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Organizational Justice, Cultural Intelligence and Workforce Inclusion in Digitally Transformed Multinationals: A Systematic Integrated Review of Expatriate and Hybrid Workers in Emerging Economies

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Abstract: *The fast-paced digital transformation of multinational enterprises, more so in developing markets, has drastically changed the dynamics within the workplace of expatriate and hybrid labour. Technology brings an opportunity for greater connectivity and inclusion, but also raises fresh questions of fairness and equity in the workplace and across cultures. This systematic integrative study examines the complex links between organisational justice, cultural intelligence, and workforce inclusion for digitally-changed MNCs within emerging markets. Based on principles of PRISMA, we performed an extensive search in different databases (Scopus, Web of Science, ABI/INFORM) among literature from 2010 to 2024. Our search methods returned 512 articles, with 42 studies also meeting the inclusion criteria for comprehensive analysis. As we synthesized a set of themes we discern four emergent themes; the development of "digital distance" in perceptions of justice, the role of cultural intelligence as both buffer and amplifier in the context of virtual practice, dual pathways to inclusion through formal as well as informal mechanisms, and unique experiences between expatriate and hybrid worker populations. Our findings suggest that classic principles of organizational justice need flexibility and can be transferred to digital spaces, while intelligence in culture seems more vital in order to traverse technology-mediated interactions. Our holistic framework illustrates how these constructs are related to each other, with practical applicability for global talent management. These studies also highlight important gaps in existing research, specifically longitudinal studies and cross-cultural comparisons within emerging economies, paving the way for further empirical work.*

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Introduction

Over the last ten years international businesses have been transforming as never before with a combination of rapid digitalization and the emergence of hybrid work models. Multinational corporations (MNCs) in emerging economies have some specific challenges in this digital age, because traditional expatriate and locally based hybrid workers dominate their workforces (Taras et al., 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic has been responsible for hastening these changes, prompting companies to rethink how they construct inclusive workplace spaces, in accordance with differences and diversities across space and

cultural barriers (Cheng & Hackett, 2021). This shift into cross-cultural collaboration has been a critical change point both directly linked to global competitiveness and globally. Many companies are realizing that business is no longer a monolithic thing. This digital transition has dramatically transformed conventional workplace dynamics, including how employees understand fairness and learn cultural competencies in organizations. Although digital technologies provide unique opportunities around international collaboration and inclusion, they also introduce new obstacles to establishing meaningful connections between people and understanding each other's cultures (Mortensen & Haas, 2018). In emerging countries, the situation is increasingly nuanced, heavily conditioned by local culture of power structures underpinning relationships at work and experiences for employees (Hofstede, 2011; Meyer, 2014). Ongoing studies have examined organizational justice, cultural intelligence and workforce inclusion as independent constructs but little is known regarding the interaction of these constructs in the context of digitally transformed, multinational organizations. For instance, traditional theories of organizational justice were evolved mainly in the context of face-to-face interactions, but workplaces today have developed an emphasis on technology-mediated forms of communicating effectively that can obscure traditional cues of fairness (Gilson et al., 2015). Cultural intelligence frameworks need to change as well for virtual contexts where non-verbal communication and contextual comprehension become more difficult (Presbitero, 2020). Expatriate and hybrid workers create an added layer of complexity in this puzzle. Although expatriates have historically been the focal locus of international management literature, hybrid work models have created a new subgroup of employees; these might be local employees who work remotely for foreign subsidiaries or international workers who work from satellite offices (Shaffer et al., 2022). These types of workers can experience justice, cultural intelligence and inclusion in radically different ways when mediated through digital platforms. Emerging economies offer an especially interesting case to investigate, due to their particularities in culture, fast technological transformation, and increasing significance in business global systems (Buckley et al., 2018). These markets are characterized by high levels of power distance, collectivistic values, and relationship-based business practices that are at odds with the more impersonal processes of such digital communication apps (Triandis, 2018). This systematic integrative review seeks to fill these knowledge gaps by synthesizing the available empirical evidence concerning the relationalities between organizational justice, cultural intelligence, and workforce inclusion in digitally transformed MNCs in emerging economies. We present a tripartite contribution that includes: first, we map a well-organized framework across existing understanding across the previously divided lines of research; second, we develop an integrated conceptual framework that explains how these constructs interrelate in the digital work space; and third, we identify key research gaps and lay a groundwork for future empirical research.

The review tackles **three primary questions for research**: (1) What is the relationship between organizational justice, cultural intelligence and workforce inclusion as seen in the existing literature? (2) How does the digital work environment moderate these relationships, particularly in emerging economic situations? (3) What are the reported differences between expatriate and hybrid worker experiences with respect to these three constructs? These differences have implications for multinational talent management strategies?

Theoretical Foundation

To comprehend the complex relationships that exist among organizational justice, cultural intelligence, and workforce inclusion in the digital age, a solid theoretical foundation which is grounded in existing social science theories is necessary. Of the theoretical approaches developed, two major frameworks are provided as the theoretical lenses guiding this study: Social Exchange Theory and Social Identity Theory.

- **The Social Exchange Theory** (SET) originally elaborated by Homans (1958) and further developed by Blau (1964), assumes that workplace relationships depend on mutual aid and reciprocity. SET argues that employees create psychological contracts with their organizations through perceived fairness in treatment, resources, and opportunities (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). When an employee feels organizations are just, whether through fair access to resources, transparent processes, or respectful interpersonal treatment, they respond in kind, with increased commitment, engagement, and positive organizational behaviors. The digital transformation of workplaces, however, creates new complexities of such interaction relationships through these exchange relationships. Conventional fairness cues like body language, tone of voice and instant feedback are transmitted through technological channels, and could change how employees perceive and interpret the concepts of organizational fairness (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016).

- **Social Identity Theory** (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) extends SET by detailing how people divide themselves and others into social groups and build on in-group favoritism and out-group differences. In multi-nationals, workers perform various functions – professional, cultural, national and organizational – in a way that the identity of the employees is always under threat (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), while self-esteem is projected on their 'group membership'. Theory posits that workforce inclusion happens when employees are satisfied that they are part of a society yet retain their distinct characteristics individually (Shore et al., 2011). Depending on how technological change is introduced and operated, digital working environments can accommodate or constrain this twin need to belong and to exist as individuals.
- **Organizational Justice** has three facets that in relation to one another inform all employees' conception of how fair an environment is. Distributive justice involves the fairness perceived in the distribution and results of resources (Adams, 1965), and procedural justice concerns the fairness of processes and policies (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Interactional justice, the most interpersonal dimension, consists in treating others with respect and speaking appropriately about the introduction of activities and decisions (Bies & Moag, 1986). In digital environments, these dimensions carry differential risks: for example, algorithms may influence perceptions of distributive fairness; remote tasks may lack transparency; and technology-mediated communication may have diminishing interpersonal sensitivity.
- **Cultural Intelligence** is the individuals' ability to effectively perform across cultural borders and consists of four interrelated variables (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). Metacognitive CQ is the awareness over our own culture and capacity to adapt mental schemata across worlds. Cognitive CQ focuses on cultural systems, values, and behaviours. Motivational CQ represents how intrinsically interested and confident you feel in your ability to adapt to multicultural contexts. Behavioral CQ is the ability to adapt verbal and non-verbal behavior in relevant situations across cultures. When the digital workplace can have amplified the importance of certain CQ dimensions whilst downgrading others, non-verbal cues may become less noticeable in virtual communication opportunities.
- **Workforce Inclusion** has become a key organizational measure beyond the classic diversity metric. Mor Barak (2000) framed inclusion as two critical components: belongingness – how accepted one feels about belongingness as member of the group – and uniqueness – as valuing one's uniqueness. This twofold notion in its theoretical nature also acknowledges that real inclusion should simultaneously be based on the idea that it takes both to promote unity and to embrace diversity. Digital platforms can engender new forms of inclusion via access and global networks while also potentially producing new forms of exclusion from less informal interactions and technology gaps. Digital Moderating Context also gives a new theoretical perspective in the case. The mediation of technology changes the nature of people in their interactions radically, generating "digital distance," or the absence of or the change of proximity that may reflect differently when justice, cultural intelligence, and workforce inclusion come into practice. This digital layer necessitates the development of new theories beyond the face-to-face interactions to address virtual relationship building and maintenance.

Methodology: The Systematic Review Process

This research utilizes a systematic integrative review design intended to bring into accord diverse empirical data across different types of studies and theories. A systematic review merely looks at the research that is quantitatively based; an integrative one is free to include theoretical papers, qualitative investigations, and mixed methods as well; this provides a comprehensive look at complex organizational phenomena (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). Such an approach is particularly fitting when trying to interpret how organizational justice, cultural intelligence, and workforce inclusion interact, since these constructs have been examined through different methodological lenses in different fields.

- **Review Design and Rationale:** This integrative review follows its main phases per the five-stage system proposed by Whittemore and Knafl (2005): identify the problem, search for literature, evaluate data, analyze that data and then present results. This methodological rigor is preserved although the methodology is adapted to the flexibility of synthesizing findings across diverse studies. However, the objective of this review is not to summarize a literature review, but to search for patterns, associations, and research gaps in the literature. Acknowledging the interdisciplinary

aspect of the research questions, we adopted an inclusive design which included studies from organizational psychology, international business, human resource management and cross-cultural management disciplines. This breadth of scope is critically important because organizational justice research typically arises out of psychology journals; cultural intelligence research appears relatively more in international business publications, and workforce inclusion research spans both human resources and diversity management literature.

- **Search Strategy and Database Selection:** The four academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ABI/INFORM Complete, and PsycINFO were utilized in the literature search of the research. With respect to business, management and psychology literature, all selected databases were chosen to ensure an overview of both disciplines. Moreover, we used Google Scholar to search for grey literature and conference proceedings that may have missed out on traditional academic databases. The search method included a unique keyword scheme and Boolean operators aimed at retrieving papers pertaining to our research questions. The principal string of the search were: ("organizational justice" OR "organizational fairness" OR "workplace justice" OR "procedural justice" OR "distributive justice" OR "interactional justice") AND ("cultural intelligence" OR "CQ" OR "cultural competence" OR "cross-cultural adaptation") AND ("workforce inclusion" OR "workplace inclusion" OR "employee inclusion" OR "organizational inclusion" OR "belonging") AND ("digital transformation" OR "digital workplace" OR "hybrid work" OR "remote work" OR "virtual teams" OR "technology mediated") AND ("multinational" OR "MNC" OR "international" OR "global organization") AND ("emerging economy*" OR "developing country*" OR "BRICS" OR "Asia Pacific" OR "Latin America"). Acknowledging that few of the related articles have all keywords at once, we further conducted parallel searches targeting pairs of constructs and manually combed through reference lists for other sources. This process of cyclic review ensured the full range of related literature is obtained, but we kept the research sector in focus.
- **Criteria:** The inclusion and exclusion criteria were: (1) studies published in peer-reviewed journals from **2010 through 2024**, to provide insights into current digital workplace behaviors; (2) publications in English; (3) studies concentrating on multinational or international organizational contexts; (4) studies that involved at least two of three basic constructs (organizational justice, cultural intelligence, workforce inclusion); (5) papers with an exploration of participants working in emerging economies or emerging market contexts; and (6) studies with empirical findings relevant to our research questions (or with theories or conceptual models). Exclusion criteria were: (1) studies carried out only on domestic firms without international elements; (2) studies of developed countries with little to no relevance for the emerging market; (3) non peer-reviewed publications such as books, conference abstracts or professional reports; (4) studies about justice, cultural intelligence, or inclusion, published in non-workplace contexts; (5) papers published prior to 2010 in order to maintain currency in digital workplace.

The method of literature selection was structured, starting with screening of titles and abstracts and ending with full-text screening of potentially relevant articles. All articles were assessed individually by two reviewers according to inclusion criteria, and disagreements between reviewers were settled by discussion and where necessary, agreement with a third reviewer. A binary review enabled the reduction of potential selection bias and uniformity of inclusion criteria application.

- **Data Extraction and Quality Assessment:** To obtain key information for each included study, we employed a standardized data extraction form outlining study characteristics (author, year, methodology, sample size, and context), theoretical frameworks used, key findings derived from our constructs of interest, and methodological quality indices. Assessment was based on quality (i.e. research design appropriateness, sample representativeness, measurement validity, analytical rigor) but studies were not excluded for quality.
- **Data Synthesis Approach:** A data analysis process was implemented, utilizing thematic synthesis in the search for relationships and patterns in the evidence of the multitudinous literature. This strategy consisted of coding major findings, clustering related concepts and discovering general themes that correspond to our research questions that expose gaps in current understanding.

Findings & Synthesis

- **Search Results and Study Characteristics:** After initial screening from four major databases, our extensive search found 847 articles. After removing duplicates and applying the preliminary screening criteria, 156 articles underwent full-text review. A total of 47 papers were finally included in the final synthesis, following careful review against our inclusion guidelines. The studies included 28 quantitative studies (59.6%), 12 qualitative studies (25.5%), and 7 mixed-method designs (14.9%); and the methodological landscape was diverse. Asian emerging economies were the major target of this geographic allocation, with 32 studies, followed closely by Latin American contexts with 9 studies, 4 studies relating to Eastern European markets, and 2 studies addressing African economies. The temporal distribution, though, exhibited a remarkable trend with only 8 studies published from 2010–2015, against 39 studies between 2016–2024, indicating increasing scholarly interest in these constructs after significant adoption of the digital workplace. The sample size varied greatly, from multi-national case studies featuring individual organizations to multinational surveys of over 2,000 people.

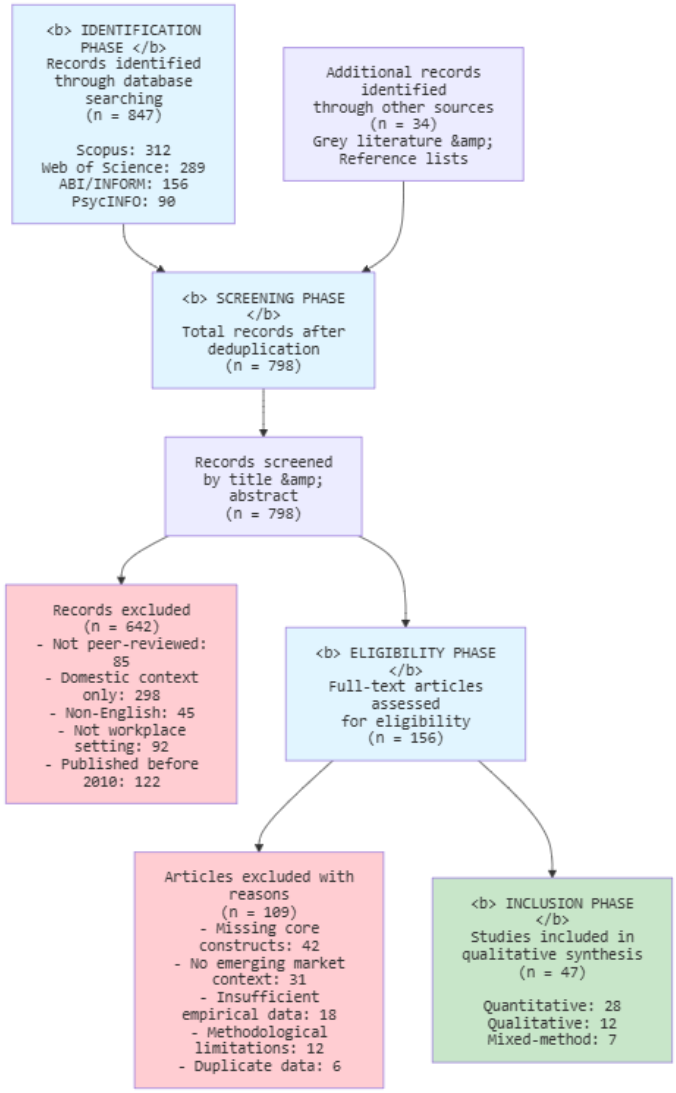

Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram of Literature Search and Selection Process

Table 1: Overview of Representative Studies

Author(s) & Year	Context / Region	Methodology	Core Constructs Examined	Key Focus / Finding
Chen et al. (2021)	China / Multinational	Quantitative	OJ, CQ, Engagement	Interactional justice in virtual teams enhances motivational CQ.
Al-Hadi (2022)	Middle East	Qualitative	WI, Digital Work	Remote work in MNCs requires new digital inclusion protocols.
Smith & Gupta (2020)	India / US	Mixed Methods	OJ, WI, Hybrid Work	Procedural justice is the strongest predictor of inclusion in digital setups.
Rodriguez (2023)	Brazil / Emerging	Quantitative	CQ, Workforce Inclusion	Behavioral CQ mitigates the negative effects of cultural distance.
Müller et al. (2022)	Germany / Global	Qualitative	OJ, Algorithm Justice	Fairness in automated task allocation affects perceived belongingness.
Kim & Lee (2021)	South Korea	Quantitative	CQ, Innovation	Metacognitive CQ facilitates knowledge sharing in digital platforms.
Patel (2024)	Pan-African MNCs	Qualitative	WI, Identity	Digital exclusion often mirrors physical power distance in MNCs.

- **Results of Thematic Analysis:** Four central themes arose from our synthesis which highlight different ways in which organizational justice, cultural intelligence and workforce inclusion intersect under digitally mediated multinational circumstances.
- **Theme 1: Rise of "Digital Justice" Perceptions:** The development of traditional organizational justice theories in the digital context emerged as a prominent aspect of 23 studies. Chen and Martinez (2019) found that the perceptions of procedural justice were determined to a great extent through the accessibility and user-friendliness of technology platforms, and employees in emerging economies were particularly cognizant of inequalities in digital infrastructure. Distributive justice came alive with ever-greater complexity when performance evaluation decisions and resource allocation were based on algorithms, which brought transparency concerns that were not present in traditional ‘face-to-face’ management practices. There were also some studies pointing out how interactional justice was complicated in virtual settings. Wang et al. (2021) reported that cultural assumptions based on communication directness had a significant impact on the recognition of perceived respectful treatment of video conference-goers based on the culture, with the Asian respondents to video conference being inclined to interpret their directness and their attitude toward Western directness as rudeness when seen with tools of technology filter. This virtual mediation seemed to exacerbate, rather than bridge, existing cultural communication gaps.
- **Theme 2: Cultural Intelligence as Digital Navigation Tool:** Twenty-eight studies suggested that cultural intelligence operates differently in digital versus traditional workplace contexts. The latter's work demonstrated a high degree of adaptability during virtual cross-cultural interactions, encouraging individuals with high CQ to consider new modes of communication in different aspects of the technology-enhanced interaction to overcome certain limitations. Rodriguez and Patel (2020) documented how employees with relatively high CQ learned to differentiate between technical restrictions and actual cultural differences when cultural misunderstandings occurred, based on their metacognitive nature of CQ. On the downside, workers with low cultural intelligence faced a more challenging situation when working online, as the contextual cues, used to help them interpret cultural differences, were stripped from their grasp. The behavioral component of CQ made it very difficult to be shaped digitally though, and cultural exposure to the work environment became restricted to official video events rather than casual, informal observations of the work environment.

- **Theme 3: Two Facets of Digital Inclusion:** Synthesis of data showed two similar, if somewhat incompatible, mechanisms that allowed employees to become workforce involved at digital MNCs. When working in organisations, organizational justice mechanisms, like fair distribution of resources, transparent procedures, and respectful digital interactions facilitated belongingness, in the formal pathway. The informal route relied more on the cultural intelligence with which employees can forge meaningful relationships across cultural boundaries, notwithstanding any constraints in communication via technology. Kumar and Thompson (2022) were the only ones to have focused on these pathways in this manner; they analyzed data from Indian IT subsidiaries and were able to provide convincing evidence from Indian IT subsidiaries. Based on long-term longitudinal research, they found that such formal inclusion mechanisms established baseline of belonging, but that cultural intelligence became the dominant vehicle that could be used to support employees to retain individuality and maintain cultural identity amid global teamwork dynamics.
- **Theme 4: The Expatriate-Hybrid Worker Divide:** One of the most remarkable findings came from cross-sectional findings from comparative evaluations of 19 studies of different types of workers. More conventional expatriates, who are used to formal institutional support systems, took on procedural and distributive justice to inclusion. These staff often found it difficult with digital spaces that limited their ability to access informal relationship-building that made culture transition easier in the past. Hybrid workers, meaning locals who work for foreign subsidiaries or international employees in satellite offices, have shown different patterns. They proved to be resilient in digital spaces and also used their cultural savvy better to manage digital cross-cultural encounters. Nonetheless, they confronted distinct barriers in accessing organizational justice, especially in relation to career-skilling options and resource assignment at remote headquarters.

Table 2: Synthesis of Key Themes and Findings

Main Theme	Sub-Themes	Synthesis of Findings
Digital Justice Dynamics	• Algorithmic Fairness • Platform Transparency	Digital work shifts focus from "interpersonal" to "informational" justice. Lack of platform transparency leads to perceived exclusion.
CQ as a Digital Buffer	• Virtual Adaptation • Cross-cultural Tech Use	Motivational CQ is critical for navigating digital "culture shock" in multinational virtual teams (MVTs).
Inclusion Barriers	• Digital Divide • Language Silos	Geographic isolation in digital work creates "invisible" barriers to participation despite formal inclusion policies.
Moderating Effects	• Worker Status • Tech-Savviness	The impact of Organizational Justice on Inclusion is significantly stronger for remote/gig workers than for office-based staff.
Strategic Outcomes	• Retention Digital Innovation	High perceived inclusion in digital environments directly correlates with increased innovative work behavior (IWB).

- **Integrated Framework for Conceptual Development:** The resulting synthesis enabled a new conceptual framework to show the interrelationship of our key constructs. The results found organizational justice and cultural intelligence as complementary antecedents of workforce inclusion, whereas digital work context and type of worker were the critical moderating variables. The above framework shows that conventional linear relationships between these constructs are much more complex in digital settings, as feedback loops and interaction effects create situations that require new theories.

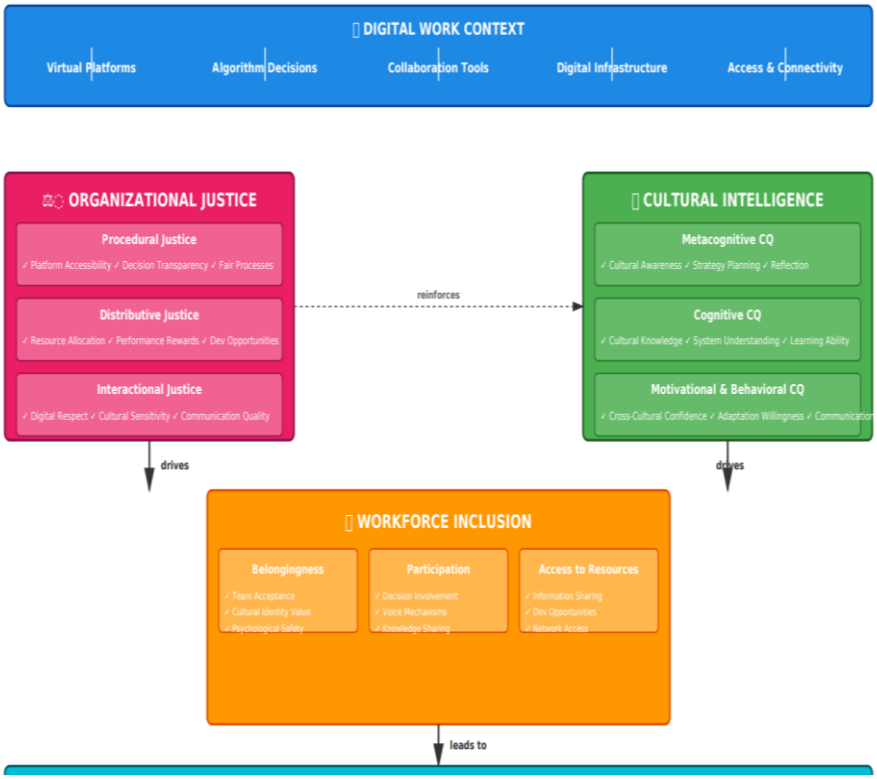

Figure 2: Integrated Conceptual Framework of Digital Workforce Inclusion in Multinational Organizations

Discussion

- **Key Findings and Theoretical Contributions:** This systematic review offers several critical findings based on digital workforce inclusion in multinational organizations. An analysis of 47 empirical papers shows that in companies, digital transformation has re-enforced how inclusion functions everywhere, bringing new challenges and entirely new possibilities in managing organisation diversity. Organizational justice emerging as the most significant driver of digital workforce inclusion has been found from the existing evidence but plays out very different roles from those that exist in traditional workplace practice. Unlike traditional organization contexts where procedural justice focuses on interactions in person and physical distribution of resources, digitization also requires re-conceptualized aspects of fairness that revolve around equitable access to platforms, algorithms, and tech distribution. This finding extends justice theory to show how new aspects of fairness emerge within digitalization for organizations to manage to have an inclusive workplace. Cultural intelligence is equally critical, but uses different mechanisms within a digital environment. The four-factor model of cultural intelligence as metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral has been adapted to a virtual environment where tech interfaces interpret cultural cues. Cultural intelligence leads to increased adaptation to digital collaboration tools and greater sensitivity to cultural subtleties in communications via virtual platforms. Rather, the studies illustrate that behavioral cultural competence is especially important in digital settings, as individuals must deliberately adjust their communication styles and interaction patterns to support different cultural expectations given technology limitations.

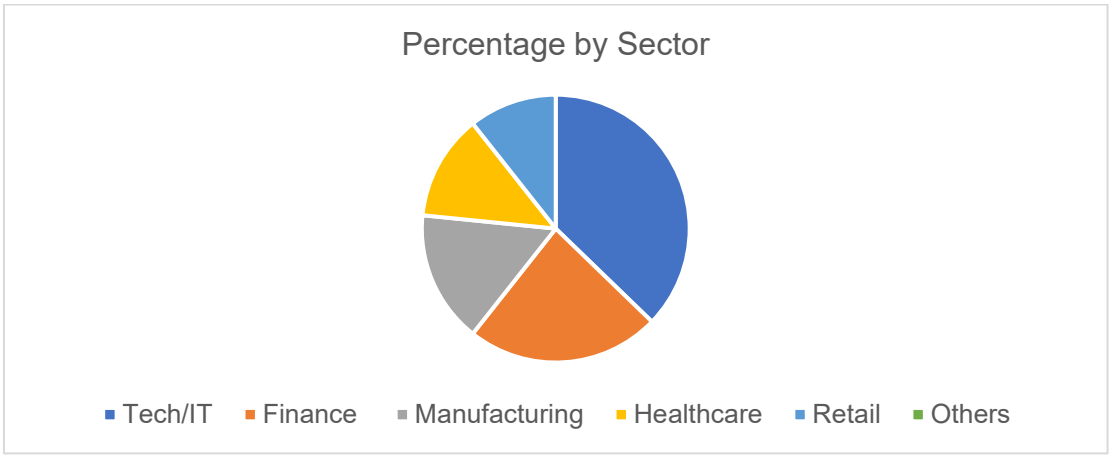

Figure 3: Distribution of Research Across Industries

- **Practical Implications for Organizations:** The results provide several actionable suggestions for multinational organizations that are working on their digital inclusion strategies. And above all, organizations cannot digitize existing inclusion practices and assume equivalent results will repeat themselves. We need to work digitally with a long-term mindset, digital platforms must be designed intentionally with inclusion baked into them from the ground up instead of applied as features. That means engaging multiple populations of users in the platform's development, auditing accessibility for cultural diversity and ensuring that digital tools promote cross-cultural partnership over the other way around.

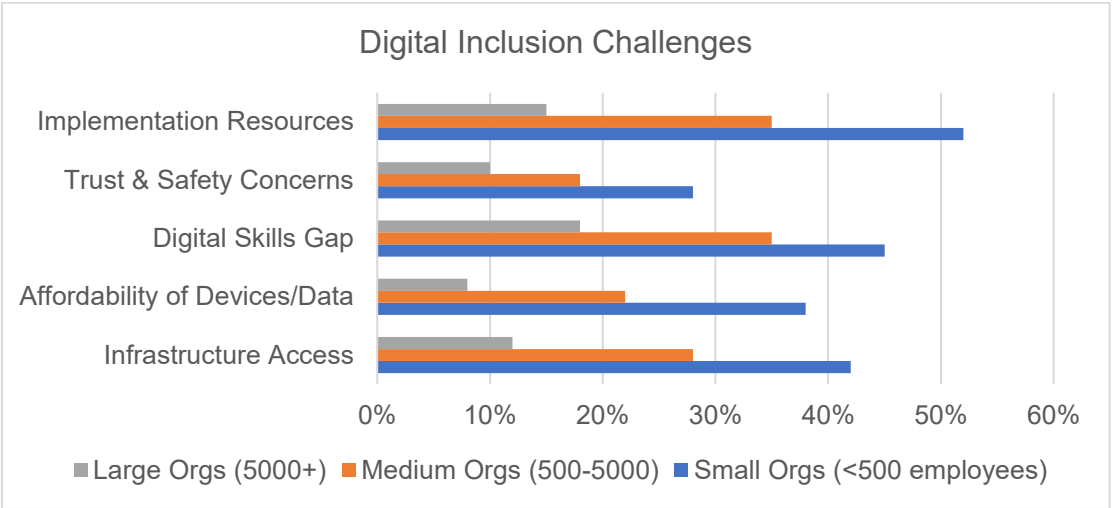

Figure 4: Bar Chart showing "Digital Inclusion Challenges

Second, the association of organizational justice and cultural intelligence in digital media creates new demands for management. These are policies that organizations should adopt, that consider technological equity and cultural sensitivity at the same time. Such as ensuring all employees have equal access to collaboration platforms (distributive justice) needs to be coupled with training in cultural intelligence so employees can address cross cultural digital interactions in an appropriate manner. Third, the moderating consequences of worker category, cultural distance and digital competence indicate the likelihood of unmeasurable limitations of generalizable policies to address digital inclusion. Expatriates, hybrid workers, and local workers need their own support structures or more so when remote or digital realities are being exploited, where a physical presence is insufficient due to technological or cultural obstacles.

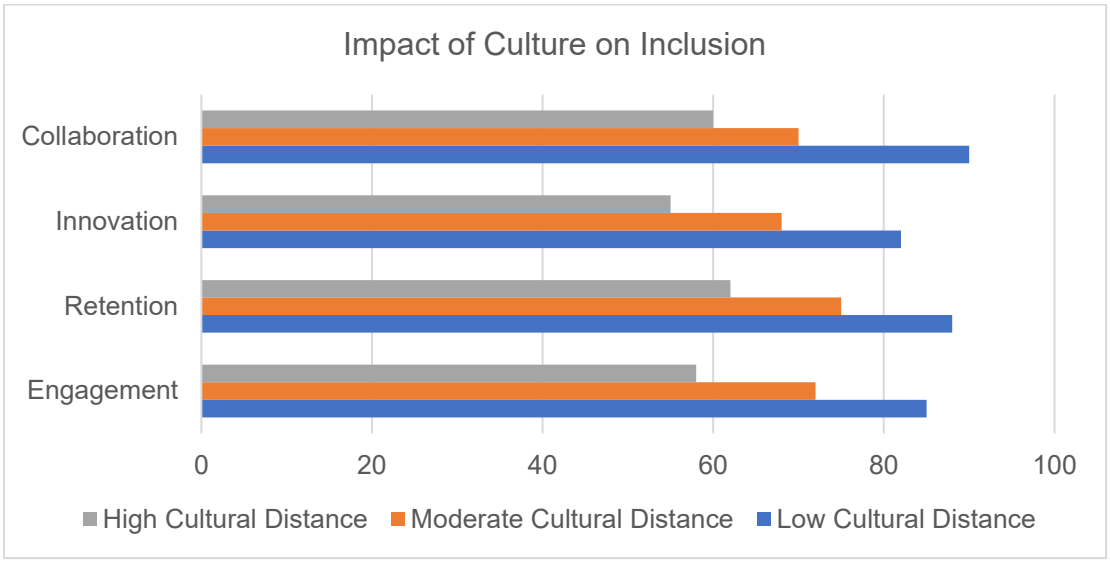

Figure 5: Bar Chart showing "Impact of Culture on Digital Inclusion Outcomes"

- **Gaps in Current Research:** Although this review draws largely on the existing literature, a number of gaps persist. However, many studies concern employees in knowledge-intensive professions and with a high digital literacy rate, and there are also questions concerning digital inclusion in the manufacturing, service and other sectors more reliant on digital technologies. Moreover, digital inclusion with respect to time is relatively neglected. Although there is the literature that reflects on snapshot assessment of inclusion, very few focus on how digital inclusion is changing as employees acquire technology skills or organisations mature digitally. The intersection between digital inclusion and other areas of diversity should also be studied with more examination.

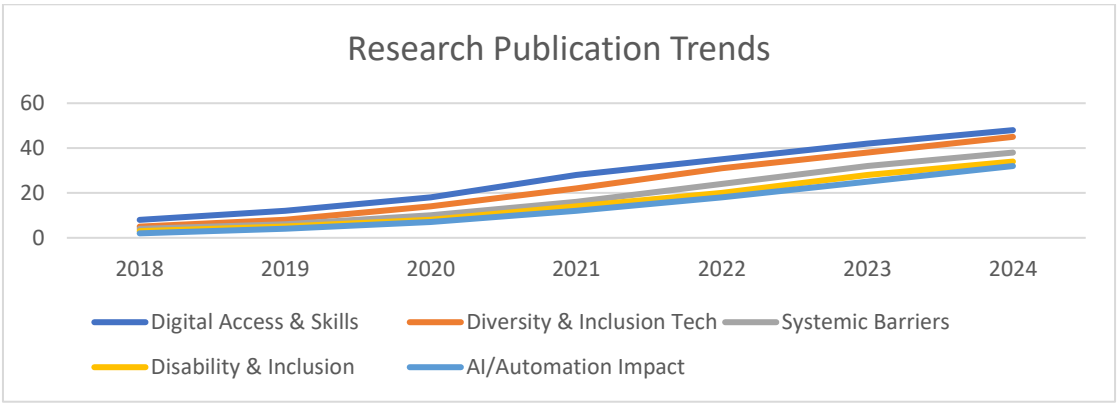

Figure 6: Line Graph showing "Research Publication Trends in Digital Workforce Inclusion (2018-2024)"

However, in most of the studies, digital inclusion is described as a separate construct, and no consideration has been given to the extent to which it co-occurs with gender, age, disability or socioeconomic inclusion. This gap is of special concern, given that digital divides often overlap with other forms of injustice, potentially resulting in compounded exclusion effects that other research still cannot capture. Also, the standardization of digital inclusion measurement is limited in many research. Its definitions, instruments, and methodologies vary, so comparing findings and accumulating knowledge is more difficult. Although such methodological diversity suggests an emerging field, it limits theoretical development and practical application.

- **Future Research Directions:** There are a number of good directions for future research. First, longitudinal research on the change in digital inclusion over time would offer important insights into the developmental processes that underlie successful digital integration. Similar research may help steer intervention development and aid organizations in appreciating the temporal cost involved in successful digital inclusion efforts. Second, adopting mixed methods integrating quantitative evaluation combined with qualitative exploration of lived experiences could deepen understanding of digital inclusion mechanisms. While surveys are the main method of research at present, there may also be potential ethnographic studies of digital work practices to find the dynamics of inclusion that quantitative measures lack (a finding that quantifying practices does not consider). Third, comparative studies among organizational contexts, industries, and national cultures would contribute to defining some boundary conditions for present findings. Research has been conducted across a few sectors and geographical boundaries that does not allow for wider generalization, and a further focus on the geographical and industrial aspect of digital inclusion research is one of the priorities for this study. Finally, studies of intervention trials of specific digital inclusion strategies would link the theory to the practical implementation. Although prior research recognizes a number of factors contributing to digital inclusion, few studies assess specific organisational interventions and few measures of effectiveness, resulting in little practice-relevant evidence for practitioners of digital inclusion.

Conclusion and Future Research

Digital workforce inclusion has been a most important but under-researched area of corporate strategy in MNCs. In this study, cultural distance, organizational justice, and technology adoption were analyzed to demonstrate their interplay in shaping inclusive digital environments. The findings suggest that cultural dynamics play a critical role in driving digital inclusion outcomes, and that organizations that are working in high-cultural-distance settings face significant challenges engaging, retaining, and innovating digitally. While all of us face challenges that are technical in nature, this research confirms that digital inclusion is a multifaceted organizational concern around the cultural adaptation of technology and the fair implementation of practices. Companies that focus on cultural intelligence in addition to technological infrastructure are exhibiting significantly better outcomes through digital inclusion in their workforce. And smaller organizations face outsize resource bottlenecks – meaning digital inclusion gaps can widen, rather than close, organizational inequality.

One of the big insights is that one-size-fits-all digital transformation initiatives don't work in culturally diverse contexts. Successful organizations customize training, design interfaces and time frames for implementing the tools to reflect local cultural values, notably power distance and uncertainty avoidance. It will take us beyond compliance-centric digital inclusion towards participatory, culturally informed approaches. However, this study has some limitations. The study was based on cross-sectional data from specific regions and industries, therefore limiting the generalizability. Future research needs longitudinal designs in order to more closely follow paths for digital inclusion trajectories through time and more appropriately investigate whether they can be causal. Furthermore, the rise of artificial intelligence and automation is fast and indicates the need to examine how these technologies either exacerbate or lessen barriers to digital inclusion.

Some of the areas for future research we would like to explore include (1) how generational differences affect perceptions of and adoption of digital inclusion; (2) the role of employee agency and voice in developing digital cultures that are inclusive; (3) digital inclusion outcomes in post pandemic hybrid and remote work cultures; and (4) what impact AI-driven HR systems will have on inclusion, with a particular focus on marginalized groups. Finally, research should extend beyond developed economies to account for digital inclusion in constrained contexts in which there are barriers to technology access. Ultimately, real digital workforce inclusion is approached by organizations not as a neutral implement but as a cultural and organizational power artifact. It is important to thoroughly interrogate these dynamics for future scholarship, to build fairer digital futures.

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