The Impact of Inclusive Leadership on Promoting Diversity and Fostering Organisational Success in Nigeria's Tech Sector

Adugbole Kehinde Felix and Maureen Njideka Kehinde

Department of Business and Law, Bournemouth University Business School, United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

This research examines the concept of inclusive leadership in advancing diversity in the Nigerian tech industry in relation to the following three objectives: determining the current status of workplace diversity, exploring barriers to inclusive leadership, and analysing the influence of inclusive leadership on employee engagement. A qualitative design was employed in which semi-structured interviews were held with 15 professionals recruited purposely in a range of positions in the Nigerian tech industry, such as tech leads, software developers, and financial analysts. The research demonstrates an increasing meritocratic culture in technology firms, where skills and contributions are valued above demographic factors, but gender and ethnic disparities and infrastructural issues are also major concerns. The results show that inclusive leadership has a positive impact on employee engagement, leading to increased collaboration, mutual respect, and innovation. The recommended practices include revising diversity policies and adopting proactive recruitment approaches, providing leadership training, promoting flexible working arrangements, and implementing mentorship initiatives. The research contributes to understanding diversity and inclusion in Nigeria's tech sector and suggests areas for further research, such as the long-term impact of inclusive leadership and cross-sector comparative studies.

Keywords: Diversity, Employee engagement, Inclusive leadership, Mentorship initiatives, Meritocratic culture

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary dynamic global world, organisations are rapidly appreciating the central role that diversity plays in creating a successful workplace. With the progression and development of businesses, there is the issue of maintaining a diverse workforce, comprising different ethnicities, cultures, and identities. Inclusive leadership is one of the major concepts that is currently being advanced in the context of effective management of diversity. Compared to the old leadership styles, inclusive leadership is more than mere tolerance towards diversity, focusing on active involvement, respect, and empowerment of every employee regardless of their differences (Olele and Achugo, 2023). This strategy leads to a feeling of belonging, as well as performance improvement in the organisation, where research has shown an increase in different measures, including a 15% increase in organisational performance (Smithson and Brown, 2022) and 25% improvement in team problem-solving effectiveness (Chen, 2023). In addition to that, inclusive leadership was associated with higher employee welfare, lower turnover, and a more favourable brand image (Williams and Smith, 2022). These benefits highlight the fact that inclusive leadership is increasingly becoming significant in modern organisations.

Inclusive leadership is of the utmost essence in a country like Nigeria, which is characterised by high cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. Studies have indicated that workplace diversity in Nigeria leads to creativity and innovation, and the adoption of diversity in companies has increased innovative solutions by 20% (Okeke and Adewale, 2021). In addition, the promotion of inclusive organisational cultures in Nigerian organisations has been associated with better talent retention and a 15% drop in the rate of employee turnover (Nwankwo and Ahmed, 2022). While these are on the advantages side, the diverse workforce in Nigeria has a number of issues and especially in enhancing inclusivity in the top leadership. Although studies in the Western setting demonstrate the advantages of inclusive leadership, scarce information has been obtained regarding its specific

effects on the situation in Nigeria, where specific sociocultural aspects influence the workplace (Olele and Achugo, 2023). Such a knowledge gap in the research, along with the dynamics of the Nigerian diverse population, leads to the need to further comprehend how inclusive leadership practices can be realised in the Nigerian context.

This study aims to fill this gap by examining how inclusive leadership may break the barriers and enhance diversity within Nigerian workplaces. Through the intersectionality of identities and practical challenges of the leaders in Nigeria, this study will give quality information on inclusive leadership in fostering workplace diversity as well as national development of the country, which is paramount in organisational performance. Finally, the results of this study can be added to a more context-dependent perspective of inclusive leadership in Nigeria and provide practical recommendations to organisations which desire to create more inclusive and equitable working conditions.

This study investigates the impact of inclusive leadership on promoting diversity in the workplace. Specifically, the study:

i.   Assessed the current state of workplace diversity in Nigeria.

ii.   Identified the barriers to implementing inclusive leadership in the workplace.

iii.   Evaluate the impact of inclusive leadership on employee engagement.

METHODOLOGY

The study employs the qualitative method to investigate the effects of inclusive leadership practices on organisational dynamics and employee engagement. Qualitative methods enable the study to capture subtle experiences and perceptions of individuals towards diversity and inclusivity, thus giving a holistic view of the role of leadership strategies in creating an inclusive workplace. This method enables a close analysis of the lived experiences of the employees in their contextual settings in their respective organisations, including the importance of leadership practices in enhancing diversity.

An interpretivist philosophy directs the study; it is optimal in understanding the complexity of phenomena and their context-relatedness, like leadership practices and their impact on organisational culture. Interpretivism is concerned with the way of social construction of reality, i.e., the understanding of the experiences from the viewpoints of the people involved. The philosophy would be very suitable in the exploration of the sociocultural dynamics in the multi-ethnic workplaces in Nigeria, enabling the researcher to have a deeper understanding of how employees perceive and experience inclusive leadership in a culturally rich workplace.

Fifteen (15) participants in the tech industry of Nigeria were selected through purposive sampling to represent a wide spectrum of views in different occupational fields, gender, and cultural diversity (Table 1). The sample consisted of those who occupied such roles as Tech Lead, Software Developer, and Financial Analyst, among others, and was connected to the different tech companies. The sampling plan was aimed at gathering as diverse perspectives as possible on the role of inclusive leadership practices in workplace diversity, and specifically, how the leadership can overcome barriers to inclusiveness. The variety of subjects participating in the study, including job position and diversity, was a strength of the study, with a wide range of perceptions on leadership and diversity.

Table 1: Participants and interview information

Participants	Job Role	Working Experience	Gender	Tech Sector	Interview Date	Interview Duration (Minutes)
ID 1	Software Engineer	5 years	Female	Fintech	03/03/2024	55minutes
ID 2	Project	3 years	Male	Edtech	03/03/2024	45 minutes 22

	Manager					seconds
ID 3	Tech Lead	8 years	Male	Enterprise Software Solutions	04/03/2024	59 minutes
ID 4	Software Engineer	2 years +	Male	Healthtech	04/03/2024	45 minutes
ID 5	Backend Engineer	1 year +	Male	Edtech	04/03/2024	49 minutes
ID 6	Software Engineer	3 years	Female	AgriTech	05/03/2024	50 minutes
ID 7	Financial Analyst	4 years	Female	Fintech	05/03/2024	57 minutes
ID 8	Backend Engineer	3 years	Female	Gaming and Entertainment Technology	06/03/2024	47 minutes
ID 9	Software Developer	2 years	Male	Enterprise Software Solutions	06/03/2024	46 minutes
ID 10	Project Manager	9 months	Female	Edtech	07/03/2024	45 minutes
ID 11	Quality Assurance Test Lead	7 years +	Male	Software as a Service (SaaS)	07/03/2024	59 minutes 10 seconds
ID 12	Frontend Engineer	6 years	Male	Digital Marketing and Advertising Technology	08/03/2024	58 minutes
ID 13	Project Manager	2 years	Female	Digital Marketing and Advertising Technology	09/03/2024	55 minutes
ID 14	Frontend Engineer	1 year	Male	Edtech	09/03/2024	50 minutes
ID 15	Revenue specialist	6 years	Male	Fintech	09/03/2024	46 minutes

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data and were conducted via remote platforms (Zoom and Google Meet). The interviews were conducted in 45-60 minutes, with an opportunity to conduct a deeper discussion of the experience of participants regarding inclusive leadership and diversity. The open-ended questions to understand the perceptions, challenges, and observations in the same case regarding inclusive leadership were included in a semi-structured interview guide designed on the basis of the research objectives and literature. The audio-recorded and transcribed transcripts were used to facilitate thematic analysis, which was applied to recognise recurrent themes and patterns with regard to leadership behaviours, the constraints of inclusivity, and the ability of leadership to influence employee engagement and diversity (Table 2).

Table 2: Emerged themes and data codes

Research Question	Theme	Data Code	Illustrative Extract
	Meritocracy and competence	Skill valuation, beyond social markers	*"The focus here is really on what you can deliver rather than who you know or where you're from."*

How can the current state of workplace diversity in Nigeria be characterised?	Gender and ethnic diversity	Gender imbalance, tribal representation	*"There's a noticeable lack of women in senior roles, despite high competence among female colleagues."*
	Meritocracy and competence	Skill valuation, beyond social markers	*"The focus here is really on what you can deliver rather than who you know or where you're from."*
What challenges and barriers exist in the implementation of inclusive leadership in the workplace?	Challenges to inclusivity	Stereotypes, societal norms	*"We still face challenges where societal norms affect who gets what role, especially impacting women in tech."*
	barriers to inclusive leadership	Infrastructure issues, cultural biases	*"Poor internet and power supply hinder our ability to work remotely and inclusively."*
	Imposter syndrome and internal barriers	Self-doubt, lack of confidence	*"Diverse employees often feel like they don't belong, especially when stepping into leadership roles for the first time."*
	Inclusive practices and leadership	Inclusive policies, leadership styles	*"Our leaders are now trained to recognise and cultivate talent from all backgrounds, promoting a truly diverse environment."*
	Impact of diversity on organisational culture	Culture of growth, learning opportunities	*"Our company culture has evolved to not only include diverse individuals but also to learn from them, enhancing growth."*
	Infrastructure and socioeconomic challenges	Reliability of services, economic barriers	*"The lack of reliable services like electricity and internet is a major barrier to implementing inclusive work policies."*
	Strategies for improvement	Policy interventions, organisational changes	*"We need to develop policies that address both the visible and invisible barriers to inclusivity in our sector."*

The ethical aspects were also the primary focus during the research process, as informed consent was obtained from every participant, and the privacy and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) were followed to safeguard the rights and well-being of the participants.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The information obtained through the interviews offers a complex qualitative study that relates to the forces of diversity and inclusion in the Nigerian technology industry. The information is revealed through the experiences and insights that the representatives of different levels and positions in the industry have to share, thus the insights into the subtle perception, issues, and methods of achieving greater diversity and promoting inclusive leadership in the technology workspace.

The first and second themes are connected to the Research Question One, which describes the present situation in the field of diversity in the workplace in Nigeria. The data demonstrate an industry in tech which is becoming meritocratic, where individual talent and input are prized rather than ethnicity, religion, or origin. This is quite an exception to the conventional industries where nepotism might be rife. For instance, the

majority of the interviewees characterise the technology industry in Nigeria as one that is very accommodating and inclusive, with a recent trend of attaching competence to social identities. This implies an active and changing corporate culture that promotes learning and development. However, the narrative also highlights ongoing challenges. For example, one interviewee remarks that there exists a high level of gender inequality in the tech sector, which is congruent with the general patterns of women's underrepresentation in STEM. In addition, tribal representation within the tech workforce is uneven, so there are underlying aspects of multi-faceted diversity beyond the simple gender divide, indicating where the tech industry can improve on inclusiveness.

The third through the seventh themes serve to address the research question two because they address barriers that are experienced in the implementation of inclusive leadership in the workplace. The observation of the shift in the inclusiveness of the tech industry may be explicit, but the data suggest the existence of a number of challenges in the way of complete adoption of inclusive leadership practices. Similarly, another interviewee mentions the company culture and regional recruitment bias as the aspects that should be improved. On the same note, other interviewees discuss the stereotypes toward some groups of people, such as women, not able to take an active part in the technology field. The interviewee mentions infrastructure issues, including access to stable electricity and the Internet, as some of the key barriers to successful remote working, which affects the tech workspace's inclusivity. This highlights the greater socioeconomic contexts affecting diversity and inclusion at work. Besides, the internal impediments, which were discussed by another interviewee, as the phenomenon of imposter syndrome, exemplify the hindrances which can be experienced by employees with various backgrounds when they become leaders. This indicates that there is a need to create enabling environments that will encourage every employee to have confidence and believe in themselves. This is attentively analysed in the following paragraphs:

Meritocracy and Competence

The study emphasises that a meritocratic approach in the workplace, where recognition and advancement are based on individual skills, performance, and contributions, promotes fairness and efficiency. This system values talent and effort over seniority or background, aligning roles with the most capable individuals, thereby enhancing organisational effectiveness. In industries like tech, where innovation and skill are crucial, the importance of meritocracy cannot be overstated. Insights from participants highlight the role of mutual respect in creating an inclusive and collaborative workplace, where competence fosters respect across all levels. One participant explained, "*There's mutual respect amongst all staff... I also think the place of competence is a key factor, because if you really know what you're up to, if you really know your game, so I think that it elicits this, it commands this respect between both parties, regardless of whether you are a junior or a senior*" (ID 2).

Another participant reinforced the link between competence and respect, adding that shared values within the organisation also play a key role in fostering respect. "*So, if you actually know your own, there is this respect, there is this feeling, this respect that it commands. So, I think competence, respect, and I also think shared values*" (ID 5). This highlights how competence, respect, and shared values together contribute to a strong organisational culture. Meritocracy, especially in the tech industry, eliminates biases related to personal connections or background. One participant succinctly noted*, "The focus here is really on what you can deliver rather than who you know or where you're from" (ID 1),* ensuring a fair and objective environment that boosts employee morale and supports a more inclusive workplace.

When organisations prioritise meritocracy and competence, they create a culture where talent and effort are the benchmarks for success. This fosters a dynamic where employees feel valued and motivated to continuously improve. Moreover, this approach breaks down silos within the organisation, promoting better communication and collaboration across departments. Employees feel part of a collective whole, working toward shared goals, leading to increased job satisfaction and organisational loyalty. Furthermore, evaluating and respecting employees based on skills and achievements promotes diversity and inclusivity, resulting in a richer problem-solving process and reflecting a diverse global marketplace. In such an environment, employees contribute to innovation and better meet the needs of a varied customer base.

In a meritocratic setting, leadership plays a crucial role by setting an example of fairness and competence. Leaders must ensure that systems and policies are transparent and uphold principles of meritocracy and equality. Continuous training programs will also help employees stay competitive in an ever-changing technological landscape. The implementation of strategies to maintain this focus on meritocracy requires regular assessments and feedback mechanisms to gauge employee satisfaction and perceptions of fairness. Embracing a meritocratic culture fosters a respectful, collaborative, and high-performing environment, ultimately driving organisational success and sustainability. The insights from participants clearly demonstrate the positive impact of prioritising skills, capabilities, and shared values across all organisational levels.

Gender and Ethnic Diversity

The concept of diversity in the workplace, particularly in terms of gender and ethnic diversity, is becoming increasingly important in today's global business environment. Diversity involves the active representation and integration of different genders and ethnicities within an organisation. It is no longer just a metric to be achieved but a strategic component that fosters a multicultural and inclusive environment. In such an environment, organisations value and leverage the unique perspectives and skills of all employees, leading to a richer, more creative, and efficient organisational culture. This inclusive approach not only strengthens the internal workplace but also enhances a company's ability to innovate and engage with a diverse global market.

Diversity plays a particularly significant role in sectors like technology, where innovation is the cornerstone of success. By incorporating diverse perspectives, companies can drive creativity, improve decision-making, and develop a better understanding of their diverse customer bases. This, in turn, boosts business performance. An inclusive workplace, where diversity is actively embraced, can result in higher job satisfaction, reduced employee turnover, and an improved company reputation. Additionally, it positions companies to capitalise on global markets more effectively. As one participant in the study noted, *"In terms of workplace diversity, I do not see it as a problem in the tech sector because everyone collaborates. The senior needs the junior, and the junior also needs the senior. So, there is this bond" (ID 6)*. This reflects how diversity facilitates genuine collaboration and mutual growth in a work environment.

Participants in the study further highlighted how diversity fosters a cohesive workforce that works towards common goals. One participant shared, *"I've witnessed different people coming from different walks of life... so, I think we've all come together to form a good blend, a good blend and a singular unit to actually achieve a purpose" (ID 7)*. This statement emphasises the synergy created when an organisation successfully integrates individuals from diverse backgrounds into a unified team. Another participant stated, *"Regardless of the different backgrounds... since we all come together for a singular cause, things like ethnicity are dropped" (ID 9)*, illustrating how shared goals can transcend individual differences. These firsthand accounts demonstrate the essential role of diversity in fostering collaboration and unity in the workplace.

Despite the clear benefits, achieving effective workplace diversity is not without challenges. These challenges include unconscious biases, resistance to change, and communication barriers. To overcome these obstacles, organisations must implement structured policies and initiatives. These could include educating employees about the benefits of diversity, expanding recruitment to include diverse candidates, encouraging mentorship for underrepresented groups, and regularly evaluating diversity metrics to track progress. As evidenced by the participants in this study, when diverse perspectives come together with a shared purpose, both personal and professional growth can flourish. Through deliberate strategies and a commitment to inclusivity, organisations can harness the power of their diverse workforce, creating not only a more equitable workspace but a more successful one.

Challenges to Inclusivity

Challenges to workplace inclusivity often arise from structural and cultural barriers that hinder diverse employees from fully engaging and being recognised. For instance, remote or junior employees may experience delays in accessing support or information, impacting their productivity and sense of inclusion. Remote work can exacerbate communication gaps, leading to fewer collaborative opportunities and increasing feelings of isolation. Additionally, biases related to ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status can significantly

limit equitable growth and development opportunities within an organisation. Such biases not only affect individual career progression but also restrict the organisation's potential for innovation and inclusivity, stifling overall success.

Employees have shared various concerns that highlight these challenges. One participant noted, *"If I have somebody in my team that wants to talk to me, and I'm not presently on Slack, I'm on Google Meets, there is no way the person is going to immediately expect us to go on to what they want to do, so you have to wait" (ID 7)*, pointing to communication delays within remote teams. Another highlighted the infrastructure-related issues, saying, *"The number one barrier that we have is electricity... if you have access to electricity within that 48 hours, just take it with me; you will not be able to do anything" (ID 12)*, underscoring the impact of basic infrastructure on productivity. Yet another shared, *"I don't feel that segregation... I've not experienced it in my budding career so far... but I've observed different people coming from different walks of life" (ID 15)*, revealing awareness of diversity without direct personal experience of segregation. These accounts reveal the multifaceted nature of inclusivity challenges, emphasising the need for comprehensive strategies to address both overt and subtle barriers that diverse employees face.

Barriers to Inclusive Leadership

The study identifies several barriers to inclusive leadership in the workplace, particularly those related to limited face-to-face interaction and communication delays in remote work settings. As one participant shared, *"When you want to talk to your team, you have to get everybody, maybe your Google mates, or on Slack... you have to wait, that is the only thing I say about productivity, to flexibility, to every other thing that you need."* Such delays make it challenging to foster inclusivity, as remote environments often hinder real-time interactions crucial for effective leadership. Additionally, insufficient resources, including access to electricity and reliable internet, create significant challenges for employees, particularly in remote settings. One participant noted, *"The number one barrier that we have is electricity," highlighting how basic infrastructure issues impede employees' ability to contribute fully, further hindering inclusivity."*

In addition to logistical issues, resistance to change within organisational culture also poses a major barrier to inclusive leadership. One participant explained the contrast between sectors, stating, *"Leadership provides the necessary environment... in the tech space, the kind of leadership I've experienced, both in written form or as in non-written form, culture-wise... it varies."* This indicates that entrenched organisational norms and practices can slow the adoption of inclusive leadership practices. These barriers underscore the importance of intentional strategies to foster inclusivity, such as improving communication infrastructure, ensuring equitable resource distribution, and actively addressing cultural resistance to change. By addressing these challenges, organisations can cultivate an inclusive environment where all employees feel valued and empowered.

Imposter Syndrome and Internal Barriers

The study highlights the pervasive occurrence of Imposter Syndrome and internal barriers faced by diverse employees, particularly those new to leadership positions. These psychological challenges can significantly undermine their sense of belonging and self-efficacy within the workplace. Employees from diverse backgrounds often question their own abilities, and this self-doubt is amplified when they step into roles traditionally not held by people from their demographic. One participant's experience illustrates this, noting, *"I didn't get to know that the person in question is actually my senior in the space for about 15 years... the way he carried himself, the composure on the job, everything was so perfect."* This shows how perceptions of competence can shape an individual's self-confidence, especially in unfamiliar or traditionally non-diverse leadership spaces.

The lack of visible role models within leadership positions can intensify feelings of being an impostor, as highlighted by another interviewee: *"Everyone is seen to be one. Everyone is in this unit that is fostered."* This observation underscores the importance of diversity in leadership roles, as it helps diverse employees feel more validated and supported. Additionally, when employees from various backgrounds perceive that their differences are neither understood nor valued, they face further internal barriers. One participant noted, *"different people coming from different walks of life, different spheres of life, ethnic-wise, professional-wise,*

career-wise, religion-wise, everything," illustrating how diversity can lead to feelings of alienation and misunderstanding. To address these challenges, it is essential to implement interventions like mentorship programs, diversity training, and inclusive policy frameworks that promote equity, helping diverse employees thrive and dismantle the internal barriers they face.

Inclusive Practices and Leadership

The study highlights Inclusive Practices and Leadership as vital factors in creating a workplace where talent from all backgrounds is recognised and nurtured. Leaders are equipped with the skills to identify and cultivate diverse talents, embedding inclusivity as a core part of the organisational strategy. As one participant noted, *"Leadership provides the necessary environment for everybody... for people coming in from different walks of life, different diverse backgrounds."* Leadership practices focus on fostering connections across various levels within the organisation, with another interviewee sharing, *"There is this bond that is fostered. There is this oneness, this unity... Everyone is being carried along."* Efforts are made to ensure that all employees feel their contributions are valued equally, regardless of background, as reflected in the statement, *"Everyone is seen as one, and then they work together as one... everyone comes together to achieve a single goal."* These inclusive leadership practices not only promote diversity but also contribute to a cohesive and productive work environment, underlining a commitment to equality and mutual respect across the organisation.

Impact of Diversity on Organisational Culture

The findings highlight the transformative impact of diversity on organisational culture, showing how embracing diversity can significantly enrich the workplace and drive organisational progress. Diverse workforces act as a catalyst for cultural evolution, leveraging the varied backgrounds of employees to foster collaboration and cohesion. As one participant shared, *"Everyone collaborates...the senior needs the junior, and the junior also needs the senior. There is this bond."* This collaboration leads to a wealth of ideas and perspectives, nurturing innovation and continuous learning, as reflected in another participant's observation, *"There is not much diversity between the senior kid and the junior...everyone is being carried along. There is this oneness, this unity."* This inclusive environment enables individuals to thrive, regardless of their background, creating a culture of mutual support.

Additionally, diversity equips organisations with a broader range of problem-solving skills, enhancing their ability to tackle challenges effectively. As one interviewee put it, *"In terms of workplace diversity, I do not see it very much in the tech sector because everyone collaborates."* This collaborative ethos underscores the significant role diversity plays in driving organisational success. The findings suggest that organisations that actively embrace and value diversity are not only more adaptable and innovative but also more successful. By championing inclusive practices, organisations can create environments where individuals feel valued and empowered, leading to a culture of innovation, growth, and continuous improvement.

Infrastructure and Socio-Economic Challenges

The study identifies infrastructure and socio-economic challenges as significant barriers to implementing inclusive work policies, particularly in regions where access to basic services is inconsistent. Employees often face difficulties due to unreliable electricity and internet services, which hinder their ability to work effectively and inclusively. One participant noted, *"The number one barrier that we have is electricity...you need it charged, now I can have a deadline, and my deadline can be within 48 hours, if you have access to electricity within that 48 hours, just take it with me, you will not be able to do anything."* Economic constraints further compound these issues, as highlighted by another respondent, *"Most of the time now when I want to work, I have to go and buy fuel for my generator, so that I can charge my system, charging my system, I think I can work for like four or five hours per day."* These challenges emphasise the need for robust infrastructure and economic stability to support inclusive policies and ensure that all employees can contribute effectively, regardless of their location or socio-economic status.

The findings underscore the profound impact of infrastructure deficiencies on work productivity. The inability to access reliable electricity and internet severely hampers employees' ability to meet deadlines and perform

work duties effectively. One participant's account of the difficulty in accessing electricity highlights the critical role of a consistent power supply in maintaining work efficiency. Similarly, economic constraints such as the need to purchase fuel for generators limit work hours and productivity. Moreover, the lack of immediate access to resources or support impedes employees' ability to resolve issues promptly, which delays response times and reduces overall efficiency. As one interviewee noted, *"When you don't have that first-hand information...you have to wait."* To address these challenges, organisations and policymakers must prioritise investments in infrastructure and efforts to bridge socio-economic disparities, ensuring that all employees, regardless of background, have access to the necessary resources and support to perform their duties effectively.

Strategies for Improvement

The study highlights several strategies for improvement aimed at addressing both visible and invisible barriers to inclusivity in the workplace. One key strategy is the implementation of advanced communication technologies, particularly in remote work settings, to bridge gaps in interaction. As one respondent explained, *"When you want to talk to your team, you have to get everybody, maybe your Google Meets, or on Slack, or you are talking to your team lead."* This reflects the importance of ensuring seamless communication across various platforms to ensure inclusivity, especially in remote work environments where face-to-face interactions are limited.

Another critical strategy emphasised is the development of clear, inclusive policies that directly address both systemic and subtle biases within the workplace. One interviewee highlighted the need for *"involving workplace diversity and implementing inclusive leadership in the tech sector,"* underscoring the role of leadership in driving inclusivity. Additionally, regular training sessions and awareness programs are essential for educating employees about inclusivity and diversity. As one participant recommended, *"There have to be more gatherings, maybe from seasoned professionals, maybe from psychotherapists, from counsellors...more team bonding activities will also help."* These strategies are designed to create a more inclusive work environment by enhancing communication, formalising support structures, and providing ongoing education on diversity and inclusivity issues. By implementing these measures, organisations can cultivate a culture that values and embraces diversity, ultimately leading to increased productivity, creativity, and employee satisfaction.

Achieving The Objectives With The Findings

The findings from the semi-structured interviews conducted within Nigeria's tech sector offer a comprehensive qualitative analysis of the dynamics of diversity and inclusion in the workplace. The insights gathered from professionals at various levels reveal detailed perceptions, challenges, and strategies for enhancing diversity and promoting inclusive leadership. These discussions provide a deeper understanding of how diversity and inclusion are approached within the sector, highlighting both the progress made and the barriers still faced.

The first objective of the study focused on assessing the current state of workplace diversity. The interviews revealed that the tech sector is becoming increasingly meritocratic, where skills and contributions are prioritised over ethnicity, religion, or background. This merit-based approach suggests a workplace culture that fosters learning and growth. However, challenges such as significant gender imbalances and disparities in tribal representation were also identified, pointing to areas where inclusivity needs further strengthening. These findings align with existing literature, which suggests that while the tech industry is progressing towards greater diversity, gender and ethnic diversity still lag (Smith, 2020; Johnson, 2021).

To address the second objective, the study also identified several barriers to implementing inclusive leadership practices. Participants highlighted company culture, regional hiring biases, and stereotypes as major challenges, alongside infrastructure issues such as unreliable electricity and internet connectivity. These barriers hinder the effective implementation of inclusive leadership and diversity policies, echoing the findings of Hernandez and Roberts (2019). Despite these challenges, the third objective of the study clearly illustrated the positive impact of inclusive leadership on employee engagement. Participants noted that inclusive leadership practices lead to enhanced collaboration and mutual respect within diverse teams. This, in turn,

contributes to a more engaged and innovative workforce, aligning with the research by Lee and Choi (2021), which shows that inclusive leadership fosters a trusting, open environment that encourages creativity and satisfaction.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research draws attention to the rising prominence of meritocratic ideas in the tech industry of Nigeria, where competencies and contributions are becoming more important than ethnicity, religion, or background. Although this turn is a positive step towards a more inclusive workplace, there are still serious problems that need to be addressed, especially those involving gender imbalances, tribal representation, and structural factors, including regional hiring bias and inadequate infrastructure. The study also shows that inclusive leadership is positively related to employee engagement, which creates an atmosphere where different opinions are appreciated and innovations are encouraged. The findings, however, highlight the need to put more effort and strategic focus into ensuring that these challenges are overcome. Overcoming these barriers, organisations will be able to make the workplace more inclusive and fair, which not only increases employee satisfaction and productivity but also leads to long-term organisational success.

Following the results of this research, organisations are advised to focus on the creation or updating of diversity and inclusion policies to combat the issue of underrepresentation of women and ethnic minorities in the tech industry in Nigeria. The policies should have targets, timeframes and accountability points so as to be effective in the implementation. Proactive recruitment methods are also necessary, which include the creation of partnerships with organisations that cater to the underrepresented groups, having diverse hiring committees and designing job ads that attract very diverse audiences. Such measures will contribute to the creation of a more diverse workforce and inclusivity throughout the hiring process.

Moreover, organisations ought to have mandatory leadership training programmes that aim at improving inclusive leadership skills. Such programmes will sensitise leaders on unconscious biases, cultural competence, and effective communication, so that leaders are highly prepared to make the work environment diverse and inclusive. Work-life balance should be provided through remote working and flexible schedules to support different styles and needs of various people, which will increase inclusiveness even further. Another way in which organisations can support the career move of underrepresented groups is the development of mentorship and professional development programmes. The continuous review of diversity and inclusion policies, as well as collaborations within the tech sector, will guarantee further enhancement and create a systemic change in the field, eventually leading to the creation of a more diverse and creative workforce.

Implications of Research Findings and Suggestions for Further Research

The empirical findings regarding inclusive leadership in the tech industry of Nigeria underscore the need to be meritocratic and to combat the existing imbalance of gender and ethnicity by implementing specific diversity and inclusion practices. These results indicate that extensive leadership training, infrastructure investment, and designing policies to address cultural and structural barriers to inclusiveness are necessary. The important thing that organisations and policymakers need to focus on developing is to have a level playing field through revising recruitment procedures, improving facilitation of flexible work arrangements, and instilling an organisational culture that appreciates diversity. The study also recommends that future studies are needed on the long-term impacts of inclusive leadership, comparative research across industries or jurisdictions, and the quantifiable influence of inclusive leadership on business performance, employee satisfaction, and retention. Also, the subsequent research may be aimed at studying particular barriers on institutional and policy levels, as well as developing the knowledge of how inclusive leadership practices can be successfully implemented.

Limitations of the Study

This research had a couple of limitations, even though it provided useful information on the role of inclusive leadership in the sphere of diversity in the Nigerian tech sector. It was difficult to recruit a diverse sample, which may have restricted the variety of viewpoints obtained. The coordination of interviews between the UK and Nigeria was logistically challenging, with time differences and constant reminders, which raised the

administration burden. The consistency of interviews was affected by network issues and platform switching, and may have changed the dynamics of interaction (Zoom to Google Meets). Also, the fact that the study was done remotely in the UK, although it was advantageous in terms of learning the Nigerian culture, deprived the researcher of the chance to interact with the individuals on the ground, which would have given a better insight into the culture and offered a more vibrant communication experience.

REFERENCES

1. Chen, L. (2023). Leveraging diversity through inclusive leadership: Insights from team dynamics. Journal of Applied Psychology, 108(3), 410-428.
2. Johnson, M. (2021). Ethnic Diversity in the Workplace. Routledge
3. Nwankwo, C., & Ahmed, M. (2022). Inclusion and Talent Retention in Nigerian Companies: A Comparative Study. International Journal of Human Resource Management, 21(4), 112-129.
4. Okeke, C., & Adewale, B. (2021). Embracing diversity: A pathway to innovation in Nigerian organisations. International Journal of Business and Management, 16(1), 113-127.
5. Olele, I., & Achugo, O. (2023). Addressing the scarcity of research on inclusive leadership in Nigeria. Nigerian Journal of Management Sciences, 8(1), 45-58.
6. Smith, J. (2020). Diversity and Inclusion in the Tech Industry: Progress and Challenges. Springer
7. Smithson, A., & Brown, K. (2022). Inclusive leadership and organisational performance: The mediating role of organisational citizenship behaviour. Personnel Review, 51(2), 489-506. https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-01-2020-0015
8. Williams, K., & Smith, J. (2022). The impact of inclusive leadership on team performance and innovation. Journal of Organisational Behaviour, 44(2), 203-220.