third hypothesis suggests that inclusive leadership will influence the relationship between gender diversity and team effectiveness, such that high levels of inclusion leverage the benefit of diversity, whereas low levels of inclusion may lead to neutral or even negative results:

H3: Inclusive leadership positively moderates the relationship between gender diversity and team effectiveness.

By merging these hypotheses, the proposed model of this dissertation seeks to clarify the conditions under which gender diversity acts as a benefit to team effectiveness and how leadership behaviors can influence this relationship. This not only adds to theoretical insights but also provides practical approaches for leveraging diversity in organizational teams.

CHAPTER 2

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research approach, using surveys to investigate the relationship between gender diversity and team effectiveness, as well as the moderating effect of leadership valuing diversity. Two distinct surveys were carried out: one for the team (individually answered) and another for its respective leaders, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the variables and their interaction.

2.1 Participants

The participants in this study work in teams with a specific team leader, from no organization in particular, but operating in a business context. Teams were chosen based on availability; therefore, the sample studied is a convenience sample, and the snowball technique was applied, where initial participants from the direct network referred or recruited others from their networks. Participants work in person, remotely, or in a hybrid form and are from countries across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. This specific target group was chosen because the nature of their work is very team-intensive, including the sharing of responsibility for the team outcomes. Interdependence among team members is a fundamental component of team functioning, as it enables team members to effectively combine their individual contributions into effective team outcomes (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). This view is mirrored in empirical research showing that team members rely on each other for task completion, information, and coordination, making interdependence an all-important element of team performance and team outcomes (Doolen et al, 2003; Buljac-Samardzic et al., 2010). This is also in line with Hackman's (1983) requirements of work groups in organizations for his model of team effectiveness. Each team is considered to consist of as many members as participants who answer the unique survey link of their team, with a clearly defined leader responsible for guiding the team's activities and overseeing its results. The inclusion criteria emphasize teams with formal structures and leaders who are directly involved in the team's operations, thereby removing any doubt about the team's hierarchy and the team's relative authority to the leader.

A total of 31 teams (117 individuals) participated in the study. However, two of the teams were excluded from the sample because they consisted of only one team member each. Thus, the final sample comprised 29 teams, including 115 team members and 29 leaders. Team sizes ranged from two to eight members, with an average of $M = 3.93$ members ($SD = 1.65$).

Most teams consisted of three people (34.5%). The sample of team members consisted of 53.0% female participants ($n = 61$), 45.2% male participants ($n = 52$), and two participants (1.7%) did not report any value. 15 different nationalities were represented across the sample, of which Germans were the most significant, with 35.7% ($n = 41$), followed by Portuguese (31.3%) and Dutch (13.9%). Two participants reported “Middle East” as nationality, one as “white”, and one reported having double nationality (Turkish and German), and four did not answer the question. Team members were, on average, $M = 33.18$ years old ($M_{range} = 21-60$; $SD = 8.68$), of whom four participants did not report their age. Most participants have been with the company for one to three years (39.1%), followed by those with less than one year (21.7%). These groups make up 60.8% of the workforce together. 14.8% of the employees have been with the company for three to five years, 14.8% for more than seven years, whereas the smallest group (7.8%) have been with the company for five to seven years, and two participants did not respond to the length of their time at the company.

The team leaders sampled ($n = 29$) for each team were, on average, a little older than 40 years ($M = 40.5$; $M_{range} = 26-59$; $SD = 8.2$). Of the leaders, 55.2% were women ($n = 16$) and 44.8% were men ($n = 13$). Differing between nine different nationalities, of which most were German (27.6%, $n = 8$), the same amount were Portuguese, and 17.2% ($n = 5$) were Dutch. The majority of leaders worked for the company for over seven years (48.3%).

2.2 Procedure

Data was gathered using two specially designed online surveys in Qualtrics, each assessing the three variables of the research model (gender diversity, team effectiveness, and inclusive leadership). The present study was conducted as part of a larger research project on teams, in which multiple research directions were explored. Therefore, not all items from the broader surveys were relevant for this dissertation. Only the measures necessary to acquire the variables of interest were kept for the analyses of the current study. Each team member filled out the same survey individually, whereas the team leader received a separate one. The survey was available in English, German, and Portuguese, depending on the nationalities within the teams, and distributed accordingly. Additionally, anonymity and confidentiality were ensured throughout the data collection process, and participants were informed of this matter. The team member’s survey took approximately 25 minutes to complete, whereas the team leader’s survey was shorter and took approximately 15 minutes. After a brief introduction to the overall study, the focus of this research, and a declaration of confidentiality and anonymity, the team members answered questions about their perception of diversity within their team, their satisfaction levels, their willingness to work within this team in the future, their team

leader's proactive valuation of diversity, and their socio-demographic characteristics. Team leaders received the same introduction as team members and answered questions about their perception of the team's effectiveness in terms of task performance and socio-demographic information. Hereafter, the focus will be on the measures relevant to this study.

2.3 Measures

In this study, gender diversity was measured as a perceptual construct, capturing team members' subjective assessment of gender variation within their team. This approach aligns with relevant literature emphasizing that perceived diversity, rather than merely objective demographic composition, plays a crucial role in shaping team processes, social identity, and team dynamics (Avery et al., 2008; Van Dick et al., 2008; Bell et al., 2011; Costa et al., 2013; Homan et al., 2020).

The measurement was based on a validated scale developed initially by Harrison et al. (1998) and later adapted by Van Dick et al. (2008) to reflect subjective perceptions of demographic diversity. For this study, three items were used: "I perceive my team as globally diverse", "I perceive my team as diverse in terms of gender composition", and "I am very aware of the differences among my colleagues in my team". All items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). Internal consistency of the scale was slightly below the commonly accepted threshold of .7 (Nunnally, 1978; Cronbach's $\alpha = .66$). However, removing any item showed no improvement in reliability, and the scale was therefore retained in full, as reliability was deemed acceptable for the exploratory objectives of this study.

Based on the established multidimensional constructs of team effectiveness by Hackman (1983), representing task performance, member satisfaction, and team viability, the variable was assessed accordingly. This three-dimensional approach has been repeatedly used in recent research on teams (Costa et al., 2015; Gonzalez-Roma et al., 2009; Lemieux-Charles et al., 2002; Mathieu et al., 2008; Mathieu et al., 2019; Standifer et al., 2015).

Hackman's (1983) multidimensional model does not specify a specific rater for assessing the scales, leaving room for researchers to determine the most appropriate source. In this study, a combined approach was employed. Team members assessed dimensions of member satisfaction and team viability, whereas team leaders evaluated task performance. This approach was chosen to leverage the unique perspectives of both sources. Team members are best positioned to evaluate their own satisfaction and willingness to continue working in the team, as these outcomes directly reflect their individual experiences. Contrarily, team leaders are well-positioned and therefore obtain a more holistic view of the team's functioning in relation to task demands and organizational expectations, making them more suitable to evaluate team outcomes. Additionally, employing sources beyond the

self-reports of members can reduce certain contamination effects, such as leniency bias, where subjective ratings of (e.g.) task performance may suffer from a biased view as a respondent desires it to be higher than it might be (D’Innocenzo et al., 2014). Like previous research that has incorporated multiple raters in assessing team outcomes (Lemieux-Charles et al., 2002; Mathieu et al., 2008; Mickan & Rodger, 2000), this dual-source strategy provides a more valid and conceptually supported approach to team effectiveness.

The items used to measure team effectiveness were adopted from the validated scales based on Hackman’s (1983) framework and later adapted by Costa et al. (2015) & Mathieu et al. (2008). Task performance was assessed with two leader-rated items: “My team has a good performance” and “My team is effective”. The two items correlated moderately ($r = .332, p = 0.079$), indicating a moderate but acceptable two-item scale. Member satisfaction was measured with the single item: “We are satisfied to be working in this team”. Team viability was evaluated using two items reflecting the team’s future functioning: “I would not hesitate to work with this team on other projects” and “This team could work well on future projects” ($r = .849, p < .001$). All items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). A Pearson correlation matrix was computed between the dimension scores (i.e., average team item scores for task performance, team viability, and a single item for member satisfaction). All intercorrelations were positive and statistically significant, with task performance correlating $r = .304$ ($p = .108$) with member satisfaction, $r = .296$ ($p = .118$) with team viability, and member satisfaction correlating $r = .828$ ($p < .001$) with team viability. The strong positive association between member satisfaction and team viability, in combination with the moderate positive (non-significant) correlations between leader-rated task performance and the member-rated dimensions, supports treating these dimensions as related yet distinct aspects of overall team effectiveness. The aggregation into an overall score is further supported by prior research; for instance, Lemieux-Charles et al. (2002) used a similar scale by Hackman (1983). This approach aligns with the recommendation to use composite indices when they represent a unified theoretical construct backed by empirical consistency (Piña et al., 2008; Mathieu et al., 2008; Mathieu et al., 2019).

Inclusive leadership was evaluated by the team members and measured using a 10-item scale combining the two interrelated dimensions: harvesting the benefits of diversity and cultivating value-in-diversity beliefs. The scale was adapted from Leroy et al. (2022), each dimension using five items. Harvesting the benefits of diversity entailed items assessing the leader’s ability to encourage team members to bring forth their different perspectives: “Our team leader encourages all of us to voice our opinions”, “Our team leader ensures that all members are valued for their contributions”, “Our team leader makes sure that everyone’s unique strengths are leveraged”, “Our team leader creates an

environment in which we can be ourselves”, and “Our team leader encourages everyone to be unique”. Whereas cultivating value-in-diversity beliefs was evaluated on five items rating if the leader creates an environment that equally appreciates the differences among team members: “Our team leader enables us to see differences as an advantage rather than as a disadvantage”, “Our team leader helps us to see how differences among us can be an added value for our team”, Our team leader helps us to solve disagreements to make better decisions for the team”, “Our team leader encourages us to listen to perspectives that are different than (from) our own”, and “Our team leader helps us to understand that different views are needed to understand the bigger picture” (Leroy et al., 2022).

Participants reported on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). Subscale reliabilities were acceptable: Cronbach’s $\alpha = .91$ for harvesting the benefits of diversity and Cronbach’s $\alpha = .92$ for cultivating value-in-diversity beliefs. The two dimensions were strongly correlated ($r = .821, p < .001$), supporting the unidimensional structure of the scale. The overall internal consistency of the inclusive leadership scale was well accepted (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .95$), verifying the use of a composite score. All items were included in the reliability analysis before the aggregation to the team level.

CHAPTER 3

Results

3.1 Aggregation

Initial data was collected from individuals in the teams, while the analysis level in this study was at the team level. Therefore, the individual answers were aggregated to the team level (Costa et al., 2013). To justify aggregation $r_{wg(j)}$, an estimate of within-group agreement designed for multiple-item scales was computed for gender diversity, the two dimensions of inclusive leadership, harvesting the benefits of diversity and value-in-diversity beliefs, and two dimensions of team effectiveness, member satisfaction, and team viability. In other words, the $r_{wg(j)}$ is a measurement index that quantifies the extent to which members of the same team provide consistent ratings on a Likert-scale of a given construct. This $r_{wg(j)}$ is intended for multiple-item scales and is the successor of r_{wg} , which was designed for single items only (Bliese, 2000; James et al., 1984; James et al., 1993). This step is crucial to uphold the validity of multilevel analyses and any inferences drawn from the aggregated data. A cut-off criterion of $r_{wg(j)} = .70$ is widely applied to validate a good estimate of within-group agreement (Biemann et al., 2012; James et al., 1993). For gender diversity, the $r_{wg(j)}$ mean value of .81 was found, and 13.8% of the values indicate weak or no agreement (ranging from 0 to .50), while 86.2% indicate moderate, strong, or very strong agreement (ranging from .51 to 1.00) (Biemann et al., 2012). The overall inclusive leadership composite score yielded a $r_{wg(j)}$ mean value of .85, where 3.4% of the values demonstrate weak or no agreement, and 96.5% moderate, strong, or very strong agreement. The composite score for team effectiveness included subdimensions, member satisfaction, and team viability, which were assessed by team members and thereafter aggregated to the team level. Each dimension produced a mean $r_{wg(j)}$ value of .86 (3.4% weak or no agreement; 96.5% moderate, strong, or very strong agreement) and .77 (10.3% weak or no agreement; 89.7% moderate, strong, or very strong agreement), respectively. Task performance was rated solely by the team leader and therefore needs no further aggregation. Since the overall composite is a team-level index formed from the aggregated member-rated dimensions and the leader's rating of task performance, $r_{wg(j)}$ does not apply to such a multi-source composite. Altogether, these results support the aggregation of individual scores to the team level for these constructs. As the number of cases with weak or no agreement is limited, it was decided to include these teams, assuming that their inclusion would not significantly influence the overall results.

3.2 Hypothesis Testing

To evaluate the moderation model, the statistical software SPSS was used. Table 3.1 shows the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among the composite variables used in hypothesis testing, with the addition of the control variable team size.

Table 3.1 - Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations Among Study Variables

	<i>Rwg (j)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1. Gender diversity	.81	4.94	0.79			
2. Inclusive leadership	.85	5.32	0.69	-.177		
3. Team effectiveness		5.79	0.52	-.086	.590*	
4. Team size		3.93	1.65	.173	-.132	-.058

Note. $n = 29$.

* Correlations are statistically significant at $p < .001$ (2-tailed).

Contrary to expectations, a slightly weak negative correlation was found between gender diversity and team effectiveness ($r = -.086$, $p = .656$), although not significant. Similarly, gender diversity and inclusive leadership were weakly and negatively correlated ($r = -.177$, $p = .359$). However, a high positive and statistically significant correlation was seen between inclusive leadership and team effectiveness ($r = .59$, $p < .001$), providing preliminary support for Hypothesis 2.

3.2.1 The Effect of Gender Diversity on Team Effectiveness

Hypothesis 1 suggested that perceived gender diversity within a team would be positively associated with team effectiveness in terms of task performance, member satisfaction, and team viability. A standard multiple regression was performed with team effectiveness as the dependent variable, gender diversity as the predictor, and team size as the control variable. Table 3.2 shows the values related to the tested relationship.

Table 3.2 - Results of Multiple Regression Analysis on Gender Diversity and Team Effectiveness (Hypothesis 1)

Predictor	B	SE	β	t (26)	p	95% CI [LL, UL]
Constant	6.10	0.65	-	9.34	<.001	-
Gender diversity	-0.05	0.13	-.08	-0.40	.694	[-0.32, 0.22]
Team size	-0.01	0.06	-.04	-0.22	.825	[-0.14, 0.11]
R^2						0.01

Note. $n = 29$, CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper Limit; All predictor variables were mean centered. Team size was included as a control variable in the regression model.

The results show that the overall model was not significant, $F (2, 26) = 0.12, p = .885$, and only explained 0.9% of the variance in team effectiveness ($R^2 = .01$). Although the regression coefficient for gender diversity was slightly negative and was not statistically significant ($B = -0.05, SE = 0.13, \beta = -.08, t (26) = -0.40, p = .694, 95\% CI [-0.32, 0.22]$). Similarly, the control variable team size did not significantly contribute to the prediction of team effectiveness, $B = -0.01, SE = 0.06, \beta = -.04, t (26) = -0.22, p = .825, 95\% CI [-0.14, 0.11]$. Against expectation, these findings indicate that perceived gender diversity, when controlling for team size, does not significantly predict team effectiveness.

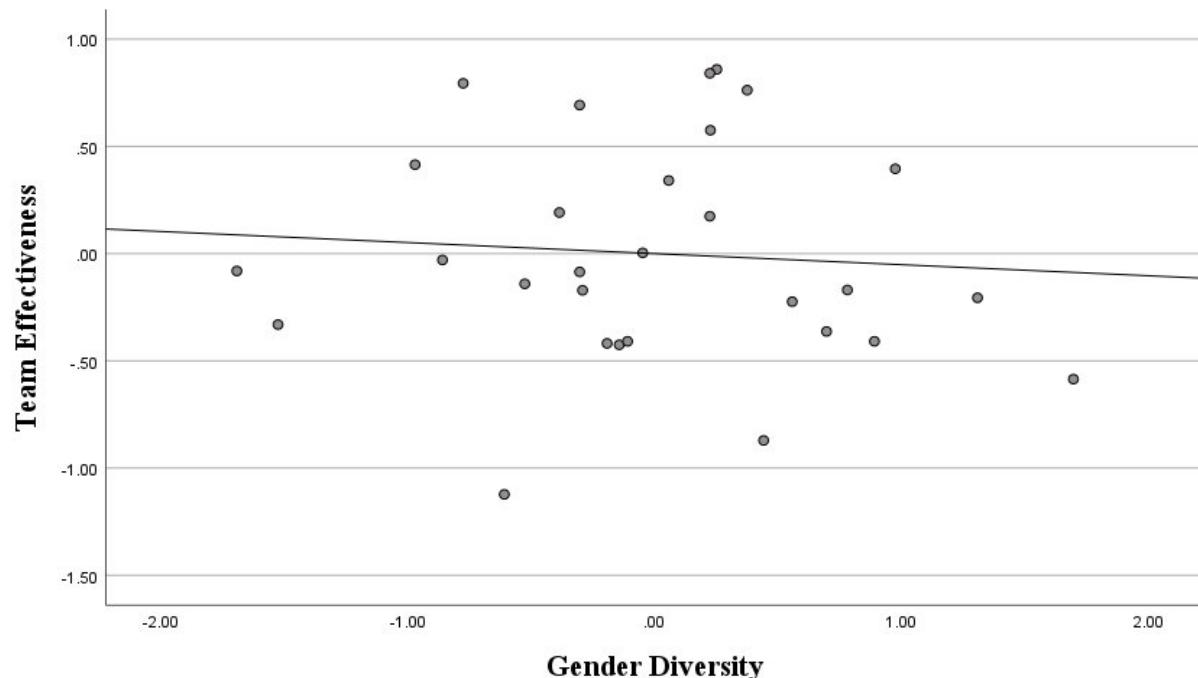


Figure 3.1 - Partial Regression Plot for Gender Diversity Predicting Team Effectiveness (Hypothesis 1)

Note. The relationship is shown while controlling for team size.

Additionally, Figure 3.2 presents the partial regression plot for gender diversity predicting team effectiveness, controlling for team size. The plot illustrates the absence of a consistent pattern between the variables, with no clear linear trend. The regression line that was added for confirmatory purposes is nearly flat, reflecting the non-significant relationship. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is not supported by the data.

3.2.2 The Effect of Inclusive Leadership on Team Effectiveness

Hypothesis 2 proposed that inclusive leadership, including behaviors such as harvesting the benefits of diversity and cultivating value-in-diversity beliefs, would underline the benefits of diversity and therefore be positively related to team effectiveness. A multiple regression analysis was conducted with team effectiveness as the outcome variable, inclusive leadership as the predictor, and team size as the control variable.

Table 3.3 - Results of Multiple Regression Analysis on Inclusive Leadership and Team Effectiveness (Hypothesis 2)

Predictor	B	SE	β	t (26)	p	95% CI [LL, UL]
Constant	3.39	0.70	-	4.87	<.001	-
Inclusive Leadership	0.45	0.12	0.59	3.72	<.001	[0.20, 0.70]
Team size	0.01	0.05	0.02	0.13	.899	[-0.09, 0.11]
R^2						0.35

Note. $n = 29$, CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper Limit; All predictor variables were mean centered. Team size was included as a control variable in the regression model.

As indicated by the results presented in Table 3.3, the model was statistically significant, $F(2, 26) = 6.97, p = .004$, accounting for 34.9% of the variance in team effectiveness ($R^2 = .35$). Inclusive leadership appeared as a significant positive predictor ($B = 0.45, SE = 0.12, \beta = .59, t (26) = 3.72, p < .001, 95\% CI [-0.20, 0.70]$), suggesting that when leaders demonstrate inclusive behavior, such as emphasizing the benefits of differences and encouraging all team members to equally participate, towards diversity within their team, team effectiveness will increase. Contrarily, team size remained a non-significant predictor in this model ($B = 0.01, SE = 0.05, \beta = 0.02, t (26) = 0.13, p = .899, 95\% CI [-0.09, 0.11]$).

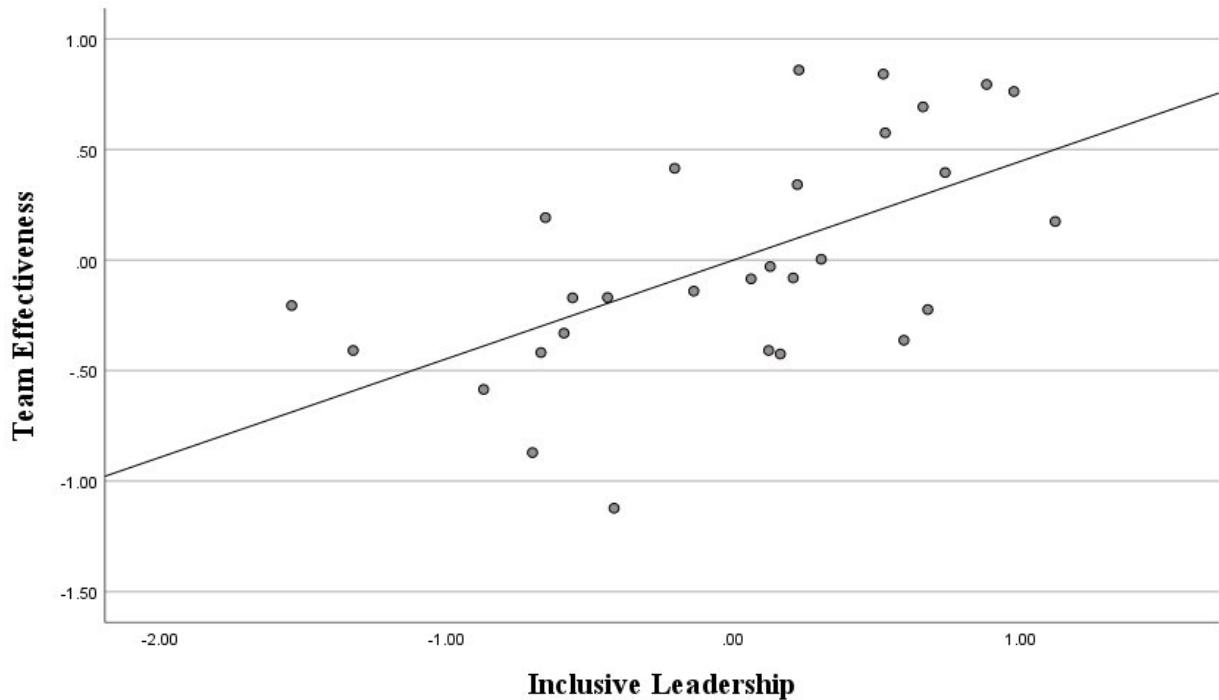


Figure 3.2 - Partial Regression Plot for Inclusive Leadership Predicting (Hypothesis 2)

Note. The relationship is shown while controlling for team size.

Furthermore, Figure 3.3 visualizes the relationship between inclusive leadership and team effectiveness, while controlling for team size. The plot clearly illustrates a strong positive trend, where team effectiveness increases as inclusive leadership rises. This pattern aligns with the regression results, underscoring that inclusive leadership is a positive predictor of team effectiveness. These results provide empirical support for Hypothesis 2, confirming that inclusive leadership plays a meaningful role in increasing team effectiveness.

3.2.3 Inclusive Leadership as a Moderator of the Gender Diversity-Team Effectiveness Relationship

To examine the moderating role of inclusive leadership on the relationship between perceived gender diversity and team effectiveness (*H3*), PROCESS Macro version 4.2 (Model 1; Hayes, 2022) was employed in SPSS. This model estimates the interaction effects between continuous variables using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, while also controlling for team size, which was included as a control variable due to its potential influence on team effectiveness. A bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples was applied to produce bias-corrected confidence intervals, which boosts the estimate's reliability by removing the need to assume a normal sampling distribution. This approach is especially suited for detecting interaction effects, often subtle and susceptible to sample size and

distributional assumptions. Therefore, this method was deemed suitable for analyzing the moderation effect in this study.

Table 3.4 - Results of Moderation Analysis on Inclusive Leadership (Hypothesis 3)

Predictor/Interaction	B	SE	t (24)	p	95% CI [LL, UL]
DV: Team Effectiveness					
Constant	5.68	0.23	24.55	<.001	[5.20, 6.16]
Gender diversity (GD)	-0.05	0.12	-0.38	.704	[-0.29, 0.20]
Inclusive Leadership (IL)	0.53	0.14	3.72	.001	[0.24, 0.83]
GD x IL Interaction	-0.21	0.18	-1.15	.260	[-0.59, 0.17]
Team size	-0.02	0.05	0.44	.665	[-0.09, 0.13]
R ² (full model)					0.38
ΔR ² (interaction only)					0.03
Explicit coordination conditional indirect effect at Inclusive Leadership = $M \pm 1SD$					
	Unstandardized boot indirect effects	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI	
-1 SD	0.10	0.13	-0.18	0.37	
M 0.00	-0.05	0.12	-0.29	0.20	
+1 SD	-0.19	0.21	-0.61	0.23	

Note. n = 29, CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper Limit; All predictor variables were mean centered. Team size was included as a control variable in the regression model.

The overall model explained 38.4% of the variance in team effectiveness ($R^2 = .38$) and reached statistical significance, $F (4, 24) = 3.73, p = .017$ (Table 3.4). Running the moderation analysis did not yield any significant results for the anticipated moderation effect of inclusive leadership on the relationship between gender diversity and team effectiveness, while controlling for team size, as the interaction term between gender diversity and inclusive leadership (GD x IL) was not significant ($B = -0.21, SE = 0.18, t (24) = -1.15, p = .260, 95\% CI [-0.59, 0.17]$). Additionally, there was no significant difference in the slope of gender diversity on team effectiveness across different levels of inclusive leadership, as evidenced by the non-significant conditional effects of gender diversity at low (-1SD), mean, and high (+1SD) levels of inclusive leadership.

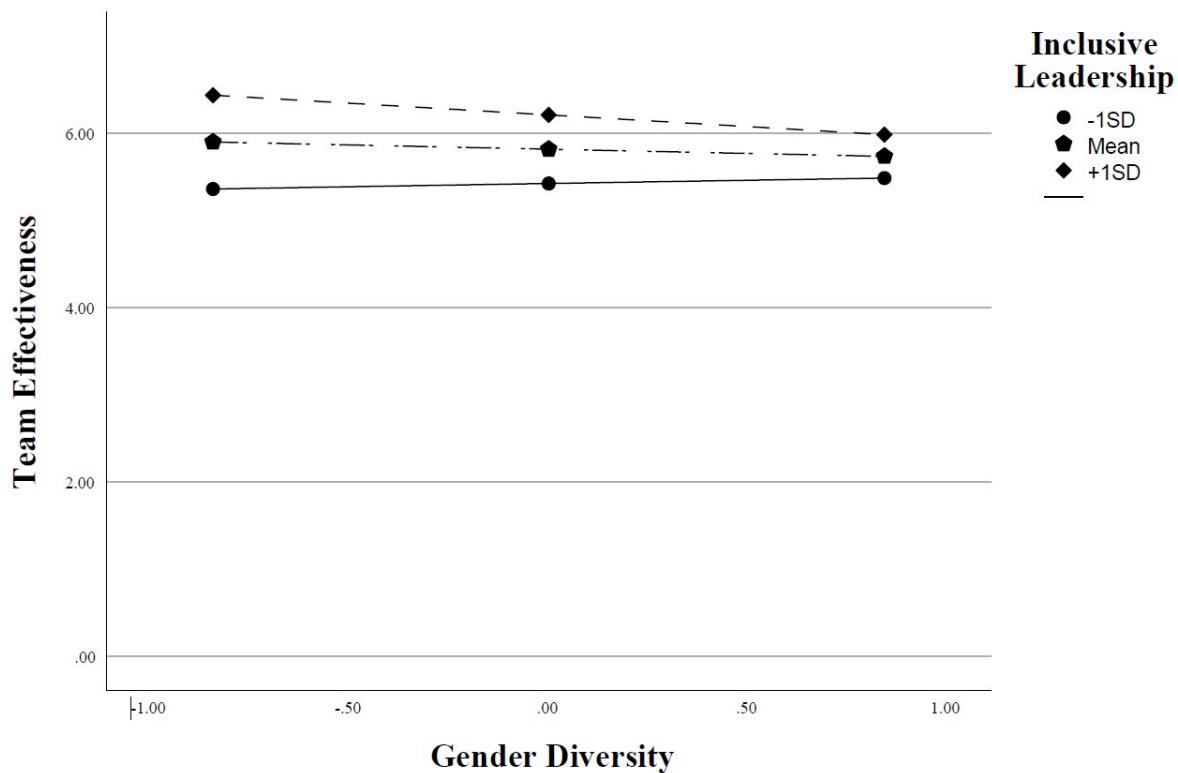


Figure 3.3 - Interaction Plot of Gender Diversity and Inclusive Leadership on Team Effectiveness (Hypothesis 3)

Note. Simple slopes are plotted at -1 SD , $M 0.00$, and $+1\text{ SD}$ of inclusive leadership. The model includes team size as a control variable.

To visualize the hypothesized moderating role of inclusive leadership, Figure 3.3 shows an interaction plot of gender diversity and inclusive leadership on team effectiveness based on conditional effects at low (-1 SD), $M 0.00$, and high ($+1\text{ SD}$) levels of inclusive leadership. As exhibited, the slopes remain relatively flat and parallel, indicating no significant effects from inclusive leadership on how gender diversity affects team effectiveness. These visual findings are in line with the observed interaction term in the regression analysis. Hence, Hypothesis 3 is not supported, as no moderating effect of inclusive leadership on the gender diversity-team effectiveness relationship was found.

Taken together, the findings showed that inclusive leadership was a significant positive predictor of team effectiveness, which supports Hypothesis 2. Contrarily, there was no significant correlation between gender diversity and team effectiveness, and inclusive leadership did not moderate this relationship, resulting in no support for Hypotheses 1 and 3.

CHAPTER 4

Discussion

Diversity and its impact on organizational teams have become important in recent literature, highlighting the challenges that organizations face due to modern globalization and the diversification of the workforce. The primary objective of this dissertation was to make a valuable contribution to the literature by better understanding the effects of diversity within teams. Gender diversity, a common type of diversity, was investigated. Furthermore, the role of inclusive leadership was introduced as a possible moderator of the relationship between gender diversity and team effectiveness.

The results revealed that gender diversity does not directly impact team effectiveness. The regression coefficient was, in fact, slightly negative, showing that more gender-diverse teams reached lower scores of effectiveness, yet this negative relationship was not statistically significant. This is inconsistent with earlier studies that underscore the potential advantages of diversity within teams (Bell et al., 2011; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). It spikes the idea that in practice, diverse teams hold a broader range of ideas and perspectives, but this potential is only realized if team members can effectively incorporate those differences into their teamwork (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). When teamwork runs smoothly, diversity can result in better problem-solving, but as Guillaume et al. (2017) and Horwitz and Horwitz (2007) note, insufficient integration of the differences may go unused or even lead to tension or conflict.

The slightly negative, nonsignificant results may also be due to the opposing influences cancelling each other out. In some participating teams, the differences might have led to increased collaboration, while in others, they might have encountered obstacles in communication or the speed of decision-making. If both situations have occurred in the same dataset, they could statistically neutralize each other, a phenomenon described by Homan et al. (2020) and developed further in the conceptual framework of the CEM by Van Knippenberg et al. (2004, 2013).

Another likely reason could stem from how team members view diversity. The tested perceptions are not only influenced by gender composition, but also by visibility, significance, and past experiences in gender-diverse settings (Harrison et al., 1998; Van Dick et al., 2008). Perhaps, at certain teams, a distinct gender proportion within the team may not be perceived as gender diverse, when at other times, even the inclusion of a single woman might be very noticeable. Such subjective views shape how diversity is experienced within the team and, in turn, how it influences personal

interactions, potentially explaining why the effect appeared slightly negative yet non-significant, too minor to be of enough importance.

The development stage of a team can also be of importance. Studies on team development, such as Mickan and Rodger (2000), Buljac-Samardzic et al. (2010), and Costa et al. (2013) show that teams that have worked together for an extensive period have often created shared routines and norms that weaken the influence of demographic differences on daily operations. In such situations, diversity might not be a significant factor of the team's effectiveness anymore.

Lastly, a contributing factor may be the inclusion of one composite score for team effectiveness, comprised of the three dimensions: task performance, member satisfaction, and team viability (Bell et al., 2011; Hackman, 1983; Lemieux-Charles et al., 2002). It is plausible that diversity strengthens some dimensions, like creative problem-solving in case of task performance, while having little to no impact or even a detrimental effect, on others, like sustaining team members' willingness to work together in the future in case of team viability. When these mixed effects are combined into a single index, they could result in a generally weak statistical relationship.

In terms of inclusive leadership, the results show somewhat unexpected outcomes. The findings indicate that inclusive leadership directly relates to team effectiveness, presented with a strong positive correlation, whereas the analysis also suggests that it does not moderate the relationship between gender diversity and team effectiveness. It is important to note that the analysis of gender diversity was done in a subjective manner rather than an objective one. Taking the perception of team members instead of abstract ratios might have contributed to somewhat moderate findings in the effects, concealing the true effects of numbers in comparison to feelings.

Nevertheless, it must be stated that the significant positive relationship between inclusive leadership and team effectiveness emphasizes the importance of leaders who actively encourage and value contributions from every team member. In everyday work settings, such leaders ensure that all members are heard, disagreements are effectively managed, and they cultivate an environment in which team members feel safe in sharing their ideas. Bourke and Titus (2019), Edmonson (1999), Leroy et al. (2022), and Nishii (2013) all stress that such an environment facilitates the free exchange of ideas, addresses problems when needed, and effectively coordinates team efforts. The combination of clear communication and this environment of trust is essential for maintaining high levels of team performance (Bell et al., 2011; Homan et al., 2020).

More support for these findings can be found in the literature. Leaders who demonstrate inclusive behaviors assist their team in managing inevitable differences in work styles, levels of experience, and perspectives, even when these differences do not relate to demographic differences such as gender. Homan et al. (2020) and Guillaume et al. (2017) already noted that by promoting

mutual respect and stimulating open communication, they reduce the chances of a misunderstanding leading to conflict. This environment helps to motivate team members to concentrate on shared goals rather than individual preferences (Van Knippenberg et al., 2013).

While inclusive leadership was linked to increased team effectiveness, it did not significantly influence the relationship between gender diversity and team effectiveness. One possible explanation for this is that inclusive leadership ensures strong communication, trust, and teamwork across all teams, regardless of the level of diversity, meaning that little additional variance is left to be explained through interaction effects (Guillaume et al., 2017).

Taken together, these findings show that inclusive leadership consistently enhances team effectiveness. However, the advantages of gender diversity are not guaranteed and may need specific situational factors to emerge. The lack of moderation effect indicates that inclusive leadership, while significant, may operate more as a general facilitator of team effectiveness rather than as a conditional strengthener of the impact of diversity. These findings contribute to a more nuanced understanding of when and how diversity leads to improved team effectiveness, highlighting the importance of considering both structural and psychological factors when evaluating the impact of diversity on team effectiveness.

4.1 Implications

Theoretical implications

Research on the topic of diversity, especially in organizational and team settings, has a long history, dating back to at least the 1980s and 1990s when organizations started to rely more on team-based structures (Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007; Mathieu et al., 2019). This study offers valuable information to the growing literature on diversity, teams, and inclusive leadership.

First, it addresses a crucial gap in the diversity literature by conducting an empirical investigation into the effects of perceived gender diversity on team effectiveness as well as how inclusive leadership might foster this relationship. The dual focus contributes to existing literature by integrating leadership into research on diversity and by directing its attention to subjective perceptions of diversity within teams instead of structural representation.

As pointed out throughout this dissertation, it is highlighted that diversity is not merely a demographic attribute but also a matter of subjective perception. While numerous prior studies took objective diversity measures such as absolute gender ratios (e.g., Bell et al., 2011; Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007), more recent research supports the use of team members' subjective experiences of diversity as it may better predict team dynamics and outcomes (Shemla et al., 2016; Guillaume et al., 2013). Considering gender diversity as a perceived construct plays into the need for a more nuanced

approach to diversity measurements and shows the importance of individual-level perceptions that can be aggregated to the team level. This uncommon approach exposes the volatile nature of diversity as a concept whose effect is mediated by the way it is defined, understood, and valued by the members of a team.

Second, this study employs a comprehensive measure of team effectiveness, which is new in this domain of research. Studies on team outcomes often focus on a single outcome such as performance, innovation, or creativity, whereas this study draws on Hackman's (1983) model of team effectiveness, which includes task performance, member satisfaction, and team viability. By doing so, emphasis is put on the structural nature of team effectiveness and shows that gender diversity might not only impact immediate outcomes but also roots itself in interpersonal relationships and a team's ability to work together effectively in the long run (Mickan & Rodger, 2000). This broader approach allows for a thorough test of the consequences of diversity and contributes to ongoing efforts to fully understand the multidimensionality of team outcomes (Piña et al., 2008).

Third, leadership is integrated as a potential factor of importance in reaching the benefits of diversity by empirically testing the mediating role of inclusive leadership in the relationship between gender diversity and team effectiveness, enriching the literature with a new direction of interest. Although leadership has been known as crucial for team functioning, the interplay of specific leadership behaviors with diversity within teams has not yet been extensively explored in existing studies. The focus on inclusive leadership, which stresses valuing, integrating, and leveraging diverse perspectives (Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Bourke & Titus, 2019), complements both diversity and leadership literatures. Based on the findings, we can assume that inclusive leadership behaviors strongly benefit team effectiveness in general (Leroy et al., 2022) and suggest that their influence might be more general rather than conditional.

Finally, the non-significant relationship results between gender diversity and team effectiveness in this sample help to clarify ongoing inconsistencies in diversity research. The argument that diversity effects are conditional, dependent on contextual factors and its environment, rather than instant or all-round, is supported by these findings (Guillaume et al., 2017; Joshi & Roh, 2009; Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). They provide a more nuanced theoretical understanding of when and how diversity influences team effectiveness, including an emphasis on the importance of including both structural and perceptual elements in future theoretical explorations.

Practical implications

In addition to theoretical contributions, this dissertation provides practical insights for organizations and team leaders seeking to leverage the benefits of diversity and leadership behaviors. The finding

that gender diversity did not directly predict higher levels of team effectiveness underscores that the benefits of diversity cannot be guaranteed. Managers and HR practitioners must take note that the composition of a balanced gender team does not automatically equal an effective team (Benschop, 2001). Instead, organizations must search for the right conditions under which diversity can be turned into an asset rather than a source of friction.

Building on this finding, a key implication of this study is that organizations should not limit themselves to tracking diversity simply in numerical terms, such as ratios or gender quotas. While these systemic indicators serve as important guidelines, they fail to fully display the true effects of diversity on teams, thus asking for additional insights into perceptions of diversity. Personal feelings and experiences of team diversity can yield different numbers than objective statistics, but it's these perceptions that determine interpersonal relationships, dynamics, and eventually, team effectiveness (Harrison et al., 1998; Van Dick et al., 2008). Practically, this implies that HR and team leaders should expand their current metrics and complement them with periodical surveys or assessments to collect information on how team members perceive and experience diversity. This approach will distinguish when diversity can be regarded as a resource and when it should alert practitioners that it can be a source of division.

Second, the same results underscore the importance of the right mindset towards diversity and belief in its possibilities. While the presence of diversity did not predict team effectiveness, it does suggest that team members' attitudes towards diversity and the way they interpret (e.g., demographic) differences matter at least as much. The diversity beliefs and mindsets, distinguished by Homan et al. (2007) and Van Dick et al. (2008), are closely related but still distinct. Diversity beliefs consider the evaluative perspective taken towards diversity, meaning whether they see it as beneficial or detrimental to the functioning of the team. Diversity mindsets encapsulate the cognitive framework through which team members understand and approach differences. This implies that organizations should direct their attention to training teams in pro-diversity mindsets, beyond merely formal leadership development. This could involve workshops that redefine differences as complementary strengths, or guided discussions in which team members review past experiences of how diverse perspectives have improved their work. By actively cultivating these beliefs, organizations can support teams in transitioning from minimal interaction to actively using differences for better teamwork and long-term viability.

Third, the strong positive relationship between inclusive leadership and team effectiveness highlights the key role leaders have in establishing a team climate. When leaders demonstrate behaviors of openness, trust, and true appreciation of every contribution, they allow their team to constructively combine diverse perspectives. To instill these inclusive behaviors in leaders, formal

training is required in addition to continuous reinforcement in daily management practices, such as actively seeking contributions from more reserved team members, defining shared goals, and effectively addressing disagreements. Incorporating such practices might cultivate team climates in which diversity is embraced rather than suppressed.

Fourth, the teams in the sample indicated that they perceived themselves as relatively diverse. For organizations, this suggests that the overall focus should not be to increase gender diversity further but to ensure that current diversity is effectively managed for teams to succeed. In practice, this relates back to the significant findings of inclusive leadership contributing to higher levels of team effectiveness regardless of team diversity. This further stresses the value in upskilling leaders into inclusive gurus, not because this would necessarily reap the benefits of diversity, but because they consistently improve teamwork and efficiency, no matter the demographic composition of the team.

Finally, organizations should revise the way they evaluate their teams' multidimensional measure of team effectiveness used in this study. The sole focus on performance might obscure other important challenges in member satisfaction or team viability, undermining the team's sustainability in the long run. Therefore, organizations are encouraged to implement a broader evaluation framework, one that includes both outcomes and team functioning. Such a broad-based assessment can discover potential issues earlier and assist in the development of targeted interventions to increase overall team effectiveness.

4.2 Limitations and directions for future research

While this study offers important insights into the interplay between gender diversity, inclusive leadership, and team effectiveness within real organizational settings, it is important to acknowledge several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. Although investigating practical settings provides generalizability, it also comes with methodological and practical challenges. These challenges can arise both from design choices and practical difficulties encountered during data collection. Reflecting on these limitations not only increases transparency but also provides helpful directions for future research aimed at building on and refining the contributions of the current study. Hence, this section outlines the most relevant limitations and offers recommendations to guide future explorations of this field.

One important consideration is the dependence on subjective measures for all three variables: gender diversity, inclusive leadership, and team effectiveness. Recent studies emphasize that perceived diversity, rather than just demographic counts, offers a more accurate understanding of team dynamics and effectiveness (Chan, 1998; Shemla et al., 2016; Guillaume et al., 2013). This shift

toward measuring diversity subjectively is grounded in theoretical developments such as the Categorization-Elaboration Model (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004), which explains that it is not diversity itself, but the subjective interpretation of diversity that is a key driver of group relations, determining whether diversity leads to positive or negative outcomes. Similarly, Harrison & Klein (2007) argue that diversity should not only be viewed as an objective construct but must also consider how individuals experience differences within their teams. In this study, gender diversity and inclusive leadership were assessed based on team members' perceptions. Although this method captures important empirical information, it also allows for potential bias linked to individual attitudes, past experiences, and interpersonal relationships (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Van Dyne et al., 1995). Alternatively, team effectiveness was measured through both team members' and team leaders' assessments, incorporating a multi-source design of evaluation. A suggestion for future endeavors includes the use of multi-source evaluation, like team effectiveness or a combination of subjective assessment with more objective indicators. This could help to reduce this potential bias and offer a more balanced and therefore reliable view of the interaction between constructs.

Based on this understanding, it is especially essential to acknowledge that in this study, team perceptions were derived solely from the responses of those members who completed the questionnaire. This makes the limitation more consequential for gender diversity compared to the other variables. The respondents were regarded as representatives of the team, although the actual team may have consisted of additional members who did not participate. Future research should aim to include the input only from complete teams to more accurately capture the collective team experience and provide a more precise and thorough analysis of the study variables.

Closely related is the issue of interpretive bias in measuring gender diversity. This phenomenon refers to the consistent skewing that occurs when people use their own personal beliefs, experiences, and contextual frames to interpret ambiguous information, resulting in differences in how the same concept is perceived and described (Podsakoff et al., 2012). The item "I perceive my team as diverse in terms of gender composition" allows respondents to interpret gender diversity in their own way. For example, some respondents may view gender diversity as an equal gender distribution, meaning 50/50. In contrast, others may see it as having a higher representation of women, particularly in sectors primarily dominated by men. Previous research has underlined that perceptions of diversity are indeed influenced by context and are shaped by social identity, expectations, and societal norms (Homan et al., 2004; Ely & Thomas, 2001). Such differences in interpretation could have led to inconsistencies in evaluating gender diversity, possibly contributing to the null findings. A suggestion for future research includes encouraging the inclusion of both perceived and objective assessments of gender diversity to verify findings and minimize conceptual ambiguity. Furthermore,

the inclusion of a concise definition or understanding of what is meant by gender diversity in the context of the questionnaire is necessary. Specifying whether the focus is on balance, representation, or proportional differences may help align interpretations across respondents and improve the consistency of measurements.

Measurement concerns also include the internal consistency of gender diversity. The three-item scale recorded a Cronbach's alpha of .66, which is just below the generally accepted threshold of .70 for acceptable reliability (Nunnally, 1978). While this value is not unusually low for shorter scales, it may suggest limited internal consistency, which could weaken correlations and conceal possible effects, potentially contributing to the non-significant results found in this study (Cortina, 1993). Surely, brief scales, especially those containing only two or three items, often lead to lower alpha values due to limited item variance, even when items are conceptually robust (Eisinga et al., 2013). Furthermore, the task performance and team viability dimensions of team effectiveness were each assessed using two-item subscales, and their internal consistency was not calculated or reported separately, because they contributed to the overall composite score. While concise measures can be necessary for practical purposes, their limited reliability may weaken statistical power and limit the detection of relationships. Broadening these scales to include additional items per dimension or scale could improve internal consistency and ensure more reliable estimations of effects, especially in studies investigating subtle or complex relationships like those between diversity and team effectiveness.

A common limitation in team studies is the relatively small sample size used in the analysis. In this study, data were gathered from 31 teams, an acceptable number but one that restricts statistical power and decreases the chances of identifying minor or interaction effects, especially when testing complex relationships and moderation effects (Biemann et al., 2012). Smaller sample sizes also tend to generate less stable parameter estimates and limit the generalizability of the findings. Increasing the sample size in future research could strengthen the dependability of the results. It would enable the use of more advanced statistical techniques, such as multilevel or structural equation modelling (Bliese, 2000; Costa et al., 2013; Kline, 2016).

In the analysis, individual responses were aggregated to the team level using the Within-Group Agreement method from James et al. (1993). Participating teams originated from a range of organizations, which likely differed in their internal cultures, structures, and ways of working. Such differences can lead to lower consensus within teams and undermine the validity of aggregated data. As Biemann et al. (2020) point out, aggregation relies on a certain level of homogeneity within groups (e.g., teams) and compatibility between them. This assumption becomes increasingly questionable when teams encompass multiple organizations. These contextual variations may conceal patterns or

weaken observable effects, especially for variables such as leadership and team effectiveness, which are profoundly shaped by organizational norms and practices. While there was statistical justification for aggregation (e.g., $r_{wg(j)}$), the theoretical compatibility among teams may still have been restricted. Focusing on teams from a single organization or statistically adjusting for organizational affiliation could help to identify true team-level effects.

The design of the study also limits the conclusions that can be made. All data were gathered at a single point in time, adopting a cross-sectional data method. As a result, the findings show associations between gender diversity, inclusive leadership, and team effectiveness, but do not allow the conclusion of causal relationships. This limitation does not reduce the significance of the findings, as cross-sectional research is still a suitable method for testing theoretical assumptions and detecting trends in real-world environments, particularly when studying teams that operate in real organizational settings (Mathieu et al., 2015; Spector, 2019). Nonetheless, it is essential to acknowledge that different research designs, such as longitudinal studies that observe teams over periods or experimental interventions, would be needed to determine whether changes in one variable directly cause changes in another (Mathieu et al., 2015; Spector, 2019). Thus, subsequent studies could employ methods that enable more definitive causal conclusions, thereby improving the understanding of how these factors interact with each other over time.

Finally, the gender of the team leader, which this study did not investigate, could potentially impact team members' perceptions of diversity and inclusive leadership behaviors. Research has shown that the gender of a leader can certainly affect how their leadership style is perceived and evaluated, influenced by both gender role expectations and social identity factors (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Homan et al., 2020). For instance, female leaders may be viewed as more supportive of diversity efforts, whereas male leaders may be evaluated differently for showing the same behaviors (Gündemir et al., 2014). Additionally, gender similarity or dissimilarity between the leader and team members can impact interpersonal relationships, identification with the leader, and acceptance of diversity (Riordan, 2000; Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989). Because this study relied on subjective measures of both gender diversity and inclusive leadership, it is possible that the gender of the leader played a role in forming these perceptions, thus influencing the results. It may be of interest to control for or include the gender of the leader as a variable to provide a more detailed understanding of how it interacts with diverse perceptions and inclusive leadership to foster team effectiveness.

In summary, these limitations reveal several interesting directions for future research in the field of diversity, teams, and leadership.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

The main objective of this dissertation was to contribute to a deeper understanding of the effects of gender diversity on a team's effectiveness, with an additional focus on the moderating role of inclusive leadership. With a theoretical foundation based on pre-existing literature, which examined numerous types of diversity in team settings as well as the consequences of leadership behaviors for team outcomes, this study connected these important constructs by examining them in one conceptual model. By employing a quantitative method in which both team members' and team leaders' perspectives were tested, and analyzing at the team level, this study explored the effects of gender diversity on team effectiveness and whether inclusive leadership behaviors can impact these team outcomes.

The findings indicate that gender diversity, while being a prominent form of diversity in team compositions, did not significantly predict team effectiveness. The takeaway from these findings is that diversity does not always lead to improved team effectiveness. Although various studies emphasized the potential advantages of diversity for team functioning and outcomes (e.g., Bell et al., 2011; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Homan et al., 2020; Hoogendoorn et al., 2013; Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007; Mickan & Rodger, 2000; Nishii, 2013; Shemla et al., 2016; Van Knippenberg et al., 2004; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998), the results in this study show that those benefits are perhaps conditional, dependent on contextual factors, and may differ between teams.

On the other hand, inclusive leadership was revealed to hold a strong, direct, and significant positive relationship with team effectiveness. This result confirms the importance of inclusive leadership behaviors that advocate psychological safety, the input from all team members, and mutual respect. However, no support was found for the moderation effect of inclusive leadership on the relationship between gender diversity and team effectiveness, suggesting that while leadership is a prominent predictor of team effectiveness, it holds a more general rather than conditional role. Instead of acting as a smoothing oil in realizing the potential of diversity, inclusive leadership strengthens team functioning across contexts, regardless of demographic team composition.

Organizations should focus on instilling inclusive leadership behaviors in their leaders to enhance overall team functioning. While initiatives like gender ratios, equal pay policies, and unconscious bias training are all important steps toward representation and equality, this study stresses the inconsistent findings of increased effectiveness at the team level. Guaranteed

improvements require leaders who genuinely intend to create inclusive environments in which differences are seen for their additional value and are integrated into team dynamics.

Like every study, certain limitations were faced that should be considered when interpreting its findings. Relying on cross-sectional data restricts the ability to draw causal conclusions, as it only captures relationships at a single point in time. Additionally, the relatively small sample size limits the generalizability of the results to broader organizational settings. Moreover, the use of perceptual measures in this study introduces the possibility of leniency bias, potentially skewing the data used. Suggestions for future research include the exploration of other contextual moderators, increasing the sample size for reliable generalization, combining both objective and subjective measures, and accounting for the gender of the team leader.

Returning to the real-world context discussed in the introduction, globalization continues to diversify the workforce and forces a mixture of people, cultures, and expertise across organizations to work together, keeping debates around the impact of diversity on the societal agenda. This study emphasizes that the day-to-day reality of teamwork is where inclusion really is put into practice. The finding of a strong positive relation between inclusive leadership and team effectiveness, showcasing a universal strengthening of team functioning, highlights the importance of transitioning from simple symbolic representation toward leadership practices that directly foster teamwork and inclusion within teams. Such efforts are becoming increasingly important in, for example, American organizations after recent changes by Trump's 2025 administration, eliminating DEI initiatives under Project 2025, underscoring how vulnerable developments in inclusion can be when larger political motives undermine organizational efforts. Turbulent times will persist regardless, which is why a need for change and a need for inclusion should come from within organizations, as a personal desire.

To conclude, the main implication is clear: organizations must invest not only in structural measures but, more importantly, in future leaders who can translate diversity into everyday inclusive practices that allow teams to work effectively and look beyond their individual differences.

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Appendix A – Questionnaire Team Members

SURVEY

1. This questionnaire is part of a research project conducted by a team of researchers from ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon, focusing on team effectiveness in a business context. The main objective of this project is to identify the factors related to teamwork that contribute to the success of projects and the satisfaction of both clients and consultants.
2. The data collected will be analyzed exclusively by the research team, and anonymity is guaranteed.
3. The questions are designed so that you only need to select the answer you find most suitable. Try to respond without spending too much time on each question.
4. There are no right or wrong answers. What matters to us is solely your personal opinion.
5. For each question, there is a scale. You can use any point on the scale as you see fit.
6. Please complete the entire questionnaire in one session without interruptions.

For any clarification or additional information about the study, please contact: Prof. Ana Margarida Passos (ana.passos@iscte-iul.pt).

Thank you for your collaboration!

Please answer this questionnaire by reflecting on the project you are currently involved in and the team you are working with.

1. The following questions aim to describe team behaviors. Indicate to what extent you agree with each statement using the response scale below.

Totally disagree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Totally agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

My team is effective in...

1.	Taking creative actions to solve problems that lack straightforward answers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	Finding innovative ways to handle unexpected situations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	Adapting and managing unforeseen events by quickly refocusing and taking appropriate actions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	Developing alternative action plans in a short time to address contingencies.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	Seeking and developing new skills to respond to situations/problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	Adjusting each member's personal style to the team's collective approach.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	Improving interpersonal relationships while considering the needs and aspirations of each member.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	Maintaining focus even when handling multiple situations and responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. The following statements refer to feelings some teams experience about their work. Use the same response scale as before.

1.	At our work, we feel bursting with energy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	At our job, we feel strong and vigorous.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	We are enthusiastic about our job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	Our job inspires us.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	When we arrive at work, we feel like starting to work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	We feel happy when we are working intensely.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	We are proud of the work that we do in the organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	We are immersed in our work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	We get carried away when we are working.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. The following questions relate to how your team works.

1.	Our team works in a well-coordinated manner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	Our team has very few misunderstandings about what to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	Our team often has to go back and start over.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	We perform tasks smoothly and efficiently.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	There is a lot of confusion about how to perform tasks.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	We anticipate what each team member does/needs at a given moment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	We adjust our behavior to anticipate the actions of other members.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	We synchronize our work with the minimal necessary communication.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. The following questions concern the leader's behavior. Indicate to what extent you agree with each of the following statements.

Totally disagree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Totally agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The leader of my team...

1.	Changes the way the team interprets events of situations the team is faced with.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	Alters the way the team thinks about events or situations the team is faced with.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	Modifies how the team thinks about events or situations the team is faced with.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	Encourages the team to collectively interpret things that happen to the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	Promotes team discussions about different perspectives of events or situations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	Encourages team members to provide their unique viewpoint on events or situations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	Promotes the development of a shared understanding of events or situations among the team members.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. Regarding the leader's behavior, please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

The leader of my team...

1.	Encourages all of us to voice our opinions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	Ensures that all members are valued for their contributions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	Makes sure that everyone's unique strengths are leveraged.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	Creates an environment in which we can be ourselves.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	Encourages everyone to be unique.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	Enables us to see differences as an advantage rather than as a disadvantage.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	Helps us to see how differences among us can be an added value for our team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	Helps us to solve disagreements to make better decisions for the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	Encourages us to listen to perspectives that are different from our own.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	Helps us to understand that different views are needed to understand the bigger picture.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. Now think about how your team works. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

1.	In my team, we actively attack problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	In my team, we quickly use opportunities to attain goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	In my team, we usually do more than we are asked to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	In my team, we are particularly good at realizing ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. Please continue thinking of your team as a whole. Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

1.	If we find ourselves in a jam, we can think of many ways to get out of it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	Right now, we see ourselves as being pretty successful as a team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	We can think of many ways to reach our current goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	We are looking forward to the life ahead of us.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	The future holds a lot of good in store for us.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	Overall, we expect more good things to happen to us than bad.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	Sometimes, we make ourselves do things whether we want to or not.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	When we're in a difficult situation, we can usually find our way out of it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	It's okay if there are people who don't like us.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	We are confident that we could deal efficiently with unexpected events.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11.	We can solve most problems if we invest the necessary effort.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12.	We can remain calm when facing difficulties because we can rely on our coping abilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. Please now think about the results of your team's work and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

Totally disagree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Totally agree				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7				
1.	My team has a good performance.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	We are satisfied to be working in this team.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	My team is effective.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	I would not hesitate to work with this team on other projects.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	This team could work well on future projects.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. Think now about how your team members relate to each other.

1.	I am able to count on my team members for help if I have difficulties with my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	I am confident that my team members will take my interests into account when making work-related decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	I am confident that my team members will keep me informed about issues that concern my work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	I can rely on my team members to keep their word.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	I trust my team members.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	It is safe for me to make suggestions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	It is safe to give my opinions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	It is safe for me to speak up around here.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10. Think now about the project your team is involved in.

Totally disagree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Totally agree				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7				
1.	We are well aware of the environment in which the project is being developed.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	We clearly understand the variables that influence the success of the project.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	We quickly identify changes that may influence our work.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	We have clear information about the tasks/project we are developing.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. Think now about the organization you work for and respond to the following questions. Indicate to what extent you agree with each of the following statements:

1.	In my organization, there are opportunities for career progression.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	It is possible to communicate openly and directly about career aspirations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	The organization helps me identify other positions within the organization that match my interests.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	This organization is a springboard for future employment opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	In my organization, salaries are adequate.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	There are rewards for additional work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	HR practices are designed to meet personal needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	The organization recognizes exceptional work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	The organization has a good reputation and is perceived as socially responsible.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	I feel good about working for this organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11.	My organization's HR practices are guided by ethical principles.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12.	My organization contributes significantly to society through solidarity actions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

12. Think about your team as a whole and indicate to what extent you agree with each of the following statements:

Totally disagree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Totally agree				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7				
1.	My team is globally very diverse.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	My team is very diverse in terms of ethnic composition.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	My team is very diverse in terms of gender.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	My team is very diverse in terms of academic background.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	My team is very diverse in terms of age.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	I am very aware of the differences among my colleagues.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7

13. Now focus on yourself and indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements:

Totally disagree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Totally agree				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7				
1.	In this team, I can be my unique self.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	In this team, I can use my unique skills and abilities.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	In this team, I feel that I belong.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	In this team I feel connected with other team members.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	In this team, I feel like an outsider.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7

13. In the next set of questions, we ask you to imagine a scenario where you would be collaborating with not only your human colleagues but also an AI agent as part of your team. An AI agent, in this context, is an autonomous system that acts as a team member with a clear, distinct role and collaborates interdependently with the team.

Please reflect on how working in a team with human and non-human team members might impact your behavior.

Your insights will help us understand the potential benefits, challenges, and dynamics of collaboration between humans and AI agents.

Totally disagree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Totally agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1.	When I've learned something new, I would tell my colleagues about it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	I would share information I have with my colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	I think it is important that my colleagues know what I am doing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	I would regularly tell my colleagues what I am doing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	When I need certain knowledge, I would ask my colleagues about it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	I would like to be informed of what my colleagues know.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	I would ask my colleagues about their abilities when I need to learn something.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	When my colleague is good at something, I would ask them to teach me how to do it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Finally, we would like to ask some socio-demographic data, essential to data analysis:

1. Gender: Female Male Non-binary Other **2. Age:** _____ years

3. Which nationality do you identify with most?: _____

4. Job function in the organization: _____

5. How long have you been working in this organization?

Less than 1 year 1 to 3 years 3 to 5 years 5 to 7 years More than 7 years

6. Team Size (excluding the leader): _____

7. Do you have a hybrid working model? (In this context, hybrid includes all working models that do not require a full-time, on-site presence and have implications for an inclusive workplace with less or no face-to-face interaction.)

Yes No

8. Do you have any agent /AI member) in your team?

Yes No

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

Appendix B – Questionnaire Team Leaders

SURVEY

1. This questionnaire is part of a research project conducted by a team of researchers from ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon, focusing on team effectiveness in a business context. The main objective of this project is to identify the factors related to teamwork that contribute to the success of projects and the satisfaction of both clients and consultants.
2. The data collected will be analyzed exclusively by the research team, and anonymity is guaranteed.
3. The questions are designed so that you only need to select the answer you find most suitable. Try to respond without spending too much time on each question.
4. There are no right or wrong answers. What matters to us is solely your personal opinion.
5. For each question, there is a scale. You can use any point on the scale as you see fit.
6. Please complete the entire questionnaire in one session without interruptions.

For any clarification or additional information about the study, please contact: Prof. Ana Margarida Passos (ana.passos@iscte-iul.pt).

Thank you for your collaboration!

To answer this questionnaire, think about the TEAM and the specific project you are leading.

1. The following questions aim to describe your team's behaviors. Please indicate to what extent you agree with each of them using the response scale below:

Totally disagree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Totally agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1.	This team has a good performance.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	Members are satisfied working in this team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	This team is effective.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	I would not hesitate to ask this team to work on other projects.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	This team could work well on future projects.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	This team actively attacks problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	This team quickly uses opportunities to attain goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	This team usually does more than they are asked to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	This team is particularly good at realizing ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. Now think about your behavior as a leader. Indicate to what extent you agree with each of the following statements:

1.	I encourage all team members to voice their opinions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	I ensure that all team members are valued for their contributions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	I make sure that everyone's unique strengths are leveraged.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	I create an environment in which team members can be themselves.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	I encourage everyone to be unique.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	I enable the team to see differences as an advantage rather than as a disadvantage.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	I help the team to see how differences among them can be an added value for our team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	I help team members to solve disagreements to make better decisions for the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	I encourage team members to listen to perspectives that are different from their own.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	I help team members to understand that different views are needed to understand the bigger picture.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. Now think about yourself in relation to the team. Indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements:

1.	In this team, I can be my unique self.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	In this team, I can use my unique skills and abilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	In this team, I feel that I belong.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	In this team, I feel connected with the other members.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	In this team, I feel like an outsider.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. The following questions aim to describe team behaviors. Please indicate to what extent you agree with each of the following statements:

Totally disagree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Totally agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

This team is...

1.	Taking creative actions to solve problems that lack straightforward answers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	Finding innovative ways to handle unexpected situations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	Adapting and managing unforeseen events by quickly refocusing and taking appropriate actions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	Developing alternative action plans in a short time to address contingencies.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	Seeking and developing new skills to respond to situations/problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	Adjusting each member's personal style to the team's collective approach.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	Improving interpersonal relationships while considering the needs and aspirations of each member.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	Maintaining focus even when handling multiple situations and responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. In the next set of questions, we ask you to imagine a scenario where you would be leading a team not only with your human colleagues but also an AI agent as part of the team. An AI agent, in this context, is an autonomous system that acts as a team member with a clear, distinct role and collaborates independently with the team.

Please reflect on how leading a team with human and non-human team members might impact your behavior and the team's effectiveness. Your insights will help us understand the potential benefits, challenges, and dynamics of collaboration between humans and AI agents.

1.	I would encourage the team to collectively interpret things that happen to the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	I would promote team discussions about different perspectives of events or situations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	I would encourage team members to provide their individual viewpoint on events or situations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	I would promote the development of a shared understanding of events or situations among the team members.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	When an AI agent is integrated into the team, the quality of the work will increase.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	When an AI agent is integrated into this team, the quantity of the work will increase.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	When an AI agent is integrated into this team, the general effectiveness will increase.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	When an AI agent is integrated into this team, it will be more productive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	When an AI agent is integrated into this team, it will be more efficient.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	When an AI agent is integrated into this team, team members could work well on future projects.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11.	When an AI agent is integrated into this team, team members will be satisfied working together.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12.	When an AI agent is integrated into this team, the team members would be willing to continue working in this team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Finally, we would like to ask some socio-demographic data, essential to data analysis:

1. Gender: Female Male Non-binary Other **2. Age:** _____ years

3. Which nationality do you identify with most?:

4. Job function in the organization:

5. How long have you been working in this organization?

Less than 1 year 1 to 3 years 3 to 5 years 5 to 7 years More than 7 years

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!