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Organizational Diversity and Inclusion as Social Order in Contemporary Workplaces

Mochamad Irfan, Mila Hariani

Universitas Mayjen Sungkono Mojokerto

correspondence: irfanmoc@gmail.com

Abstract

This article presents a normative account of diversity and inclusion from organizational sociology. It explains how workplaces manage differences in social background, ethnicity, gender, and generation through everyday norms, informal culture, and formal procedures. Inclusion is defined as socially secured participation where employees can contribute without sacrificing dignity or being pushed into assimilation. The discussion argues that inequality often persists through subtle mechanisms such as vague performance criteria, exclusive networks, uneven recognition of emotional labor, and humor that normalizes exclusion. A conceptual framework is proposed with three domains: recognition, access, and voice protection. Recognition concerns legitimacy and respect for plural identities. Access concerns transparent pathways to information, projects, sponsorship, and promotion. Voice protection concerns complaint procedures, meeting rules, and safeguards against retaliation and stigma. The central claim is that durable inclusion requires coherence between written policies and lived practices, supported by leadership that enforces respectful interaction and accountable decision making. By clarifying these mechanisms, the article offers a structured way to assess whether workplace diversity becomes shared learning or an added burden for those far from dominant norms.

Keywords: diversity, inclusion, organizational culture, recognition, access, voice, procedural justice.

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Introduction

Diversity in organizations is increasingly appearing as an unavoidable reality of work, as the workforce is shaped by educational mobility, demographic changes, and the expansion of job access. In daily experience, diversity is present through differences in language, communication styles, social class, ethnic identity, gender, beliefs, and generations that bring different work habits. The presence of difference can be a source of learning, as people are forced to reinterpret habits that have long been taken for granted. However, difference can also give rise to subtle tensions when organizational standards are built upon the image of an ideal worker who resembles a specific group. This is often related to how core values in working are applied in the field (Darmawan, 2013). Subtle tensions emerge in meetings, in performance appraisals, in office humor, or in the way people are given the opportunity to speak. Often, tension is not expressed as open conflict, but rather as a sense of discomfort, a feeling of being watched, or a sense of having to over-conform. From a sociological perspective, this situation shows that diversity is not just a collection of identities, but rather an arena of power relations that work through norms, symbols, and procedures. Therefore, inclusion becomes a matter of how organizations allow difference to exist without suppressing anyone's dignity (Vertovec, 2012).

Modern work environments often praise diversity as an asset, yet such praise does not automatically result in a safe and equitable work experience. Inclusion demands that employees feel recognized as legitimate subjects, not merely as representatives of a category. In everyday work, recognition is seen in small things, such as how names are pronounced, how ideas are responded to, and how supervisors distribute their attention. Furthermore, the competitiveness of a workplace highly depends on how they manage the people within it to remain competitive at a global level (Abdulah et al., 2021). When recognition is uneven, members of certain groups may feel they must repeatedly prove their competence, while others are assumed competent from the start. In the workspace, repeated proof is a social burden that consumes energy and reduces room for growth. Additionally, organizations often have informal cultures that determine who is close to the center of information. Access to this information and opportunity is also influenced by the policies adopted by leaders (Rojak & Issalillah, 2022). Informal culture is often unrecorded, yet it is highly decisive regarding access. Diversity that is not accompanied by improvements in informal culture risks becoming "moral decoration" looking good in brochures but not felt in the employee experience. Thus, sociological study needs to assess the mechanisms of recognition, access, and psychological safety as the core of inclusion (Shore et al., 2011).

Differences in social backgrounds affect how people understand politeness, how to ask for help, and how to build networks. Employees from families experienced in organizational culture often possess "tacit knowledge" about meeting etiquette, how to write emails, and how to present themselves. In the current era, the way we communicate, even through digital media such as email, greatly determines our professionalism (Sinambela & Darmawan, 2021). This knowledge can function as social capital that accelerates adaptation. Conversely, employees who do not possess such knowledge may be judged as less professional, when what is actually occurring is an inequality of access to cultural codes. In a sociological perspective, this inequality is not always produced by ill intent, but rather by standards that are assumed to be universal. Standards assumed to be universal often become selection tools that filter people based on cultural similarity rather than potential. Consequently, organizations can reproduce class inequality through processes that appear neutral. Of course, this triggers discussion regarding the extent to which individual freedom can coexist with our responsibilities to the group (Saputra & Darmawan, 2021). Inclusion in the dimension of social class demands that organizations re-evaluate what is considered competence, how professional language is defined, and how learning opportunities are provided. If an organization views adaptation solely as an individual obligation, then the burden of assimilation falls on those furthest from the cultural center, and diversity turns into unrecognized extra labor (Rivera, 2012).

Ethnic and cultural diversity brings differences in speaking styles, ways of expressing disagreement, and methods of understanding hierarchy. In some traditions, contradicting a superior is considered inappropriate, while in others, critical discussion is seen as a sign of responsibility. When an organization does not clearly arrange the rules for discussion, these differences in style can lead to misunderstandings. This condition shows how important the role of society is in voicing their opinions within a healthy democratic system (Rojak et al., 2021). An individual may be perceived as passive because they remain silent more often, even though they are maintaining etiquette. Another may be perceived as aggressive due to straightforward speech, while they are actually practicing the discussion norms they learned. Furthermore, the majority language often becomes the standard that determines who is considered fluent and who is considered less prepared. Language standards can hinder careers if not accompanied by support, as technical ability can be obscured by stylistic judgment. From a sociological perspective, this issue relates to symbolic

power the ability of a dominant group to define the meaning of professionalism. Inclusion demands that organizations distinguish core competence from communication habits that are actually negotiable. Therefore, the way we understand rules and habits in the office greatly determines our comfort in working (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2012). Without this distinction, ethnic diversity becomes a source of subtle injustice that is difficult to reveal because it occurs through cues rather than formal prohibitions (Zanoni et al., 2010).

Gender in organizations relates to the division of tasks, behavioral standards, and the way leadership is evaluated. Women may be judged as insufficiently assertive when collaborative, yet judged as too harsh when being firm. Men may obtain greater leeway in displaying ambition, while women are expected to maintain warmth. This kind of double standard forces women and gender minority groups to manage their image more intensely, causing their energy to be divided. Additionally, the division of labor often includes invisible emotional labor, such as mediating conflicts, welcoming guests, or managing office social activities. An individual's job satisfaction is often influenced by the extent to which they feel supported by the rules and culture of their workplace (Jahroni et al., 2021). Emotional labor is often directed toward women as a natural expectation, even though it consumes time. From a sociological perspective, the division of emotional labor shows that organizations are not gender-neutral, as they inherit household norms into the workspace. Inclusion in the gender dimension demands a restructuring of achievement criteria, so that invisible contributions do not become unappreciated burdens. Inclusion also demands protection from harassment and demeaning jokes, as humor can be a tool of social control that keeps people silent. If demeaning humor is permitted, the organization sends a message that dignity can be traded for the sake of camaraderie (Acker, 2006).

Generational differences in organizations are often discussed as differences in work values, but sociologically they also relate to differences in historical experience, technology, and job security. Moreover, at present, the younger generation is very familiar with digital technology and social media in their daily lives (Kurniawan et al., 2021). Younger generations may bring habits of fast communication, demand

routine feedback, and expect clear work boundaries. Older generations may bring habits of respecting seniority, preferring stable structures, and interpreting loyalty as physical presence. When these two habits meet without shared rules, the organization can experience interpretive conflicts. Some perceive the request for boundaries as a lack of commitment, while others perceive the rejection of boundaries as a form of dominance. Additionally, digitalization reinforces differences in learning styles. Some learn through application exploration, while others learn through written instructions. Generational inclusion demands that organizations provide learning spaces that do not humiliate, as shame is a primary barrier to change. From a sociological perspective, shame is often used as a subtle sanction to enforce dominant norms. If an organization wants to be inclusive, it must restrain these subtle sanctions and replace them with mutually respectful learning practices. Thus, generation is not merely an issue of age, but an issue of how authority, knowledge, and respect are shared (Lyons & Kuron, 2014).

The description of the problem in this topic rests on the tension between the narrative of diversity as a value and a work experience that still directs employees toward assimilation. Many organizations claim to value difference, yet success standards are often constructed from the habits of the dominant group. Consequently, employees who are different must adapt to a language, style, and network that they did not possess from the start. This self-adjustment is frequently treated as proof of professionalism, even though it is additional social labor that is not shared equally. When this additional social labor is unrecognized, the organization loses the ability to see inequality as a systemic problem. Every individual actually carries unique traits and characters that need to be appreciated so they can provide their best performance (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2012; Darmawan, 2013). This issue also concerns how organizations define objectivity. Performance appraisals are often considered objective, but in practice, they can be shaped by preferences for specific communication styles, personal proximity, and cultural comfort. If these preferences are not acknowledged, then inequality will continue to be produced through procedures that appear orderly. Thus, the primary problem is how organizations manage

difference without making cultural similarity a requirement for entry, survival, and promotion (Ely & Thomas, 2001).

The next problem description relates to the gap between formal policy and informal culture. Formal policies may mention equal opportunity, codes of ethics, and training, yet informal culture determines who is trusted, who is given important projects, and who is considered fit to lead. It is important for us to see how incentives and leadership can strengthen an individual's commitment to their workplace (Jahroni et al., 2021). Informal culture works through office stories, humor, meeting habits, and networking practices outside of working hours. Within informal culture, discrimination rarely appears as an overt prohibition, but rather as a reduction of opportunities, the dismissal of ideas, or biased character assessments. This issue is difficult for employees to prove because its form is scattered and often justified as a matter of "taste." When employees voice objections, they risk being judged as oversensitive or a "poor cultural fit." This situation produces a spiral of silence, where people choose to restrain themselves for the sake of job security, and the organization loses information about the social wounds within it. From a sociological perspective, the spiral of silence indicates an imbalance of voice. This reminds us that the active involvement of all parties is essential so that inequality does not occur (Rojak et al., 2021). An imbalance of voice causes an organization to judge itself as already inclusive because there are no complaints, even though injustice persists through fear. This issue needs to be understood as a problem of communication structure and legitimacy, rather than merely a problem of interpersonal relationships (Mor Barak, 2015).

Many organizational discussions tend to position inclusion as a program, whereas inclusion concerns the arrangements of recognition and access that affect the dignity of employees every day. This writing is necessary so that organizations do not stop at the symbols of diversity, but rather understand the social conditions that allow difference to exist without the pressure of assimilation. Because a sense of solidarity among fellow workers is the key to creating a harmonious atmosphere (Saputra & Darmawan, 2021). Urgency also arises because demographic changes, labor mobility, and hybrid work expand the space for misunderstanding, accelerate the spread of stigma, and change the forms of surveillance and

evaluation. Therefore, understanding current trends such as the use of social media and communication technology becomes very important (Kurniawan et al., 2021; Sinambela & Darmawan, 2021). In such situations, organizations require a sociological language to read how professional standards are formed, how informal networks operate, and how the inequality of voice emerges. With an orderly normative framework, this writing can serve as a reference for internal policymakers, team leaders, and human resource managers to organize procedural justice and work social ethics that respect difference (Nishii, 2013).

The purpose of this writing is to develop a normative conceptual framework regarding diversity and inclusion from the perspective of organizational sociology. The description aims to explain how norms, informal culture, and formal procedures shape the recognition and access of employees from different social, ethnic, gender, and generational backgrounds. This writing also aims to formulate normative measures of equal opportunity, procedural justice, and the protection of voice as requirements for an inclusive work environment. Theoretically, this framework clarifies the relationship between social capital, symbolic power, and organizational legitimacy. Practically, this framework provides a reference for internal policy design and leadership behavior that respects the dignity of employees.

Method

This study utilizes a qualitative literature study to construct a conceptual synthesis regarding diversity and inclusion within organizations from a sociological perspective. The exploration of ideas is directed toward themes of opportunity structures, professional norms, informal culture, as well as mechanisms of recognition and participation in the workplace. Lune and Berg (2017) emphasize that qualitative research in the social sciences originates from the organization of meaning; thus, researchers need to organize conceptual categories capable of capturing processes rather than merely outcomes. The synthesis work is conducted by grouping reading materials into themes such as assimilation and recognition, social capital and networks, emotional labor and gender standards, and generational differences in authority structures and

learning. These themes are then woven into a normative argumentative flow that addresses the research problem without presenting field data.

Clarity of reasoning is maintained through a disciplined evaluation of the limitations and claims of each source used. Shipman (2014) emphasizes the limitations of social research and the need for caution regarding generalizations, ensuring that the synthesis does not turn into normative statements detached from their conceptual foundations. This principle is applied to distinguish between descriptions of organizational practices, interpretations of social mechanisms, and assessments of justice. De Vaus and De Vaus (2013) stress the importance of order in social research design, including the precision of definitions and consistency of terms, even though their discussion stems from the survey tradition. Definitional order is used to maintain consistency in the use of terms such as inclusion, recognition, equal opportunity, and the protection of voice, so that the arguments do not shift into mere slogans.

The synthesis is carried out through iterative reading, recording key concepts, and formulating interconnected propositions. Comparisons are made between themes to observe how a mechanism that appears positive such as a culture of togetherness can result in exclusion if it demands uniformity. In this methods section, the qualitative literature study is positioned as a means of building a normative assessment framework regarding just organizations, by linking sociological concepts to practices such as performance appraisals, project distribution, meetings, and grievance management. The final framework is structured to be used in evaluating the coherence between formal policies and informal culture, as well as assessing whether the organization provides equal access to information, opportunity, and a sense of psychological safety. The method section concludes with a bibliography corresponding to the methodological references used.

Result and Discussion

Diversity in organizations can be understood as a social condition where differences in identity and experience coexist within a single work system that possesses rules and hierarchies. Inclusion, within a sociological framework, is not merely the presence of diverse people, but rather the quality of relationships that allows everyone to participate without having

to sacrifice their dignity. Differences in social background, ethnicity, gender, and generation bring distinct ways of speaking, ways of interpreting authority, and ways of measuring professionalism. Organizations often view professionalism as something universal, whereas professionalism is actually the result of institutional history shaped by a specific group. In this regard, creating a work atmosphere that embraces everyone is crucial for increasing organizational competitiveness and performance (Mardikaningsih & Hariani, 2022). When universal standards are built from dominant habits, the organization creates demands for assimilation that are imposed on other groups. This assimilation is evident in the pressure to change accents, suppress certain types of humor, or mimic communication styles deemed appropriate. From a normative perspective, such demands must be distinguished from the demands of work ethics. Work ethics demand responsibility and respect, whereas assimilation demands similarity. Inclusion requires organizations to shift focus from similarity toward equality of opportunity, so that difference is not treated as a deviation that must be corrected (Ferdman, 2017).

The management of differences in social background is closely related to the cultural and social capital that employees bring with them before joining the organization. It is important for us to understand that the surrounding environment and office culture greatly influence how an individual delivers their best work (Putra et al., 2020). Cultural capital includes knowledge of professional language, presentation styles, and social codes. Social capital includes networks that open up information, career sponsors, and access to projects. Strong teamwork and good social relations are often the keys to achieving work quality standards (Putra et al., 2021). Organizations often reward those who already possess such capital, then evaluate the results as pure individual achievement. This assessment obscures the reality that some employees must work harder to learn unwritten codes. Within a normative framework, an inclusive organization needs to acknowledge that access to these codes is a matter of justice. We must also be aware that there are certain groups who often feel marginalized within the social structure of the workplace (Hartono, 2021). Justice here means the organization provides learning mechanisms that do not cause humiliation and provides clear rules on how opportunities are

distributed. When the rules for opportunity are allowed to follow networks, class inequality becomes stabilized. The sense of being entitled to speak is often produced by the experience of being accepted. If employees from certain social backgrounds always feel they must apologize before conveying an idea, the organization loses innovative potential while simultaneously producing an inequality of voice (Lareau, 2015).

Ethnic diversity demands that organizations organize the relationship between identity and legitimacy. Many organizations claim to be ethnically neutral, yet neutrality is often translated as a disregard for the experience of discrimination. To that end, leaders in the office must be able to demonstrate a way of leading that truly cares about the interests of many people (Rojak, 2021). This disregard turns ethnicity into an issue that must not be discussed, so that employees who experience biased treatment lack an official language to explain it. From a normative perspective, the prohibition of speaking about ethnicity can perpetuate injustice because it erases the space for recognition. Tangible support from the company is greatly needed so that everyone feels valued even though they are different (Hariani et al., 2021). Recognition does not mean favoring one group, but rather acknowledging the existence of different experiences and making them the basis for improving rules. Furthermore, organizations need to assess how stereotypes operate in daily decisions, such as who is deemed fit to lead, who is considered friendly, or who is considered a risk. Stereotypes work subtly through word choices in meetings and through vague character evaluations. Organizations that wish to be inclusive must reduce vague evaluations and strengthen accountable criteria. Thus, ethnic diversity can be managed through fair evaluation systems, respectful working language, and safe grievance procedures (Nkomo & Rodriguez, 2019).

Gender management in organizations requires a reading of how emotional labor and social care work are distributed. A leader has a major task to build a creative culture so that teams can work more cohesively (Özkaya et al., 2023). Many organizations depend on people who maintain the team atmosphere, manage tensions, and nurture client relationships. This kind of work is often considered a natural trait of women, and thus is imposed without symbolic or material compensation. Within a normative framework, imposition without recognition is an

injustice, because the organization benefits from labor that is not given equal value. Additionally, gender shapes leadership standards. Leadership is often judged by firm and dominant speaking styles, so that collaborative women are considered less strong. Changes in the way we relate to others in a modern social environment indeed bring their own challenges (Irfan & Al Hakim, 2022). This double standard produces a behavioral trap. Gender minority groups face additional risks because their identities are often made the objects of humor. Demeaning humor functions as a social sanction that keeps people silent. Inclusive organizations need to set boundaries for humor and enforce social ethics that do not trade away dignity. Thus, gender inclusion cannot be separated from the overhaul of achievement criteria, recognition of emotional labor, and protection from social sanctions that operate through jokes (Grandey et al., 2019).

Generational differences are often understood as differences in values, even though they also encompass differences in positions within the knowledge hierarchy. The older generation often serves as the guardian of procedures, while the younger generation often acts as the guardian of technological speed. Frequently, social relationships between employees are actually formed due to shared hobbies or similar interests within the city environment (Rejeki, 2021). Tension arises when one party feels that old knowledge is being underestimated and the other feels that innovation is being suppressed. In a normative framework, an inclusive organization does not take the side of one generation, but instead arranges knowledge transfer mechanisms that value both directions (Joshi et al., 2011). Two-way transfer means that institutional experience is respected and technological capability is also respected. Furthermore, organizations need to organize the way they provide feedback. Some people are accustomed to direct feedback, while others are used to subtle hints. If the organization allows feedback styles to follow dominant habits, then other groups will misunderstand and feel attacked. When feeling attacked becomes a routine experience, participation declines. Therefore, it is very important for every organization to ensure that everyone feels supported and protected at work (Hariani et al., 2021). Organizations need to establish clear and fair communication norms. These norms are not intended to homogenize

identity, but rather to protect all parties from demeaning interpretations. Thus, generational inclusion requires communication rules, learning spaces without shame, and the recognition that good ways of working can be diverse as long as dignity is maintained.

Organizational culture is the primary space where inclusion is tested, because culture regulates the small habits that determine who is considered "part of us." Culture operates through meeting rituals, ways of greeting, ways of joking, and ways of resolving disagreements. If a culture views inequality as a disturbance, then diversity will always be seen as a problem. In a normative framework, an inclusive culture requires two elements to work together: a sense of safety and a sense of fairness (Edmondson, 1999). This is because organizational culture and good leadership are the keys for an institution to run effectively (Darmawan, 2022). A sense of safety means people are not afraid of being humiliated when conveying ideas or asking for help. A sense of fairness means the opportunity to speak and the opportunity to grow do not depend on proximity or similarity. Culture is often maintained by informal figures, such as respected seniors or dominant team members. If informal figures spread demeaning humor, the culture will tolerate injustice. Thus, leadership is not sufficiently carried out by formal managers alone. Of course, factors such as compensation and commitment from all members also greatly influence how their work results will turn out (Ernawati et al., 2022). Leadership also concerns the organization's ability to influence informal figures through norms, feedback, and consequences. An inclusive culture also demands openness toward small conflicts. Small conflicts need to be treated as signals for improvement, not as threats to reputation. If small conflicts are swept aside, social wounds accumulate and explode in the form of resignations or passive resistance.

Diversity policies often appear as documents, training sessions, and value statements. However, from a sociological perspective, a policy only becomes meaningful when it becomes a felt practice. Many organizations hold training, yet meeting behaviors and evaluation behaviors remain unchanged. Moreover, if the organization operates in many countries, the challenges of cultural differences will certainly be more pronounced (Hariani & Mardikaningsih, 2021). When this lack of synchronization

occurs, employees learn that policies are merely symbols. Symbols without practice diminish trust. In a normative framework, trust is the organizational social capital (Kalev et al., 2006). Trust is formed when people see consistency between words and actions. It is important for us to ensure that every rule made is truly implemented fairly for everyone (Fauzi, 2021). Therefore, organizations need to assess the path from policy to practice, such as how training is translated into meeting standards, recruitment standards, and grievance handling standards. Policies also need to be measured by their impact on the inequality of voice. If employees remain afraid to speak, the policy is not yet working. Inequality of voice can emerge due to the fear of being labeled a troublemaker, the fear of being accused of being oversensitive, or the fear of being judged as a "poor fit." This fear is an indicator of inclusion failure. Thus, organizations need to arrange protections for those who voice objections, as well as arrange follow-up procedures that do not cause humiliation.

When searching for new employees, companies must be truly meticulous so they do not only choose people who are similar to them. Recruitment and selection often become the first door for the reproduction of inequality, because organizations choose who is considered a "fit" from the very beginning. Fit is often vaguely defined as "cultural fit." This vague definition risks becoming a filter for similarity, making it difficult for diversity to grow. Within a normative framework, organizations need to distinguish between ethical fit and taste fit. Ethics means a willingness to cooperate and respect, whereas taste means a similarity in style (Derous et al., 2012). We must also begin thinking about how to prepare the workplace for the new generation that will soon enter the digital world (Gani & Darmawan, 2023). Fair selection requires clear and accountable criteria. Additionally, selection must pay attention to the language used in interviews and appraisals. Assessment language often contains stereotypes, for example, calling a certain candidate "unconvincing" without explanation. Assessment without explanation provides room for bias. We must not let differences in background become a barrier for someone to get the same opportunity (Fariz, 2021). Organizations also need to assess how referral networks operate. Internal referrals often provide a significant advantage, but they can lock out

access for candidates who do not have the network. If an organization wants to be inclusive, it needs to restructure the weight of referrals and provide equitable access to information.

Performance appraisals and promotions are the arenas where inclusion is tested most rigorously, as that is where opportunities are distributed. Appraisals often combine outcome measures and behavioral measures. Behavioral measures are frequently vague, such as leadership, communication, and influence. Every individual, whether working in the office or in the field, deserves a balance between work time and their personal life (Eddine & Darmawan, 2021). Vague measures open up space for cultural bias. In a normative framework, organizations need to clarify what behaviors are being assessed and why. If communication is being evaluated, the organization needs to explain whether communication means speaking a lot, or constructing clear arguments, or building cooperation. Without a definition, assessors will use their own preferences. Preferences tend to favor styles similar to their own. This results in the reproduction of similarity at the leadership level. Ultimately, all of this is done so that every worker feels valued and can provide the best for their organization (Ernawati et al., 2022; Darmawan, 2022). Additionally, promotions often depend on sponsorship senior figures who advocate for someone. Sponsors are more likely to emerge for people who are socially close. If the organization does not organize access to sponsorship, then network inequality will become career inequality. Inclusion demands transparency in promotion tracks, openness to project opportunities, and feedback mechanisms that help employees understand developmental steps. When tracks are unclear, employees from different groups will interpret the ambiguity as rejection. This interpretation reduces motivation and weakens the sense of belonging (Heilman, 2012).

Informal networks in the office often determine the flow of information, project opportunities, and reputation. Informal networks are built through lunches, casual chats, or social activities. These activities appear light, but sociologically they are the infrastructure of access. Employees who are uncomfortable participating due to cultural, religious, or family responsibility reasons can be left behind. Therefore, every leader needs to have the right strategy so that changes within the

team can proceed well and everyone provides maximum results (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2022). In a normative framework, an inclusive organization needs to reduce dependence on informal networks as a requirement for success. The way to reduce this is not by banning friendships, but by ensuring that important information is not exclusive. For example, project decisions must not be established through closed conversations, but through accessible procedures. Furthermore, organizations need to provide diverse spaces for togetherness so that togetherness is not locked into a single style. This is very important because transparency in a company will help maintain business continuity in the broader market (Rojak & Al Hakim, 2023). Thus, organizations need to design rituals that provide space for people with different habits. These rituals can take the form of knowledge forums, study groups, or social activities that do not depend on specific types of consumption. When spaces for togetherness are designed inclusively, informal networks become more open and access inequality decreases (McDonald, 2011).

Language and communication are the primary mediums of inclusion, because through language, people are judged as intelligent, polite, or trustworthy. Accents, word choices, and speaking speed often become the basis for unfair assessments. In a normative framework, organizations need to distinguish between the ability to convey ideas and cultural speaking styles. We need to remember that a comfortable work atmosphere and a healthy culture will make employees more loyal to their workplace (Irfan et al., 2021). If an organization regards a single style as the sole standard, it suppresses legitimate variation. Communication also concerns who is interrupted, who is given time, and whose ideas are taken without credit. Taking ideas without credit is a form of symbolic violence that damages dignity. An inclusive organization needs to organize meeting etiquette, such as speaking turns, recording ideas, and providing clear credit. Companies also need to have clear policies so that work performance is maintained and the environment remains healthy for everyone (Hariani et al., 2022). Good meeting management is not bureaucracy; rather, it is a protective mechanism. This protection is vital for employees whose positions are more vulnerable within the hierarchy. Additionally, office humor needs to be regulated. Humor is often used

to build rapport, but humor that turns identity into an object marks who is safe and who can be ridiculed. If identity can be ridiculed, then dignity can be negotiated. Inclusion rejects the negotiation of dignity. Thus, organizations need to enforce boundaries for humor as part of communication ethics (Mor Barak & Cherin, 1998).

In this day and age, the way we chat and work has changed significantly due to internet technology. Hybrid work and digitalization change the form of inclusion because interactions shift to platforms, instant messaging, and online meetings. In online work, visibility becomes an issue. People who speak often appear active, while those who write or work quietly can be overlooked. These changes create new ways of communicating and gathering in cyberspace that are very different from the norm (Darmawan, 2021). In a normative framework, organizations need to arrange ways to recognize contributions across media. If contribution is only measured by meeting attendance, then workers with different work styles will be disadvantaged. Online work also amplifies the risk of misunderstanding because instant messages do not carry nuance. Misunderstandings can easily turn into labels, such as being considered cold or uncooperative. An inclusive organization needs to establish respectful online conversation norms, such as how to provide criticism and how to request clarification. Furthermore, online work expands the space for surveillance. Excessive surveillance can damage the sense of security, especially for employees who already feel judged through stereotypes. We must be careful so that long-standing inequalities do not worsen as a result of these changes in working methods (Gani, 2022). Therefore, organizations need to manage the balance between accountability and trust. Trust is a requirement for inclusion because without trust, employees will work in a state of fear. Fear reduces participation and encourages passive compliance. Thus, hybrid work demands the design of new norms that maintain fair visibility, respectful communication, and surveillance boundaries (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007).

In addition to technological issues, we must also give special attention to ensure that friends with physical limitations can still work comfortably. Inclusion is also related to accessibility for workers with disabilities, as organizations are often built for specific bodies and ways of working. Accessibility includes physical access, information access,

and access to work methods. In a normative framework, accessibility is a measure of justice because it shows whether an organization is willing to adapt to diverse human needs. Therefore, every policy adopted must be able to support all employees without exception (Irfan et al., 2021; Hariani et al., 2022). When an organization positions disability as an individual burden, it fails to understand that many barriers are created by environmental design. Furthermore, stigma toward disability often works through low assumptions about capacity. Low assumptions limit opportunities before individuals have a chance to demonstrate their abilities. Inclusion demands that organizations replace assumptions with a dialogue on work needs (Santuzzi & Waltz, 2016). A wise leader must be able to see these unique needs so that overall team performance continues to improve (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2022). A dialogue on work needs respects worker autonomy and avoids condescending pity. Accessibility is also related to technology. Work platforms need to provide helpful features, such as text, captions, or screen reader compatibility. However, accessibility is not just about features. Accessibility requires a team culture that is willing to adjust the way meetings are held, the way documents are shared, and the way schedules are arranged. Thus, disability inclusion affirms that a fair organization is one that organizes its design, rather than forcing individuals to patch up design flaws.

Grievance mechanisms and internal conflict resolution are critical indicators of inclusion. Many organizations have grievance channels, yet employees are reluctant to use them for fear of retaliation or being labeled a troublemaker. In a normative framework, a good grievance channel requires protection, access, and follow-up. Protection means the reporter is not career-disadvantaged. Access means procedures are easy to understand and do not drain energy. Follow-up means the organization provides clear decisions and reasons. If reasons are unclear, employees judge the process as a facade. A facade process damages trust more deeply than the absence of a process because it provides false hope. Furthermore, grievance handling must maintain the dignity of all parties. The goal is not to humiliate, but to improve relationships and procedures. In issues of discrimination, organizations often get trapped in searching for a single perpetrator, even though the

problem may be systemic (Bies & Tyler, 1993). If the organization only punishes individuals without improving procedures, the problem will resurface. Thus, grievance handling needs to culminate in changes to rules, meeting practices, appraisals, or training. Consequently, grievance channels are institutional learning tools that maintain inclusion through routine correction.

Inclusion demands leadership capable of reading subtle power relations. Much injustice does not appear as harsh conflict, but rather as neglect, reduction of opportunities, or small demeaning comments. An inclusive leader needs the sensitivity to see patterns, not just events. In a normative framework, this sensitivity is not mere intuition, but a moral discipline to listen and examine procedures. Leaders also need to organize the distribution of speaking time in meetings, project access, and the granting of credit. This is important because leaders are often the source of legitimacy. If a leader permits demeaning jokes, the jokes become the norm. If a leader reprimands with respect, the organization learns the boundaries. Additionally, leaders need to manage disagreements without stigmatization. Employees from minority groups often worry that disagreement will be read as a negative trait of their group (Randel et al., 2018). Therefore, leaders need to emphasize that criticism is a part of work, not a sign of disloyalty. When criticism is protected, the organization gains correction. Thus, inclusive leadership is the work of maintaining a safe space for voice while enforcing ethical rules that protect dignity.

Diversity training is often used by organizations, yet from a sociological perspective, training easily becomes a moral ritual if it is not linked to procedural change. Training can increase awareness, but awareness does not automatically change meeting habits, promotion habits, or networking habits. In a normative framework, training must be positioned as an entry point for structural change, not as a substitute for structural change (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016). If training is used as a cover-up, the organization will blame individuals when injustice recurs. Blaming individuals masks procedural bias. Therefore, training needs to be followed by revisions to appraisal criteria, recruitment guidelines, and meeting norms. Training also needs to avoid language that oversimplifies identity. If training teaches generational or cultural stereotypes, the

training actually reinforces the problem. Good training emphasizes dialogue skills, feedback skills, and the skill of checking assumptions. Consequently, training becomes a tool to build a learning culture. A learning culture views mistakes as material for correction, not as material for humiliation. Without a learning culture, people will remain silent and the organization will fail to see the problems.

The measure of success for inclusion is often narrowed down to representation, even though representation does not guarantee a sense of belonging. Employees can be present in certain numbers, yet still feel alone in meetings and continue to feel unsafe. In a normative framework, the crucial measures are equality of opportunity and quality of experience. Equality of opportunity is visible in access to projects, access to mentors, access to sponsors, and access to promotion tracks. Quality of experience is visible in the sense of safety to speak, the sense of being respected, and the sense of being treated fairly during conflicts. Organizations need to realize that some forms of injustice are not visible in documents, because they occur in small conversations. Therefore, organizations need to build routine reflection mechanisms, such as meeting evaluations, promotion process evaluations, and grievance handling evaluations (Roberson, 2006). This reflection must result in improvements, not just records. From a sociological perspective, improvement is a sign that the organization acknowledges structure. If an organization rejects improvement, it maintains the illusion of neutrality. The illusion of neutrality is a major barrier to inclusion because it assumes everyone has the same access, whereas access is shaped by networks, language, and hierarchy. Thus, the success of inclusion is the success of improving the structures of opportunity and the structures of recognition.

Diversity often triggers resistance from some members of the organization, especially if inclusion is perceived as a threat to status or as a morality that blames. Resistance can emerge as cynicism toward programs, as jokes, or as silent rejection. In a normative framework, resistance needs to be understood as a symptom of power relations and status anxiety. If an organization responds to resistance by punishing without dialogue, the resistance will go underground. If the organization responds with boundless dialogue, injustice will be permitted to persist.

Thus, organizations require a balance between dialogue and ethical enforcement. Dialogue is necessary to explain that inclusion is procedural justice, not a gift. Ethical enforcement is necessary to protect the dignity of those who are vulnerable. Additionally, organizations need to distinguish between learning discomfort and demeaning actions (Thomas & Plaut, 2008). Learning discomfort can be accepted as part of change, but demeaning actions must be stopped. Thus, organizations need to establish clear norms while providing learning spaces for those who are not yet accustomed to them. The learning space must be safe for the learner, but also safe for those who are frequently targeted by stereotypes. This dual safety is the core of inclusion.

Identity differences often intersect for example, an individual may simultaneously experience differences in class, ethnicity, and gender. This intersection forms an experience that cannot be understood through a single category. In a normative framework, an inclusive organization needs to avoid policies that assume all members of an identity group experience the same thing. Homogeneity of experience is a detrimental assumption, as it causes the organization to overlook specific needs. For instance, a policy supporting women may fail to reach women from certain social backgrounds if the policy only focuses on established office work styles. Therefore, organizations need to develop the ability to listen to experiences without turning them into a commodity. Listening to experiences means opening up spaces for stories, but these story spaces must be connected to procedural improvements (Atewologun, 2018). If story spaces are only used for image-building, the organization exploits experience. The exploitation of experience damages trust. Thus, a sociological reading demands that organizations organize participation mechanisms that invite diverse voices into the decision-making process. Meaningful participation means that voices can change the rules, not just be heard. When participation is meaningful, diversity becomes a source of structural learning that improves the organization sustainably.

Organizations also need to organize the symbols and rituals that shape a sense of belonging. Symbols can take the form of corporate narratives, holiday celebrations, or the way the organization praises exemplary employees. If symbols always praise a specific type of worker,

other employees feel like guests. In a normative framework, the feeling of being a guest is a form of subtle exclusion. Organizational rituals such as general meetings, awards, and leadership communications must reflect equal recognition. Equal recognition means the organization acknowledges diverse ways of contributing, including invisible contributions like coordination work. Furthermore, organizations need to organize physical and digital spaces so they do not mark who is primary and who is supplementary (Pless & Maak, 2004). For example, prayer rooms, lactation rooms, or access to work facilities are signs of whether the organization respects human needs. When basic facilities are neglected, the organization sends a message that certain needs are a nuisance. This message damages the sense of security. Thus, symbols, rituals, and facilities are the organizational language that shapes inclusion. A serious organization must regard this language as part of governance, not as decoration.

Consequently, there are three interconnected domains: the domain of recognition, the domain of access, and the domain of voice protection. Recognition concerns how the organization legitimizes identities and experiences without demanding similarity. Access concerns how the organization distributes information, projects, sponsorship, and promotion tracks through accountable procedures. Voice protection concerns how the organization maintains grievance channels, meeting etiquette, and the ethics of humor so that employees can voice objections without stigma. These three domains demand alignment between formal policy and informal culture. Formal policy provides direction; informal culture provides reality. If informal culture is left unchecked, policy becomes merely a symbol. With this framework, organizations can assess whether diversity is managed as shared learning or as a burden of assimilation. This framework also affirms that inclusion requires leadership that upholds the ethics of dignity, organizes clear appraisal criteria, and builds diverse rituals of togetherness. Thus, the organization manages difference not by suppressing it, but by organizing shared rules that protect diverse humans. That is the social requirement for an inclusive work environment.

Conclusion

Diversity and inclusion from a sociological organizational perspective must be understood as a matter of social relations shaped by professional norms, informal culture, and the distribution of opportunity. Diversity is not merely the presence of differences in social background, ethnicity, gender, and generation, but rather the presence of differences within a hierarchy that determines who is recognized, who is trusted, and who is granted access. Inclusion is achieved when an organization shifts the focus of evaluation from cultural similarity toward equality of opportunity and the protection of dignity, ensuring that employees are not forced to undergo assimilation as a prerequisite for being deemed worthy. The analysis demonstrates that injustice often emerges through subtle mechanisms such as vague behavioral evaluations, exclusive informal networks, unrecognized emotional labor, and humor that normalizes exclusion. The answer to the research problem positions recognition, access, and the protection of voice as the three primary domains that determine whether formal policies truly translate into lived experiences. Thus, an inclusive work environment is the result of coherence between rules, meeting practices, performance appraisals, grievance handling, and leadership that upholds an ethics of respect.

The implications and suggestions emphasize the need for organizations to restructure diversity governance through normative measures that can be practiced within core work processes. Organizations need to clarify recruitment and promotion criteria so that evaluations do not depend on cultural tastes or network proximity, as well as ensure that information and critical projects are shared through transparent procedures. Meeting cultures should be organized with rules for speaking turns, the crediting of ideas, and respectful feedback, thereby reducing voice disparity and increasing participation. Grievance channels must be provided with real protection, easy access, and clear follow-up to prevent employees from becoming trapped in a spiral of silence. Leadership needs to be trained to identify subtle biases, limit demeaning humor, and recognize contributions that have previously remained invisible, including coordination and emotional labor. Organizations are also advised to design diverse communal rituals and work facilities that respect human needs, ensuring that organizational symbols align with practice. Further

research could detail normative indicators for the quality of performance appraisals, the quality of sponsorship access, and the quality of voice protection as a basis for consistent internal evaluation.

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