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Leaders' Reflection on Inclusive Leadership

*A qualitative study on perspectives of leaders
on inclusive leadership behaviours*

Master thesis

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Preface

Never in my life would I have dreamt of doing a master study on a topic that is so important to me. Since reading about the second feminist movement in a history book in class when I was sixteen, I was hooked on feminism and equality and was determined to write my high school 'profielwerkstuk' on the Dolle Mina's. Finding feminist friends the year after, and now seven years later still having rich conversations with them on the topic, they convinced me to pursue a specialisation that might not be the most fruitful for the job market. Despite my doubts, they encouraged me to stay close to my passion and to pursue this wonderful study.

Writing this thesis was both a joy and a headache, as the process was long and the amount of data was large. However, talking to both my academic and company supervisors and the participants of the study about the importance of this topic kept me motivated and excited to work on this research. Gaining insight in how inclusive practices play out in a large organization has been extremely valuable to me as a starter in the job market.

First, I would like to thank my supervisor Yvonne Benschop for guiding me through the process of writing a master thesis and supporting me where necessary. Her support has helped me tremendously. Her way of giving feedback in a way that makes you think about the right approach for yourself, instead of just giving the 'right' answer, made me challenge my academic thinking. Second, I would like to thank Kathleen, Gloria and Femina for facilitating the opportunity to conduct this study and for supporting me throughout the process. Additionally, this thesis would not have been so rich in data if it were not for the participants of the study, who made time to talk and have been vulnerable and personal with me to share their thoughts and opinions. Third, this study would have been a whole lot more stressful and less fun if my fellow student Poonam would not have been with me on the same task. We challenged each other's ideas and shared views and feedback which made the research process more insightful. Last, I would like to thank my friends and family for the support throughout, as they are the ones who had to listen to my worries and had to endure my rants on why all the topics mentioned in my thesis are so important for a better world.

I hope you enjoy reading my master thesis!

Dianne Ammerlaan
Utrecht, August 2022

*"Diversity is being invited to the party;
inclusion is being asked to dance."*

- Verna Myers

Abstract

The concept of inclusion has been gaining attention in recent years and is seen as the follow up approach after obtaining diversity within an organisation. With leaders being of great importance of passing on the organisational message, inclusive leadership has been identified as an important step to create and foster an inclusive environment (Randel et al., 2018). Literature on the perceptions of leaders on the topic of inclusive leadership is scarce. In order for leaders to become inclusive, self-awareness and reflection are seen as crucial for leadership success and is proven to increase leaders' competence. However, self-reflection on inclusive leadership is not previously addressed in literature. The topic has gained attention from both academic and corporate perspective, with organisations aiming to implement inclusive leadership as a next step after obtaining a diverse workforce. This aim of this study is to contribute to the development of the field of D&I, particularly on the topic of reflection and inclusive leadership, by providing insights into how leaders can reflect on their inclusive leadership behaviours. Additionally, the aim is to provide insight into the organisation's current state of inclusive leadership and give recommendations accordingly. The research question answered in this study is "*How do leaders reflect on their inclusive leadership behaviours?*". A social constructivist approach was taken on to perform a qualitative study. Twenty-seven leaders of a large telecommunications organisation in the Netherlands were interviewed and asked how they view organisational practices on inclusion, how they give meaning to inclusion and inclusive leadership behaviours and characteristics and how they reflect on their own behaviour. The findings of this study suggest that leaders vary in their level of pro-diversity beliefs and level of reflection. Some leaders fail to see inclusion as a next step of diversity and do not recognise that equal treatment does not correspond to fair treatment. However, most leaders spoken to are positive about D&I initiatives and are motivated to push the message onwards. There seems to be discrepancy between what leaders say they do and what actions they undertake to actually ensure said practices. Some leaders do show examples of reflection on their behaviours. Recommended is to involve leaders actively in the D&I activities and initiatives in the organisation and to create active talk on inclusion in all levels of the organisation. Leaders should be provided with education to gain knowledge of D&I and inclusive leadership and to be supported in enacting inclusive leadership by providing tools and guidance. Additionally, leaders should be held accountable and inclusive leadership should be set as the new standard.

Keywords: inclusive leadership, inclusive behaviours, leaders, reflection, self-awareness.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Problem context

In today's world, organisations have employees from a diversity of identity groups. Areas for diversity include gender, ethnic and cultural background, age, religion, sexuality and disability. There has been a rise in the popularity of diversity management, meaning that organisations aim to improve employment outcomes of historically disadvantaged groups with the end-goal of increasing organisational performance. However, obtaining a diverse workforce is not a goal on its own and having a diverse workforce does not simply lead to an increase in organisational performance. Employees of diverse backgrounds do not always experience a sense of belonging in team environments. Management of diverse workforces takes particular behaviours to unleash the potential of all members of the organisational group (Randel et al., 2018; Korkmaz et al., 2022). An inclusive environment needs to be facilitated in which different approaches, experiences and perspectives are welcomed and acknowledged (Winters, 2014). "*Diversity the mix. Inclusion is making the mix work*" (Tapia, 2009, p. 12).

The traditional approach of an inclusive organisation has been to recruit and hire diverse employees (Jackson, 1992; Shore et al., 2009). However, an inclusive culture is not measured merely by numerical representation of a demographically diverse workforce. In order to reduce the challenges that are associated with a diverse workforce, such as high levels of conflict and turnover, an inclusive environment has to be facilitated in order to seize the benefits of a diverse workforce and to unleashing the full potential of organisational members (Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2011; Randel et al., 2018).

Whereas agents for creating and maintaining an inclusive organisational culture inclusion are at top management level, leadership level and employee level, leaders are proven to play a crucial role (Avery et al., 2007; Wasserman et al., 2008). Especially senior leadership can be considered one of the most powerful ways in which a culture is created and reflected as the values of the organisation (Church & Rotolo, 2010). Given the importance of the role of leaders and managers to lead change in the organisation, inclusive leadership has been identified as an effective tool for creating and facilitating an inclusive culture. Inclusive leadership can be defined as "a set of behaviours that create a climate of psychological safety, in which group members feel like they belong, like their unique talents are being valued and appreciated, and in which organisational efforts on inclusion are being supported". This form of leadership enables effective functioning of diverse workforces in a way that is not sufficiently addressed in other leadership styles.

When attempting an organisational shift, leaders are essential in driving change and getting all organisational members on board (Workman-Stark, 2017). Leadership development efforts should be avoided to become a one-time intervention (Workman-Stark, 2017). Successful leaders need to possess certain skills and characteristics such as feedback seeking behaviour, pro-diversity beliefs, humility and cognitive complexity in order to improve themselves. To have leaders successfully develop themselves to become inclusive leaders, self-awareness is a critical element that will benefit the process. Reflection by leaders will improve leadership effectiveness, increase follower satisfaction and is beneficial for overall organisational performance (Tekleab et al., 2008; Castelli, 2016). Despite self-awareness and reflection not being sufficient as a tool on its own to move the organisational change, it is a crucial element that cannot be dismissed and is therefore central in this study. Self-awareness and reflection are important elements of inclusive leadership, as leaders need to be able to identify their advancements and shortcomings in order to develop.

Whereas multiple studies have been done regarding inclusive leadership, the area is still ripe for research. Most existing studies focus on the perspective of the employee. However, there is a gap in literature regarding the perspectives of the managers or other change-agents in the organisation regarding inclusive leadership studies (Randel et al., 2018; Roberson & Perry, 2021; Shore et al., 2011; Castilla, 2011; Nishii, 2013). There is little evidence of whether inclusive behaviours are consciously enacted by leaders in organisations (Roberson & Perry, 2021). Little to no literature exists regarding self-awareness and reflection on inclusive leadership behaviours in particular. Thus, there is an area of interest for whether and how leaders reflect on their inclusive behaviours or lack thereof (Winters, 2014). Accordingly, in this study leaders will be asked how they enact inclusive behaviours. By doing so, analysis will be done to assess if leaders are aware of the behaviours they need to enact and if they are aware of whether and how they integrate them in their day-to-day practices.

1.2. Organisation

The study will be adopted at TeleConnect Netherlands¹. The organisation aims to have a diverse workforce with people from various backgrounds. Areas of diversity are defined as gender, sexuality/LGBTQ+, ethnic diversity and disability. TeleConnect Netherlands voiced inclusive leadership as one of their pillars and a Diversity and Inclusion² roadmap will be rolled out amongst all employees and leaders in 2022. This roadmap is aimed at (senior) leaders as

¹ The name of the organisation written in this report is a fictitious name to ensure anonymity.

² Hereafter the abbreviation D&I will be used in referring to Diversity & Inclusion.

important change agents to foster an inclusive environment. TeleConnect Netherlands is currently integrating inclusive leadership competencies into the leadership program. Their aim is for leaders to be able to self-assess themselves on inclusive leadership. Whilst being an intern at the organisation, there will be access to interview leaders in senior positions and lower-level manager positions.

1.3. Research aim and research question

This aim of this research is to contribute to the development of the field of D&I, particularly on the topic of reflection and inclusive leadership, by providing insights into how leaders reflect on their inclusive leadership behaviours. Second, the organisation of this study wants to create an inclusive climate, thus insights of the current state of inclusive leadership will be provided, alongside practical implications with the aim of helping them improve the company's leadership. The focus of this study is senior leadership and top management layers of the organisation. The topic will be explored by conducting a literature study. Through open-ended interviews with leaders, candid responses of leaders on how they define inclusion and how they say to enact inclusive behaviours towards their team members will provide insights into their ability to reflect and their level of self-awareness. Practical implications will be offered for organisations that aim to make the transition to inclusive leadership by implementing inclusive leadership behaviours, in order to foster an inclusive environment for a diverse workforce.

The following research question will be central in this study:

“How do leaders reflect on their inclusive leadership behaviours?”

1.4. Academic relevance

This qualitative study will contribute to the existing academic literature by offering insights into perceptions of inclusive leadership and by assessing how leaders reflect on their own inclusive leadership behaviours. This will be done through analysing opinions, experiences and values of leaders regarding inclusive leadership behaviours (Symon & Cassell, 2012). This research aims to build onto the existing theories and frameworks of inclusive leadership and identify novel ideas regarding this concept (Symon & Cassell, 2012). This research contributes to literature on the perspectives of leaders, as there has been limited attention for their point of

view (Castilla, 2011), even though there are seen as essential for organisational change and facilitating an inclusive culture.

1.5. Societal relevance

Organisational environments benefit from this study by gaining insights on how leaders reflect on their inclusive behaviours or lack thereof. This knowledge can help them implement D&I strategies. These insights can be used to design human resources instruments, for example to be used for leadership development and leadership performance evaluation. Utilising the findings of this study, necessary support for leaders to enact inclusive leadership behaviours can be identified. Organisational practices can be implemented in the company to make the culture more inclusive and to optimise the benefits of a diverse workforce, which will be beneficial for both the organisation and employees (Shore et al., 2011).

1.6. Outline thesis report

This research report is divided into multiple chapters. After the introduction, the theoretical framework will follow in the second chapter. This chapter is an outline of the relevant literature on the key concepts of this study. Chapter three is about the methodology of the research. This contains a detailed description of the research design, the determination of the sample size and the methods used for data collection and data analysis. In this chapter there is also a description of the limitations of the research and how research ethics were kept in mind while performing the study. In chapter four the most important findings of the study are presented. The final chapter, chapter five, starts with conclusions drawn based on the results of this study, followed by a discussion on the findings which elaborates on practical implications, recommendations for the organisation the study was conducted for, reflection on the performed research and recommendations for future research.

2. Theoretical framework

This chapter provides an overview on existing literature on inclusion in organizational context, actors of inclusion, inclusive leadership, behaviours and characteristics of inclusive leaders and self-awareness and reflection.

2.1. Inclusion

2.1.1. Definition of inclusion

Looking at existing literature on inclusion within organisations, there is disparity among researchers with respect to the definition of inclusion. The foundation of inclusion is described in the work of Schutz (1958), who specifies inclusion as a basic human need that people experience in their interpersonal relationships. Regarding the various definitions stated in literature, two themes seem to be apparent. The theme of belongingness is indicated by phrases as “accepted and treated as an insider” (Pelled et al., 1999, p. 1014-1015), “full participation and contribution” (Roberson, 2006, p. 215), “diverse individuals enabled to contribute fully” (Miller, 1998, p. 151), “eliciting and valuing contributions from all employees” (Lirio et al., 2008, p. 443) and “engaging in efforts to involve all employees” (Avery et al., 2008, p. 6). Secondly, the theme of uniqueness is referred to by terms as “have their voices heard” (Wasserman et al., 2008, p. 176), “diversity of knowledge and perspectives” (Holvino et al., 2004, p. 249) and “respecting individual talents” (Avery et al., 2008, p. 6). The definition of Shore et al. (2011, p. 1265) takes these two notions of inclusion in their definition and phrases it as “the degree to which an employee perceives that he or she is an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness”.

2.1.2. Benefits and pitfalls of inclusion

In diverse organisations with an inclusive organisational culture, employees are said to be more satisfied with their jobs, are committed to the organisation and have high task effectiveness and experience less anxiety if the need to be included in the group is met (Mor Barak, 2000; Schutz, 1958). According to theories about human motivation and social comparison, the desire to create and maintain meaningful relationships with others is essential for an individual’s psychological and physical well-being (Roberson & Perry, 2017). From a business perspective, diversity in organisations can be seen as a mean for gaining competitive advantage (Zanoni et al., 2010). Attracting diverse employees to your organisation will result

in a wider range of perspectives, ideas and values and increased organisational creativity and learning. Thus, fostering an inclusive culture and thus making optimal use of said range of ideas will be beneficial for the organisational performance.

In contrast to the notion that belongingness and uniqueness are key to an inclusive organisation, theoretical perspectives in diversity literature argue that people seek to belong to groups and tend to treat people of their in-group more favourably than people in their out-group (Shore et al., 2011), which can potentially be a pitfall of inclusion. This suggests that organisational members working together with people solely from their in-group, and thus in a team in which diversity is lacking, experience more positive attitudes. Both gender similarity and race similarity within a group has been found to be positively related to trust, feelings of competence and psychological attachment (Shore et al., 2011). Nevertheless, findings of research focusing on similarity have often been mixed, which suggests that similarity may not always promote a sense of belongingness on its own and thus similarity may not be sufficient to ensure positive outcomes (Riordan & Wayne, 2008; Shore et al., 2011). This is in line with the optimal distinctiveness theory, meaning that individuals have the need to be both similar and different from others simultaneously (Brewer, 1991). Inclusion is therefore both beneficial for demographic diverse work groups such as women, ethnic minorities, and LGBTQ+ people, as well as homogenous work groups.

2.1.3. Actors of inclusion

Earlier studies have emphasised the importance of top management for facilitating inclusion in diverse workforces. Organisational responsibility for D&I should be established in order to achieve inclusion goals (Avery et al., 2007; Kalev et al., 2006). Most studies on inclusion focus on the relations among employees and the relations between employees and leader, but lack in addressing how inclusion plays out at organisational level (Korkmaz et al., 2022). Taking on a top-down approach, promoting inclusion starts at the top of the organisation. Inclusion can be managed from top level of the company by assigning financial resources to D&I practices, corporate affirmative action, the implementation of policies or providing access to information networks (Kalev et al., 2006; McKay & Avery, 2005; Mor Barak et al., 2021). Board members, directors and other policy makers determine the strategy of the organisation and thus the move towards change. Further, senior leaders and managers, who act within a complex organisational system, are the one to realise the policies in day-to-day practices (Higgs & Rowland, 2010).

Various studies theorise the importance of leaders in creating an inclusive organisational culture (Wasserman et al., 2008; Nishii & Paluch, 2018; Randel et al., 2018), as they are known to establish the narrative for organisational culture. Individual members form perceptions of inclusion based on the treatment they receive by their managers (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Nishii, 2013). Next to leaders serving as role models for inclusion, they are also key agents in determining access to promotions and opportunities (Douglas et al., 2003). Randel et al. (2018) proposes that inclusive leadership enables the effective functioning of diverse work groups in ways that are not sufficiently addressed in other forms of leadership.

Although it is the leaders' role to push the organisational agenda onwards, employees also have to be active in creating and maintaining an inclusive environment. This includes behaviours such as treating other employees with respect, not discriminating others regarding background, religion or sexuality and demonstrating openness to others' perspectives (Church et al., 2014). Gathering data, feedback and information from employees at all levels is necessary to drive organisational transformation (Church et al., 2014).

Summarising, creating an inclusive culture starts at the top level of the organisation, but the levels below are the leaders and managers that have to facilitate and execute it to the larger organisational population. Leaders are crucial in translating inclusion policies into day-to-day practices and bringing employees on board to achieve the organisation's ambitions. Concluding, inclusive leadership is an important tool contributing to creating and maintaining an inclusive organisational culture. Although studies have been done to assess employee experiences regarding inclusive leadership, little is known about the perceptions of leaders on this topic. The gap in literature regarding the perceptions of leaders on inclusive leadership provides reason for leaders to be the focus of this study.

2.2. Inclusive leadership

2.2.1. Definition of inclusive leadership

Not many definitions of inclusive leadership can be found in existing literature. Definitions found include “words and deeds by a leader or leaders that indicate an invitation and appreciation for others' contributions” (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006, p. 927), “leaders who exhibit visibility, accessibility, and availability in their interactions with others” (Carmeli et al., 2010, p. 250), “a set of positive leader behaviours that facilitate group members perceiving belongingness in the work group while maintaining their uniqueness within the group as they fully contribute to group processes and outcomes” (Randel et al., 2018, p. 190).

Roberson & Perry (2021, p. 5) add to the latter by saying the leaders should have “behaviours to create the psychological experience of feeling connected within organisations”.

2.2.2. *Inclusive leadership behaviours*

Various examples of inclusive leadership behaviours have been found in earlier inclusive leadership studies. In 2008, Hollander identified four behaviours to be essential for successful inclusive leadership: respect, recognition, responsiveness and responsibility. Seven inclusive leadership behaviours introduced by the British Army (2015) are: lead by example, encourage thinking, apply reward and discipline, demand high performance, encourage confidence in the team, recognise individual strengths and weaknesses and strive for team goals. These definitions lack mention of the diverse workforce offering a range of varied perspectives, which has been identified as an important element of inclusion. There is also no mention of psychological safety and other aspects like being aware of biases, including people from diverse identity groups or shared-decision making. Workman-Stark (2017) elaborated on the example of the British Army by making a list of sixteen behaviours of inclusive leadership. Some of which are the following: understand own biases and how they affect decisions, encourage different voices to speak and value diverse perspectives, empower employees and involve them in decision-making, create mutual trust, provide timely feedback and be held accountable and hold others accountable for things that are within their control (Workman-Stark, 2017). These behaviours seem to match the various definitions of inclusion stated earlier relatively well. Other studies have highlighted specific inappropriate behaviour that could harm people feeling included in their work environment, such as the use of humour or cases of harassment (Fine et al., 1990; Mak et al., 2012; Tremblay, 2017).

More recent studies on inclusive leadership state behaviours that match the themes of belongingness and uniqueness more effectively. Such behaviours include: encouraging different perspectives and views, supporting ideas, facilitating shared decision-making, supporting group members, ensuring justice and equity, providing equal opportunities and helping team members achieve their full potential (Randel et al., 2018; Roberson & Perry, 2021). Next to facilitating belongingness and valuing uniqueness, Korkmaz et al. (2022) have identified two additional dimensions of inclusive leadership behaviours. ‘Showing appreciation’ and ‘supporting organisational efforts’ were found to be important aspects to take into consideration when addressing inclusive leadership. Korkmaz et al. (2022), describe the inclusive leadership behaviours in the following categories. Fostering employees’ uniqueness includes supporting employees as individuals, promoting diversity, empowering employees and

contributing to employees' learning and development. Strengthening belongingness within a team regards ensuring equity, building relationships and sharing decision-making. Showing appreciation is about recognising efforts and contributions and supporting organisational efforts includes being open to organisational change and promoting the organisational mission on inclusion (Korkmaz et al., 2022).

Another aspect commonly seen as crucial to a leader's inclusive behaviours is to create a climate of psychological safety (Shore et al., 2021; Wasserman et al., 2008; Korkmaz et al., 2022). Psychological safety refers to the belief that one will not be rejected or humiliated in a particular setting or role, in a climate in which people feel free to express their thoughts and feelings (Edmondson, 2009). It is notable that although Randel et al.'s (2018) definition seems quite encompassing, it fails to address the concept of psychological safety in its definition. As sense of belongingness can mainly be realised by creating an environment in which team members experience a sense of psychological safety, it should be taken on as an indispensable element of inclusive leadership (Zeng, et al., 2020; Korkmaz et al., 2022; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Wang & Shi, 2021).

Regarding the various definitions and aspects of inclusive leadership behaviours, Randel et al.'s (2018) identified behaviours supplemented by the dimensions of behaviours Korkmaz et al.'s (2022) seems to be most comprehensive to define a set of leadership behaviours, which will therefore be used as a framework for this study's interview. Psychological safety is also taken on as underlying core of inclusive leadership, which is not mentioned literally, but is subjacent in the categories given. Concluding and combining the various definitions, the following definition for identifying inclusive leadership behaviours has been designed for the purpose of this study: "a set of behaviours that create a climate of psychological safety, in which group members feel like they belong, like their unique talents are being valued and appreciated, and in which organisational efforts on inclusion are being supported".

2.2.3. *Characteristics of an inclusive leader*

A leader should possess various characteristics in order to successfully enact inclusive leadership. First, a leader should support organisational efforts and have pro-diversity beliefs, meaning that they perceive diversity to have positive outcomes (Randel et al., 2018; Homan et al., 2007). Leaders with these beliefs recognise in-group differences of individual group members and try to incorporate diversity. Second, cognitive complexity of the leader is the ability to perceive the behaviour and social information of others in a multidimensional manner

(Bieri, 1995). Leaders in possession of this skill are likely to recognise strengths among group members as well as limitations, rather than perceiving a one-dimensional view that may minimise organisational members' ability to contribute (Randel et al., 2018). It is important for a leader to recognise inequality among their team members and to be able to identify underlying processes or events that may cause inequality. Third, leaders should be open to change and willing to learn. This relates to the fourth dimension of inclusive leadership by Korkmaz et al. (2022), 'supporting organisational efforts'. Organisations are not stuck in time and are always evolving and innovating. Various societal developments cause the organisation to move in a different direction or to change their core values. Leader's degree of support for organisational initiatives towards D&I alter the impact of the efforts. Hence, an inclusive leader should be confident in promoting the organisation's mission for an inclusive culture and push the agenda onwards (Korkmaz et al., 2022; Church & Rotolo, 2010). Fourth and most importantly, inclusive leaders should be humble and reflect on their own behaviours. Humility can be defined as "a self-view that involves accepting that one is 'not the centre of the universe' in their relationships with others" (Nielsen et al., 2010). It is tied to positive tendencies like a high level of self-awareness, low self-focus, empathy, openness and appreciation for others (Davis et al., 2011). Leaders should be willing to learn from others and be open to others' opinions, also from organisational members from the out-group. When a leader possesses these characteristics, the other characteristics pro-diversity beliefs, cognitive complexity and openness to change are more likely to be improved. For the purpose of this study, the expressions of leaders will be compared to the four characteristics to examine the leaders' ability to reflect on their inclusive leadership behaviours.

2.3. Self-awareness and reflection

2.3.1. Self-awareness and reflection of leader

Facilitating an inclusive culture within an organisation or within a team is not a single finite occurrence, but a non-linear and unpredictable process that calls for reflection and self-awareness of leaders (Wasserman et al., 2008). Existing literature on leadership development fails to address the importance of the perspective of the self on development as a leader (Rothstein & Burke, 2010; Church et al., 2014). Research suggests that reflective skills are even more important for leadership success than for example intelligence or technical skills (Showry & Manasa, 2014; White et al., 1996; Church, 1997). Self-awareness, which can be defined as "the trait or ability that enables a person to evaluate their own behaviour and skills" (Church, 1997, as cited in Showry & Manasa, 2014, p. 17), is proven to improve leadership competence

and increase follower satisfaction among leaders (Tekleab et al., 2008; Church & Rotolo, 2010; Showry & Manasa, 2014; Van Breukelen & Sips, 2017; Church, 1997). Furthermore, leader that show low self-awareness are even said to deter personal growth and organisational performance (Showry & Manasa, 2014).

Various behaviours for successful self-awareness can be found in performed studies, but there does not seem to be consensus on a specific set of behaviours. Self-awareness can be trained by noticing how past experiences influence our interpreting in the current moment (Wasserman, 2013). Behaviours that are said to improve effective self-awareness include emotional and social intelligence, reflexivity, empathy, mindfulness of microaggressions, feedback seeking behaviour, being critical of one's own behaviour and being realistic (Wasserman, 2013; Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012; Tekleab et al., 2018). In this study, the interviews will highlight whether the leaders possess skills like feedback seeking behaviour and being critical of one's own behaviour, to examine whether self-awareness can be improved to develop inclusive leadership.

2.3.2. Benefits and limitations of self-awareness

Being aware of the self can help to pinpoint the specific areas for development. High self-awareness enables people to better adjust to their environment (Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012), and thus to take on inclusive leadership style. Considering that inclusion is still a relatively new topic to some people that have been in a leadership position for years, it can be useful to specify the behaviours that leaders need to develop. Then, leaders can reflect on how they enact inclusive competencies or behaviours described in the organisational policies. Leaders may consciously or unconsciously reinforce non-inclusive behaviour patterns that they have been performing for years. Being aware of these blind spots avoids being stuck in the process. Thus, lack of self-awareness adds to 'stuckness' (Higgs & Rowland, 2010). Knowing one's strengths and development areas will help the leader to change their behaviours (Church & Rotolo, 2010).

When interpreting leaders' voiced constructs of their inclusive behaviours, it is crucial to keep in mind that there can be a discrepancy between behaviours leaders enact and what kind of behaviours leaders say they will enact or believe in, phrased by Mor Barak (2021, p. 6) as "what leaders 'say' versus what leaders 'do'". For example, a leader may have pro-diversity beliefs and believe to not perform favourable treatment in their team, but their unconscious biases may still have an influence the leader is not aware of. A useful method to test the presence of self-awareness among leaders and whether their reflections are accurate is to compare self-

evaluation to the evaluation of others. Leaders who overestimate themselves, actually seem to perform more poorly than leaders who agree with their subordinates' evaluation or who underestimate themselves (Tekleab et al., 2008; Van Breukelen & Sips, 2017; Bratton et al., 2011). They also tend to be evaluated by others as more poorly (Van Velsor et al., 1993). Accuracy of self-awareness partly depends on the leaders' sensitivity for critiquing comments and feedback by people in their surroundings (Sitzman et al., 2010). When people feel a threat to their feelings of self-worth, for example to lose their leadership position, they tend to over-evaluate themselves (Brown, 2012).

Although self-awareness among leaders has previously been reported as being successful for leadership styles such as transformational leadership, empowering leadership, servant leadership, reflective leadership (Tekleab et al., 2008; Church et al., 2014; Castelli, 2016), self-awareness is not addressed excessively in existing studies regarding inclusive leadership (Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012). Randel et al. (2018) address self-awareness briefly as a factor of 'humility'. Despite not mentioned in the article, self-awareness is also related to the determinant 'cognitive complexity' stated by Randel et al. (2018), as self-awareness is a cognitive competency (Bennett, 2014). As there is a gap in literature regarding self-awareness and inclusive leadership development, this study will address the combination of these two principles by gaining insights into how leaders reflect on their inclusive leadership behaviours.

3. Methodology

This chapter contains explanation on the methodological approach taken on for this study, the research design, methods for data collection and analysis and insights on reflexivity or the researcher and research ethics.

3.1. Methodological approach

Philosophical assumptions have to be considered for the research design (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Epistemology is the study of the criteria by which we can know what does and what does not constitute scientific or warranted knowledge. Ontology concerns whether the phenomenon studied actually exists independent of our knowing. This study takes on a subjectivist epistemological and ontological stance, as multiple realities co-exist and reality is socially constructed (Evers & De Boer, 2012).

This research is conducted taking the philosophical stance of social constructivism, meaning that individuals develop subjective meanings which are varied and multiple. The researcher looks at the participants' view on the phenomenon studied and looks for the complexity of views, rather than narrowing down the meanings into a few ideas (Creswell & Poth, 2016). According to this stance, reality is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and formed through participants' interaction with others and historical and cultural norms in society and the participants' personal environment. The researcher makes an interpretation of the meanings and views collected through open-ended interviewing, with intent to make sense of how the participants view the phenomenon studied (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

This study is a form of engaged scholarship, as it is participatory between the corporate and academic world and seems to bridge the theory-practice gap by developing research that contributes both to practical problem solving and to providing new theoretical insights (Mathiassen, 2017). Engaged scholarship is a proposed method for studying complex social problems (Van de Ven, 2018). As a seeming lack of inclusive leadership in the organisation is the starting point of this study, this method will be appropriate.

3.2. Research design

This study is a qualitative research. Qualitative research helps to understand how people give meaning to their world (Evers & De Boer, 2012), which fits the social constructivism stance (Symon & Cassell, 2012). This type of research is suitable for explaining topics from the

perspectives of the participants, as this study tries to explain how leaders reflect on their inclusive leadership behaviours or lack thereof, it is an applicable method.

The study was conducted at TeleConnect, a large telecommunications organisation in the Netherlands. Research participants were interviewed in May and June 2022. Participants are pre-selected and invited to cooperate in this study by the HR Director of the organisation. Not consenting to the interview and therefore not participating in the research is optional. This study fits in to the organisation's ambition and urges to improve the inclusive culture within the organisation. They have determined inclusive leadership to be an important pillar to improve their D&I practices, and thus the insights provided by this study will help them to improve their strategy and assist and support leaders in adopting inclusive behaviours.

3.3. Data collection

3.3.1. Interviews

Interviewing is a widespread method to gather information on people's perceptions, opinions and values, specifically useful for interpreting, contextualising and gaining in-depth insights into specific phenomena (Symon & Cassell, 2012). In qualitative research, it is the most commonly used method for collecting data (Evers & De Boer, 2012). Symon & Cassell (2012) conclude that sourcing data through interviews allows to understand what goes on regarding one's behaviour, beliefs, values and decisions made. Accordingly, the data collection method of this study will be individual semi-structured interviews.

Interviews were held face online via Microsoft Teams. They were set in a safe environment, either a closed off location at the organisations' office or in the participant's own home or private office. This allowed the participants to feel able to speak truthfully and openly, which allows for collection of rich information (Symon & Cassell, 2012). The interviews were held individually to look at the individual leaders' perceptions on inclusive leadership and to not have the opinions of others interfere with their own. All interviews were recorded and transcribed manually for further analysis. They all took approximately one hour. Pilot interviews were held in March 2022 to test the efficacy of the questionnaire (Symon & Cassell, 2012). This includes four participants, who are senior leaders at the organisation and involved in D&I development, also called 'ambassadors', who provided feedback in order to improve the questionnaire. The interviews were conducted between the researcher conducting this study and a co-researcher conducting a study with a separate research question an aim.

Beforehand, a list of interview questions has been designed, but the researcher was able to go with the drift of the conversation taking place and is allowed to deviate from the design and ask additional questions or change the order of the questions (Symon & Cassell, 2012). The interview is designed using appreciative inquiry. This method involves asking questions that strengthen a person's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential (Cooperrider, 2011). This opens opportunities for interviewees to talk about achievements, elevated thoughts, lived values and visions of possible futures (Cooperrider, 2011). This method is especially useful for this study, as appreciative inquiry is known to facilitate moments of reflection (Wasserman, 2005). For the design of the interview, that means that questions are open-ended and ask for candid responses. Some questions prompt leaders to put topics to mind that they maybe have not put much thought to before. The research participants were asked various questions regarding inclusive leadership behaviours. For the design of the interview questions, the themes founded in the studies by Randel et al. (2018) and Korkmaz et al. (2022) were used as a guideline for designing the interview questions, which are therefore partially theoretically driven. There is also a set of questions regarding to existing inclusion events and policies taking place in the organisation of the study. The interview guide can be found in Appendix 1.

3.3.2. *Sample*

For allowing the researcher to meet the research aim, appropriate data will need to be collected (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Non-probability sampling technique was used, meaning choice of sample is based on the researcher's judgement regarding the population's characteristics that are important in relation to the data required (Symon & Cassell, 2012). The initial sample for this study includes 43 leaders from the four layers of leadership at TeleConnect Netherlands, with the focus being on the top three layers. The leadership level has a total population of 160. The highest level is the Executive Committee that is composed of seven leaders. The second level consists of nearly thirty leaders and the third layer has around eighty leaders. The sample size of 43 leaders covers roughly 27% of the total population, which is a relatively high sample for qualitative research (Evers & De Boer, 2012). More participants would only lead to homogeneity in the responses, which does not add value to the study (Saunders et al., 2018). Purposive sampling is the most frequently used form of non-probability sampling in qualitative research (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Cases were selected that were expected to enable the researcher best in answering the research question. The sample consists

of a diverse population of different genders and backgrounds. By doing this selection, the sample should provide an illustrative profile that is considered representative (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Demographic information of the leaders was collected in order to draw possible conclusions and to assess the representation of the interviewees for the whole population. Although in non-probability sampling the participants are usually selected by the researcher, in this study the list of participants has been determined by the organisational members of the D&I program in cooperation with Human Resources department of TeleConnect Netherlands. Reason for this is that the researcher is an outsider to the organisation. However, the criteria for selecting the participants were discussed thoroughly by the researcher with the D&I team, to assure a diverse selection. The criteria regard gender, leadership level, nationality and age. Among the criteria discussed was the balance between representativity and diversity of the sample. The majority of leaders within the organisation are men, white and of Dutch background. Taking a statistically representative sample would mean that opinions would be gathered mainly from the participants of the considered homogeneous in-group. Therefore, heterogeneous purposive sampling was used, by using judgement in selecting participants based on diverse characteristics to provide maximum variation in the data collected (Symon & Cassell, 2012). This method strengthens the study, as patterns that emerge from the data will be more valuable (Patton, 2002; as cited by Symon & Cassell, 2012). A list of the selected initial sample can be found in Appendix 2.1. Although the majority of leaders in the sample is Dutch, some do have a multicultural background.

Out of the 43 leaders, 27 ended up being interviewed and included in the study. This includes four participants from the pilot interviews and 23 participants out of the 39 leaders approached to be asked to participate in the study. The interview phase being in June and May resulted in quite some managers being on holiday or short on time because they were going on holiday soon. The non-response was 37,2% of the sample. Of the sixteen leaders that were approached but did not participate, three people did not have time to participate, two people were on Holiday, two people were on sick leave, two people left the company or changed position, two people were scheduled but later on withdrew participation, two people were willing to participate but unable to schedule a timeslot and three persons never responded to the request after being sent multiple reminders. The final list of participants can be found in Appendix 2.2. Tables of the distribution of gender, leadership level, age and nationality of the final sample in comparison to the initial sample and to the total population can be found in Appendix 2.3.

3.3.2.1. Sample representativity

Given that not every manager approached for the study has taken part, there have been some consequences for the representation of certain groups in the sample and therefore possibly being less variation in the data collected. Regarding gender, the aim was to interview more women compared to the total population to get variation. The final sample consists of relatively less women than intended by the initial sample, but they are still slightly overrepresented in comparison to the total population, as intended. Regarding age, it is notable that relatively few young (39 years old and under) managers were interviewed, both in comparison to the initial sample and to the total population. Of the final sample, the oldest age group (50 years old and older) seems to be slightly overrepresented. When looking at representativity of the leadership level it should be noted that the focus of the sample is on the top three levels of the total four leadership levels. Therefore, the final sample has a relatively larger number of participants from the top three layers of leadership than of the category 'others'. Despite matching the focus of the study, when drawing conclusions it should be kept in mind that the opinions voiced in this study relate to mostly those of senior leaders and not to all leadership levels of the organisation. Regarding nationality, it is notable that only two international people participated. Of the Dutch interviewees, four have a birthplace outside of the Netherlands. This does not match with the initial sample based on selection criteria to get variation in data, but it does represent the total population of the organisation. Generally speaking, most people spoken to were white and Dutch. Out of the 16 managers of the initial sample that did not participate, roughly six or seven could be said to be 'diverse' in the sense that they are either people of colour (POC) or their non-Dutch name could indicate their cultural background. However, in terms of ethnicity and cultural background it is hard to draw any conclusions as the company data available only shows nationality and birth place. From the position of the researcher, being a white Dutch person, it is not in my power to categorise interviewees as POC or guess their cultural background if they do not address this themselves. As a result, given that the international people were selected for the purpose of getting variation in answers and getting diverse perspectives, this could harm gaining understanding of the status of inclusive leadership in the organisation and of how managers from minority groups reflect on their inclusive leadership behaviours. Possible reasons for people of diverse cultural backgrounds or POC not wanting to participate in the research could be because they do not want to take over the responsibility that the organisation carries for this topic, that they think they already perform inclusive leadership and they do not want to take extra time and effort to talk about this topic, or they might feel singled out as 'diverse' people and are the ones that already have to talk about D&I related

topics more often than people from the heterogeneous majority. This results in possible lack of diverse perspectives in the data used to provide the findings of the study. Because of this, the organisation might miss out on the perceptions of people from diverse group on how inclusive leadership is performed, which would provide valuable insights. Additionally, there is not much known regarding other diversity aspects of the sample such as religion or sexuality. One participant did voice to have a disability and of all interviewees, none voiced to be part of the LGBTQ+ community, although they were not asked. Furthermore, as participation was voluntarily, this could mean that people that are already motivated about D&I are more likely to join than people who do not show interest in the topic. The conclusions of this study can likely be translated to other organisations in a similar field in the Netherlands, as the composition of managers is expected to be similar in terms of gender, age and nationality.

Concluding, overall the final sample is not fully representative of the initial sample as decided upon the selection criteria for diversity groups, but the final sample is representative of the total population. Despite lack of perspectives of persons from international, diversity or minority groups, the conclusions can be translated to the total population of leadership at TeleConnect, as this the total population is also not as diverse as the initial sample aimed to be.

3.4. Data analysis

Once all data was collected and transcribed, analysis was conducted. This study uses the method of template analysis, which is a thematic analysis most commonly used to analyse data collected through individual interviews (Symon & Cassell, 2012). The main advantage of this method is that one can make use of multiple-level coding, through which patterns, themes and sub-themes can be discovered (Symon & Cassell, 2012). It is a highly flexible and adaptive method. The theory that is used to design the questionnaire, taken from Randel et al. (2018) and Korkmaz et al. (2022), is illustrated in an initial template (see Appendix 3). After coding, the final template was created, as can be found in Appendix 4.

To analyse the outcomes of the collected data, an inductive analysis approach was taken on to develop pattern of meanings, which matches social constructivist stance (Creswell & Poth, 2016). There was room for the pre-identified themes from the initial template to be redefined or discarded during the research (Symon & Cassell, 2012). First, during reading the collected data, codes were assigned to pieces of text that were useful for answering the research question, which resulted in over 700 individual codes. Second, the codes were merged together into roughly 170 codes to create more overview and clarity in the emerged codes, which are the

third and fourth level codes that can be seen in the final template. Next, the merged codes were grouped into overarching themes, which are the second level codes. Last, the themes were categorised into six categories. When comparing the final template to the initial template, it is evident that although some themes and categories matched, there were also new themes that emerged after data collection.

After developing the codes and themes, the data has to be interpreted. The core themes are presented in the results, using quotes to aid the understanding of discovered themes (Symon & Cassell, 2012). The quotes were used to illustrate the findings to stay as close as possible to the participants meanings and outings and to enable them for transferability to other contexts. By being consistent in interviewing, recording, transcribing and coding in a suitable program, all information analysed can be traced back to ensure confirmability. Acknowledging and considering the social and linguistic complexity of the interviews, various theoretical viewpoints were considered and applied when interpreting the interview material, in order to prevent risking naivety or narrow understanding (Alvesson, 2003).

3.5. Reflexivity

Reflexivity is the awareness of the researcher in how they affect the research process and outcomes (Symon & Cassell, 2012). It involves questioning about how interpretation of data came to be and how pre-existing knowledge and experiences may influence understandings of data. Taking on the social constructivism stance, when interpreting meanings, reflexivity is therefore especially crucial. Aspects to be taken into account and to reflect on include the researcher's political stance, personal ideas about what it takes to be a successful inclusive leader, theoretical knowledge gained in education and affinity bias and other unaware biases (Symon & Cassell, 2012). A research diary was kept as a tool for reflexivity. Presumptions, thoughts and feelings were written down and revisited throughout the process and reflected on at the end.

3.6. Research ethics

Research ethics were addressed throughout the study to ensure integrity for both the participants of the study and the organisation as a whole (Orb et al., 2001). The researcher is transparent regarding the aim of the research and how information gathered will be used. Before the interview takes place, the participants were informed about said purpose and about how the collected data will be handled. Confidentiality and anonymity were verbally guaranteed.

Participants were made aware that they can withdraw from the study at any time, both before or during the interview. After the interview, anonymised data was stored on the university server with limited access. Post interview, the participants were given the opportunity to request a transcript of the interview for reviewing and voicing potential concerns. Permission to record the interview was obtained by signing an informed consent form. This allows the researcher to gain trust from the participant (Symon & Cassell, 2012). By keeping notes throughout the whole process and keeping a research diary, reflexivity was used to stay aware of biases that might affect the research. Additionally, during the interviews I made sure to not ask any leading questions that may have prompted the participant to respond in favour of any assumptions I may have had.

In the thesis report, the name of the organisation is anonymised to protect the company from any unwanted outsiders gaining insights into the leaders' perceptions and potential weaknesses in the organisation. When reporting the results of the study to the organisation, quotes taken from interviews will not be identified by a leader's name.

4. Results

This chapter provides an overview of the findings after data analysis. Quotations from the transcribed interviews will be used to illustrate the findings. Given that there was a large amount of data collected for this study, only the most elaborated on and most important findings will be presented in this chapter. First, how interviewees give knowledge to the concepts of diversity and inclusion will be described, followed by characteristics they possess. Thereafter, how they perceive and how they say they enact inclusive leadership behaviours will be described, followed up by the level of reflection of the research participants in order to answer the research question on how leaders reflect on their inclusive leadership behaviours.

4.1. Knowledge of diversity and inclusion

The first section describes how leaders define inclusion, their awareness of the difference between diversity and inclusion. Next, the leaders' perception of the need for inclusivity and their mindset will be addressed. Additionally, leaders' characteristics will be addressed.

4.1.1. Definition of inclusion

When leaders were asked to define what inclusion means to them, definitions varied from being very narrow and basic to very broad definitions of the concept. Some define inclusion simply as being the opposite of exclusion, without going into further detail. Multiple leaders mention that feeling at home and safe within the organisation is the foundation of being inclusive and that *“everyone should be part of the society within TeleConnect”* (134) and that *“everybody should have equal opportunities to be part of the group and to belong to the work community that we have”* (132). Other leaders elaborated further on these concepts, by acknowledging that diversity aspects may have an influence on whether people are included, saying *“people should be judged based on their talent and not based on other things like skin colour or religion”* (115) and *“that all different aspects of ethnicities are all included and that there's no bar or judgment for them to be included in a certain group or activity”* (107). Someone added that to be inclusive, you should *“be open for everybody and don't have any hesitation to talk about different cultures or people with disabilities, and give everybody the possibility to really contribute to the company goals”* (126), indicating that it involves topics that need to be talked about. Other leaders add on to the concept by noting that you should be able to be yourself within a work environment, saying *“if you act like yourself, you should have similar opportunities as everyone else”* (138). Additionally, one leader noted that inclusion does

not only have to be related to social identity, but can also be related to whether someone possesses the core values of the company. They said: “*in the end, I always select people on our core values. Inclusion also means including people with different core values. But that makes it really difficult to work together*” (124).

Generally, more than half of the participants gave a rather broad definition, naming a few of the examples mentioned like equal opportunities, valuing talent, believing everyone should be able to contribute and that employees should feel safe and at home. However, almost no one was able to give a fully comprehensive definition. Roughly, about eight out of twenty-seven managers have an idea of inclusive leadership that corresponds somewhat with the literature (Randel et al., 2018; Korkmaz et al., 2022). Among the eight who gave somewhat corresponding definitions were two of the four pilot interviewees who are involved in D&I developments. It can be concluded that the D&I ambassadors the organisation assigned are not necessarily specialised in the field of D&I, as two of them did not give sufficient definitions.

4.1.2. Difference between diversity and inclusion.

The terms ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusion’ were often used interchangeably. It’s hard to draw conclusions regarding the influence of their language on how they perceive diversity and inclusion. For example, this could indicate lack of knowledge of the distinction of the two concepts, it could be because of the interviews not being in their first language and therefore they might struggle to find correct or suitable words to describe their thoughts, or the leaders might not be sufficiently educated or used to talking about the topic and therefore they could sometimes mean ‘inclusion’ when they say ‘diversity’. However, for a handful of leaders it was clear they lacked knowledge regarding the difference between diversity and inclusion. They were not knowledgeable that inclusion is a step beyond diversity (Randel et al., 2018), which could be identified by phrases like “*when you look at all the employees, it’s very inclusive*” (115). By saying this, the leader illustrates that having a diverse workforce population automatically means that everyone feels safe, that everyone is treated equally and given equal opportunities within the organisation. Yet, other leaders do see inclusion as the next step to take after obtaining a diverse workforce, saying “*inclusion even goes a step beyond diversity as I know it*” (124) and “*when you’re becoming a diverse company, you have to be inclusive*” (109). Theory shows that awareness of the distinction between the two concepts is important for performing inclusive leadership and being able to reflect on it (Tekleab et al., 2018). The few leaders who do not recognise the difference show lack of knowledge and therefore cognitive

complexity which may be a barrier in reflecting on their inclusive leadership behaviours (Randel et al., 2018). Explicitly communicating to leaders about the distinction of the two concepts can help their understanding.

4.1.3. Leaders' mindset towards fostering inclusion

4.1.3.1. Pro-diversity beliefs

To successfully implement inclusive leadership, a leader should have pro-diversity beliefs, meaning that they perceive diversity to have positive outcomes (Randel et al., 2018; Homan et al., 2007). Knowing whether leaders have pro-diversity beliefs is important to determine if they are able to reflect on their inclusive leadership behaviours, because a positive mindset and mental openness towards diversity will allow the leader to enact inclusive leadership behaviours purposively, which allows for better reflection (Randel et al., 2018).

In terms of possessing pro-diversity beliefs, the leaders can be divided in two groups. The majority of interviewees voice to be positive towards diversity in the organisation, saying that it improves organisational performance. Other benefits mentioned by leaders include improved problem definition, better input due to the range of various skills and knowledge of different fields, coming to better solutions and more innovation and creativity. Various leaders acknowledge that there is inequality in the organisation on certain grounds, such as female leadership or equal opportunities for multicultural employees, which shows that they are aware of possible diversity related issues in the environment and that they reflect on that. Notable is that every interviewee said to be positive about a diverse workforce and that it can be beneficial, some continued to bring statements that suggest that these beliefs may not be as strong. They can be categorised as the second group. One leader mentions: *"It's not that two women and two men are more fertile than four men in the team"* (134), which shows lack of pro-diversity beliefs as this leader does not voice to see the benefits of a diverse workforce composition.

When interviewees asked to share something about the composition of their team, most say they lead quite diverse teams. The diversity spoken of mostly involves diversity in terms of male/female-ratio or diversity in nationality and cultural background. LGBTQ+ identity or age is addressed by a handful of leaders, but these factors do not seem to be top of mind for the majority of leaders, which could indicate that their definition of diversity is relatively narrow. Of the leaders who say not to have such diverse teams, most of them wish their team was more diverse. The latter mainly involves male interviewees of IT and Technology departments who wish to have more women in their teams. Whereas some leaders actively ask HR to find them suitable female candidates when putting out a vacancy, others simply say *"they just don't apply*

for the job” (134) without showing any reflection on how that might be changed or what the cause for that might be. Some leaders voice to be keen on positive discrimination. Two leaders name the example of waiting for a suitable female candidate when a managerial position opened, which is a good example of inclusive leadership. However, roughly half of the interviewees do not seem to be in favour of or even against positive discrimination. They emphasise on meritocracy, believing that the ‘best candidate’ should always be chosen for the job, regardless of identity. By believing this approach is always taken on, they do not recognise that power relations and historical influences are sometimes reason that the best person for the job is not always selected, and that minority groups are often the one that catch the blow (Godfrey & Wolf, 2016).

Summarising, most interviewees say to be positive of a diverse workforce. However, there is variation in the extent to which leaders are able to name specific diversity related benefits. Additionally, the fact that many leaders emphasised on ‘selecting the best candidate’ indicates that they value meritocracy. Interviewees show little reflection on the disconnect between meritocracy and the value and benefits of diversity.

4.1.3.2. Supporting organisational efforts and D&I initiatives

Supporting organisational efforts includes being a promoter of change, paying attention to new opportunities for development, engaging with resistance and promoting the internal mission on inclusion (Korkmaz et al., 2022). The organisation of this study has been putting more emphasis on the promotion of D&I in the past two years. Of the interviewees, about half of them explicitly say to be positive about the promotion of D&I. Yet, four of those leaders are critical of not putting enough effort into creating inclusion. They recognise that first steps are being taken, but emphasise that there is still a lot to be done. According to them, the organisation could mainly improve on educating people on why inclusion is important. Interviewees who are positive about the promotion of D&I speak greatly about the efforts that the D&I ambassadors put in and the imagery in the office building being more diverse. Others mention there is room for improvement in various areas. Multiple leaders say that D&I initiatives are sufficiently brought forward by the top leadership levels in the organisation, but that it is yet to be implemented at lower levels. There seems to be lack of common goals and to a lot of people, it is unclear what exactly the D&I related problems are that the organisation is facing. One leader mentions that although promoting this topic so much might be for symbolic reasons, it is still a good thing and cannot do any harm (132). Other opinions voiced include being aware

of the risk of tokenism and that just putting new protocols in place is not enough as they do not ensure safety on their own (109). A handful of leaders believe that TeleConnect is overdoing it and paying too much attention to D&I. They believe it is political correctness and wonder if the initiatives come from intrinsic motivation, adding that diversity and inclusion should come naturally and that it is currently being forced upon them. These leaders also mention that putting pressure on D&I practices could lead to resistance of the topic.

4.1.4. Leadership characteristics

Next to possessing pro-diversity beliefs, the leadership characteristics of managers influence their ability to be inclusive leaders. In order for a leader to perform inclusive leadership and to reflect on their inclusive leadership actions, they should possess skills and characteristics that improve effective self-awareness such as emotional and social intelligence, reflexivity, empathy, mindfulness of microaggressions, feedback seeking behaviour, being critical of one's own behaviour and being realistic (Wasserman, 2013; Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012; Tekleab et al., 2018).

4.1.4.1. Awareness of role as leader

Multiple participants reflect on the importance of their role as a leader in the D&I initiatives by realising that they are the addresser or spokesperson of inclusion towards the organisational members below them and that it matters how the initiatives are brought forward by the manager for determining the success of it being implemented (138) and that they take final responsibility into taking the different needs that people have into account (125). These beliefs match existing literature, which states that leaders are important actors for creating inclusion (Wasserman et al., 2008; Nishii & Paluch, 2018; Randel et al., 2018). A few leaders mention that they see the D&I initiatives as a "HR project" (132) and that they do not feel like they are part of implementing the change. Leaders who mention this have different reasons for saying so. About half of the leaders who mentioned to be motivated about improving D&I and they say they do not feel involved enough in the decisions being made. The other half, who are not as motivated about the emphasis on D&I voice that it feels like they are obliged to bring the topic to their team, with some leaders even making statements like "*it [D&I] should not be a hot topic for me*" (134). Such leaders can be a bottleneck for the organisation to create inclusion, as they are not the ones with motivation to improve their inclusive leadership behaviours and thus lack motivation to actively reflect on their inclusive behaviours.

Roughly a third of leaders takes responsibility in their role to create and foster inclusion. Over a third has a more neutral view of their position and does not initiate as much action on their own, but is willing to push down the organisational efforts when being asked. The remaining leaders do not want to be active as inclusive leaders and think that there is too much focus on it, thus diminishing their role in D&I.

4.1.4.2. Willingness to learn

In order to implement new initiatives and to become inclusive leaders as wished by the organisation, the leaders should be willing to learn new competencies (Korkmaz et al., 2022). A common way to educate leaders is through awareness sessions or bias trainings (Carter et al., 2020). The organisation has recently begun to organise trainings and sessions with the aim of creating more awareness of biases and inclusive leadership behaviour. Only leaders in the higher management levels have been given the opportunity to undergo these trainings. Of the people that underwent bias or awareness training, every single leader said to have learned from it and say they believe more people in the organisation should be able to undergo trainings. Leaders reflect on their learnings, saying: *“we did the bias test. Of course, I thought I had no bias. But yes, I have some. One of my personal learnings is that it was worse than I thought it was. It was a big eye opener”* (142). Leaders mention to be positive of training to make it tangible to talk about inclusion and privilege (124), to be aware of taking different opinions into account when making decisions (142), to become aware of the existing D&I problems in the organisation even when not being confronted with them directly (140), to start thinking about how full potential can be unleashed in every team member (130) or why certain identity groups may be absent or lacking in their teams and what the reason for that could be (120). Of the leaders that have not taken any trainings, most of them are highly motivated to attend them. Main reasons mentioned for this are that they want to become more aware of their biases, become aware of possible inequalities with in their team or learn more about how to create inclusion as a manager of a diverse team. They recognise that trainings can be very useful for this purpose, which is supported by theory (Korkmaz et al., 2022). Some leaders are neutral towards undergoing trainings. They do not deem them necessary but are also not against taking them. Out of the 27 interviewees, four do not see any reason to organise trainings and have no intention to join them. Reasons provided include thinking inclusion should come naturally, thinking they are already aware of all of their biases and therefore seeing trainings as unnecessary (131) or thinking self-education and reading in their personal time is sufficient to

be fully aware of D&I topics and issues (126). Although their level of self-reflection might be high due to education themselves frequently or having rich experience, they are possibly over-evaluating their own skills. Unwillingness towards education is obstructive towards becoming an inclusive leader and helping the organisation to reach D&I goals. Resistance to trainings will lead to lack of enactment on inclusive actions and lack of awareness of the importance of the issues the company is facing.

Thus, leaders who have undergone trainings are positive and with a few exceptions, there is momentum amongst the leaders to attend educational sessions. However, notable is that managers in higher positions tend to be more positive and open towards trainings than managers in lower positions. The positive remarks of the managers who underwent trainings are in higher level positions, so it's hard to say if lower positioned managers will have similar experiences.

4.1.4.3. Being humble and reflective

As a leader, being humble and reflective of one's own behaviours is tied to positive tendencies like a high level of self-awareness, low self-focus, empathy, openness and appreciation for others (Davis et al., 2011). When a leader possesses these characteristics, the other characterises pro-diversity beliefs, cognitive complexity and openness to change are more likely to be improved (Randel et al., 2018). Various interviewees show humbleness by admitting to making mistakes (124), reflecting on possible shortcomings in their knowledge or leadership (138, 126), listening to the opinions of others when begin doubtful of their own ideas (119) and reflecting on situation in which they maybe should have made a better decision (116, 125). These examples show reflection. Another aspect of being humble is showing vulnerability (Hoekstra et al., 2008). Various leaders speak of being vulnerable as an important element to bond with team members and to create trust (107, 119, 140). On the other hand, one manager shows a different take on this, saying: *"I think I'm very approachable for my people, but I'm still their boss. By being vulnerable, you also sort of you show a certain weakness. We're still in an environment where I think weakness is not really appreciated"* (114). This behaviour can be perceived as being contradictory to belong to inclusive leadership, as showing vulnerability and being humble is seen as an important factor to meet psychological needs for belongingness and uniqueness and should not be seen as a weakness (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). The leader therefore seems to lack reflection on what it takes to enact inclusive leadership behaviours.

Majority of interviewees show humbleness when talking about their actions and behaviours. Multiple leaders show vulnerability when reflecting on past situations. However, there are also leaders who fail to name specific examples.

4.1.4.4. Awareness of privilege and biases

Being aware of one's biases and privileges is crucial to be able to reflect on one's own inclusive leadership behaviours (Middleton et al., 2009; Workman-Stark, 2017). Multiple interviewees show that they are aware of the privileges that they may have due to their gender, identity, background or upbringing. Some leaders recognise that because of their privilege it is hard for them to judge whether enough efforts are being made to foster inclusion on both organisational level as well as on the leader's behalf. When asked if TeleConnect is doing enough to promote inclusion, one leader also voices that her privilege limits her in giving an opinion on that, saying "*that's maybe a difficult question for me to answer since I am a white woman*" (116). These reflective thoughts show that they are aware that people with less privileges may have a different experience. Some other leaders fail to reflect on their privileges or seem to avoid the topic. One leader mentioned: "*it's defined in boxes. That's what I don't like about D&I, because now I am in the box of a white old lady. I don't want to be in that box. I want to be in the box of the innovators*" (109). By giving such a statement, there seems to be lack of reflection and awareness of one's privileges and position.

Regarding biases, about a fifth of the interviewees mention that they are aware of their biases even before being asked about them (109, 118, 119, 124, 130, 132), which suggests they are aware that biases are an element of inclusive leadership and how it may possibly impact organisational practices. Some also explicitly address that they may have unconscious biases (109, 116, 122, 130, 132, 141). Leaders show reflection on their biases by recognising that the influence of their biases should not have consequences for others (131) and that their own personality and preferences should be excluded when making decisions for hiring and promotion or when discussing topics within the department (138). For example, when selecting an employee for a project, one leader realised they had personal prejudice towards which employee they wanted to push forward (109). Realising that, they asked their team for opinions on who should be chosen, to minimise the influence on their own judgement. A few leaders mention that they often give in to their biases when having to make urgent decisions or that they are not able to collect everyone's opinions in such situations (124). Other examples of giving in to biases happen when looking for similarity in recruitment (124, 138). Although these examples could be signs of lacking inclusive behaviour, the fact that they voice these issues shows that are aware and reflective of the impact. Some interviewees also mention that they need more education to eliminate biases and step out of their own reference frame. Some leaders show humbleness by mentioning the importance of being open and vulnerable regarding biases towards their colleagues, superiors and subordinates, which can help to spread awareness

towards others to also reflect on their biases (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). A few leaders do not seem to be aware of biases. Two leaders explicitly say they are positive they do not have any biases at all (113, 115). Other leaders only specifically go into behaviour or attitude related biases (125, 131, 134), instead of the more D&I related biases like cultural background or skin colour, for example. They reflect on this by saying that they make decisions objectively and that they only focus on performance and outcome and not on the person's identity. They do not recognize how biases, either conscious or unconscious, might influence their decision making in hiring or assigning opportunities and that it can almost never be fully objective. These statements show lack of reflection and could indicate that there is a certain degree of 'colour blindness', meaning that they believe the best way to end discrimination is by treating individuals as equal as possible, without regard to race, gender, culture or ethnicity (Williams, 2011), instead of valuing differences and being aware of individual needs. When people believe that they should only recruit or promote based on talent, they fail to recognize that biases and existing corporate culture play an important part in that (Godfrey & Wolf, 2016; Pierce, 2003).

Concluding, the majority of leaders are positive about creating more diversity in the workforce and see the benefits. However, meritocracy is also valued by majority of leaders, which shows a discrepancy to their pro-diversity beliefs. For a handful of leaders, their knowledge only regards to concept of diversity and they do not see the importance of putting focus on inclusion, as they do personally not experience people from diversity groups being excluded. About a third of leaders take responsibility in actively playing their part in fostering inclusion and these leaders are open to being more educated, with some emphasizing that it is a necessity for them to be more educated, guided and supported on the topic. On the contrary, a handful of leaders do not deem their role as important for creating inclusion. They believe the organisation is overdoing D&I efforts and are not in favour of education. Regarding biases and privilege, more than half of leaders reflect on how everyone has biases and how that may possibly affect their actions in creating an inclusive environment. However, there are also a few leaders who do not recognise biases as being important or impactful in D&I efforts.

4.2. Leaders' actions and reflection on inclusive leadership behaviours

This section contains description and analysis of how leaders say to enact inclusive leadership behaviours in practice and how leaders reflect on those actions.

4.2.1. General leadership behaviours

There are behaviours that an inclusive leader is expected to possess that are not exclusive to inclusive leadership. They are related to other leadership styles such as transformational leadership, empowering leadership, servant leadership or authentic leadership (Randel et al., 2018). However, as certain behaviours are also crucial for an inclusive leader to enact, they will briefly be addressed. Behaviours include building personal connection, demonstrating openness and encouraging sharing ideas and contributing to employees' learning and development. Said behaviours are defined and addressed in multitude in literature (Shore et al., 2011; Randel et al., 2018; Roberson & Perry, 2021; Korkmaz et al., 2022).

A big part of creating belongingness is actively asking employees for their feeling and also investing in personal connections with team members, with the aim of being able to identify individual needs. Leaders acknowledge this by saying that it is important to have close contact with team members (107), that they try to create an environment in which members can talk about themselves and what is important to them (126), being considerate regarding family or personal circumstances (125), engaging in social talk (115), making time for employees and accommodating to their needs where possible (140). Most leaders seem to be well aware that it is important to create a bond with their employees and that it is also important to ask how they are doing personally, instead of only having content-related conversations. Various leaders mention that hybrid working can be a possible barrier to making personal connections, which shows reflection on external factors that might have an impact on staying connected.

Demonstrating openness and encouraging to share ideas provides a base for performing inclusive leadership, as this includes taking different perspectives and viewpoints into account from people with different backgrounds, which can be used for shared decision-making. Nearly all leaders mention that they always aim to be open to listen to others' ideas and that they aim to be open-minded when doing so. Multiple participants say to actively ask and encourage employees to share their ideas during team meetings. One leader illustrates this by saying: "*it's everyone's own responsibility to speak out, but I think I can help them to create the stage for that*" (124), recognising that is their role to facilitate the surroundings in such a way that it enables employees to speak out shows reflection on their position as a leader in creating a safe environment. Another leader emphasises the importance of follow up actions regarding the employees' ideas, to make them feel heard (107).

Contributing to employees' learning and development is important to provide equal opportunities for promotion for all employees. All interviewees take responsibility in coaching, guiding and mentoring subordinates in their personal development and career development and

see it as a part of their job. Leaders demonstrate openness to the needs for development by addressing the subordinates' wishes in recurring one-on-one meetings. Aside from listening to the employees' wishes, managers also come up with their own vision for the employees' development. Some leaders emphasised the importance of seeing potential in people, saying “*if I really see something with potential, then I really put in some time*” (131) and “*I like to give people an opportunity within a team that don't have all the competencies they need, or maybe they don't have a study that they need. But when their attitude and behaviour is good, I'm sure that the competencies they miss will come in time*” (126). Various leaders recognise that it is important for them to know the ambitions of their team members, so they can support them in the right ways. Regarding taking action to ensure sufficient support, a few participants expressed that they sometimes lack time to guide every employee sufficiently or as much as they would like, due to their team being relatively large (131). This shows that they reflect on how they can possibly improve their support in personal development. Various interviewees mention that there is a lack of organisational support and tools to successfully support development. Currently, personal development of employees is said to be seen by the organisation as mostly the employees' own responsibility, with the leader being their coach or mentor (119). A handful of leaders show an active attitude towards employee development by thinking how they can improve this implementation and some design their own frameworks, but other leaders leave it as just a conversation where they keep some notes of development.

Concluding, nearly all interviewees say they perform actions that are in line with general 'good' leadership skills. They show reflection on their leadership actions by mentioning how and why they demonstrate openness and contribute to employees' learning and development for example.

4.2.2. Leadership behaviours to foster inclusion

Other behaviours defined by literature are especially beneficial for creating and fostering inclusion. Important behaviours include fostering belongingness and valuing uniqueness (Korkmaz et al., 2022). This includes implementation of D&I initiatives, creating a safe environment for all team members, addressing inappropriate jokes, accommodating to different needs, valuing diverse perspectives and shared decision-making (Randel et al., 2018; Korkmaz et al., 2022).

4.2.2.1. Implementation of organisational D&I initiatives

Regarding the implementation of D&I initiatives, leaders show good example by mentioning that they explain to their subordinates why creating an inclusive environment is important (126), explaining how stable diverse teams can contribute to the value they need to deliver (134), giving feedback to people when they are not being inclusive (124), or they feel responsible to push the message from the top of the organisation onwards to employees and strengthen the message (122). Interviewees do acknowledge that it is sometimes a difficult task to do or a difficult message to pass onwards, but they see that it is part of their job responsibilities and they are willing to put in the effort, which shows awareness. When reflecting on dealing with resistance, most interviewees are tempted to take a step back when being backfired. Main reason for this is that they are not educated enough to deal with resistance accordingly and that they experience getting questions and comments that are fair, but difficult to handle as a manager (124). Another leader expressed that they wish to be more educated on the topic, so that they can become a front runner of inclusion (124).

Leaders also express critique towards the efforts the organisation is taking. Examples include leaders being expected to enact inclusive leadership behaviours, without being trained in that field (119), lacking support in having proper conversations on the topic (124) and lack of tools on how to serve D&I to their team (132). Statements like these show that there are leaders who have right mindset and motivation to become more inclusive and that they are also reflective in the sense that they realise they do not know how to implement all these practices all of a sudden.

Notable is that very few leaders seem to realise that in order to successfully foster a safe and inclusive environment, there needs to be repetitive talk, instead of mentioning it just once (Kang, 2016). Only a few leaders recognise the importance of repetition, saying *“responsibility of safety creation is something we should be constantly be aware of and should always be on our radar. (...) I think we need to learn as an organisation and in my role, how we can prevent the pressure cooker effect and make sure we get those signals in an earlier stage”* (141). With this statement, the leader expresses both organisational responsibility as well as their own, which shows reflection on their role in inclusion. Another example given by an interviewee is that they think it is important to keep repeating that team members should speak English in a team with one or more non-Dutch speaking employees. Even though said interviewees have to address it multiple times in both real-life situations as well as online, they recognise the importance of doing so, which shows that they are knowledgeable and reflective on their behaviours to foster inclusion (130). Most leaders do voice that they repeatedly tell team

members to feel free to voice their opinions or to come to the manager in case of any issues, but specific D&I related topics do not seem to be on the table that often in the teams of the interviewees.

Other interviewees do not actively participate in pushing the inclusion agenda onwards. Most of them feel that they are obliged to do so and lack intrinsic motivation. They might introduce a new policy when it is implemented in the organisation and brought to them from higher management, but they do not bring up the topic if not absolutely necessary. For example, one leader mentions an employee not being aware of the interchangeable holiday policy. The reason they provided was that the policy was not discussed often in the team, “*because the team is still 60% Western*” (138), but that should not be an excuse. It shows lack of reflection on the impact they have. There are a few interviewees who do not see it as their job to foster inclusion in their teams. They say that it should not be emphasised because it should come naturally or that they do not see any reason as they see the organisation and team as inclusive already, failing to realise that not everyone’s experiences are the same. Others say that there is no momentum for D&I because promoting is output focused and based on qualifications, and therefore inclusion is not a relevant topic as that would mean that everyone gets equal opportunities (131) or that if you’re a ‘good’ manager, that there is no need to focus on inclusion because you would value all your people equally and cultural differences should not be of importance, thus ignoring any possible biases leaders have towards others.

Thus, leaders seem to be selective in which D&I issues and policies they discuss in their teams. This is dependent on how important D&I is deemed by the leaders and if they are motivated to be active in contributing to organisational change. In practice, this confirms the importance of the role of the leader in implementing D&I to lower levels, meaning that teams who do not have a manager active in D&I might not be aware of certain policies for example. For the organisation, this means that unwilling leaders may be a bottleneck for creating and fostering an inclusive culture.

4.2.2.2. Creating a safe environment

Creating group safety

Most leaders acknowledge that an important part of ensuring safety within a group or team is to make sure that there is a culture of trustworthiness, comfortableness and openness and that this means that the leader should spend time on making sure everybody feels safe. These statements are supported by existing literature (Randel et al., 2018; Korkmaz et al.,

2022). Leaders acknowledge that it takes a lot of effort and time to ensure employees feeling safe. Some leaders show reflection on possible lack of safety and think about how they can improve that. A few leaders have mentioned that they want to create an environment in which their team members will speak up for others and be active bystanders in case something happens (119), Previous studies suggest that being an active bystander can be beneficial for fostering an inclusive culture (Poteat & Vecho, 2016). The fact that these leaders recognise this, shows understanding of how a safe environment can be created and how other organisational members can contribute to inclusion. However, interviewees do not seem to reflect highly on whether they are doing enough to create a safe environment. For example, they were not able to share examples on how they actively encourage team members be active bystanders. Whilst one leader did reflect on steps taken to change an existing “*toxic culture*” (107) by saying they spent time and effort getting to know team members and actively asking for feelings, most leaders lack reflection on what actions they can take to actually create and foster safety. The actions mentioned do not go much further than asking employees in one-on-one meetings why they do not feel comfortable sharing things in a group or mentioning that people should feel free to express their feelings and concerns.

When asked what the leaders’ role is in contributing to a safe environment, one answered: “*My role is pretty simple, and that is that I need to get the best out of my people*” (125). Although acknowledging that they play a part, calling their role ‘simple’ indicates that is seen as an easy task, thus ignoring the sensitivity of the issue. Another leader is more reflective, saying “*I need to create a stable, safe environment for everybody. That's my role within inclusiveness*” (131) and thereby acknowledges that leaders play a big part in creating and fostering inclusion. Generally speaking, most interviewees do realise that they play an important part in creating a safe environment and its importance for inclusion, but fail to name examples and lack reflection on how they can change their behaviours to improve safety.

Safety of diversity groups

Regarding situations of harassment, majority of leaders said they did not experience any situations in recent years or during their time being a manager at TeleConnect. They indicate that there is a strong team-feeling and various managers state that everybody is comfortable to share their feelings and opinions. Interviewees generally do not realise that there can always be underlying issues or team members that may not feel entirely comfortable to be themselves or to voice all their feelings and opinions, which leaders seem to lack reflection on. One example

of this regards people's sexuality. LGBTQ+ people often hide their sexuality in the workplace for various reasons, one of them being that they fear to face discrimination (Bell et al., 2011). One leader says "*I have no LGBT people in my team*" (132). Another leader says "*I actually never ask people, so I don't even know for everybody. That's something that either shows itself or doesn't*" (119). The question remains if there are any people that feel unsafe to come out or to express themselves, as leaders do not say to be aware of this. The latter leader set example in reflecting on their role in this, saying: "*I think I shouldn't ask. As a manager, I just should make sure that there is this atmosphere where if somebody wants to tell, they can be open about it*" (119). However, a few interviewees state that sexual orientation has no influence on how work is executed, and is therefore not of importance. Generally, among leaders there seems to be lack of reflection on their role and the impact of having a diverse sexuality in a corporate environment. Furthermore, some leaders do not recognise that although people do not purposively exclude others, some organisational members can still feel excluded. Majority of interviewees seem to think that as long as someone's intentions are right, there should be no harm. One leader, being a person of colour, highlights that people sometimes make comments that feel discriminating towards them, even if the person making the comment has no intent to be racist (133). The leader in question is used to hearing phrases like '*I can't be racist because I have friends of colour*' or people defending Black Pete by saying it is part of Dutch tradition. Such microaggressions can be very harmful and can lead to people not feeling included (Wasserman, 2013). Only a handful of interviewees recognise the impact of these microaggressions. Other interviewees may add to the problem, as they voice phrases similar to saying that it is the intention that matters. Additionally, recently rising social movements like Black Lives Matter and MeToo have emphasised the threats and lack of opportunities that people from certain groups might face in society and also especially within an organisational context (Deggans, 2018; Birchall, 2020). Some participants recognise this and also recognise that it may be especially challenging in a company that has multiple male-dominated departments: "*If you talk about inclusion, MeToo is a special kind of domain, which is very difficult. Just look at technology. The average member is over 45, male and white. For the few women that are working there... It must be very difficult. Because you're fully surrounded by a male society*" (119). As this quote comes from a man that works within that male environment, it shows reflective skills and being able to imagine what someone else's, in this case women's, perspective might be. Whereas most leaders see the importance of thinking about how these movements impact the workplace, a handful of interviewees do not recognise the connection of said movements to contributing to the discussion of inclusion and creating (psychological)

safety. Not realising this and seeing these movements as a separate topic that is outside of the inclusion discussion, shows their limited understanding of how people from diverse or minority backgrounds may have reasons to feel unsafe. Their limited understanding hinders them to reflect on how they can prevent employees from feeling unsafe and may limit their ability to perform inclusive leadership.

Concluding, examples mentioned show that even though there is willingness, there is lack of awareness and knowledge amongst leaders on how important it is to create a safe environment especially for people from marginalised groups and how they say they enact suitable actions to do so.

4.2.2.3. *Inappropriate jokes*

Another aspect of creating belongingness and ensuring psychological safety is to address possibly inappropriate jokes and behaviour. Generally, leaders voice that there is an increasing awareness regarding making jokes and possibly inappropriate comments at the office. Reflecting on recent history, one leader said “*forty years ago, it wasn't a problem to make sexual related jokes. That has changed. You also see that within the group, the jokes they make with each other are less provocative than they were ten years ago*” (131). However, multiple leaders also mentioned examples of jokes being made regarding the news of the cases of alleged sexual harassment in The Voice of Holland³ (134). This shows that casually joking around the office is still in place and also regards topics that are sensitive to some groups. Other examples mentioned include male dominated departments still having a culture in place of making jokes towards women.

Most leaders recognise their role in managing jokes in the work environment. Various leaders talk about stepping in immediately when people make jokes around a serious topic (125), that age-old company jokes such as “*the CEO flirted with the personal assistant at the Christmas Party (example)*” (138) should be eliminated and that reacting firmly when inappropriate situations are happening is the only way to get rid of this behaviour (126). Reflection was shown by one leader saying they realise that if you, as a leader, use humour to soften things it can be “*destructive*” (119). Another leader adds to this topic by saying that they actively try to create awareness that some jokes can be harmful to others (120). The leader in this example reflects on how they address this to the team, saying that they purposely spread

³ The Voice of Holland came under fire as news emerged that several men in powerful positions had allegedly abused their position to take advantage of young women by committing sexual misconduct. At the time that the interviews took place, this was a current news topic and it highlighted women feeling unsafe in corporate environments as well (Algemeen Dagblad, 2022).

awareness instead of harshly telling people off, because they believe that this prevents resistance and therefore leads to a change in mindset of those who may not be sensitive towards others when making jokes (126). This shows that some leaders reflect on the impact of their actions and think of which actions are most suitable to reach D&I goals. However, not all interviewees show this level of reflection as stepping in and telling people off seems to be dependent on the situation. In these situations, the leader is always the judge of what is deemed inappropriate. One manager said: *“there were some Voice of Holland related jokes. But the question is, is that sexual harassment? Is it appropriate? The jokes that I heard within my team, if you can consider it as a joke, they were acceptable, in my opinion. They didn't cross the line”* (125). In this case, the leader in this example was a middle-aged man, who decides what is an appropriate joke regarding sexual harassment of young women. His perspective may be a barrier to decide what is appropriate, as they do not know how other people feel about said jokes. And deciding whether a joke is appropriate is a very sensitive topic.

Concluding, most interviewees agree that joking around the office is not contributory to creating safety. However, there is a dichotomy in opinions regarding the appropriateness of making jokes. Some leaders think that making jokes should be eliminated to prevent people being offended, whereas others think that joking should still be possible.

4.2.2.4. Accommodating to different needs

Not recognising the different needs that people from diverse identity groups may have and not acknowledging that certain groups may need different treatment than others, can contribute to existing inequality regimes in the organisation (Randel et al., 2018; Acker, 2006). While multiple leaders do understand the concept of inclusion, some do not acknowledge that differences can actually be used to their advantage or that some people may need different treatment because of their background or position. One leader stated *“inclusion for me means that anybody, regardless of age, background, beliefs, religion, gender, is welcome and we treat everybody with respect and leave them with their beliefs on their own. The way they live their life should be of no meaning for us. If they really feel connected to our values and then all the other stuff is irrelevant”* (116). Another leader stated *“not excluding anybody means no preferences for non-important things, meaning the only important thing is that people do their work and how they do their work. What they feel is important, but not for their work. It's important how they behave, not who they are. If you got someone in the team who says "I'm different", then there is a problem immediately. We all work for the same goals, so "I'm*

different" cannot be. That's a difficulty" (131). These statements show that some leader struggle to recognise uniqueness amongst the employees in their teams. Treating people equally does not always mean that people need to be treated in the exact same manner. Some people may need more guidance or support than others, and some people may need more time and attention for various reasons, which these leaders seem to lack reflection on.

Multiple interviewees occasionally struggle to accommodate to the needs of diversity groups. For instance, when people are fasting during Ramadan, one leader mentioned that they cannot just fully accommodate to the employee's circumstances during this period. They mentioned: *"I had discussions on how much can you expect from them while they're not eating the entire day. I don't expect a performance dip. You've got leave hours. If you cannot work, you take leave hours. After King's Day, I'm also taking day off"* (124). Although it may be fair to expect an employee to deliver their work on the hours they are paid for, there does not seem to be room for negotiation, which shows that the leader shows little action to accommodate to people from diverse backgrounds in this instance and little reflection on how their actions might impact the employee. Yet, another leader voices more inclusive opinions, saying: *"it should be on a deeper level. It's about managers offering flexibility in working hours for being able to go to the mosque during Ramadan. Having the flexibility as a leader to basically accommodate to different culture"* (121), which shows that the leader is aware of implementing more thorough actions to foster inclusion and willing to do so. Another great example of inclusive leadership is one leader who takes a step further, saying *"with the start of Ramadan, I send every team member participating a message of good luck. At the end, I send 'may your praises be heard'. It's not my culture, but I know what is important for them, so I share it with them"* (133). This leader adds on that doing such acts, will lead to a safer team environment and also eventually to better organisational performance, which shows awareness and reflection on which actions are necessary to foster inclusion.

Similar issues arise regarding holiday hours. The organisation recently implemented a policy for interchangeable holiday days, which enables employees to take days off that are important to them, such as national or religious holidays. Nearly all interviewees think highly positively of this policy and think it's a good effort to meet the needs of the diverse workforce. However, the implementation of the interchangeable holiday still has room for improvement. One leader from a department with strict deadlines that are set on certain days of the year, says they want to be more flexible regarding the interchangeable holidays, but they say they do not have the leverage to do so: *"I want to be, but I cannot. During the Christmas and New Year, if it's very busy, we have to work. There is no space. No, you chose the wrong profession then, if*

you don't want to be restricted by the months and closing blocks for days off" (122). Currently, leaders do not seem to accommodate and manage to make sure that everybody gets their preferred days off within the limitations that the job offers, as they are not actively involved in holidays that are important to their team members and do not see alternative solutions and take action accordingly. They seem to approve leave requests only if they come in, but they do not further engage with the employees on a more personal level regarding this topic.

Another example of lack of accommodating to different needs is that one of the managers mentions that they do not put any extra attention to their interactions with people from minority groups, saying *"I am really interested in his story, but I don't make it any special for him"* (134). Another interviewee explicitly fails to recognise that some people may need different treatment and thereby ignores that people from minority groups have historically and currently still not always been treated equally to people from the in-group, stating: *"So you're a minority, so I have to push you more? No. You get the same treatment. You have the same possibilities. The world is for you is exactly the same as for all those white men of middle age"* (109). Data collected in the organisation shows that people from minorities or female employees experience that they do not have the same opportunities for promotion. The leader's statement shows lack of awareness of privilege. In essence, the situations mentioned in these examples do not have to cause for any issues, but when people from minority groups may have special needs to feel safe within an organisation, they maybe do need extra attention to ensure feelings of belongingness.

Summarising, accommodating to needs of people from diversity or minority groups may sometimes take some extra attention or flexibility, which not all leaders are offering or see the importance of. There is room for improvement to educate leaders on the importance and to provide tools that make it approachable to accommodate to every individual's needs. Whilst recognising that in a corporate environment with an existing culture it may be hard to implement inclusive leadership actions at team level, majority of leaders who do not accommodate to needs of diversity groups also lack reflection on how the matter can be improved.

4.2.2.5. Valuing diverse perspectives and shared decision-making

Some leaders explicitly mention the importance of encouraging to share ideas because getting more perspectives is beneficial for the organisational output. A multitude of leaders mention that people of different genders, ages, ethnicities or cultural background often look differently at the world and therefore have different values to bring. Actions that interviewees

undertake include giving subordinates freedom and responsibility on project level (132, 140) and asking subordinates for their opinion before dictating the leader's own to get to better solutions (122). Another leader mentions including others in decision-making when being doubtful (107). In essence that is a good thing, but the leader did not mention if being doubtful is a condition for including others, which it should not be when aiming to be fully inclusive. Some leaders show reflection on how they can improve in shared decision-making. Examples include realising that it is sometimes better to discuss ideas in a smaller group (132) and leading by example by openly sharing ideas themselves (116). There's also a balance to maintain regarding the employees' comfort zone. On the one hand, leaders want to encourage people to share their ideas and opinions and to speak up during team meetings, which may need some introverted people to step out of their comfort zone. While one leader says "*I want to get people a bit out of their comfort zone and start moving*" (119), another one says "*for me, it's not necessary that they speak out loud when they don't feel comfortable because it's not their thing*" (126). However, the latter leader meets employees in the middle by addressing sharing ideas in one-on-one meetings, and offering to present the introverted employees' ideas in the next team meeting or letting a colleague present. By doing that, they show appreciation for the employees' comfort zone without pushing them, whilst giving the possibility to be involved in decision-making. This is a great example of inclusive leadership and shows that this leader is aware of what actions they can take to include employees. Another issue brought forward by a few participants is that shared decision-making is often passed over in situation in which decisions need to be made urgently. The interviewees who mention this show reflection on past situations in which this has happened, and shows awareness of how external factors might impact shared decision-making.

Summarising, with shared decision-making said to be valued by most leaders, from only listening to their perspective it's hard to judge whether all opinions are taken into account or whether the leader has any unconscious biases which may result them in being more likely to take input of people similar to them into consideration more often than those of people who are not as similar to them. Examples of shared decision-making mentioned by leaders are more of less part of general 'good leadership', and they do not emphasise on making sure there is shared decision-making specifically amongst people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. When addressing this, multiple interviewees mention that this is hard to implement without leaving anyone out. Interviewees do not want to actively focus on asking opinions from people of minority groups, as this feels like they are treating them differently from the rest. It is seen

as a sensitive topic, which on the one hand can be seen as lack of awareness and education but on the other hand as reflection on the sensitivity of addressing people from marginalised groups.

Concluding, nearly all leaders show actions such as demonstrating openness towards employees, creating groups safety and contributing to employees' learning and development. However, they seem to be selective in which dimensions of diversity they pay attention to and which policies they discuss and implement in their teams. This is in line with the theory that leaders play a crucial role in passing D&I initiatives down to team level. All though most leaders are in favour of operating in an inclusive environment, there is lack of knowledge amongst leaders on how it is especially important to create safety for people from minority groups. The extra attention needed to accommodate to individual needs or needs of people from diversity groups is not always offered. Additionally, leaders voice that they lack tools and guidance to implement actions. Similarly, whilst shared-decision making is being valued as an important practice within teams, there is lack of emphasis on opinions and perspectives specifically from people of diverse backgrounds.

4.3. Range of pro-diversity beliefs, actions and reflection

With the aim of providing insights into how leaders reflect on inclusive leadership behaviours, the range of pro-diversity beliefs and enactment of behaviour is described as a range from low to high level of beliefs and actions. Reason for this is that pro-diversity beliefs and supporting organisational efforts provide the basis of performing inclusive leadership, and thus performing actions in support of creating more inclusion and enacting inclusive leadership. The level of said beliefs and actions is of influence on the level of reflection that leaders show.

As mentioned before, the leaders can be divided into two groups regarding their pro-diversity beliefs. The first being positive about diversity and able to name benefits and the second group being more neutral towards diversity and believes that it should come naturally. Similarly, when it comes to supporting organisational efforts on D&I, about half of the interviewees are positive about the efforts and a few are critical and believe that the topic should get more attention. On the other hand, a handful of leaders believe TeleConnect is overdoing D&I and they are resistant to the D&I related changes the organisation wants to commit to. Generally, the leaders with higher pro-diversity beliefs are also more supportive of organisational efforts.

4.3.1. *Range of inclusive leadership actions among participants*

When it comes to the actions that leaders say they take that are in line with inclusive leadership behaviours as defined in literature (Randel et al., 2018; Korkmaz et al., 2022), the leaders can be divided in three groups. The first group being very positive about the changes to be made and willing to commit themselves to playing a part in bringing D&I efforts down to their teams and the lower levels of the organisation. They are motivated to be active in implementing D&I initiatives in their teams. However, when it comes to actual actions they are only able to name a few examples, or they are able to voice what end goals they want to reach, but failing to name exact actions needed to get to those goals. The main reason they provide for this is that they lack the tools and guidance to enact inclusive leadership. They are expected to perform without being educated or trained. This groups consists of about a third interviewees. The second group is not as actively motivated to become a front runner but they are willing to perform inclusive leadership because they perceive the actions as being part of a good leader, without the emphasis or focus on diversity specifically. A few leaders stand out because they seem to be willing to perform inclusive leadership actions and seem to have pro-diversity beliefs, but they see some D&I initiatives as extreme or unnecessary. One example is a leader who is positive about organisational efforts for D&I and thinks it is important that everyone in the organisation is comfortable and included, but thinks that gender neutral toilets are unnecessary and vouches to focus on “*the important stuff*” (109). It shows that some leaders are selective in which dimensions of diversity and which policies they find important or useful and therefore in which policies they support or promote to lower levels. Like the first group, the actions they perform are either more in line with general good leadership and are not specifically focused on D&I related issues due to lack of guidance, support and education. This groups consists of about half of the interviewees. Noteworthy is that some of the four D&I ambassadors included in the study also seemed to be selective in which dimensions they deemed important, which shows that although they may be more knowledgeable on the topic and supportive of the D&I efforts, they also have areas that they could be educated on. The third group is least active in performing inclusive leadership actions. These are leaders that are mostly not as enthusiastic about the focus on D&I in the organisation, with some even saying that the organisation is overdoing it. Some of them do not see the difference between diversity and inclusion. They think that diversity and inclusion should come naturally and that just showing respect towards your team members and colleagues is sufficient to foster a safe and inclusive environment, which means that they do not initiate any extra action on specifically performing inclusive leadership behaviours. This groups consists of about a fifth of the interviewees.

4.3.2. Range of reflection of inclusive leadership actions among participants

Regarding the level of reflection on both organisational practices on inclusion as well as on the leaders' own inclusive leadership behaviours, about ten of the participants show high reflection on their actions by explicitly mentioning why and how they try to create and foster inclusion. About eleven leaders could be classified as being medium reflective. The remaining six were not as reflective on both organisational efforts as themselves. Notable are the differences amongst the various leadership characteristics groups regarding their level of reflection. Most evident in this study was the difference of matter of reflection amongst managers from different leadership levels within the organisation. It is notable that all executive committee members and leadership team members have high or medium to high level of reflection. Following, of the senior managers two thirds have medium/high to high level of reflection and a third has low/medium to medium levels of reflection. In the category 'others', all three participants show low reflection on inclusive actions. Remarkable is that of the D&I ambassadors, who are all in the higher levels of leadership, only two of them show high reflective skills and the other two show medium reflection. Looking at gender, the nine women spoken to all show medium to high level of reflection. Of the eighteen men spoken to, twelve of them also show medium to high level of reflection and six of them show low or low/medium level of reflection. Regarding age, the group of people younger than 40 years old had four out of five with medium/high to high level of reflection. For the other age groups, it was more distributed.

To conclude, when looking at the range of pro-diversity beliefs, actions and reflection amongst leaders it can be said that the higher the pro-diversity beliefs are, the more actions are performed and the higher the level of reflection is. With a few exceptions, this seems to be parallel to the level of leadership, meaning that interviewees in higher management positions tend to be more active in inclusive leadership behaviours and also show more reflection.

5. Conclusion and discussion

This chapter provides a discussion for findings of the study. In the first section, the conclusions of the findings of this study will be reported. Next, the contribution of this study to theory will be elaborated on, followed by a reflection on the research and its limitations. Lastly, directions for future research will be provided, along practical implications for the organisation the study was conducted at.

5.1. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the findings of this study, the research question “*How do leaders reflect on their inclusive leadership behaviours?*” will be answered in this section.

To start, when leaders are asked to give a definition of inclusion, answers range from a very narrow and basic definition to broader definitions. However, almost no one was able to give a fully comprehensive definition. Roughly eight out of twenty-seven managers have an idea of inclusive leadership that corresponds fully or partially with the literature. Most of the leaders spoken to say they possess pro-diversity beliefs and voice to be positive about the developments of D&I conducted in the organisation. However, a small number of leaders do not recognise the difference between diversity and inclusion or deem certain inclusion practices and policies as unnecessary. They believe diversity and inclusion should come naturally. In order for the organisation to move forward with their D&I ambitions, establishing consensus on the definitions amongst leaders will benefit improvement in understanding of inclusive leadership.

Regarding the actions that leaders perform that are in line with inclusive leadership, one of the main issues is that a number of leaders perceive fostering inclusion as giving everybody equal treatment. Not recognising the different needs that people from diverse identity groups may have and not acknowledging that certain groups may need different treatment than others, can contribute to existing inequality regimes in the organisation. Additionally, some leaders do not acknowledge that employees from diverse social identity groups may be more prone to feeling unsafe than employees that are not from marginalised groups. This includes people of colour, women, LGBTQ+ people, people with various religions or disabled people. For example, some interviewees deem sexual orientation as not work-related or think that gender neutral toilets should not be part of the necessary steps to make the organisation more inclusive. Similarly, employees of colour can perceive remarks as racist, discriminating or insulting, of which some organisational members say that as long as the intention is right, it should do no

harm. In this case, as the leaders perception is that there is no need to intervene in these possibly excluding situations, there is absence of reflection on how their actions as a leader can have impact in creating a safer environment. Whereas some leaders do take responsibility in trying to be an inclusive leader and pushing the message from the top of the organisation onwards, many interviewees seem to be selective in which policies and initiatives they discuss or implement. Furthermore, there seems to be a disconnect between what leaders believe they should do and which actions they actually initiate. Most leaders voice that they believe everyone should have feelings of belongingness and valued uniqueness, but most fail to name examples of initiatives implemented to promote and ensure this. Their actions are not as widespread as rhetoric suggests. It is evident that some leaders lack knowledge and awareness regarding D&I topics and inclusive leadership and that at this moment, the leaders do not experience enough support from the organisation to show the demanded behaviour and perform the actions needed. When it comes to reflecting on the inclusive leadership behaviours, only a handful of interviewees is able to explain why they take certain actions and how they approach situations with detail for diversity groups. Part of the leaders do tell to be aware of their role and position as a leader in the scope of creating inclusion and are willing to put in effort. Others, however, are more reluctant about the part they play in that. They lack reflection on their behaviours, hiding behind that inclusion should come naturally and that it is therefore not given much thought. The leaders whose pro-diversity beliefs are not that strong fail to reflect on behaviours in reference to inclusion as they do not perceive these behaviours as necessary to focus on. Next, not all leaders are aware of the influence of privileges or biases, which could be harmful when leading diverse teams. Not being aware of privilege and biases obstructs leaders from being able to reflect on the impact of their behaviours or the sensitivity in approach that some actions may need. However, a group of leaders who is more motivated about D&I shows active thinking about their biases and privilege and translates it to the actions they take. They admit to need more education on how to handle biases and are willing to learn. Concluding, only a small number of leaders show examples of inclusive leadership through their actions and reflect on why they undertake certain actions.

Regarding implementing D&I practices and initiatives in the organisation through inclusive leadership, the problem identified is twofold: the first group of leaders does not see importance of doing these organisational efforts and believes diversity and inclusion should come naturally, meaning that they are highly selective in which D&I topics they discuss in their teams and how much time and effort they take to perform inclusive leadership. Besides education, knowledge and awareness of D&I they also lack motivation. The second group is

supportive of D&I efforts and is motivated to perform inclusive leadership but is lacking tools, education and guidance. They are expected to show actions that they are not familiar with. The potential for inclusive leaders is high in the latter group and most of them are willing to learn and improve. However, the leaders who are not that supportive of D&I efforts of the organisation are not as willing to learn, which can be a serious bottleneck for the organisation when implementing inclusion in the lower levels of the organisation. Additionally, there is lack in taking action on certain dimensions of diversity and lack of reflection amongst the senior leaders who are ambassadors of D&I and involved in related developments, as assigned by the organisation. Despite the efforts to have these people be front runners, they could also benefit from education and guidance on how to lead D&I efforts.

Summarising, few leaders are able to explain the actions taken to reach D&I goals and create and foster inclusion. Leaders mention the reason for this to be lack of education and guidance and organisational support. Although attempts of inclusive actions and reflection upon actions are shown to a certain amount, the demands that the organisation has in terms of inclusive leadership cannot be satisfied at this point as the leaders are not trained in these behaviours. On the other hand, the fact that the leaders mention that they need more education and guidance in order to perform inclusive leadership could also be seen as a way to shuffle off responsibility to take action themselves. Majority of leaders do not reflect on their responsibility and their own role in fostering inclusion. In an ever-changing world and industry, demands for leadership can change, and especially experienced senior leaders can be expected to adapt to these changes. Updating the demands on leaders will ask for the organisation to track the leaders' progress and making it part of leadership development and performance evaluation. Again, here we also see a twofold in the leaders' perspectives. On the one hand, there are leaders who do not deem inclusive leadership actions to be crucial and lack reflection on their actions and responsibility. They are not willing to spend time on educating and developing themselves in this field, meaning they do not take responsibility. Organisation could benefit from holding these people accountable in the needed development in the field of inclusive leadership. On the other hand, there is a group of leaders who do deem inclusive leadership important and who are willing to learn, already showing reflection on their own behaviours. The organisation could benefit from providing the right tools to these leaders to move forward.

5.2. Contribution to theory

Given that research on the perceptions of managers on inclusive leadership is scarce (Castilla, 2011), this study contributes to existing theory by providing insights of leaders of the top management layers of an organisation. Their perspective is important, as they are seen as key agents in translating inclusive leadership behaviours into day-to-day practices. Gaining insights through rich quotations is filling a gap in already existing literature on the topic. Following the inclusive leadership behaviours as identified by Korkmaz et al. (2022), this study shows to what extent leaders say they enact these behaviours. The study's findings confirm the importance of the role of leaders in creating an inclusive environment, as the interviews have highlighted that leaders are selective in the policies they execute, which makes them a bottleneck for bringing inclusion down to lower levels and to all employees.

Second, this study provides new insights into the level of reflection that leaders have regarding their own inclusive leadership behaviours, which has not been studied elaborately before (Rothstein & Burke, 2010; Church et al., 2014; Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012). The study fills a gap in literature by describing how leaders are aware of their privileges and biases and how they reflect on their inclusive leadership behaviours. The leaders' pro-diversity beliefs and support of organisational efforts are also closely linked to their level of reflection, meaning that leaders who do not think that D&I should get as much focus and attention, also do not give much thought to the way they perform leadership for diversity groups. Moreover, leaders lack knowledge and awareness of D&I to reflect on actions they need to perform in order to become inclusive leaders.

Third, this study sheds lights on the wishes and demands of leaders that need to be fulfilled in order to enact inclusive leadership. Whereas existing literature has shed light on the importance of leaders to support organisational efforts for inclusion, be willing to learn and be open to organisational change (Randel et al., 2018; Korkmaz et al., 2022), little can be found on the support that managers need to receive from the top of the organisation in order to successfully implement inclusive leadership behaviours and practices. This study has shown that leaders who are motivated to bring the organisation forward in terms of D&I often report they lack education, guidance and tools.

5.3. Limitations

Regarding the method of data collection, it is important to keep in mind the possible drawbacks of the interviews. Online interviews are seen as a less effective method of data

collection compared to face-to-face interviews, due to the lack of subtle non-verbal communication, ethical problems or feeling uncomfortable or embarrassed being filmed (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). These drawbacks can be overcome by creating a safe and comforting, but they were kept in mind and tackled when necessary. Second, the time limit of the interviews and the duration of the total study is relatively short to discuss all aspects of inclusive leadership. Due to the duration of the study, it is also not possible to detect how perceptions of inclusive leadership may progress and adapt over time. Furthermore, with any method of qualitative research there are limitations in analysing the data. Multiple interpretations can be given to the transcribed data and the identified themes. Biases of the researcher may have influenced the interpretations. Thus, reflexivity of the researcher is of crucial importance. Additionally, in performing the template analysis, there is also a risk of trying to fit the answers in to the initial theoretical framework selected to build the interview questions on, possibly obstructing novel or hidden meanings to be found (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Therefore coding was done inductively and only after completing the final coding tree compared to the initial coding tree. Next, a possible barrier for the accurate interpretation of the meanings given to inclusive leadership by the participants is that the study was conducted in English, which is not the primary language for both participants and researcher. Given the novelty of certain inclusive leadership topics and the sensitivity of voicing opinions on certain topics regarding minority groups, not being able to explain yourself in your own language could limit the words they can give to voice their opinions.

Another limitation to this study is the potential of leaders giving socially desirable answers. With aim to prevent this, before the interview took place it was clearly stated that there are no right or wrong answers and that if they do not feel comfortable answering a question, they are free to skip it. Confidentiality and anonymity were also ensured in both e-mails sent before the interview, by signing a consent form and by mentioning it in person before commencing the interview. However, as leaders were asked questions regarding their own actions and behaviours and they were asked to talk about their strengths and weaknesses, it is still a topic that is sensitive to give socially desirable answers or giving answers to make themselves look good and to not always admit to making mistakes or showing insecurities. To minimise the impact of social desirability bias, questions were asked in a neutral manner to aim to get truthful answers. Also, when participants asked for the purpose of the study, the answer was kept rather vague by saying the goal is “to give the organisation insights into D&I topics and recommendations on D&I development”, to not make it seem like participants would be judged or evaluated based on the answers they would give.

Last, my own assumptions and biases could have influenced the reporting of the outcomes of this study. I am well aware that I, as a young woman, have a certain reference frame when it comes to this subject. I have been interested in equality and inclusion in society for a few years and read a lot about it, but mainly from a feminist and leftist perspective. Being involved in the LGBTQ+ community as well and following activists on social media who talk about the topic of inclusion, I am very aware of my perspective that has been influenced by certain voices in said communities. Additionally, I do not have any prior experience with inclusion practices in a corporate environment. Being well aware of my reference frame, throughout the interviews I actively tried to ask open questions and asking follow up questions to understand the opinions of the participants, without trying to fill in their thoughts. A research diary was also kept to keep track of this process and to reflect on whether my opinions were biases or not. Keeping notes on my thoughts helped me to become more aware of my biases and to reflect upon them. By linking findings to theory and trying to keep away any presumptions I might have about certain participants. I have learned that I can sometimes be quick in drafting an image of someone and making presumptions on what their opinions might be, based on elements of their identity. This can regard elements of religion, nationality, age, gender, etc. Talking to the varied range of participants I was sometimes surprised by their opinions.

5.4. Directions for future research

This study only takes the perceptions of leaders into account. Although it is fruitful for gaining understanding on their viewpoints, it does not guarantee accurate understanding of the experiences of inclusive leadership in the organisation amongst employees. Talking to employees on how the leaders' actions are perceived and if this is in line with how the leaders describe it, can give insights into the effect of the action the leaders say they enact. Keeping in mind that there can be a discrepancy between "*what leaders 'say' versus what leaders 'do'*" (Mor Barak, 2021, p. 6), conducting a more elaborate study by including employees' perspectives would enable better understanding on the relationship between leaders and team members and would give a more rounded picture of inclusive leadership in the organisation.

Second, for this research only a portion of leaders in the organisation were interviewed. Given that opinions towards inclusive leadership can vary massively per person, it is interesting to interview more leaders on this topic to gain even better understanding of everything going on in the organisation. Despite the final sample being representative of the total leadership population, it does not include many leaders from diversity groups. Including them can provide more insights and improved understanding of inclusive leadership actions amongst leaders that

come from a diverse background themselves, as they can shed different light on how they reflect on inclusive leadership behaviours and the general status of D&I in the organisation.

Last, as inclusive leadership is still a relatively novel theme in academic studies, not much has been written about education, guidance and support tools for leaders to perform inclusive leadership. As the wish for education and support emerged from the data of this study, it is advised to conduct research on what exactly their wishes and needs are and how this can be implemented in the organisation. Another interesting point to focus on is the possible difference between needs for education amongst leaders from minority or diversity groups and leaders from the majority group, as they are likely to have different perspectives.

5.5. Practical implications and recommendations

Gained insights of leaders' perspective on D&I initiatives, inclusive leadership practices and level of reflection amongst leaders can help the organisation in shaping policies and communication regarding diversity and inclusion. These recommendations are aimed at the study the organisational was conducted at, but can also be transferred to other organisations. First, there needs to be focus on education. This includes education on a starter level, meaning spreading awareness of the importance of D&I, why leaders should pay attention to it and on the differentiation between diversity and inclusion. Next to that, trainings should be provided for leaders who are ready to implement new inclusive practices, but lack guidelines and education to do so. Trainings should be provided for new managers entering the organisation, existing leaders and refreshment courses can also be provided. In order for leaders to be more reflective on their behaviours, their knowledge needs to be improved. Second, the organisation should hold leaders accountable for their inclusive leadership actions by including it in the performance evaluation system. If good leadership is considered to be inclusive leadership, then this should be set as the new standard that leaders will have to adapt to. Inclusive leadership should be pushed more to leaders and should be part of performance reviews. Third, the leaders could benefit from intervision and peer-coaching to get the less motivated managers on board. Leaders can exchange ideas and make fostering inclusion more approachable by sharing examples and experiences. An inclusive culture and an inclusive leadership style are not implemented in one day and will need multiple revisions. Leaders will continue to be confronted with situations in which they need to find a way to approach employees in an inclusive matter. Sharing these experiences can help others. The fourth recommendation is to ensure clear and frequent communication regarding the initiatives the organisation is taking in the field of diversity and inclusion. This includes being transparent regarding the problems that

exist within the organisation and identifying common goals and visions for D&I, which seem to be lacking among both leaders and employees. Essential is to put emphasis on the important role the managers play in fostering inclusion and that it is not an “HR project”. Conversations on inclusion should be held at all levels of the organisation and not just at the top layers, as it currently seems to be. To include everyone in the conversation, the D&I ambassadors and HR team should actively ask employees to voice their concerns on the topic. By doing this, the organisation can aim to find out what is going on in different departments and how employees experience inclusive leadership.

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Appendix 1. Interview guide

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study on Inclusive Leadership at TeleConnect. My name is Dianne Ammerlaan and I am currently graduating in the Masters of Business Administration at Radboud University. My area of specialisation is Gender Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in Management. I have been an intern at the Corporate Communications department for the past six months.

We are a team of two students (including my course mate, Poonam), who are co-conducting this study. The aim of our master's thesis is to assess how leaders, like yourself, perceive your behaviours as being facilitative of inclusion in a work scenario that is very diverse. The findings of the study will be used to provide TeleConnect an insight into leadership perception of what it takes to be an inclusive leader and provide recommendations for enhanced inclusive practices within the organisation.

The interview consists of open questions. Please feel free to share your opinions candidly – there are no right or wrong answers. As you have already read in the consent form, the interview will be recorded. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, feel free to interrupt. In case you have any questions before we commence or after the interview, now is your time to share.

– *begin interview* –

Supporting organisational efforts

1. What does inclusion mean to you?
2. How important is inclusion for TeleConnect? Why?
 - a. What recent developments in society do you feel could have caused the emphasis on diversity and inclusion in TeleConnect?
 - b. What is TeleConnect doing to promote diversity and inclusion and how do you feel about that? Is TeleConnect doing enough to promote inclusion?
3. In the diversity and inclusion roadmap at TeleConnect, how does your role contribute to the company's inclusion ambition?
 - a. What kind of initiatives have you adopted recently to encourage inclusion in your teams or for the organisation on whole? Can you share some specific examples?

- b. Have you reviewed TeleConnect’s D&I survey report? What is your opinion on the findings from D&I survey at TeleConnect? What outcomes stood out to you, the most?

Belongingness

Support Individuals

4. How do you encourage team feeling and feelings of belonging amongst your team members? Any examples?
 - a. Considering the recent news regarding inappropriate behaviour and sexual harassment at workplace do you think TeleConnect spends enough effort in creating a safe environment for people at TeleConnect?
5. How can female employees be encouraged to get to the top leadership positions according to you?
 - a. One of the comments in the D&I survey was that “Women do not grow. And women who do get to higher positions must show a lot of masculine traits”. How would you respond to this? How do you feel about this comment?

Ensure Equity and Justice

6. How do you ensure your team members get a fair treatment and there is no discrimination on basis of group identity such as women, religious minorities, disabled people and LGBTQ+?
 - a. How could your own biases or unconscious biases sometimes effect your decision making with respect to your team people?
 - b. Which policy(ies) at TeleConnect, according to you, serve to protect the rights of groups or biases against them e.g.: LGBTQ+, women, multicultural groups, disabled people?
 - c. How have you dealt with incidents of inappropriate behaviour in your team such as stereotyping, sexist, racist remarks, jokes or bullying in your org/team? What happened? How did you deal with it?
7. “I have seen a lot of capable women leave because the career opportunities usually go to men”. This is a statement from an employee in the D&I survey. What steps have you taken to ensure that female and multicultural employees’ get equal growth opportunities in your team?

8. How do you think more diversity, including gender, ethnic or LGBTQ+ representation, at top management, affects an organisation?

Uniqueness

Encourage shared decision making

9. How do you create an environment where each individual member feels safe to speak out in meetings?
- How much do you keep track of team dynamics in meetings? For example: who gets the most speaking time? Who gets interrupted the most? Whose ideas are being executed?
 - How do you respond to people disagreeing with you in meetings? Do they ever disagree with you or sometimes?
 - How do you encourage different opinions within your team?
 - How do you actively ask team members to speak up and express their feelings?

Showing appreciation

Encourage diverse contributions

10. How diverse is your team in terms of different backgrounds, sexual orientation, disability, gender etc?
- Have you ever pondered upon your team's composition and thought of hiring specifically for more diversity? Why (not)?
 - What value do you see of having a diverse team? What could it bring for you?
11. If you have a diverse team, what do you feel, are the challenges or pitfalls?
- What is important, for a leader, to know or do to manage a diverse team?
12. How do you demonstrate openness to listen to your team members' opinions?

Enable group members to contribute

13. How are you personally grooming/mentoring some of your team members to lead them to a senior career path? Would you describe these/ this individual as being similar as yourself or different? IN what way?
14. Do you understand your team members' personal strengths, weaknesses, and areas for development? How did you develop this understanding and how have you followed up on their needs? Example?

- a. According to the D&I survey at TeleConnect, 34% of Non-Dutch employees feel that they are not free from work on holidays and celebrations that are of importance to them. How do you feel about this? How do you manage your team calendar to record your own team members' special religious holiday needs, birthdays, work anniversaries?

Supporting organisational efforts

15. Have you attended TeleConnect's "Connect with Change" awareness training? What were the key take away points for you from the session?
 - a. Did awareness training result in highlighting possible inequalities or cases of exclusion within your team and organisation? Examples?
16. Do you think awareness trainings are useful in developing knowledge on inclusion and keeping the momentum on driving inclusion?
 - a. What do you think are some specific skills leaders need to develop to promote inclusion?
17. How has TeleConnect been sharing periodic communication on its policy of Inclusion?
 - a. What can the company do to improve transfer of information to leaders?
18. How does the information mechanism on diversity and inclusion work at TeleConnect? Is there anyone in the organisation, you can refer to in case you have questions regarding inclusion at your senior level?
19. How does performance evaluation systems value inclusive leadership at TeleConnect?

Questions relating to D&I survey response

20. How do you feel about some of the findings of the D&I survey relating to providing an equitable and just work environment?
 - a. 1 in 5 multicultural colleagues believe TeleConnect does not make sufficient effort to promote them and 1 in 5 women believe they do not have equal opportunities compared to men.
 - b. 27% of DI survey respondents felt that TeleConnect does not make sufficient effort to recruit employees with non-Western backgrounds, 29% felt that there were not enough efforts to recruit women.
 - c. According to D&I survey, 43% of women from multicultural backgrounds at TeleConnect feel that their managers do not encourage and support them sufficiently

to realize their ambitions. How do you think multicultural women can be supported in career development?

– end of interview –

This was the last question for you. I would like to thank you for sparing your time and sharing your responses. It's much appreciated! Would you like me to add on anything else on to the topic of inclusive leadership at TeleConnect? Anything you feel that was not asked? Your feedback would be valuable to us. In case you have any questions, please feel free to connect with myself, Dianne Ammerlaan (dianne.ammerlaan@teleconnect.nl) or Poonam Sharma (poonam.sharma@teleconnect.nl).

Appendix 2. List of participants

Appendix 2.1. Participants approached

| Participant Code | Nationality | Leadership Group | Gender | Age | Years in org. |
|------------------|-------------|------------------|--------|-------|---------------|
| 100 | Dutch | Other | Man | 35-39 | 5/<10 |
| 101 | Dutch | Other | Man | 45-49 | 20/<25 |
| 102 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 35-39 | 5/<10 |
| 103 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 50-54 | 1/<5 |
| 104 | Non-Dutch | LT | Woman | 55-59 | 20/<25 |
| 105 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 50-54 | 20/<25 |
| 106 | Non-Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 45-49 | 15/<20 |
| 107 | Dutch | Other | Woman | 30-34 | 1/<5 |
| 108 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 35-39 | 10/<15 |
| 109 | Dutch | LT | Woman | 50-54 | 5/<10 |
| 110 | Non-Dutch | LT | Man | 35-39 | <1 |
| 111 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 35-39 | 1/<5 |
| 112 | Dutch | LT | Woman | 40-44 | 15/<20 |
| 113 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 30-34 | 5/<10 |
| 114 | Dutch | LT | Man | 55-59 | 10/<15 |
| 115 | Dutch | Other | Man | 45-49 | 20/<25 |
| 116 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Woman | 50-54 | 5/<10 |
| 117 | Non-Dutch | Senior Manager | Woman | 50-54 | 15/<20 |
| 118 | Dutch | LT | Man | 40-44 | 10/<15 |
| 119 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 50-54 | 5/<10 |
| 120 | Dutch | Other | Man | 45-49 | 5/<10 |
| 121 | Non-Dutch | LT | Man | 45-49 | 20/<25 |
| 122 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Woman | 40-44 | <1 |
| 123 | Dutch | EXCO | Woman | 50-54 | 15/<20 |
| 124 | Dutch | LT | Man | 35-39 | 10/<15 |
| 125 | Dutch | Other | Man | 50-54 | 15/<20 |
| 126 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 45-49 | 1/<5 |
| 127 | Dutch | Other | Woman | 30-34 | 5/<10 |
| 128 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 35-39 | 10/<15 |
| 129 | Non-Dutch | Senior Manager | Woman | 45-49 | 15/<20 |
| 130 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 35-39 | <1 |
| 131 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 55-59 | 1/<5 |
| 132 | Dutch | LT | Woman | 45-49 | 1/<5 |
| 133 | Dutch | LT | Woman | 45-49 | 1/<5 |
| 134 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 45-49 | 5/<10 |
| 135 | Dutch | Other | Man | 50-54 | 15/<20 |

| | | | | | |
|-----|-------|----------------|-------|-------|-------|
| 136 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 25-29 | 1/<5 |
| 137 | Dutch | Other | Woman | 35-39 | 5/<10 |
| 138 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Woman | 45-49 | 1/<5 |
| 139 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 30-34 | 5/<10 |
| 140 | Dutch | Other | Woman | 40-44 | 1/<5 |
| 141 | Dutch | EXCO | Woman | | |
| 142 | Dutch | EXCO | Man | | |

Appendix 2.2. Participants included in research

| Participant Code | Nationality | Leadership Group | Gender | Age | Years in org. |
|------------------|-------------|------------------|--------|-------|---------------|
| 103 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 50-54 | 1/<5 |
| 106 | Non-Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 45-49 | 15/<20 |
| 107 | Dutch | Other | Woman | 30-34 | 1/<5 |
| 109 | Dutch | LT | Woman | 50-54 | 5/<10 |
| 113 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 30-34 | 5/<10 |
| 114 | Dutch | LT | Man | 55-59 | 10/<15 |
| 115 | Dutch | Other | Man | 45-49 | 20/<25 |
| 116 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Woman | 50-54 | 5/<10 |
| 118 | Dutch | LT | Man | 40-44 | 10/<15 |
| 119 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 50-54 | 5/<10 |
| 120 | Dutch | Other | Man | 45-49 | 5/<10 |
| 121 | Non-Dutch | LT | Man | 45-49 | 20/<25 |
| 122 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Woman | 40-44 | <1 |
| 123 | Dutch | EXCO | Woman | 50-54 | 15/<20 |
| 124 | Dutch | LT | Man | 35-39 | 10/<15 |
| 125 | Dutch | Other | Man | 50-54 | 15/<20 |
| 126 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 45-49 | 1/<5 |
| 130 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 35-39 | <1 |
| 131 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 55-59 | 1/<5 |
| 132 | Dutch | LT | Woman | 45-49 | 1/<5 |
| 134 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 45-49 | 5/<10 |
| 137 | Dutch | Other | Woman | 35-39 | 5/<10 |
| 138 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Woman | 45-49 | 1/<5 |
| 139 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 30-34 | 5/<10 |
| 140 | Dutch | Other | Woman | 45-49 | 1/<5 |
| 141 | Dutch | EXCO | Woman | 45-49 | 5/<10 |
| 142 | Dutch | EXCO | Man | 50-54 | 15/<20 |

| | | | | | |
|-----|-----------|-----------------------|------------|-------|--------|
| 100 | Dutch | Other | Man | 35-39 | 5/<10 |
| 101 | Dutch | Other | Man | 45-49 | 20/<25 |
| 102 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 35-39 | 5/<10 |
| 104 | Non-Dutch | LT | Woman | 55-59 | 20/<25 |
| 105 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 50-54 | 20/<25 |
| 108 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 35-39 | 10/<15 |
| 110 | Non-Dutch | LT | Man | 35-39 | <1 |
| 111 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 35-39 | 1/<5 |
| 112 | Dutch | LT | Woman | 40-44 | 15/<20 |
| 117 | Non-Dutch | Senior Manager | Woman | 50-54 | 15/<20 |
| 127 | Dutch | Other | Woman | 30-34 | 5/<10 |
| 128 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 35-39 | 10/<15 |
| 129 | Non-Dutch | Senior Manager | Woman | 45-49 | 15/<20 |
| 135 | Dutch | Other | Man | 50-54 | 15/<20 |
| 136 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 25-29 | 1/<5 |
| 139 | Dutch | Senior Manager | Man | 30-34 | 5/<10 |

Appendix 2.3. Tables for initial sample and final sample distribution and representation

These tables show the distribution of nationality, leadership level, gender and age for the initial sample and the final sample. The initial sample and final sample consist of respectively 43 and 27 managers.

Nationality

| | Final sample | | Initial sample | | Total population | |
|-----------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | <i># of participants</i> | <i>% of total sample</i> | <i># of participants</i> | <i>% of total sample</i> | <i># of participants</i> | <i>% of total sample</i> |
| Dutch | 25 | 93% | 37 | 86% | 146 | 91% |
| Non-Dutch | 2 | 7% | 6 | 14% | 14 | 9% |
| Total | 27 | | 43 | | 160 | |

Table 1: number of participants included in initial sample and in final sample, distribution of nationality

Leadership level – all four levels

| | Final sample | | Initial sample | | Total population | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | <i># of participants</i> | <i>% of total sample</i> | <i># of participants</i> | <i>% of total sample</i> | <i># of participants</i> | <i>% of total sample</i> |
| EXCO | 3 | 11% | 3 | 7% | 7 | 4% |
| Leadership Team | 7 | 26% | 10 | 23% | 27 | 17% |
| Senior Manager | 12 | 44% | 20 | 47% | 82 | 51% |
| Other | 5 | 19% | 10 | 23% | 44 | 28% |
| Total | 27 | | 43 | | 160 | |

Table 2: number of participants included in initial sample and in final sample, distribution of leadership level

Leadership level - top three levels

| | Final sample | | Initial sample | | Total population | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | <i># of participants</i> | <i>% of total sample</i> | <i># of participants</i> | <i>% of total sample</i> | <i># of participants</i> | <i>% of total sample</i> |
| EXCO | 3 | 14% | 3 | 9% | 7 | 6% |
| Leadership Team | 7 | 32% | 10 | 30% | 27 | 23% |
| Senior Manager | 12 | 55% | 20 | 61% | 82 | 71% |
| Total | 22 | | 33 | | 116 | |

Table 3: number of participants included in initial sample and in final sample, distribution of leadership level

Gender

| | Final sample | | Initial sample | | Total population | |
|--------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | <i># of participants</i> | <i>% of total sample</i> | <i># of participants</i> | <i>% of total sample</i> | <i># of participants</i> | <i>% of total sample</i> |
| Female | 9 | 33% | 16 | 37% | 37 | 23% |
| Male | 18 | 67% | 27 | 63% | 123 | 77% |
| Total | 27 | | 43 | | 160 | |

Table 4: number of participants included in initial sample and in final sample, distribution of gender

Age

| | Final sample | | Initial sample | | Total population | |
|---------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | <i># of participants</i> | <i>% of total sample</i> | <i># of participants</i> | <i>% of total sample</i> | <i># of participants</i> | <i>% of total sample</i> |
| 25 - 39 | 5 | 19% | 14 | 33% | 45 | 28% |
| 40 - 49 | 12 | 44% | 16 | 37% | 65 | 41% |
| 50 > | 10 | 37% | 13 | 30% | 50 | 31% |
| Total | 27 | | 43 | | 160 | |

Table 5: number of participants included in initial sample and in final sample, distribution of age

Appendix 3. Initial template for data analysis

1. Diversity

1.1. Knowledge of diversity

1.1.1. Gender

1.1.2. Ethnic background/Cultural background

1.1.3. Sexuality/LGBTQ+

1.1.4. Religion

1.1.5. Age

1.1.6. Disability

1.2. Acknowledgement of different needs

2. Definition of inclusion

2.1. Belongingness

1.1.1. Acceptance

1.1.2. Treating as insider

1.1.3. Full participation

1.1.4. Valuing contribution from all employees

2.2. Uniqueness

2.2.1. Have voices heard

2.2.2. Individual talents

2.2.3. Various perspectives

2.3. Psychological safety

3. Benefits of inclusion

3.1. Organisational commitment

3.2. Job satisfaction

3.3. High task effectiveness

3.4. Less anxiety

3.5. Gained competitive advantage

3.5.1. Creativity

3.5.2. Learning

4. Pitfalls of inclusion

4.1. In-group over out-group

4.2. Lack of trust

- 4.3.Lack of feeling of competence
- 4.4.Lack of psychological attachment
- 5. Actors of inclusion
 - 5.1.Top management
 - 5.1.1. Promoting inclusion
 - 5.1.2. Inclusion practices and initiatives
 - 5.1.3. Affirmative action
 - 5.1.4. Determining strategy
 - 5.1.5. Providing access to information
 - 5.2.Leaders
 - 5.2.1. Role model
 - 5.2.2. Providing access to promotions
 - 5.2.3. Day-to-day practices of inclusion
 - 5.3.Employees
 - 5.3.1. Treating others with respect
 - 5.3.2. Demonstrating openness to others' perspectives
- 6. Inclusive leadership
 - 6.1.Inclusive leadership behaviours
 - 6.1.1. Creating psychological safety
 - 6.1.2. Fostering belongingness
 - 6.1.3. Valuing uniqueness
 - 6.1.4. Appreciation for others
 - 6.1.5. Supporting organisational efforts
 - 6.2.Inclusive leader characteristics
 - 6.2.1. Pro-diversity beliefs
 - 6.2.2. Cognitive complexity
 - 6.2.3. Open to change and willing to learn
 - 6.2.4. Motivation to push organisational agenda onwards
 - 6.2.5. Being humble and reflective
- 7. Self-awareness and reflection
 - 7.1.Reflecting on own behaviour
 - 7.1.1. Evaluating one's own skills
 - 7.1.2. Looking back at past experiences
 - 7.1.3. Being mindful and empathic

7.1.4. Being aware of blind spots and biases

7.1.5. Feedback seeking behaviour

7.2. Benefits of self-awareness amongst leaders

7.2.1. Increasing follower satisfaction

7.2.2. Personal growth and organisational growth

7.2.3. Adjustment to new leadership style

7.3. Limitations of self-awareness amongst leaders

7.3.1. Discrepancy between said enacted behaviour and perceived behaviour

7.3.2. Feeling threatened in position

Appendix 4. Final template for data analysis

1. Diversity

1.1. Diversity groups

1.1.1. Gender

1.1.1.1. (lack of) women in technology

1.1.1.2. Bias towards women working part time

1.1.1.3. Female leadership

1.1.1.4. Showing masculine traits

1.1.2. Ethnic and cultural background

1.1.2.1. Discrimination

1.1.2.2. Gaining understanding on cultural backgrounds

1.1.3. Age

1.1.3.1. Generational differences

1.1.4. LGBTQ+

1.1.5. Religion

1.1.6. Disability

1.2. Different personalities

1.2.1. Expected set of characteristics

1.2.2. Management drives (colour profiles)

1.3. Acknowledgment of different needs

1.3.1. Acceptance of differences

1.3.2. Acknowledging that not everybody has the same needs

2. Definition of inclusion

2.1. Definition of inclusion

2.1.1. Narrow definition of inclusion

2.1.2. Basic definition of inclusion

2.1.3. Broad definition of inclusion

2.1.4. Inclusion is beyond diversity

2.2. Measuring inclusion

2.3. MeToo movement – recognition

3. Benefits and challenges of diversity and inclusion

3.1. Benefits of diversity

- 3.1.1. Better problem definition
- 3.1.2. Better solutions
- 3.1.3. Celebrating differences
- 3.1.4. Having role models to look up to
- 3.1.5. Improved organisational performance
- 3.1.6. Improvement - not specified
- 3.1.7. Innovation
- 3.1.8. More creativity
- 3.1.9. More perspectives are beneficial
- 3.1.10. Range of skills and knowledge

3.2.Challenges of diversity

- 3.2.1. Accessibility
- 3.2.2. Change is time-consuming and/or takes effort
- 3.2.3. Clashes and misunderstandings
- 3.2.4. Dealing with differences
- 3.2.5. Dealing with resistance
- 3.2.6. Old boys network
- 3.2.7. People victimising themselves
- 3.2.8. Shortage of good people
- 3.2.9. Taking all perspectives into account
- 3.2.10. Language
 - 3.2.10.1. Difficulties due to language
 - 3.2.10.2. Language in vacancies
 - 3.2.10.3. Speaking Dutch/English

3.3.Influence of hybrid working

4. Organisational efforts

4.1.Culture of organisation

- 4.1.1. Culture of organisation: existing culture in team/organisation
- 4.1.2. High workload and high-pressure environment
- 4.1.3. Informal culture
- 4.1.4. Power relations
- 4.1.5. Referring back to 'old normal'
- 4.1.6. Required skills

4.2.D&I practices and initiatives

- 4.2.1. Execution of policies and initiatives
- 4.2.2. Existence of prayer rooms
- 4.2.3. Finding common (D&I) goals
- 4.2.4. Getting D&I down to lower levels
- 4.2.5. Implementation of D&I in practice (organisation)
- 4.2.6. Onboarding
- 4.2.7. Talking about quota
- 4.2.8. Using diverse imagery

4.3.D&I education/trainings/sessions

- 4.3.1. Beliefs training should be optional
- 4.3.2. In favour of D&I training/education
- 4.3.3. Neutral to D&I education / open to specific D&I education
- 4.3.4. Not in favour of D&I training/education
- 4.3.5. Tools for inclusion

4.4.D&I issues and challenges

- 4.4.1. Awareness of D&I issues
- 4.4.2. Awareness of D&I problems
- 4.4.3. Lack of awareness of D&I issues
- 4.4.4. Problem within TeleConnect not visible or hard to define
- 4.4.5. Surprised by experiences of not feeling safe in organisation

4.5.Organisational practices

- 4.5.1. Creating group safety (organisation)
- 4.5.2. Creating safe environment (organisation)
- 4.5.3. Organisational responsibility to step in
- 4.5.4. Public image
- 4.5.5. Reflection to society
- 4.5.6. Representation in top management
- 4.5.7. Recruitment and hiring
 - 4.5.7.1. (lack of) diversity in applicants
 - 4.5.7.2.Hiring for diversity
 - 4.5.7.3.Short vs. Long term goals for recruitment
- 4.5.8. Opportunities and promotions
 - 4.5.8.1.Equal opportunities
 - 4.5.8.2.Internal promotions

4.5.9. Performance evaluation

4.5.9.1. In favour of evaluation of inclusive behaviours in performance evaluation

4.5.9.2. Neutral/dilemma about evaluation of inclusive behaviours in performance evaluation

4.5.9.3. Not in favour of evaluation of inclusive behaviours in performance evaluation

4.5.9.4. Weak performance evaluation

4.6. Promotion of D&I

4.6.1. Critical of not promoting D&I enough

4.6.2. Political correctness

4.6.3. Positive about D&I promotion - but still need to do more

4.6.4. Positive about D&I promotion - doing enough

4.6.5. Risk of tokenism in D&I

4.6.6. Thinks TeleConnect is overdoing D&I

4.7. Harassment

5. Leadership behaviours

5.1. Creating psychological safety

5.1.1. Creating safe environment (leader)

5.1.2. Creating trust (leader)

5.1.3. Employee well-being

5.1.4. Inappropriate jokes

5.1.5. Recognition of importance of psychological safety

5.2. Fostering belongingness

5.2.1. Being an active bystander

5.2.2. Being approachable as leader

5.2.3. Creating group safety (leader)

5.2.4. Equal/different treatment

5.2.5. Feeling part of TeleConnect / family feeling / team feeling

5.2.6. Giving everybody right to participate and contribute

5.2.7. High employee engagement

5.2.8. Holiday and leave hours

5.2.9. Importance/encouragement of getting to know different identities/cultures/perspectives

- 5.2.10. Personal attention
- 5.2.11. Shared decision-making
- 5.2.12. Social interactions and team relations
- 5.2.13. Work relationship vs personal relationship

5.3. Valuing uniqueness

- 5.3.1. Encouraging discussion
- 5.3.2. Encouraging sharing feelings
- 5.3.3. Encouraging sharing ideas
- 5.3.4. Encouraging sharing voices
- 5.3.5. Encouraging to help
- 5.3.6. Facilitating personal development for employees
- 5.3.7. Getting the best out of people
- 5.3.8. Giving feedback
- 5.3.9. Putting (partly) responsibility at team members

5.4. Showing appreciation

- 5.4.1. Supporting employees in needs and development

5.5. Supporting organisational efforts

- 5.5.1. Implementation of D&I in practice (leader)

5.6. Inclusion discussion

5.7. Momentum for inclusion

- 5.7.1. Lack of momentum for D&I
- 5.7.2. Neutral momentum for D&I
- 5.7.3. Positive momentum for D&I/change

6. Leadership characteristics

6.1. Pro-diversity beliefs

- 6.1.1. Believes other leaders should be made more aware
- 6.1.2. Diversity should come naturally
- 6.1.3. Aversion to 'wokeness'
- 6.1.4. Finding similarity
- 6.1.5. Looking for best candidate - meritocracy
- 6.1.6. Positive of D&I initiatives
- 6.1.7. Telling people off
- 6.1.8. Wishes to have more diverse team
 - 6.1.8.1. Positive discrimination

- 6.1.8.2.Dilemma about positive discrimination
- 6.1.8.3.Not in favour of positive discrimination
- 6.1.8.4.Positive discrimination can be good

6.2.Biases

- 6.2.1. Awareness of biases
- 6.2.2. Aware of unconscious biases
- 6.2.3. Mentions biases themselves, before being asked
- 6.2.4. Stepping outside of own reference frame
- 6.2.5. Talks only about behaviour/attitude related biases (not cultural, etc.)

6.3.Cognitive complexity

- 6.3.1. Awareness of skills needed to be inclusive leader
- 6.3.2. Believes inclusion should be normal/standard
- 6.3.3. Lack of education
- 6.3.4. Looking for non-verbal signals
- 6.3.5. Outcome focused
- 6.3.6. Small efforts matter

6.4.Open to change and willingness to learn

- 6.4.1. Actively changing culture
- 6.4.2. In favour of 360 feedback (performance evaluation)
- 6.4.3. Initiating self-education
- 6.4.4. Learning process - recognition
- 6.4.5. Motivated to change and develop
- 6.4.6. Threatened (white fragility)

6.5.Motivation to push agenda onwards

- 6.5.1. Pushing agenda onwards
- 6.5.2. Spreading awareness of trust person

6.6.Being humble and reflective

- 6.6.1. Awareness of possible shortcomings
- 6.6.2. Awareness of role as leader
- 6.6.3. Feedback seeking behaviour
- 6.6.4. Possible overachieving image of self
- 6.6.5. Reflection of own behaviour
- 6.6.6. Reflection on own perspective
- 6.6.7. Reflection on work environment

6.6.8. Showing vulnerability

6.7. Showing reflection

6.7.1. Awareness of identity

6.7.2. Awareness of privilege

6.7.3. Reflection on self and others

6.7.4. Taking responsibility as manager

6.7.5. Thinking in solutions for D&I problems