

A Narrative Study on Inclusive Leadership Patterns in Community-Based Business Ecosystems in Underserved Areas



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A B S T R A C T

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This narrative study examines inclusive leadership patterns within community-based business ecosystems in underserved areas. Using a qualitative approach, the study employs a literature review methodology to explore existing research on inclusive leadership, its impact on business ecosystems, and its role in fostering sustainable development in marginalized regions. A comprehensive analysis of 10 selected articles reveals that inclusive leadership promotes diversity, collaboration, and innovation by integrating diverse perspectives into decision-making processes. In underserved areas, inclusive leadership contributes to overcoming systemic challenges such as resource scarcity, limited infrastructure, and socio-economic disparities. The findings highlight the importance of cultural intelligence in leadership, as well as the ability to adapt leadership strategies to local contexts. Inclusive leadership practices not only enhance organizational success but also empower local communities by fostering trust, transparency, and social cohesion. Moreover, the study identifies the significant role of inclusive leadership in driving innovation and creating business models that are more attuned to the needs of the local population. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on inclusive leadership in community-based business ecosystems, particularly in marginalized areas, and provides valuable insights for leaders and policymakers seeking to promote sustainable business development. Future research is recommended to explore the long-term effects of inclusive leadership on community development and to identify specific strategies for overcoming barriers in underserved regions.

1. Introduction

In recent years, inclusive leadership has emerged as a pivotal concept in the field of management, particularly in contexts where diverse communities are involved (Shore et al., 2018). As businesses continue to operate in an increasingly complex global environment, fostering inclusive leadership within community-based ecosystems has become essential for promoting equity, participation, and innovation (Northouse, 2025). The need for such leadership is particularly pronounced in underserved areas, where access to resources and opportunities is often limited (Avolio & Bass, 2004). In these regions, inclusive leadership can serve as a catalyst for creating resilient business ecosystems that empower marginalized communities and foster sustainable development (Robbins & Judge, 2019). However, despite the growing recognition of inclusive leadership's importance, research on its application in community-based business ecosystems in underserved areas remains sparse.

This research aims to address the gap in the literature by providing a comprehensive narrative exploration of inclusive leadership patterns in business ecosystems within underserved regions. The focus is on identifying the unique challenges and opportunities faced by leaders in these contexts, and how inclusive leadership practices are employed to overcome barriers and create sustainable business networks. While leadership studies have explored inclusive leadership in various settings, including organizations and corporate structures (Randel et al., 2018; Tedesco & Soria, 2023), little attention has been paid to its role within community-based business ecosystems, particularly in underserved areas. This research, therefore, seeks to fill this research gap by examining how inclusive leadership can shape the dynamics of community-based businesses, specifically focusing on leadership styles, strategies, and outcomes in these marginalized environments.

The urgency of this research is underscored by the increasing importance of community-based business

models in driving local economic development, particularly in regions where traditional business structures are underdeveloped (Angeli & Jaiswal, 2016). In underserved areas, businesses often struggle to thrive due to limited infrastructure, capital, and human resources. Inclusive leadership, however, has the potential to mobilize local resources, foster collaboration, and create more equitable opportunities for all stakeholders, especially marginalized groups (Noor et al., 2023). By understanding the role of inclusive leadership in these settings, this study will contribute to the development of strategies that can enhance the sustainability and success of businesses in underserved areas.

Previous studies have highlighted the relationship between leadership styles and business success in various contexts, with inclusive leadership being identified as a key driver of innovation and organizational performance (Gong et al., 2021). However, research on inclusive leadership within community-based business ecosystems, particularly in underserved areas, is limited. The novel contribution of this study lies in its focus on community-based business ecosystems in underserved regions, offering new insights into how inclusive leadership can help overcome systemic challenges and contribute to business success. By utilizing a narrative research approach, this study will provide a rich, contextual understanding of inclusive leadership practices and their impact on community-based businesses in these regions.

The primary objective of this research is to explore the patterns of inclusive leadership in community-based business ecosystems within underserved areas, identifying how these leadership patterns contribute to the development and sustainability of local businesses. Specifically, the study seeks to examine how leaders in these contexts implement inclusive leadership practices, engage diverse community members, and foster collaborative networks that support business growth. The study will also explore the outcomes of inclusive leadership, focusing on how it influences organizational success, community



empowerment, and economic development in underserved areas.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform leadership theory and practice, particularly in the context of community-based businesses in underserved areas. By identifying effective inclusive leadership practices, the study will offer practical recommendations for leaders, policymakers, and practitioners aiming to foster inclusive and sustainable business ecosystems in marginalized regions. Moreover, the findings will contribute to the broader discourse on inclusive leadership and its role in promoting social and economic equity in business practices.

Inclusive Leadership Patterns in Business Ecosystems

Inclusive leadership refers to leadership styles and behaviors that ensure diverse perspectives, talents, and backgrounds are not only acknowledged but also actively integrated into organizational processes and decision-making (Shore et al., 2011). In the context of business ecosystems, inclusive leadership patterns manifest in the way leaders facilitate collaboration and participation across all levels of the ecosystem, ensuring that all stakeholders, from local communities to industry partners, are equally valued. By fostering an environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds can contribute their unique insights and expertise, inclusive leadership promotes innovation and resilience, which are crucial for the sustainability of business ecosystems, particularly in underserved or marginalized regions (Cortés et al., 2021).

One key aspect of inclusive leadership within business ecosystems is the ability to adapt leadership practices to diverse cultural, social, and economic contexts (Nosratabadi et al., 2020). Leaders in these ecosystems must be attuned to the needs of their community members, recognizing the unique challenges they face and employing strategies that are both sensitive and responsive to these challenges. This includes adopting participatory decision-

making processes, empowering local entrepreneurs, and creating platforms for collaboration that amplify marginalized voices. In doing so, inclusive leaders can help overcome structural inequalities and create equitable opportunities for all participants within the ecosystem (Boudreaux & Nikolaev, 2018). This approach leads to greater cohesion within the ecosystem and more equitable distribution of resources, further strengthening the business network's sustainability.

Moreover, inclusive leadership patterns encourage long-term relationship building among ecosystem participants, which fosters trust and mutual respect (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). This relational leadership approach is characterized by leaders who prioritize communication, transparency, and shared goals. By cultivating an inclusive culture, leaders in business ecosystems can enhance stakeholder engagement, which is essential for creating dynamic and adaptable networks. These relationships also foster a sense of belonging and shared responsibility, motivating individuals and organizations to work toward common objectives. As such, inclusive leadership patterns are not only a catalyst for business success but also play a pivotal role in social and economic development, especially in underserved or marginalized areas where the ability to build strong, collaborative networks can significantly impact local prosperity.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, specifically a literature review methodology, to explore the patterns of inclusive leadership in community-based business ecosystems in underserved areas. A literature review is an essential method for synthesizing existing research and offering a comprehensive understanding of a given topic (Papaioannou et al., 2016). By systematically examining and analyzing relevant academic articles, reports, and other published works, this study aims to uncover the theoretical foundations, key findings, and gaps in the current understanding of inclusive leadership within the context of business ecosystems in underserved regions. This approach

allows for a thorough exploration of how inclusive leadership practices have been conceptualized, implemented, and evaluated across various studies, providing a broad perspective on the topic.

The primary sources of data for this research are academic journals, books, conference papers, and reputable reports related to inclusive leadership and business ecosystems. Key databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus, and Springer will be used to access peer-reviewed articles and other relevant academic resources. The selection of sources will be guided by criteria such as the relevance of the content, publication date, and the credibility of the authors and institutions involved. Special attention will be given to studies that focus on leadership in community-based ecosystems, leadership styles, and the impact of inclusive leadership in marginalized and underserved areas. This ensures that the research draws from a diverse and credible body of literature, providing a well-rounded view of the subject matter.

Data collection will be carried out through a systematic review process, where relevant studies will be identified, selected, and analyzed based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The method of analysis will involve thematic analysis, where key themes and patterns related to inclusive leadership and its application in business ecosystems will be extracted from the selected literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach

will allow the researcher to identify recurring themes, concepts, and theoretical frameworks related to inclusive leadership, as well as examine the challenges and opportunities presented in community-based business ecosystems in underserved regions. The findings will be synthesized to develop a comprehensive understanding of the patterns and strategies of inclusive leadership that contribute to the success of businesses in marginalized areas, highlighting the unique aspects of these leadership styles in promoting collaboration, innovation, and sustainability.

3. Result and Discussion

The following table presents the results of the literature selection for this study. A total of 10 articles were identified through a systematic search of relevant literature on inclusive leadership and community-based business ecosystems in underserved areas. These articles were carefully selected based on their relevance to the research topic, publication quality, and their contributions to understanding inclusive leadership patterns in marginalized business ecosystems. The selection process involved reviewing articles from reputable academic journals and sources, ensuring that the findings were aligned with the focus of this study. Below is a summary of the key articles reviewed and analyzed in this research.

No	Author & Year	Title	Findings
1	(Barak, 2022)	Managing Diversity: Toward a Globally Inclusive Workplace	Inclusive practices value diversity and equality, which are crucial for fostering collaboration and innovation
2	(Brimhall & Palinkas, 2020)	Inclusive Leadership and Employee Engagement	Inclusive leadership improves organizational behavior and enhances employee engagement
3	(Groves & Feyerherm, 2011)	The Role of Cultural Intelligence in Inclusive Leadership	Leaders with cultural intelligence perform better in cross-cultural settings
4	(Phillips, 2014)	How Diversity Makes Us Smarter	Diversity in leadership fosters creativity and innovation through diverse perspectives
5	(Cropanzano et al., 2007)	The Management of Organizational Justice	Inclusive leadership promotes fairness and transparency, improving organizational culture

No	Author & Year	Title	Findings
6	(Brenton & Slawinski, 2023)	Inclusive Leadership Practices and Community Empowerment	Inclusive leadership empowers local stakeholders and promotes community development
7	(Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015)	Diversity Management and its Effect on Organizational Behavior	Inclusive leadership enhances collaboration, employee satisfaction, and organizational outcomes
8	(Ayad, 2016)	Inclusive Leadership: A Transformational Approach to Business Development	Inclusive leadership helps businesses thrive by addressing the needs of marginalized communities
9	(Pache & Chowdhury, 2012)	Social Entrepreneurship and Its Impact on Business Ecosystems	Social entrepreneurship balances social impact and financial gain, promoting sustainable business models
10	(Bowen et al., 2021)	Inclusive Leadership and Community Development	Inclusive leadership drives community development by empowering local stakeholders in underserved areas

This table serves as a concise overview of the key literature relevant to the study of inclusive leadership within community-based business ecosystems in underserved areas. The articles reviewed provide insights into the impact of inclusive leadership on organizational culture, innovation, and community development, particularly in marginalized regions. These sources offer a blend of theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, and case studies that contribute to understanding how inclusive leadership patterns can foster sustainable business practices in these contexts.

Data Interpretation

The table above presents the key findings from the literature reviewed in this study, highlighting significant insights into the role of inclusive leadership in community-based business ecosystems, particularly in underserved areas. Upon analyzing the selected articles, several patterns emerge that are crucial for understanding the impact and application of inclusive leadership within such contexts. These findings reveal not only the benefits of inclusive leadership but also the challenges faced in implementing these leadership styles in marginalized regions.

One of the most prominent themes that emerged from the literature is the connection between inclusive leadership and the creation of diverse, equitable, and sustainable workplaces and communities. (Barak, 2022) emphasize the importance of inclusive practices that value diversity and equality, which is essential for fostering collaboration and innovation within an organization or ecosystem. This aligns with the findings of (Brimhall & Palinkas, 2020), who argue that inclusive leadership improves organizational behavior and enhances employee engagement by creating environments where all voices are heard and valued. Inclusive leadership is, therefore, a key driver of organizational success and sustainable growth, particularly in settings where diversity is prevalent.

Moreover, inclusive leadership has a profound impact on the ability to adapt to different cultural and social contexts. (Groves & Feyerherm, 2011) highlight the importance of cultural intelligence in inclusive leadership, suggesting that leaders who are culturally aware can more effectively navigate the complexities of cross-cultural environments. This adaptability is particularly valuable in community-based business ecosystems in underserved areas, where local cultures and social dynamics may vary significantly. Leaders

who are skilled in cultural intelligence can build stronger relationships and foster a more inclusive atmosphere, which is essential for overcoming the challenges often faced in marginalized regions.

The role of inclusive leadership in fostering innovation was another key finding. (Phillips, 2014) explore how inclusive leadership promotes innovation within business ecosystems by encouraging diverse perspectives and ideas. Inclusive leaders create environments where team members feel empowered to contribute their unique insights, leading to more creative solutions and improved business outcomes. This is especially relevant for underserved areas, where traditional business models may not be as effective. By embracing inclusivity, leaders can drive innovation that addresses local challenges and opens up new opportunities for economic development.

The literature also underscores the connection between inclusive leadership and organizational culture. (Cropanzano et al., 2007) found that inclusive leadership positively influences organizational culture by promoting fairness, transparency, and equal opportunity. This creates a work environment where individuals feel respected and motivated to contribute their best work, which is crucial in fostering a thriving business ecosystem. In underserved areas, where resources are often limited, the ability to cultivate a positive and inclusive organizational culture can lead to more resilient and adaptive business practices that support long-term success.

Lastly, the findings highlight the importance of inclusive leadership in promoting community development and economic growth in underserved areas. (Brenton & Slawinski, 2023) discuss how inclusive leadership practices can harness local potential by empowering community members and fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders. This is particularly important in marginalized regions, where inclusive leadership can be a powerful tool for overcoming structural barriers and driving

sustainable economic development. Leaders who prioritize inclusivity help build stronger, more resilient business ecosystems that benefit not just the businesses themselves but the communities in which they operate.

In summary, the data from the literature reviewed underscores the critical role that inclusive leadership plays in fostering diverse, innovative, and sustainable business ecosystems. Leaders who adopt inclusive practices can create environments that promote collaboration, innovation, and community development, which are essential for the success of businesses in underserved areas. These findings provide valuable insights for future research and practice, offering a foundation for developing inclusive leadership strategies that can be applied in marginalized contexts to drive long-term growth and resilience.

Discussion and Analysis

The findings from this study highlight the critical role of inclusive leadership in shaping community-based business ecosystems, particularly in underserved areas. These results resonate with current phenomena in business and leadership practices, especially in environments where economic and social disparities prevail. As organizations and businesses face the increasing need for diversity and inclusivity, the results underscore the importance of inclusive leadership as a driver of sustainability, innovation, and community development. Inclusive leadership fosters environments where diverse voices are not only heard but are actively integrated into decision-making, which is particularly vital in marginalized regions.

The connection between inclusive leadership and organizational success, as noted in the findings from (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015) and (Ayad, 2016), is well-documented in leadership theory. These studies emphasize that inclusive leadership practices create work environments that promote equity, foster collaboration, and enhance employee satisfaction. In the context of underserved areas, where businesses



may face challenges related to resource scarcity, limited infrastructure, and economic instability, inclusive leadership plays an even more significant role. It ensures that local communities are not excluded from the decision-making process, allowing them to take ownership and contribute to the growth and sustainability of local businesses (Dongier et al., 2003). By fostering collaboration, inclusive leaders help businesses adapt to the unique challenges and opportunities present in these regions.

Moreover, the findings from (Paiuc, 2021) regarding cultural intelligence in inclusive leadership align with current global trends of increasing cultural diversity in business environments. In underserved areas, where the community's cultural, social, and economic backgrounds often differ from those in more developed regions, cultural intelligence becomes an essential leadership competency. Leaders who are attuned to the nuances of the local culture can more effectively engage with their teams and local stakeholders. This cultural awareness enables them to craft leadership strategies that resonate with local values and norms, which in turn improves the likelihood of successful implementation of business strategies. By acknowledging and embracing cultural diversity, inclusive leaders create a more cohesive and collaborative business ecosystem (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015).

Inclusive leadership's role in driving innovation is another key finding that aligns with the current business climate. As (Leroy et al., 2022) suggest, inclusive leadership fosters an environment where diverse perspectives can thrive, leading to enhanced creativity and innovation. In underserved regions, where traditional business models often fail to address local needs, inclusive leadership becomes a catalyst for developing solutions that are more attuned to the community's specific context. By empowering local leaders and entrepreneurs, inclusive leadership promotes the creation of innovative business models that are adaptable, sustainable, and locally relevant. This resonates with the growing trend of social entrepreneurship, where

business leaders are increasingly focusing on creating social impact alongside financial gain (Pache & Chowdhury, 2012).

Additionally, the findings highlight the influence of inclusive leadership on organizational culture. (Barnes et al., 2023) argue that inclusive leadership practices enhance organizational culture by fostering a climate of fairness, respect, and opportunity. In marginalized communities, this cultural shift is crucial for businesses to thrive. In these environments, the lack of opportunities often leads to frustration and disengagement, which hampers growth and productivity. Inclusive leaders who prioritize fairness and transparency create a work environment that motivates individuals to contribute their skills and talents, which ultimately strengthens the overall performance of the business ecosystem. Such organizational cultures not only enhance business performance but also contribute to the development of a more cohesive and resilient community.

(Bowen et al., 2021) emphasize that inclusive leadership in underserved areas can drive community development by empowering local stakeholders. In regions where traditional business models fail to address the needs of marginalized populations, inclusive leadership offers a more equitable approach to business development. By ensuring that all community members have a seat at the table, inclusive leaders create business ecosystems that are more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable. In fact, inclusive leadership fosters trust among community members, which is a key element in building long-term relationships that can sustain local businesses in the face of adversity. This is particularly relevant in underserved areas, where trust is often lacking due to historical neglect or exploitation by external business interests.

In the broader context of leadership theory, the findings of this study reflect key elements of transformational leadership, which emphasizes vision, innovation, and the empowerment of

followers (Ayad, 2016). Transformational leaders inspire and motivate followers to achieve common goals, which is particularly important in community-based business ecosystems where collective effort is essential. Inclusive leadership shares similarities with transformational leadership in that it involves engaging with followers and creating a shared vision. However, the key distinction lies in the focus on inclusion and equity, which ensures that all stakeholders, particularly those from marginalized communities, have the opportunity to contribute to the collective success.

The results also highlight the importance of inclusive leadership in creating business ecosystems that are responsive to the needs of local communities. (Elkington & Booysen, 2015) argue that inclusive leadership helps businesses adapt to changing environments, particularly when dealing with complex and dynamic social challenges. In underserved areas, where access to education, healthcare, and infrastructure is often limited, inclusive leadership can help bridge these gaps by fostering collaboration and cooperation among local businesses, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations. By leveraging local knowledge and resources, inclusive leaders can help create business ecosystems that are not only economically viable but also socially responsible and inclusive.

However, the implementation of inclusive leadership in underserved areas is not without its challenges. As noted in the literature, there are often systemic barriers such as limited access to resources, insufficient training, and cultural resistance that can hinder the effectiveness of inclusive leadership practices. These barriers require leaders to be particularly adaptive, resilient, and resourceful. They must be able to engage with diverse stakeholders and overcome entrenched power dynamics that may limit the effectiveness of inclusive leadership. The findings of this study suggest that for inclusive leadership to be successful in underserved areas, it must be accompanied by targeted interventions that address

these systemic challenges and support the development of inclusive leadership skills among local leaders.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the patterns of inclusive leadership in community-based business ecosystems in underserved areas. The findings underscore the significant role that inclusive leadership plays in fostering innovation, collaboration, and sustainable development. While the challenges are substantial, the potential benefits of inclusive leadership in transforming business ecosystems in marginalized regions are undeniable. Inclusive leadership not only drives business success but also contributes to the broader goal of social and economic equity, which is essential for the long-term prosperity of underserved communities. By focusing on the empowerment of local stakeholders, inclusive leaders can create business ecosystems that are resilient, adaptive, and capable of generating positive social impact.

4. Conclusion

The findings from this study underscore the vital role of inclusive leadership in shaping sustainable and innovative business ecosystems, particularly in underserved areas. Inclusive leadership practices foster diverse, equitable, and collaborative environments that empower local communities to actively participate in business development. These leadership styles not only drive organizational success but also contribute to community growth by addressing local challenges, enhancing trust, and promoting social cohesion. The research highlights how inclusive leadership can transform marginalized regions by ensuring that all voices, especially those from historically excluded groups, are integrated into decision-making processes.

Moreover, inclusive leadership's influence on innovation is significant, especially in underserved areas where traditional business models often fail to address local needs. By embracing diverse perspectives, inclusive leaders create environments conducive to creative solutions, which is essential for overcoming the socio-economic challenges that

these regions face. The study further emphasizes that leaders who possess cultural intelligence and adaptability are more effective in navigating the complexities of local dynamics, ensuring that business strategies align with the values and needs of the community. As such, inclusive leadership contributes not only to organizational performance but also to the social and economic empowerment of the local population.

For future research, it is recommended to explore the specific strategies and practices that inclusive leaders use to overcome systemic barriers in underserved areas. Further empirical studies could focus on longitudinal data to assess the long-term impact of inclusive leadership on community development and business sustainability in marginalized regions. Additionally, more research could be conducted to explore the relationship between inclusive leadership and other factors, such as access to technology, education, and infrastructure, to better understand how inclusive leadership can be integrated with broader development goals in underserved areas.

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