

Workplace Inclusivity from a Strategy-as-Practice Perspective: A Systematic Literature Review

Sibongile Amy Katarina Mukupa^{*}, *Matteo Cristofaro*^{**},
Pierluigi Giardino^{***}

Received 24 April 2023 – Accepted 15 June 2023

Abstract

Inclusive work environments are more likely to attract and retain a diverse talent pool, improving business outcomes and competitive advantage. However, inclusivity has been treated as a sum of organizational behaviour norms elaborated by savvy organizations. In line with real-world practices, we advance that inclusivity is a strategic practice that emerges as an inter-related and co-evolving pool of influences from the individual, firm, and environment, elevating it as a strategic management topic. We implemented a systematic literature review (SLR) of selected contributions dealing with the role of workplace inclusivity. Collected papers have been analysed by considering the so-called strategy-as-practice (s-as-p) perspective (i.e., the doing of strategy, who does it, what they do, how they do it, what they use, and what implications this has for shaping strategy), hence, enriching strategy theory, empirical research, and real-world practice. We offer a typology of strategic inclusivity practices that scholars and practitioners can use to study workplace inclusivity strategically. The proposed typology identifies the different domains of inclusivity by considering the level of praxis and practitioners. This article is the first to provide an in-depth and broad review of inclusivity in the workplace via a strategic management lens.

Keywords: Workplace inclusivity; Strategy-as-Practice; Systematic Literature Review

^{*} Studentessa. Dipartimento di Management e Diritto. Università degli Studi di Roma “Tor Vergata”. sibongileamykatarina.mukupa@students.uniroma2.eu

^{**} Assistant professor. Dipartimento di Management e Diritto. Università degli Studi di Roma “Tor Vergata”. matteo.cristofaro@uniroma2.it

^{***} Dottorando. Dipartimento di Economia e Management. Università di Trento. pierluigi.giardino@unitn.it

Sommario

Gli ambienti di lavoro inclusivi hanno maggiori probabilità di attrarre e trattenere talenti, migliorando i risultati aziendali e il vantaggio competitivo. Tuttavia, l'inclusività è stata spesso trattata, dalla letteratura scientifica e dalla pratica aziendale, come una somma di norme di comportamento organizzativo. In linea con le pratiche del mondo reale, in questo articolo avanziamo che l'inclusività è da intendersi, invece, come una pratica strategica. Quest'ultima emerge dall'interconnessione e co-evoluzione di influenze tra l'individuo, l'azienda e l'ambiente, elevando il concetto di inclusività ad argomento di gestione strategica. In questo articolo forniamo una revisione sistematica della letteratura di contributi scientifici che trattano il ruolo dell'inclusività sul posto di lavoro. I lavori raccolti sono stati analizzati considerando la prospettiva *strategy-as-practice*. Offriamo una concettualizzazione di pratiche di inclusività strategica che studiosi e professionisti possono utilizzare per studiare strategicamente l'inclusività sul posto di lavoro. Questo articolo è il primo a fornire una revisione approfondita e ampia dell'inclusività sul posto di lavoro attraverso una lente di gestione strategica.

Parole chiave: inclusività, posto di lavoro, strategia, management strategico, co-evoluzione

1. Introduction

Workplace inclusivity has gained significant attention in recent years in organizational studies. It generally refers to “involv[ing] equal opportunity for members of socially marginalized groups to participate and contribute while concurrently providing opportunities for members of non-marginalized groups, and to support employees in their efforts to be fully engaged at all levels of the organization and to be authentically themselves” (Shore *et al.*, 2018, p. 177). In this regard, scholars have pointed out that such practice should not only focus on the representation of diverse groups but also on creating an environment that allows all employees to feel valued and included (e.g., providing training and resources to managers to help them understand and address their own biases, promoting open communication and feedback) (Shore *et al.*, 2018; Santoro *et al.*, 2020; Glowka *et al.*, 2022). Hence, it is worth noting that workplace inclusivity holds ethical and moral significance and carries strategic implications.

Organizations can integrate workplace inclusivity into their strategic goals and objectives to enhance performance and competitiveness. In fact, inclusive organizations are more likely to attract and retain a diverse pool of talent, stimulate innovation, creativity, and problem-solving processes, as well as enhance strategic decision-making at large (Oshiotse and O'leary, 2007; Vohra *et al.*, 2015; Metz *et al.*, 2022). Consequently, the effects linked to workplace inclusivity can be investigated through a *strategy-as-*

practice (s-as-p) perspective, which delves into the practical aspects of strategy implementation, including the actors involved, their actions, the tools they utilize, and the resulting implications for shaping superior strategy (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). Thus, bringing valuable insights for business and management knowledge.

However, despite a growing body of research and attention on the workplace inclusivity topic, its outcomes in the context of firms' strategic management have either received no attention. To fill this void, we assessed the state-of-the-art knowledge, spotted limitations and provided a research agenda by answering the following research question: *May workplace inclusivity be reframed as a strategic practice?*

To answer this research question, a comprehensive Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was conducted, analysing a total of 32 articles published in English in peer-reviewed journals.

Specifically, to provide an examination of inclusivity according to a (s-as-p) perspective, the SLR has been conducted by analyzing articles via a multilevel view: i) *micro*, those papers that explore and attempt to explain strategy at levels of the individual or group's experience of a specific episode (e.g., a decision); ii) *meso*, those contributions that explore and attempt to explain strategy at the organizational or sub-organizational level (e.g., a change program, or a strategy process), and iii) *macro*, those articles studies that explore and attempt to explain strategy at the institutional level, within a specific industry. Additionally, articles have been analysed by looking to identify i) the role of practitioners as individuals or aggregate actors (e.g., top management), and ii) whether the practitioner is inside the organization (i.e., line or staff role within the organization's structure and governance arrangements) or outside the organization – in line with Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009). This methodological choice falls into what discussed by behavioral strategists (e.g., Powell *et al.*, 2011; Cristofaro, 2022; Cristofaro and Lovallo, 2022): understanding how individual cognition scales to collective behavior in organizations. In fact, from a behavioral strategy standpoint it will be possible to understand how individuals guide organizational policies for inclusivity and analyze how industry norms and regulations impact workplace inclusivity.

This multilevel analysis's findings contribute to theory and practice in several ways. First, from the SLR, it appeared that workplace inclusivity is a multidimensional concept that requires a comprehensive approach to tackle it both from theoretical and practical points of view. Second, practitioners can learn the importance of integrating inclusivity into their organizations' strategic architecture at *micro* (where individual values, beliefs, and behaviors play a crucial role in creating an inclusive work

environment), *meso* (where organizations must adopt inclusive policies, practices, and foster a sense of belonging, supporting diverse perspectives), and *macro* (where societal norms, cultural values, and legal frameworks collectively influence the overall workplace inclusivity) levels, thereby enhancing performance and competitiveness. Third, scholars gain insights into the strategy-as-practice perspective and its application to workplace inclusivity from a behavioral strategy standpoint, opening avenues for further research in workplace inclusivity within strategic management. Fourth, this SLR's findings could be beneficial to spur policymakers enhancing the promotion of laws and regulations towards a wider adoption of workplace inclusivity policies within organizations.

Overall, this SLR emphasizes the importance of elevating workplace inclusivity as a needed strategic management practice (Barile *et al.*, 2022), and sees it as an inter-related and co-evolving pool of influences from the individual, firm, and environment (e.g., Paniccia and Leoni, 2019; Abatecola and Cristofaro, 2020; Abatecola *et al.*, 2020) that, if not done, will remain confined as a sum of organizational behaviour norms adopted by savvy organizations.

2. Theoretical premises

2.1 Workplace inclusivity

In organizational environments characterized by high levels of workplace diversity, workplace inclusivity represents at the same time, both the prerequisite as well as the desired end (Brown, 2002; Douglas, 2008). Over the years, many scholars have been interested in investigating how organizations manage inclusivity; in this regard, Brendel *et al.* (2022) observed that management inclusivity research can be approached from three paradigms: i) technical inclusion, ii) organic inclusion, and iii) integrated inclusion research.

Whereas technical inclusion research focuses on quantitative attributes of inclusivity that contribute towards the betterment of an already diverse organization (Cucari *et al.*, 2018; Brendel *et al.*, 2022), Andrew and Ashworth (2022) highlighted the benefits of technical inclusion in their study of the relationship between representation and inclusion within public organizations. Particularly, these authors, by using statistical methods, discovered a positive correlation between organizational representation and employee and organizational performance. More specifically, in the case of public service organizations, the statistical results suggested “that

representative public service organizations are more likely to produce improved policy outcomes for citizens in general” (p. 285).

In contrast, organic inclusion research prioritises qualitative attributes of a diverse workforce, such as workers’ psychological and emotional experiences of belonging (Brendel *et al.*, 2022). The qualitative case study accomplished by Lirio *et al.* (2008) explored the inclusive role of the manager in supporting reduced-load arrangements; these authors highlighted that key managerial psychological and emotional behaviours, such as developing identifying and empathizing with the employees led to more workplace inclusivity and more excellent organizational performance. This aligns with Yu and Lee (2022) definition of inclusion “as a set of behaviours (culture) that encourage employees to feel valued for their unique qualities and experience a sense of belonging” (p. 4).

However, in favour of the previously mentioned paradigms, Brendel *et al.* (2022) recommend a more comprehensive approach in integrated, inclusive research that considers both perspectives. In fact, integrated inclusion research holistically merges technical and organic inclusion streams to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of creating a truly inclusive workplace. By merging these two streams, researchers can better understand how formal policies and practices interact with cultural norms and values to create an inclusive workplace. This approach can help organizations identify gaps in their current diversity and inclusion efforts and develop more effective strategies to address them. Ultimately, integrated inclusion research can help organizations to create a more inclusive culture that values diversity and supports the success of all employees.

As previously outlined the initial assumption in facilitating inclusivity is that diversity already exists within an organization (Brown, 2002; Douglas, 2008). Where this assumption stands, studies on the barriers to workplace inclusion are harmonized in line with the perspective of the inclusivity topical area that the study addresses, whether it be inclusive organizational cultures, inclusive leadership approaches and inclusive organizational practices (Shore *et al.*, 2018; Brendel *et al.*, 2022). And as such, barriers to inclusivity can be categorized into: i) inclusive practices (i.e., relating to a combination of barriers depending on if it is the praxis, practitioner, or actionable practices under focus), ii) inclusive organizational cultural barriers (i.e., relating to macro and sectorial level barriers), and iii) inclusive leadership (i.e., relating to firm level and individual behavioural barriers) (Oshiotse and O’leary, 2007; Cummings and Daellenbach, 2009; Shore *et al.*, 2018; Metz *et al.*, 2022).

2.2. *Strategy-as-practice*

Initially, a challenge associated with the concept of ‘strategy-as-practice’ research was the tension between the academic discipline and the applied discipline of s-as-p and other management studies (Chia, 2004). That gap between the two where “strategy-in-practice answers to a different logic of engagement from that that the academic world is most comfortable with: a practical logic that, while internally coherent and plausible to the world of practitioners, is often misrepresented and force-fitted into an academic logic of rationality that requires practice to speak itself in a language foreign to its application” (Chia, 2004, p. 33). More recently, s-as-p research has expanded the scope of study to include research parameters that attempt to consider practical logic (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). In particular, the s-as-p field has defined its broad research parameters as studying: i) practitioners (i.e., those people who do the work of strategy), ii) practices (i.e., the social, symbolic, and material tools through which strategy work is done), and iii) praxis (i.e., the flow of activity in which strategy is accomplished) (Jarzabkowski 2005; Whittington, 2006; Johnson *et al.* 2007).

Each of the three topical areas of the s-as-p study contributes to further strategic management studies in distinct ways. Vaara and Whittington (2012), in their review of s-as-p practices research, noted the attributes of strategic practice being that they are complex, flexible, polyvalent, and adaptive to their social environment. Resulting in the conclusion that s-as-p serves not only decision-making but also “to include and exclude, legitimate and delegitimate, and even, potentially, to change the very concept of the organization itself” (p. 14). Although s-as-p praxis studies allow for more empirical research within the field as they can focus on the micro-level specifics, including behaviours, actions, skillsets, and resources, those micro-level specifics are still influenced by macro-institutional and societal organizational aspects (Vaara and Whittington, 2012). Regarding s-as-p practitioners’ studies, Vaara and Whittington (2012) noted that the practitioner’s identity plays a role in the delivery of their strategic actions, and the social factors that inform the practitioner’s identity also inform their strategic actions. Furthermore, this acknowledgment and understanding of the role that trends and shifts in social, societal, and macro-institutional practices play in s-as-p help to bridge the initial gap in s-as-p research between static academic discipline and fluctuating applied discipline.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection

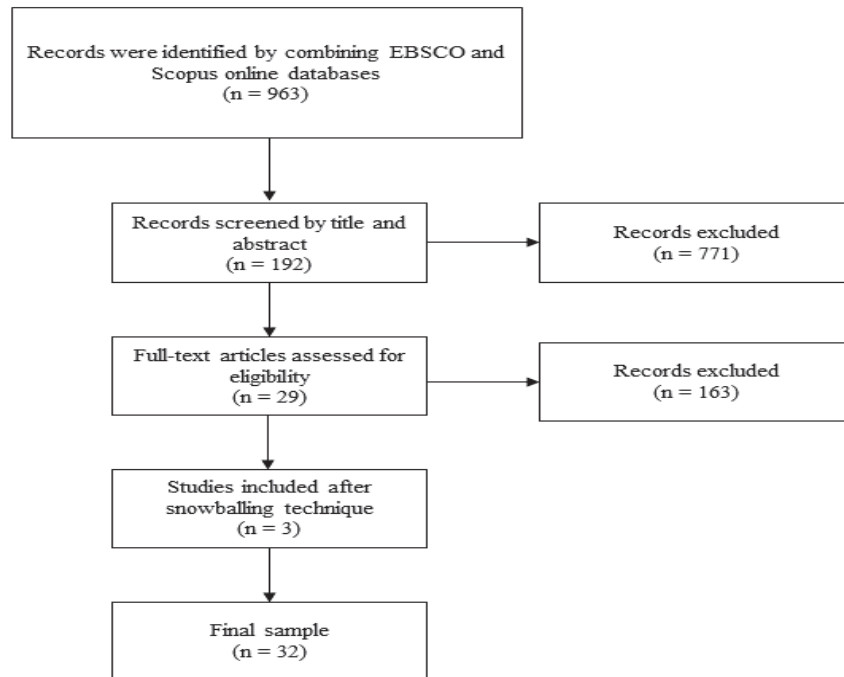
Research into workplace inclusivity can be categorized as mature since empirical contributions flourished and other reviews have been published (e.g., Stevens *et al.*, 2008; Shore *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, subsequent studies have tended to “draw from the literature to argue the need for a new study and to develop the logic underlying the hypotheses they will test” (Edmondson and Mcmanus, 2007, p. 1159). According to this life cycle stage, we propose a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to address the aim of this work. The choice to embrace this methodology is in line with Tranfield *et al.* (2003), who have highlighted the two distinctive traits of any SLR: i) it employs a scientific data selection process, and ii) it helps to link future and past research.

1. Specifically, by following the best practices adopted in recent contributions that used a similar process (e.g., Cristofaro *et al.*, 2022), a selection of scientific articles has been accomplished, as illustrated in Figure 1. In particular:

2. In this study, we have retrieved articles by combining the results produced on Business Source Premier (EBSCO) and Scopus databases;
2. The search for articles has not been limited by any temporal exclusion criteria (last update December 2022). Nevertheless, we considered only peer-reviewed journal articles published in English;
3. Selected papers had to contain one or more of the keywords used in the search to guarantee the paper’s substantive relevance of contributions to the theme (e.g., Cristofaro, 2022). As a result, the following three keywords were selected ‘inclusiv*,’ ‘involv*,’ ‘integrat*’;
4. Then, a second string has been implemented to align with the business side of the research (Cristofaro, 2019): ‘organization*’ OR ‘compan*’ OR ‘manag*’ OR ‘corporat*’ OR ‘firm*’ OR ‘business*’ OR ‘enterprise*’ OR ‘venture*.’ 963 articles have been retrieved;
5. The resulting abstracts of the 963 articles were scanned to ensure their suitability for the SLR. This step in the selection process helps to ensure that the substantive context of the papers, are in coherence with the research question and aim of the review. The scan produced 192 results.
6. Authors individually scanned the 192 remaining articles to detect if such contributions dealt directly or indirectly with workplace inclusivity, inclusion, involvement, and integration topics; in case of discordance, authors discussed to reach a consensus. Lastly, only 29 results remained, and to ensure additional rigor, a snowballing technique has been

implemented and three contributions were added within the final sample (32 contributions in total).

Figure 1 - Flowchart of papers' collection strategy



3.2 Data analysis

To systematically analyze the 32 selected articles, we adopted a two-step procedure. First, following the s-as-p analysis of Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009), we identified practitioners in terms of what unit of analysis the authors regard as a strategy practitioner and the location of that strategy practitioner about organizational boundaries: i) whether the practitioner is an individual or an aggregate actor (e.g., top management), and ii) whether the practitioner is inside the organization (i.e., line or staff role within the organization's structure and governance arrangements) or outside the organization.

Second, to have an exhaustive understanding of organisational inclusivity as an s-as-p approach, it appeared to be necessary the investigation of such phenomena on three distinct, but intertwined levels of analysis – in line with Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009). Following these latter scholars, we define

praxis as a stream of activity that interconnects the micro actions of individuals and groups with the wider institutions in which those actions are located and to which they contribute; they suggested that this definition helps link the macro and the micro in s-as-p research. Accordingly, we distinguished three levels within the literature: i) *micro*, thus studies that explore and attempt to explain strategy praxis at levels of the individual or group's experience of a specific episode (e.g., a decision); ii) *meso*, thus studies that explore and attempt to explain strategy praxis at the organizational or sub-organizational level (e.g., a change program, or a strategy process), and iii) *macro*, thus studies that explore and attempt to explain strategy praxis at the institutional level, within a specific industry.

As a result of this analysis, we came out with a typology of strategic inclusivity practices by defining three sub-sequential domains for each of the three topical aspects (see Table 1):

- Domains A, B and C are comprised of studies examining the practitioner as an individual organisational actor, although each domain had a different focus level. Domain A focuses on the macro level, Domain B focuses on the meso level, and Domain C concentrate on the micro level;
- Domains D, E and F contained those studies that examined the practitioner as an aggregate organizational actor. Where Domain F focussed on a macro level, Domain E on a meso level, and Domain D on a micro level;
- Lastly, Domains G, H, and I were formed by research with a focus on extra organizational practitioners, who act on a macro, meso, and micro level, respectively.

Notably, Domain F contained the most empirical (N=3; 9%) and theoretical studies (N=10; 31%), whereas Domains G and H did not contain any studies at all. In general, most studies focussed on the macro level of praxis (N=13; 41%). With Domain, the aggregate actor at a macro level emerged as the most popular research domain containing 13 articles. Whereas, at the same praxis level, only two contributions each comprised the domains where the individual and the extra organizational actor were the focus. More detailed information for each domain is provided in the following subsections.

3.3 Descriptive statistics

Among the 32 articles included in the qualitative synthesis, the majority were studies that focused on Inclusive Leadership (N = 12; 38%), followed by Inclusive Practices (N=9; 28%), and Inclusive Culture (N = 8; 25%). Notably, within the dataset, Brown's earliest synthesized paper focused on inclusive leadership and was published in 2002. This shows the relevance

of this stream of research; despite being a relatively novel topic, it has received quite a satisfactory level of attention from scholars worldwide.

Table 1 - A typology of strategic inclusivity practices

		Type of Practitioner		
		<i>Individual actors within the organization</i>	<i>Aggregate actors within the organization</i>	<i>Extra organization</i>
Level of Praxis	<i>Micro</i>	A Empirical = 1 Theoretical = 3	D Empirical = 0 Theoretical = 3	G Empirical = 0 Theoretical = 0
	<i>Meso</i>	B Empirical = 1 Theoretical = 2	E Empirical = 0 Theoretical = 5	H Empirical = 0 Theoretical = 0
	<i>Macro</i>	C Empirical = 1 Theoretical = 1	F Empirical = 3 Theoretical = 10	I Empirical = 1 Theoretical = 1

Furthermore, concerning the three distinct but interrelated main topical aspects of workplace inclusivity, among the papers belonging to the *inclusive culture* cluster, 50% are conceptual, and the other 50% are equally split among quantitative and qualitative papers. Regarding *inclusive leadership*, 75% of the documents are conceptual frameworks, case studies, or empirical qualitative papers, while 16% are SLR, and only 8% used the mixed methods approach. About the *inclusive practices*, 50% are conceptual frameworks; in this case, the other 50% of the articles are equally split among quantitative and qualitative contributions. Remarkably, those scholars who have been focussed on more than one topical aspect have produced conceptual contributions.

4. Inclusivity from a s-as-p point of view

By the means of a SLR, which allowed us to rigorously analyze the 32 articles collected, we adopt a multilevel perspective of how inclusivity enhances firms' performances as well as how inclusivity can be successfully implemented by relying on the concept of strategy-as-practice. In doing so, we shed light on the role that employees and managers have at the micro, meso, and macro level. Particularly, inclusivity is a complex and multi-dimensional concept requiring a multi-level approach (as illustrated in Figure 2). At the micro level, creating a culture of inclusivity requires promoting individual-level factors such as personal values and beliefs (Coscia, 2022). At the meso level, organizations must focus on leadership practices, team

dynamics, and organizational policies to create an inclusive work environment. Finally, at the macro level, policies and norms play a significant role in shaping inclusivity in the workplace. More information about the dynamics of each level are disclosed in the following sub-sections.

4.1 Strategic inclusivity: A micro-level perspective

Research into Micro praxis emphasizes the crucial role of employee identity and belonging in amplifying corporate performance and sustainable competitive advantage. Inclusive practices are identified as a catalyst for efficiently achieving organizational strategic objectives at a micro level (Douglas, 2008; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Mária and Lozano, 2010; van Rooji, 2012; Adams *et al.*, 2020).

Among these, inclusive leadership reinforces employee identity and feelings of belonging, consequently influencing job performance outcomes. As aggregate actors, inclusive leaders utilize instruments like affinity groups and demographic-specific workplace programs to advance s-as-p at a micro level. Such tools legitimize recognition of employee cultural and demographic identities, fostering organizational efficiency and performance by enhancing feelings of belonging, thus moderating job satisfaction (Douglas, 2008; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; van Rooji, 2012; Alang *et al.*, 2022). Every study in this domain identified ‘standpoint plurality’ as key for inclusion, alongside values and skills. Douglas (2008) found that affinity groups give diverse employees a sense of belonging, increasing job satisfaction, retention, and overall performance. van Rooij (2012) similarly noted performance gains when older workers engaged in age-inclusive talent management strategies.

Also, inclusive leadership approaches significantly affect micro-level employee behaviours (Mária and Lozano, 2010), with clear correlations to employee well-being and performance (Adams *et al.*, 2020).

This domain probes the impact of inclusive leadership on implementing inclusive social expectations and policies, shaping the inclusive organizational culture, and fulfilling strategic goals (Vohra *et al.*, 2015; Moore *et al.*, 2017). Particularly, Alang *et al.* (2022) observed that in public organizations where indigenous people are marginalized, inclusive leadership enhances strategic performance by improving employee perceptions of inclusion. Upon recognizing themselves as “esteemed members of the work group”, these employees can enhance their voice, job satisfaction, and individual performance, contributing to overall firm performance.

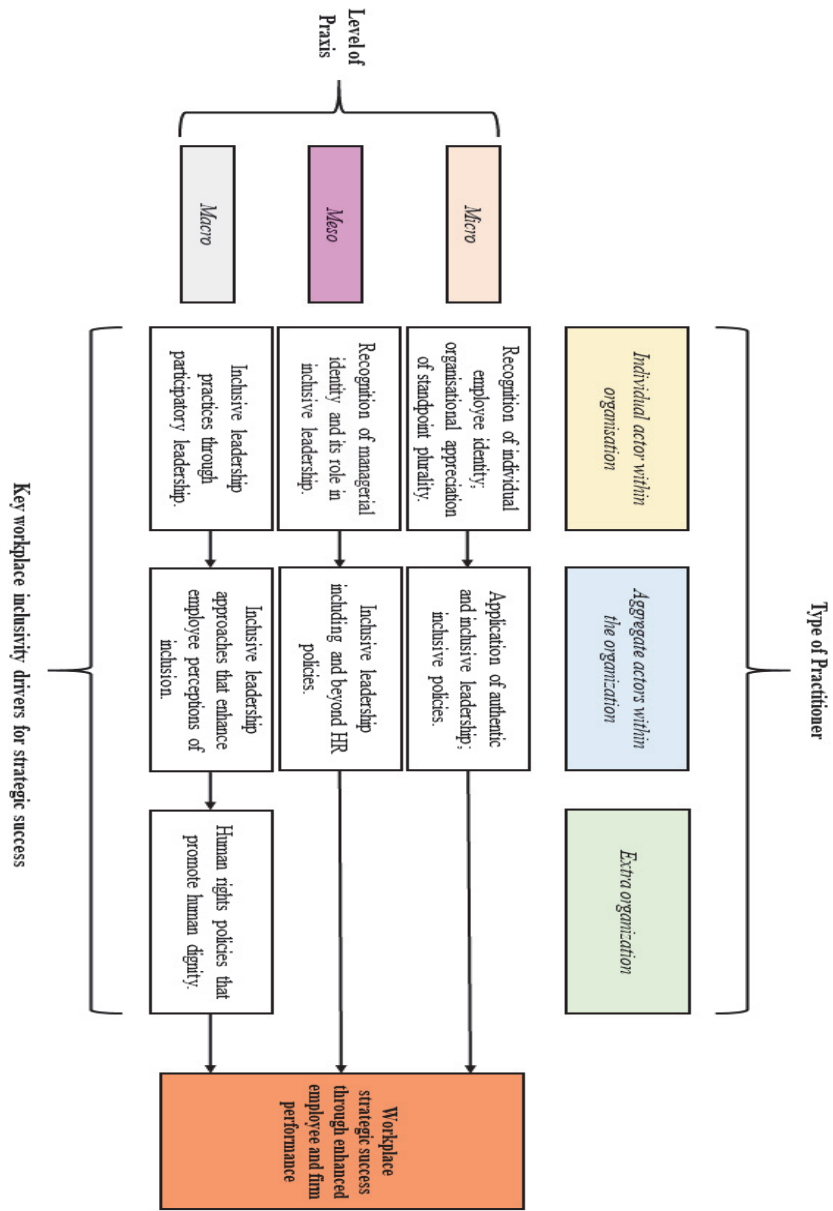


Figure 2 - Inclusivity from a s-as-p point of view

4.2 Strategic inclusivity: A meso-level perspective

At the Meso praxis level, achieving inclusion relies on effective management of employee membership in formalized institutional subgroups, representing their social and organizational identity structures (Metz *et al.*, 2022). This indicates that strategic inclusive practices hinge on the successful implementation of micro-level inclusive strategic practices (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). Inclusive leaders' key role involves operating both as individual and aggregate actors.

Specifically, as individual actors, inclusive leaders' success is tied to their strong sense of belonging towards coworkers and the broader organization (Lirio *et al.*, 2008; Yu and Lee, 2020; Metz *et al.*, 2022). Conversely, as aggregate actors, they can devise and enforce rewarding policies fostering an inclusive culture, thereby improving strategic performance via organizational standpoint plurality, employee satisfaction, retention, and commitment (Allison *et al.*, 2004; Pless and Maak, 2004; Ryan and Kossek, 2008; Boekhorst, 2015; Dobusch, 2021).

As per Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009), this domain shares theoretical lenses with Domain A regarding identity, cognition, and discourse analysis. Metz *et al.* (2022) observed a correlation between an individual's inclusion or exclusion feelings and their identification with multiple organizational subgroups. Lirio *et al.* (2008) and Yu and Lee (2020) affirmed this observation, extending it to encompass the relationship between managerial identity and inclusive leadership. They demonstrated how culture impacts not only individuals but also entire organizational subgroups. Specifically, Yu and Lee (2020) underscored the effect of male managers on female employees' experiences and performance. This domain's studies elucidate the interplay between social and human capital, its impact on individual experiences and opportunity access, and its effect on commitment, performance, and organizational strategic objectives.

Ryan and Kossek (2008) identified inclusive HR practices' role in establishing an inclusive organizational culture and achieving strategic goals. They proposed three considerations for fostering inclusivity, leading to improved work-life balance, employee satisfaction, job retention, and commitment. Other scholars (Allison *et al.*, 2004; Boekhorst, 2015; Dobusch, 2021; Pless and Maak, 2004) emphasized inclusive leadership's significance beyond HR policies in promoting organizational strategy via standpoint plurality.

4.3 Strategic inclusivity: A macro-level perspective

The Macro praxis level, unlike previous levels, affects policies and structures below it while building upon them. Organizational leadership at this level, through their inclusive, participatory leadership, generates strategic benefits for their firms (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Kuknor and Bhattacharya, 2021; Ke *et al.*, 2022; Korkmaz *et al.*, 2022). These practices bolster inclusive cultures that affirm employee identity and belonging, enhancing performance. Furthermore, external actors, such as labor unions, influence firms' strategic performance by supporting policies that elevate human dignity (Kalfagianni and Pattberg, 2013; Hahn, 2022).

According to Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009), studies in this domain examine institutional, market, or industry praxis from individuals' actions and interactions. For instance, Meng and Neill (2021) linked inclusive leadership practices through participatory leadership to industry-level strategic performance. Similarly, Bortree and Waters (2014) found that inclusive practices, like inclusive communication, enhance employee retention. These studies underscore the link between inclusive leadership, employee empowerment, and strategic performance.

This domain explores the relationship between aggregate practitioners and macro-praxis concerning institutions, industries, or sectors (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). Both Brown (2002) and Ke *et al.* (2022) observed inclusivity's differential experience based on individual factors and organization size, while highlighting inclusive leadership's positive impact on performance. Kuknor and Bhattacharya (2021) emphasized inclusive policies' varied impact on individuals. Other papers emphasize authentic and inclusive leadership's role in achieving strategic goals and enhancing firm performance (Korkmaz *et al.*, 2022).

The domain also investigates the influence of external stakeholders, such as institutions, on organizational strategic practice (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). Hahn (2022) discussed human rights policies' role in organizational strategy, stating reduced human dignity due to poverty affects strategic employee and societal development. Similarly, Kalfagianni and Pattberg (2013) observed that industry standards impact organizational inclusion levels and industry-specific strategic goals.

5. Research Agenda

In this study, the authors performed a SLR of papers about workplace inclusivity using the strategy-as-practice perspective. This approach allowed us to contribute to the research area by answering the research question: *May workplace inclusivity be reframed as a strategic practice?* To understand how the strategy-as-practice perspective can provide a typology for inclusivity as a strategic practice; and identify inclusivity as a strategic practice.

This work – by translating under a strategic management perspective what has been for an extended period mainly an organizational behaviour topic – proposes an understanding of the relationship between inclusive practices and strategy-as-practice aimed at enhancing firms' performance and their sustainable competitive advantage.

Specifically, this SLR is aimed to fill four voids in the literature: i) the call for future research, posed by Ryan and Kossek (2008), about understanding the role that inclusion plays in mediating the relationship between job commitment, job satisfaction and firm performance, ii) the need to provide an understanding of inclusive workplace culture as an instrument that supports employee fulfilment and performance, and which is also directly linked to strategic firm outcomes (Yu and Lee, 2022), iii) a better understanding of how inclusive leadership, as a strategic tool, is determined by the leader's experience and identity, and how, in turn, it influences employee experience, identity, and job outcomes (Korkmaz *et al.*, 2022), and iv) understanding how individual cognition about workplace inclusivity scales to collective behavior, and vice versa, in organizations.

In doing so, this study sheds light on the role that employees and managers have at the micro, meso, and macro level. Particularly, the findings of this SLR – including the proposed framework – highlight the importance, for both scholars and practitioners, to adopt a holistic approach while either studying or promoting workplace inclusivity.

Future research in the field of inclusive practices and strategy-as-practice can build upon the findings of this study and explore several avenues. The following 10 areas provide recommendations for future research:

1. Investigate the moderating role of contextual factors: Future research should examine how contextual factors, such as organizational culture, industry characteristics, and national culture, moderate the relationship between inclusive practices and firm performance. Understanding these moderating effects can provide a nuanced understanding of the complex

dynamics at play and help identify contextual factors that enhance or hinder the effectiveness of inclusive practices.

2. Examine the role of inclusive practices in diverse organizational contexts: While this study focuses on the relationship between inclusive practices and firm performance, future research can explore the role of inclusivity in different types of organizations, such as startups, non-profit organizations, and multinational corporations. Examining how inclusive practices manifest and impact performance in diverse organizational contexts can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the subject.
3. Explore the longitudinal effects of inclusive practices: This study primarily focuses on the immediate and short-term effects of inclusive practices on firm performance. Future research can adopt longitudinal research designs to investigate the long-term effects of inclusive practices on various outcomes, such as innovation, employee retention, and organizational resilience. Longitudinal studies can shed light on the sustainability and enduring impact of inclusive practices over time.
4. Investigate the role of technology in promoting workplace inclusivity: With the increasing reliance on technology in the workplace, future research can explore how digital platforms, AI-driven systems, and virtual collaboration tools can be leveraged to promote inclusivity. Understanding how technology can be harnessed to create inclusive work environments can provide insights into innovative practices and interventions that organizations can adopt.
5. Examine the intersectionality of identities in relation to inclusive practices: This study emphasizes the importance of leaders' experiences and identities in shaping inclusive leadership. Future research can delve deeper into the concept of intersectionality, considering how different dimensions of diversity (e.g., race, gender, age, and disability) intersect and influence employees' experiences of inclusivity. This research can offer a more nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in creating inclusive workplaces.
6. Explore the impact of inclusive practices on external stakeholders: future research can investigate the effects of inclusive practices on external stakeholders, such as customers, clients, and suppliers. Examining the link between inclusive practices and external stakeholder perceptions, satisfaction, and loyalty can provide insights into the broader societal impact of organizational inclusivity.
7. Conduct comparative studies across different industries and regions: This study contributes to understanding inclusive practices from a

strategic management perspective. Future research can extend this understanding by conducting comparative studies across different industries and regions. Such studies can identify industry-specific challenges and opportunities for promoting inclusivity and shed light on the role of contextual factors in shaping inclusive practices.

8. Examine the role of leadership development programs in fostering inclusive practices: Future research can investigate the effectiveness of leadership development programs in enhancing leaders' competencies and behaviors related to inclusivity. By examining the impact of such programs on leader effectiveness, employee experiences, and organizational outcomes, researchers can provide evidence-based recommendations for designing and implementing leadership development initiatives focused on inclusivity.
9. Explore the role of inclusive practices in crisis situations: Organizations face unique challenges in maintaining inclusivity in times of crisis, such as natural disasters or pandemics. Future research can examine how inclusive practices contribute to organizational resilience and employee well-being during crises. Understanding the role of inclusivity in crisis management can inform strategies and interventions that support employees and maintain a culture of inclusivity under challenging circumstances.
10. Investigate the role of metrics and measurement in assessing inclusive practices: Future research can explore the development and application of metrics and measurement tools to assess the effectiveness of inclusive practices. By establishing robust measurement.

In conclusion, future research in the field of inclusive practices and strategy-as-practice holds great potential for advancing our understanding of the relationship between inclusion, firm performance, and sustainable competitive advantage. By addressing the outlined research gaps, scholars can contribute to developing evidence-based strategies for promoting workplace inclusivity and creating more equitable organizations. Ultimately, this research can drive positive change at the micro, meso, and macro levels, fostering a more inclusive and prosperous future for organizations and their stakeholders.

6. Implications for Practice, Limitations, and Remarks

For what concerns the practitioners, the present study suggests the following: a) Aligning inclusivity with strategic objectives, b) Incorporating

inclusivity in strategic planning, c) Developing inclusive leadership capabilities, d) Integrate inclusivity into performance management systems, e) Foster cross-functional collaboration for inclusivity, and f) Embed inclusivity in talent management processes.

Aligning inclusivity with strategic objectives: Practitioners should recognize that inclusivity is not just an HR initiative but a strategic practice that aligns with broader organizational objectives. By integrating inclusivity into the organization's strategic goals and vision, leaders can ensure that diversity and inclusion efforts are prioritized and embedded throughout the organization. This alignment enables organizations to leverage the benefits of diversity and inclusivity to drive innovation, improve decision-making, and enhance overall performance.

Incorporating inclusivity in strategic planning: Inclusive practices should be integrated into the organization's strategic planning processes. This involves considering diversity and inclusion as critical factors when formulating strategies, setting goals, and allocating resources. By proactively addressing inclusivity at the strategic planning stage, organizations can develop a comprehensive roadmap for creating an inclusive culture and leveraging diversity as a competitive advantage.

Developing inclusive leadership capabilities: Practitioners should focus on developing the leadership capabilities necessary to drive inclusivity as a strategic practice. This involves providing leadership development programs that equip managers with the skills to lead diverse teams effectively, foster an inclusive climate, and navigate the complexities of diverse perspectives. Developing inclusive leaders at all levels of the organization ensures that inclusivity is practiced throughout and enables the alignment of strategic objectives with inclusive behaviors.

Integrate inclusivity into performance management systems: Inclusivity should be integrated into performance management systems to ensure that progress towards inclusivity goals is measured and rewarded. This includes incorporating diversity and inclusion metrics into performance evaluations, providing feedback on inclusive behaviors, and recognizing and rewarding individuals and teams that actively contribute to creating an inclusive work environment. By linking inclusivity to performance management, organizations send a clear message about the importance of inclusivity and provide incentives for employees to actively engage in inclusive practices.

Foster cross-functional collaboration for inclusivity: Inclusivity as a strategic practice requires collaboration across different functions and departments within the organization. Practitioners should encourage and facilitate cross-functional collaboration to leverage diverse perspectives,

knowledge, and expertise. This can be achieved through initiatives such as diversity councils, task forces, and employee resource groups that bring together employees from different backgrounds and levels of the organization to collaborate on inclusive practices and initiatives.

Embed inclusivity in talent management processes: To effectively implement inclusivity as a strategic practice, practitioners should integrate inclusive principles into talent management processes. This includes inclusive recruitment and selection practices, diverse succession planning, and providing equal opportunities for career development and advancement.

In conclusion, embracing inclusivity as a strategic practice holds numerous benefits for organizations. By aligning inclusivity with strategic objectives, organizations can leverage diversity to drive innovation and enhance overall performance. Integrating inclusivity into strategic planning ensures that it becomes a priority and informs resource allocation. Developing inclusive leadership capabilities empowers managers to foster an inclusive climate and effectively lead diverse teams. Incorporating inclusivity into performance management systems promotes accountability and recognition for inclusive behaviors. Finally, fostering cross-functional collaboration and embedding inclusivity in talent management processes create a foundation for sustained organizational success and a culture of equity and inclusion.

This study is not exempted from limitations, which, however, can represent a starting point for the following studies. Notably, we point out the following: i) the keywords used for the data collection process, despite being strictly controlled may have affected the final sample selection in ways that different keywords may not have, and ii) we used Business Source Premier (EBSCO) and Scopus as databases. This data analysis limitation is based on assessment limitations stemming from the researcher's knowledge; nonetheless, the methodological steps outlined in making the selection process may have helped to reduce the effects of this limitation to only a negligible one (Cristofaro, 2019; Cristofaro, 2022). Furthermore, we also invite future scholars to look also in different sources as well as to study the domains that have received little or no attention (e.g., domains G and H in Table 1).

By filling the voids in the literature, we can expand our theoretical frameworks and deepen our understanding of inclusive leadership, workplace culture, and the collective impact of inclusivity on organizational outcomes. Our research holds the potential to shape not only academic discourse but also practical strategies for practitioners and

policymakers alike. Together, let us forge new paths, challenge existing paradigms, and pave the way for a future where inclusivity is not just an aspiration but a strategic imperative.

References

- Abatecola G., Breslin D., Kask J. (2020). Do organizations really co-evolve? Problematizing co-evolutionary change in management and organization studies. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 155, 119964. DOI: 10.1016/j.techfore.2020.119964
- Abatecola G., Cristofaro M. (2020). Hambrick and Mason's "Upper Echelons Theory": evolution and open avenues. *Journal of Management History*, 26(1): 116-136. DOI: 10.1108/JMH-02-2018-0016
- Adams G.B., Meyers M.C., Sekaja L. (2020). Positive leadership: Relationships with employee inclusion, discrimination, and well-being, *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 69(4): 1145-1173. DOI: 10.1111/apps.12230.
- Alang T., Stanton P., Rose M. (2022). Enhancing employee voice and inclusion through inclusive leadership in public sector organizations, *Public Personnel Management*, 51(3): 309-329. DOI: 10.1177/00910260221085583
- Allison M., Hibbler D. (2004). Organizational barriers to inclusion: Perspectives from the recreation professional, *Leisure Sciences*, 26(3): 261-280. DOI: 10.1080/01490400490461396
- Andrews R., Ashworth R. (2014). Representation and inclusion in public organizations: Evidence from the U.K. civil service, *Public Administration Review*, 75(2): 279-288. DOI: 10.1111/puar.12308
- Barile S., La Sala A., Bianco R. (2022). Management between crises and emergencies. Toward an "absential" approach, *Corporate Governance and Research & Development Studies*, 2: 157-181. DOI: 10.3280/cgrds2-2022oa15105
- Boekhorst A.J. (2015). The role of authentic leadership in fostering workplace inclusion: A social information processing perspective, *Human Resource Management*, 54(2): 241-264. DOI: 10.1002/hrm.21669
- Bortree S., Waters D. (2014). Race and inclusion in volunteerism: Using Communication Theory to improve volunteer retention, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 26(3): 215-234. DOI: 10.1080/1062726X.2013.864245
- Brendel W., Arman A., Farzam L. (2022). Beyond Talk: Developing Consciousness for Genuine Inclusion, *Organisation Development Review*, 54(2): 48-58.
- Brown A.W. (2002). Inclusive governance practices in nonprofit organizations and implications for practice, *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 12(4): 396-385. DOI: 10.1002/nml.12404
- Chia R. (2004). Strategy-as-practice: Reflections on the research agenda, *European Management Review*, 1(1): 29-34. DOI: 10.1057/palgrave.emr.1500012

- Coscia M. (2022). Board gender diversity and family firms' corporate environmental responsibility: Does "critical mass" matter? *Corporate Governance and Research & Development Studies*, 2: 137-156. DOI: 10.3280/cgrds2-2022oa15066
- Cristofaro M. (2019). The role of affect in management decisions: A systematic review, *European Management Journal*, 37(1): 6-17. DOI: 10.1016/j.emj.2018.12.002
- Cristofaro, M. (2022). Organizational sensemaking: A systematic review and a co-evolutionary model, *European Management Journal*, 40(3): 393-405. DOI: 10.1016/j.emj.2021.07.003
- Cristofaro M., Lovallo D. (2022). From framework to theory: an evolutionary view of dynamic capabilities and their microfoundations. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 28(3): 429-450. DOI 10.1017/jmo.2022.46
- Cristofaro M., Giardino P.L., Malizia A.P., Mastrogiorgio A. (2022). Affect and cognition in managerial decision making: A systematic literature review of neuroscience evidence, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.762993
- Cucari N., Esposito De Falco S., Orlando B. (2018). Diversity of board of directors and environmental social governance: Evidence from Italian listed companies, *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 25(3): 250-266. DOI: 10.1002/csr.1452
- Cummings S., Daellenbach U. (2009). A guide to the future of strategy? The history of Long-Range Planning, *Long Range Planning*, 42(2): 234-263. DOI: 10.1016/j.lrp.2008.12.005
- Dobusch L. (2021). The inclusivity of inclusion approaches: A relational perspective on inclusion and exclusion in organizations, *Gender, Work & Organization*, 28(1): 379-396. DOI: 10.1111/gwao.12574
- Douglas H.P. (2008). Affinity groups: Catalyst for inclusive organizations, *Employment Relations Today*, 34(4): 11-18. DOI: 10.1002/ert.20171
- Edmondson C.A., Macmanus E.S. (2007). Methodological fit in management field research, *Academy of Management Review*, 32(4): 1155-1179. DOI: 10.5465/amr.2007.26586086
- Glowka G., Zehrer A., Leifeld L. (2022). Values of centenarian family firms as a source of longevity, *Corporate Governance and Research & Development Studies*, 1: 33-53. DOI: 10.3280/cgrds1-2022oa13752
- Hahn R. (2012). Inclusive business, human rights and the dignity of the poor: A glance beyond economic impacts of adapted business models, *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 21(1): 47-63. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-8608.2011.01640.x
- Hristov I., Chirico A., Camilli R. (2022). The role of Key Performance Indicators as a performance management tool in implementing corporate strategies: A critical review of the literature, *Financial Reporting*, 1: 117-153. DOI 10.3280/FR2022-001004
- Jarzabkowski P. (2005). *Strategy as Practice*, Sage Publications Ltd.

- Jarzabkowski P., Spee A. (2009). Strategy-as-practice: A review and future directions for the field, *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 11(1): 69-95. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2370.2008.00250.x
- Johnson G., Langley A., Melin L., Whittington R. (2007). *Strategy as practice: research directions and resources*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kalfagianni A., Pattberg P. (2013). Participation and inclusiveness in private rule-setting organizations: does it matter for effectiveness? *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 26(3): 231-250. DOI: 10.1080/13511610.2013.771888
- Ke J., Zhang J., Zheng L. (2022). Inclusive leadership, workplace spirituality, and job performance in the public sector: A multi-level double-moderated mediation model of leader-member exchange and perceived dissimilarity, *Public Performance & Management Review*, 45(3): 672-705. DOI: 10.1080/15309576.2022.2069138
- Korkmaz V.A., van Engen L.M., Knappert L., Schalk R. (2022). About and beyond leading uniqueness and belongingness: A systematic review of inclusive leadership research, *Human Resource Management Review*, 100894. DOI: 10.1016/j.hrmr.2022.100894
- Kuknor S., Bhattacharya S. (2021). Organizational inclusion and leadership in times of global crisis, *Australian Accounting Business & Finance Journal*, 15(1): 95-112. DOI: 10.14453/aabfj.v15i1.7
- Lirio P., Lee D.M., Williams L.M., Haugen K.L., Kossek E.E. (2008). The inclusion challenge with reduced-load professionals: The role of the manager, *Human Resource Management*, 47(3): 443-461. DOI: 10.1002/hrm.20226
- Mària F.J., Lozano M.J. (2010). Responsible leaders for inclusive globalization: Cases in Nicaragua and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 93: 93-111. DOI: 10.1007/s10551-010-0628-5
- Meng J., Neill S.M. (2021). Inclusive leadership and women in public relations: Defining the meaning, functions, and relationships, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 33(3): 150-167. DOI: 10.1080/1062726X.2021.2010556
- Metz I., Stamper C.L., Ng E. (2022). Feeling included and excluded in organizations: The role of human and social capital, *Journal of Business Research*, 142: 122-137. DOI: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.12.045
- Moore K., McDonald P., Bartlett J. (2017). The social legitimacy of disability inclusive human resource practices: the case of a large retail organization, *Human Resource Management Journal*, 27(4): 514-529. DOI: 10.1111/1748-8583.12129
- Oshiotse A., O'Leary R. (2007). Coming creates an inclusive culture to drive technology innovation and performance, *Global Business and Organizational Excellence*, 26(3): 7-21. DOI: 10.1002/joe.20140
- Paniccia P. M. A., Leoni L. (2019). Co-evolution in tourism: The case of Albergo Diffuso. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 22(10): 1216-1243. DOI:10.1080/13683500.2017.1367763

- Pless N.M., Maak T. (2004). Building an inclusive diversity culture: Principles, processes and practice, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 54: 129-147. DOI: 10.1007/s10551-004-9465-8
- Powell T.C., Lovallo D., Fox C.R. (2011). Behavioral strategy, *Strategic Management Journal*, 32(13): 1369-1386. DOI: 10.1002/smj.968
- Ryan A.M., Kossek E.E. (2008). Work-life policy implementation: Breaking down or creating barriers to inclusiveness? *Human Resource Management*, 47(2): 295-310. DOI: 10.1002/hrm.20213
- Santoro G., Messeni-Petruzzelli A., Del Giudice M., (2020). Searching for resilience: The impact of employee-level and entrepreneur-level resilience on firm performance in small family firms, *Small Business Economics*, 57: 455-471. DOI: 10.1007/s11187-020-00319-x
- Shore L., Cleveland J., Sanchez D. (2018). Inclusive workplaces: A review and model, *Human Resource Management Review*, 28(2): 176-189. DOI: 10.1016/j.hrmr.2017.07.003
- Stevens F.G., Plaut V.C., Sanchez-Burks J. (2008). Unlocking the benefits of diversity: All-inclusive multiculturalism and positive organizational change. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 44(1): 116-133. DOI: 10.1177/0021886308314460
- Tranfield D., Denyer D., Smart, P. (2003). Towards a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review. *British Journal of Management*, 14(3): 207-222. DOI: 10.1111/1467-8551.00375
- Vaara E., Whittington R., (2012). Strategy-as-practice: Taking social practices seriously, *Academy of Management Annals*, 6(1): 285-336. DOI: 10.5465/19416520.2012.672039
- van Rooij S.W. (2012). Training older workers: Lessons learned, unlearned, and relearned from the field of instructional design, *Human Resource Management*, 51(2): 281-298. DOI: 10.1002/hrm.21466
- Vohra N., Chari V., Mathur P., Sudarshan P., Verma N., Mathur N., Gandhi H.K. (2015). Inclusive workplaces: Lessons from theory and practice, *Vikalpa*, 40(3): 324-362. DOI: 10.1177/0256090915601515
- Whittington R. (2006). Completing the practice turn in strategy research. *Organization Studies*, 27(5): 613-634. DOI: 10.1177/0170840606064101
- Yu H.H., Lee D. (2020). Gender and public organization: A quasi-experimental examination of inclusion on experiencing and reporting wrongful behavior in the workplace, *Public Personnel Management*, 49(1): 3-28. DOI: 10.1177/0091026019836196

