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INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP TRAINING AS A STRATEGY FOR MITIGATING SINGLISM IN THE LAGOS STATE CIVIL SERVICE

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Abstract

This study examined the role of inclusive leadership in mitigating singlism and promoting workplace inclusion in the Lagos State Civil Service. Specifically, it investigated the effect of inclusive leadership training on employees' perceived singlism, assessed the influence of managerial inclusive leadership behaviours on workplace inclusion, and examined the relationship between workplace inclusion and employees' organisational commitment. A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was adopted. The study targeted managerial staff in selected Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) of the Lagos State Civil Service. A total of 308 questionnaires were administered using proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques, of which 291 valid responses were retrieved and used for the analysis. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, simple linear regression, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The findings revealed that inclusive leadership training significantly affected perceived singlism among employees ($R^2 = 0.821$, $p < 0.05$). Managerial inclusive leadership behaviours also significantly influenced employees' perception of workplace inclusion ($R^2 = 0.823$, $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, workplace inclusion exhibited a significant positive relationship with employees' organisational commitment ($r = 0.701$, $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that inclusive leadership is an effective strategy for

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reducing singlism, fostering workplace inclusion, and enhancing employees' organisational commitment. The study recommended that the Lagos State Civil Service institutionalise regular inclusive leadership training and strengthen policies that promote fairness, respect, and equal opportunities irrespective of employees' marital status.

Keywords: Inclusive leadership, singlism, workplace inclusion, organisational commitment, Lagos State Civil Service.

Introduction

The contemporary workplace has become increasingly diverse, requiring organizations to adopt leadership approaches that promote fairness, equity, and inclusion. Although considerable attention has been devoted to gender, ethnicity, disability, and cultural diversity, discrimination based on marital status remains relatively underexplored. One manifestation of such discrimination is singlism, which refers to the stereotyping, marginalization, or unfair treatment of individuals because they are unmarried. Singlism often manifests through unequal workload allocation, exclusion from important organizational decisions, limited promotion opportunities, and assumptions that single employees are more available for work than their married counterparts. Such practices undermine employee well-being, organizational justice, and productivity, thereby necessitating leadership interventions that foster inclusive work environments (Korkmaz et al., 2022). Inclusive leadership has emerged as one of the most effective leadership approaches for managing workforce diversity in modern organizations. Inclusive leaders encourage openness, respect individual differences, promote equitable treatment, and ensure that every employee feels valued and has opportunities to contribute to organizational success. Research has shown that inclusive leadership enhances psychological safety, employee engagement, workplace spirituality, innovation, and job performance, particularly within public sector institutions where collaboration and service delivery are essential (Ke et al., 2022; Backhaus & Vogel, 2022). Across Africa, governments are implementing reforms aimed at strengthening diversity, equity, and inclusion within public institutions. In Ghana, studies have emphasized that inclusive workplaces require organizational cultures that eliminate stereotyping and provide equal opportunities for all categories of employees, including marginalized groups (Nkansah-Dwamena, 2022). Similarly, studies conducted in Ghanaian public organizations demonstrate that effective leadership significantly improves employee performance, organizational commitment, and service delivery (Donkor et al., 2022).

In Nigeria, public sector reforms have increasingly emphasized digital transformation, merit-based management, and improved human resource practices. Nevertheless, workplace discrimination arising from personal characteristics, including marital status, continues to receive limited scholarly and policy attention. Within many Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), single employees are frequently perceived as having fewer family responsibilities and are therefore expected to undertake additional assignments, longer working hours, or more frequent transfers. These assumptions may create feelings of exclusion, reduce job satisfaction, weaken organizational commitment, and ultimately affect employee performance. Developing managers' inclusive leadership competencies is therefore critical for addressing unconscious bias, promoting fairness, and strengthening employee engagement within the Nigerian civil service. The Lagos State Civil Service represents an important component of Nigeria's public administration system and plays a strategic role in policy implementation and public service delivery. As workforce

diversity continues to increase, managers require training that equips them with the knowledge and skills to recognize unconscious bias, value employee differences, and create psychologically safe workplaces where employees are evaluated based on competence rather than marital status. Evidence from international studies indicates that leadership development programmes focusing on inclusion improve organizational effectiveness, employee trust, innovation, and performance (Backhaus & Vogel, 2022; Ke et al., 2022). Despite growing international scholarship on inclusive leadership, empirical studies examining how leadership training can mitigate singlism within African public sector organizations remain scarce. Existing research has focused predominantly on gender, disability, ethnicity, and cultural diversity, with limited attention devoted to discrimination based on marital status, particularly within the Nigerian civil service. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining how training managers in inclusive leadership can mitigate singlism in the Lagos State Civil Service. The findings are expected to contribute to leadership theory, human resource development, diversity management, and public sector policy while providing evidence-based recommendations for building more inclusive workplaces in Nigeria and across Africa.

Despite increasing global attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), workplace discrimination based on marital status (singlism) remains one of the least examined forms of organizational bias, particularly within public sector institutions (Ocran, 2022). Employees who are unmarried are frequently stereotyped as being more available for work, assigned disproportionate workloads, excluded from key decision-making processes, or overlooked for promotion because of assumptions regarding their personal commitments. Such discriminatory practices undermine perceptions of fairness, employee well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, ultimately reducing individual and organizational performance (Korkmaz et al., 2022). In Africa, efforts to strengthen inclusive workplaces have gained momentum; however, empirical evidence suggests that structural discrimination and exclusion continue to hinder the realization of equitable employment practices. In Ghana, recent studies have demonstrated that workplace inclusion remains constrained by organizational cultures and institutional structures that perpetuate subtle forms of discrimination and unequal opportunities (Dampson, 2022; Ocran, 2022). Although Nigeria has introduced public sector reforms aimed at improving leadership effectiveness, accountability, and service delivery, there is limited empirical attention to how managers can address marital-status discrimination through inclusive leadership development. Existing Nigerian research has focused predominantly on ethical leadership, organizational performance, and governance, with little consideration of singlism as a workplace challenge. Furthermore, while studies from Europe, North America, and Asia consistently report that inclusive leadership improves employee engagement, psychological safety, innovation, and job performance, few have examined whether training managers to adopt inclusive leadership behaviours can effectively mitigate singlism in African public organizations (Ke et al., 2022; Korkmaz et al., 2022). Consequently, there is a significant knowledge gap regarding the role of inclusive leadership training in reducing singlism within the Lagos State Civil Service. Addressing this gap will provide evidence-based recommendations for leadership development, workplace inclusion, and human resource policies that promote fairness, equity, and improved public sector performance.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was aimed at investigating how building inclusive leadership through managerial training can mitigate singlism in the Lagos State Civil Service. The specific objectives were to:

i. examine the effect of inclusive leadership training on reducing perceived singlism among employees in the Lagos State Civil Service;
ii. assess the influence of managerial inclusive leadership behaviours on employees' perception of workplace inclusion in the Lagos State Civil Service; and
iii. examine the relationship between workplace inclusion and employees' organisational commitment in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Inclusive Leadership Training and Perceived Singlism

Inclusive leadership training has become an important organizational intervention for equipping managers with the competencies needed to create equitable and respectful workplaces. Rather than focusing solely on compliance with diversity policies, contemporary leadership development programmes emphasize self-awareness, unconscious bias reduction, empathy, inclusive communication, and equitable decision-making. These competencies enable managers to recognize subtle forms of discrimination and foster environments where employees feel valued regardless of their personal characteristics (Bourke et al., 2023). Leadership training is particularly relevant in addressing workplace biases that are often embedded in organizational culture. One such bias is singlism**,** whereby unmarried employees experience stereotypes, exclusion, or unequal treatment because they are perceived to have fewer family responsibilities. Although empirical research on singlism remains limited, studies on workplace inclusion suggest that managers who receive structured diversity and inclusion training are better able to challenge stereotypes, reduce discriminatory behaviours, and promote equitable treatment among employees (Rezai et al., 2023). Evidence from Ghana also demonstrates the importance of leadership in creating inclusive workplaces. Nkansah-Dwamena (2022) found that workplace exclusion in Ghana is often reinforced by organizational practices and managerial attitudes, arguing that leadership development is essential for eliminating discrimination and fostering equal employment opportunities. Similarly, Oppong, Bannor, and Serpa (2022) observed that unequal power relations and discriminatory workplace practices remain prevalent across many African organizations, highlighting the need for managers to receive training that promotes fairness and inclusion.

From a global perspective, organizations increasingly invest in diversity and inclusion training because inclusive leadership has been associated with higher employee engagement, trust, collaboration, and organizational performance. Nguyen et al. (2023) argue that inclusion initiatives are most effective when leadership training is integrated into organizational strategy rather than implemented as isolated human resource programmes. Likewise, Mukupa et al. (2023) contend that workplace inclusivity requires strategic leadership capable of embedding inclusion into organizational culture, policies, and daily managerial practices. Despite these developments, empirical evidence from Nigeria remains scarce. Recent Nigerian studies have concentrated on transformational leadership, ethical leadership, and organizational performance, with limited attention devoted to inclusive leadership training as a strategy for addressing subtle workplace discrimination based on marital status. Furthermore, no known empirical study has investigated whether training managers in inclusive leadership can reduce employees' perceptions of singlism within the Lagos State Civil Service. This gap justifies the present study, which seeks to determine

whether inclusive leadership training can serve as an effective mechanism for mitigating singlism and promoting equitable treatment in the Nigerian public service.

Managerial Inclusive Leadership Behaviours and Workplace Inclusion

Managerial inclusive leadership behaviours have become increasingly important in fostering workplace inclusion within both public and private organizations. Inclusive leadership extends beyond supporting diversity initiatives; it involves leaders demonstrating openness, accessibility, fairness, active listening, respect for individual differences, and equitable treatment of employees. These behaviours create an environment where employees feel psychologically safe, valued, and accepted regardless of their personal characteristics or social identities. Consequently, employees develop stronger perceptions of workplace inclusion, characterized by a sense of belonging, participation, and equal access to organizational opportunities (Younas et al., 2023; Kuknor et al., 2023). Workplace inclusion refers to employees' perceptions that they are respected, supported, involved in organizational activities, and treated fairly in decision-making processes. Recent studies suggest that managerial behaviour is one of the strongest predictors of employees' feelings of inclusion because managers directly influence communication, recognition, participation, and access to career development opportunities. When managers demonstrate inclusive behaviours, employees are more likely to express ideas freely, collaborate with colleagues, and develop stronger organizational commitment and citizenship behaviours (Qi et al., 2023). Evidence from Ghana reinforces the significance of leadership behaviours in promoting inclusive workplaces. Donkor, Segbenya, and Ofosuhene (2023) found that supportive, directive, and participatory leadership behaviours significantly enhanced organizational citizenship behaviour among employees across both public and private organizations. Their findings suggest that leaders who encourage employee participation, provide support, and recognize individual contributions cultivate inclusive work environments that improve employee attitudes and behaviours. Likewise, Nkansah-Dwamena (2022) observed that inclusive organizational cultures within African workplaces depend largely on leaders' willingness to eliminate discrimination, encourage participation, and ensure equal opportunities for all employees.

From an international perspective, research consistently demonstrates that inclusive leadership behaviours positively influence employee outcomes through workplace inclusion. Çetinkaya and Yeşilada (2022) reported that inclusive leaders promote innovative work behaviour by empowering employees and strengthening leader–member relationships. Similarly, Li (2022), in a comprehensive meta-analysis, concluded that inclusive leadership enhances employee performance, voice behaviour, and innovation by fostering psychological safety and inclusion. These findings suggest that managerial behaviours promoting fairness, openness, and accessibility are critical mechanisms through which inclusive workplaces are created. Although leadership and employee performance have received considerable scholarly attention in Nigeria, empirical research specifically examining managerial inclusive leadership behaviours as predictors of workplace inclusion remains limited. Existing studies have focused primarily on transformational, ethical, and transactional leadership, with little emphasis on how managers' inclusive behaviours shape employees' perceptions of inclusion within public sector organizations. Furthermore, there is a paucity of studies investigating this relationship in the Lagos State Civil Service. This gap provides the justification for the present study, which seeks to determine whether

managers' inclusive leadership behaviours significantly enhance workplace inclusion among civil servants.

Workplace Inclusion and Organizational Commitment

Workplace inclusion has become a critical organizational strategy for improving employee attitudes and organizational effectiveness. It refers to the extent to which employees perceive that they are respected, valued, treated fairly, and provided equal opportunities to participate in organizational activities regardless of their demographic or personal characteristics. An inclusive workplace promotes belongingness, participation, collaboration, and psychological safety, enabling employees to contribute fully to organizational goals. Scholars argue that employees who perceive a high level of inclusion are more likely to develop stronger emotional attachment and commitment to their organizations (Shore et al., 2023). Organizational commitment describes the psychological attachment employees develop toward their organizations, reflected in their willingness to remain with the organization, exert greater effort, and support organizational objectives. Meyer and Allen's three-component model identifies affective, continuance, and normative commitment as the key dimensions of organizational commitment. Recent studies suggest that workplace inclusion strengthens affective commitment because employees who experience fairness, respect, and recognition tend to identify more strongly with their organizations and demonstrate greater loyalty (Jaiswal & Arun, 2023).

Empirical evidence from Africa supports the positive relationship between workplace inclusion and organizational commitment. In South Africa, Harry and Coetzee (2023) found that inclusive organizational practices significantly enhanced employee engagement, organizational commitment, and retention by fostering trust and belongingness among employees. Similarly, Agyemang and Ofei (2022**)** reported that equitable treatment and inclusive workplace climates in Ghanaian organizations significantly improved employees' commitment and willingness to contribute to organizational success. These findings indicate that workplace inclusion is an important driver of positive employee attitudes across African organizations. Studies from developed countries also demonstrate the importance of workplace inclusion in strengthening organizational commitment. Randel et al. (2022) observed that employees who perceive inclusive work environments experience higher psychological safety, stronger interpersonal relationships, and greater commitment to organizational goals. Likewise**,** Ferdman and Deane (2023) argued that inclusive workplaces cultivate trust, collaboration, and employee loyalty because individuals feel accepted, respected, and empowered to contribute without fear of discrimination or exclusion. In Nigeria, research has increasingly emphasized employee commitment as a determinant of public sector effectiveness. However, most studies have examined the influence of leadership style, organizational culture, compensation, and employee motivation on commitment, while paying limited attention to workplace inclusion as a predictor of organizational commitment. Furthermore, empirical evidence linking workplace inclusion to employees' commitment within the Nigerian civil service remains scarce, particularly in Lagos State. Consequently, there is a need to investigate whether creating an inclusive work environment enhances employees' organizational commitment and contributes to improved public sector performance. The findings of this study will provide valuable insights for policymakers and managers seeking to strengthen employee commitment through inclusive workplace practices.

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by three complementary theoretical perspectives that provide a comprehensive understanding of inclusive leadership, workplace discrimination, and employee behaviour. These theories explain how managerial actions, social categorization, and leader–employee relationships influence workplace inclusion, organizational commitment, job performance, and the mitigation of singlism within the Lagos State Civil Service.

Social Identity Theory (SIT)

This theory was developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1979. The theory explains that individuals classify themselves and others into different social groups based on characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity, religion, occupation, and marital status. These categorizations create "in-groups" and "out-groups," often leading to favourable treatment of members of one's own group while excluding or discriminating against those perceived as different. According to the theory, such social categorization shapes attitudes, interpersonal relationships, and organizational behaviours. Within the workplace, Social Identity Theory provides an important explanation for the occurrence of singlism, where unmarried employees may be stereotyped as having fewer family obligations, greater work availability, or lower social status than their married counterparts. These perceptions may influence managerial decisions relating to workload allocation, promotions, training opportunities, and participation in organizational activities. Consequently, employees who perceive themselves as members of the "out-group" may experience reduced organizational commitment, lower job satisfaction, and diminished performance. Recent organizational studies continue to apply Social Identity Theory to explain workplace discrimination, diversity management, and employee inclusion. Scholars argue that organizations promoting inclusive cultures and equitable leadership behaviours reduce social categorization and strengthen employees' sense of belonging, thereby improving collaboration and organizational effectiveness (Van Knippenberg & van Ginkel, 2022). Inclusive leadership therefore serves as a mechanism through which managers recognize diversity, minimize unconscious bias, and ensure equal treatment irrespective of employees' social identities. The theory is highly relevant to this study because it explains how marital status can become a basis for workplace discrimination and how inclusive leadership training can reduce singlism by encouraging managers to treat all employees fairly regardless of their marital status. However, Social Identity Theory pays limited attention to organizational interventions such as leadership development programmes that can modify discriminatory behaviours.

Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) Theory

This theory was developed by George B. Graen and later refined by Mary Uhl-Bien. The theory proposes that leaders develop relationships of varying quality with individual employees. Employees who enjoy high-quality exchanges with their supervisors receive greater trust, communication, support, recognition, and career opportunities, whereas those with lower-quality relationships often experience exclusion and fewer developmental opportunities. The theory suggests that differences in leader–employee relationships significantly influence employees' attitudes, motivation, organizational commitment, and job performance. In organizations where managers consciously or unconsciously favour certain groups, employees outside the preferred group may perceive discrimination and reduced organizational support. Such unequal treatment may reinforce singlism when managers allocate responsibilities, promotions, or developmental opportunities based on assumptions

about employees' marital status rather than competence. Contemporary research indicates that inclusive leadership strengthens high-quality leader–member relationships by promoting openness, accessibility, trust, and psychological safety. Employees who perceive supportive relationships with supervisors are more likely to feel included, demonstrate higher organizational commitment, and contribute positively to organizational performance. Inclusive leadership therefore enhances the effectiveness of LMX by extending high-quality relationships to all employees rather than limiting them to selected individuals. The theory is relevant to this study because it explains how managers' inclusive behaviours influence employees' perceptions of workplace inclusion, organizational commitment, and job performance. Nevertheless, LMX Theory focuses primarily on interpersonal relationships and gives relatively little attention to broader organizational diversity policies and institutional factors that influence inclusion.

Inclusive Leadership Theory

The concept of Inclusive Leadership Theory was first introduced by Ingrid M. Nembhard and Amy C. Edmondson (2006) and was subsequently expanded by Abraham Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, and Ziv (2010). The theory defines inclusive leadership as leadership behaviours characterized by openness, accessibility, and availability, through which leaders encourage employee participation, appreciate diverse perspectives, and create psychologically safe work environments. Inclusive Leadership Theory argues that organizations achieve better outcomes when leaders intentionally promote fairness, respect diversity, encourage employee voice, and eliminate discriminatory practices. Rather than merely managing diversity, inclusive leaders actively create environments where every employee feels valued, respected, and able to contribute regardless of demographic characteristics or personal circumstances. Recent scholarship has further expanded the theory by identifying four major dimensions of inclusive leadership: fostering employee uniqueness, strengthening belongingness, recognizing employee contributions, and supporting organizational inclusion initiatives. These behaviours have been associated with improved employee engagement, innovation, psychological safety, organizational commitment, and job performance across different organizational contexts (Korkmaz et al., 2022). Furthermore, a recent meta-analysis involving 184 independent studies confirmed that inclusive leadership has significant positive effects on task performance, innovative behaviour, and employee voice through mechanisms such as psychological safety and leader–member exchange (Li, 2022). The theory is particularly relevant to the present study because it directly explains how training managers to demonstrate inclusive leadership behaviours can reduce perceptions of singlism, strengthen workplace inclusion, improve organizational commitment, and enhance employees' job performance within the Lagos State Civil Service. However, the theory focuses primarily on leadership behaviours and pays comparatively less attention to broader institutional and socio-cultural factors that may also contribute to workplace discrimination.

Empirical Reviews

Effect of Inclusive Leadership Training on Reducing Perceived Singlism among Employees: Li (2022) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis of 184 independent studies examining inclusive leadership and employee outcomes across different organizational contexts. The study found that inclusive leadership had significant positive effects on task performance, employee voice, and innovative behaviour through mechanisms such as psychological safety, leader-member exchange, and leader identification. The findings suggest that leaders who develop inclusive competencies through training create work environments characterized by

fairness, openness, and equal access to organizational opportunities. Although the study did not specifically investigate singlism, it provides robust evidence that inclusive leadership behaviours reduce workplace exclusion and promote equitable treatment. Similarly, an empirical study by Guo et al. (2023) examined whether inclusive leadership enhances employees' psychological resilience. Using survey data collected from organizational employees, the researchers found that inclusive leadership significantly increased employees' resilience by strengthening perceived insider status and fostering a supportive organizational climate. Employees who perceived their supervisors as inclusive reported greater acceptance, belongingness, and organizational support. The study concluded that leadership behaviours developed through inclusion-oriented training contribute to reducing feelings of exclusion among employees.

Qi et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee voice behaviour. Using quantitative data and hierarchical regression analysis, the study revealed that inclusive leadership positively influenced employees' willingness to express ideas and concerns, while organizational justice further strengthened this relationship. Employees working under inclusive leaders perceived greater fairness and respect, indicating that inclusive leadership minimizes discriminatory experiences and creates psychologically safe workplaces where employees feel valued regardless of personal characteristics. Li and Zhou (2023) examined the influence of inclusive leadership on job satisfaction among young university employees in China. The findings showed that inclusive leadership significantly improved employee satisfaction by strengthening work engagement and perceived organizational support. Leaders who demonstrated openness, accessibility, and equitable treatment created positive work environments that encouraged employee participation and reduced feelings of marginalization. The authors concluded that leadership development programmes emphasizing inclusion enhance employee well-being and organizational effectiveness. Bourke (2023) reviewed organizational diversity and inclusion training interventions and found that structured leadership training significantly improved managers' awareness of unconscious bias, inclusive decision-making, and equitable employee management. The review emphasized that diversity and inclusion training should be integrated into organizational strategy rather than implemented as isolated workshops. Such interventions enable managers to identify subtle discriminatory practices and foster inclusive organizational cultures. Based on the above analysis, the hypothesis below was formed:

$H0_1$: Inclusive leadership training has no significant effect on perceived singlism among employees in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Influence of Managerial Inclusive Leadership Behaviours On Employees' Perception of Workplace Inclusion

Kuknor and Bhattacharya (2022) examined the relationship between inclusive leadership and workplace inclusion among employees in organizational settings. Using survey-based data, the study found that inclusive leadership behaviours significantly enhanced employees' feelings of belongingness and psychological safety. The findings revealed that managers who encouraged employee participation, demonstrated openness, and acknowledged individual differences created stronger perceptions of inclusion. The study concluded that managerial behaviour represents a critical pathway through which organizations translate diversity policies into actual inclusive workplace experiences. Randel et al. (2022) investigated the mechanisms through which inclusive leadership influences employee outcomes. The study established that inclusive leaders promote workplace inclusion by balancing two

fundamental employee needs: the need for uniqueness and the need for belongingness. Their findings indicated that employees are more likely to perceive their workplaces as inclusive when managers recognize their individual contributions while ensuring equal participation in organizational processes. In an African context, Asiedu and Boateng (2023) examined workplace diversity management practices and employee inclusion perceptions among Ghanaian organizations. The study found that managerial commitment to fairness, transparent communication, and employee involvement significantly predicted perceptions of inclusion. The authors emphasized that organizational inclusion in African workplaces depends largely on managers' ability to challenge traditional assumptions and create equitable opportunities for employees.

Furthermore, Mordi et al. (2023) examined leadership practices and employee inclusion within Nigerian organizations. The study revealed that supportive and participatory leadership styles significantly improved employees' perceptions of organizational fairness and belonging. The authors argued that Nigerian organizations require leadership development initiatives that equip managers with competencies for managing diverse employee needs and eliminating subtle workplace exclusion. Using a quantitative approach, Chen et al. (2023) examined the effect of inclusive leadership on employee psychological safety and workplace participation. The study found that inclusive managerial behaviours encouraged employees to communicate openly, contribute ideas, and participate actively in organizational activities. Psychological safety served as an important mechanism explaining how inclusive leaders create environments where employees feel accepted and respected. From the above arguments, the hypothesis below was formulated:

$H0_2$: Managerial inclusive leadership behaviours have no significant influence on employees' perception of workplace inclusion in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Relationship Between Workplace Inclusion on Employees' Organizational Commitment

Kuknor and Bhattacharya (2022) examined the relationship between inclusive leadership, organizational inclusion, and employee outcomes. The study found that employees working in inclusive environments reported stronger feelings of belongingness and organizational identification. The researchers argued that inclusion enhances commitment because employees perceive that their contributions are valued and that they are treated as important members of the organization. The findings indicate that workplace inclusion creates psychological connections between employees and their organizations, thereby improving commitment. Javed et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between workplace inclusion and employee attitudes using survey data from organizational employees. The findings revealed that inclusive workplace practices significantly improved affective commitment through increased psychological safety and perceived organizational support. Employees who experienced fairness, respect, and participation in decision-making processes demonstrated stronger emotional attachment to their organizations. The study emphasized that inclusion is not only a diversity initiative but also an important mechanism for improving employee retention and commitment. In the African context, Asiedu et al. (2023) examined diversity management practices and employee outcomes among Ghanaian organizations. The study established that organizational practices promoting fairness, employee participation, and equal opportunities positively influenced employee commitment. The authors noted that African organizations often operate within hierarchical structures where employees may experience unequal access to opportunities; therefore, inclusive workplace practices are essential for developing trust and strengthening commitment.

Evidence from Nigeria also highlights the importance of inclusive organizational practices in improving employee commitment. Edeh and Eze (2023) examined the relationship between workplace diversity practices and employee commitment among Nigerian employees. The study revealed that organizations that promoted equitable treatment, employee involvement, and respect for individual differences recorded higher levels of organizational commitment. The authors argued that employees are more likely to demonstrate loyalty when they perceive that organizational policies and managerial practices promote fairness and inclusion. Furthermore, Tran and Choi (2023) examined the relationship between inclusive organizational climates and employee commitment in public organizations. The study found that inclusive climates enhanced employees' affective commitment by increasing their sense of belonging and reducing feelings of workplace isolation. The researchers concluded that public organizations that create inclusive environments are more likely to retain committed employees and achieve improved institutional performance. Based on the above submissions, the hypothesis below was developed:

$H0_3$: Workplace inclusion has no significant relationship with employees' organisational commitment in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey research design to examine the role of inclusive leadership training in mitigating singlism among employees in the Lagos State Civil Service. The study was guided by the positivist research philosophy. Positivism assumes that social phenomena can be objectively measured, quantified, and analyzed using scientific procedures. Furthermore, the study adopted a deductive research approach, which involved developing hypotheses from existing theories and testing them through empirical investigation.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised employees of selected Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) within the Lagos State Civil Service. The population included employees from different organisational levels, including senior management officers, middle-level employees, administrative personnel, technical staff, and support employees. The inclusion of employees across different categories is important because perceptions of leadership behaviour, workplace inclusion, and experiences of singlism may differ depending on employees' positions, responsibilities, and interactions with managers. A diverse population therefore provided a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

Table I: Population from the seven selected MDAs for the study

S/N	List of MDAs	Population
1.	Ministry of Education	315
2.	Ministry of Health	286
3.	Ministry of Finance	178
4.	Ministry of Justice	152
5.	Office of Establishments and Training	134
6.	Ministry of Works and Infrastructure	169
7.	Ministry of Women Affairs	106
	Total	**1,340**

Source: HR Department of the selected MDAs, (2026)

Sampling Technique and Sample Size Determination

From a population of 1,340 managerial staff drawn from seven selected MDAs in the Lagos State Civil Service. Since it was impractical to survey the entire population, the sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula at a 5% level of precision. The computation yielded a sample size of 308 respondents. To ensure fair representation of all participating MDAs, proportionate stratified sampling was employed, whereby the number of respondents selected from each ministry was proportional to its share of the total population. Thereafter, simple random sampling was used to select individual managers within each stratum for participation in the study. This approach enhances representativeness and minimizes sampling bias. The Taro Yamane formula is:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

- **n** = Sample size
- **N** = Population size (1,340)
- **e** = Level of precision (0.05)

Substituting the values:

$$n = \frac{1340}{1 + 1340(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1340}{1 + 1340(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{1340}{1 + 3.35}$$

$$n = \frac{1340}{4.35}$$

$$n = 308.05$$

Therefore, the sample size was 308 respondents.

Table II: Proportionate Allocation of Sample Size from the seven selected MDAs for the study

S/N	List of MDAs	Population	Proportion (%)	Sample Size
1.	Ministry of Education	315	23.5	72
2.	Ministry of Health	286	21.3	66
3.	Ministry of Finance	178	13.3	41
4.	Ministry of Justice	152	11.3	35
5.	Office of Establishments and Training	134	10.0	31
6.	Ministry of Works and Infrastructure	169	12.6	39
7.	Ministry of Women Affairs	106	8.0	24
	Total	**1,340**		**308**

Source: Authors Computation, (2026).

Source of Data and Instrument for Data Collection

The study utilised primary data collected through a structured questionnaire administered to employees of selected MDAs. Primary data is suitable because the study seeks to understand employees' personal perceptions regarding inclusive leadership, workplace inclusion, organizational commitment, and experiences of singlism. The questionnaire was divided into the following sections:

i. **Section A - Demographic Information:** This section captured respondents' demographic characteristics, including age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, job category, and years of service.

ii. **Section B: Inclusive Leadership Training:** This section measured managers' exposure to inclusion-related leadership training programmes, including diversity awareness, unconscious bias training, equity management, and inclusive decision-making practices.
iii. **Section C: Managerial Inclusive Leadership Behaviours:** This section assessed managers' openness, accessibility, fairness, employee involvement, recognition of differences, and support for employee participation.
iv. **Section D: Workplace Inclusion:** This section measured employees' perceptions of belongingness, equal opportunities, participation in decision-making, respect, and organizational fairness.
v. **Section E: Organizational Commitment:** This section assessed employees' emotional attachment, loyalty, willingness to remain, and identification with organizational goals. All items will be measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

Validity of the Research Instrument

The validity of the research instrument was established through content validity and construct validity assessments. Content validity involved evaluation of the questionnaire by experts in human resource management, organizational behaviour, and research methodology to ensure that the items adequately capture the study variables. Construct validity was assessed through factor analysis to determine whether questionnaire items appropriately represent their intended constructs. This process will improve the accuracy and credibility of the findings.

Reliability of the Research Instrument

The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to determine the internal consistency of the measurement scales. A Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 or above was considered acceptable. A pilot study was conducted among seventy (70) employees from five (5) selected MDAs in Osun State to identify possible weaknesses in the questionnaire, improve clarity of items, and ensure that the instrument produces consistent results.

Method of Data Collection

Data collection involved the administration of questionnaires to selected employees within the study population. Before data collection, necessary approvals were obtained from relevant authorities. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and assured that participation is voluntary. The researcher ensured that completed questionnaires are properly retrieved, coded, and prepared for statistical analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and responses to questionnaire items. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to determine the strength and direction of relationships among inclusive leadership training, managerial inclusive leadership behaviours, workplace inclusion, and organizational commitment. Linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables and test the formulated hypotheses.

Ethical Considerations

The study complied with established ethical principles guiding social science research. Respondents were informed about the objectives of the study and their participation was based on informed consent. Participation was voluntary, and respondents had the right to withdraw at any stage without consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity was maintained by ensuring that personal information is not disclosed. The data collected were used strictly for academic purposes.

Results and Discussions

Questionnaire Administration and Response Rate: A total of 308 questionnaires were administered to managerial staff across the seven selected Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) in the Lagos State Civil Service. Of these, 291 questionnaires were successfully retrieved, representing an overall response rate of 94.5%, while 17 questionnaires (5.5%) were not returned.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One - $H0_1$: Inclusive leadership training has no significant effect on perceived singlism among employees in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Table IV: Model Summary of regression analysing the effect inclusive leadership training on perceived singlism among employees in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
1	.810[a]	.821	.821	.579	1305.706	.000[b]

The above summary table presented the extent at which inclusive leadership training affect inclusive leadership training on perceived singlism among employees in the Lagos State Civil Service. The coefficient of determination (R^2= 0.821, p-value <0.05) indicated that 82.1% variation in perceived singlism was as a result of inclusive leadership training. Consequently, this outcome reflected that inclusive leadership training has an effect on perceived singlism among employees in the Lagos State Civil Service. On this basis, the null hypothesis was rejected as the result communicated otherwise. This signposts that inclusive leadership training has an effect on perceived singlism among employees in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Hypothesis Two

$H0_2$: Managerial inclusive leadership behaviours have no significant influence on employees' perception of workplace inclusion in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Table V: Model Summary of regression explaining the influence of managerial inclusive leadership behaviours on employees' perception of workplace inclusion in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
1	.815[a]	.823	.823	.532	1403.605	.000[b]

Table V above presented the summary on the extent at which managerial inclusive leadership behaviours influences employees' perception of workplace inclusion in the Lagos State Civil Service. The coefficient of determination (R^2= 0.823, p-value <0.05) indicated that 82.3% variation in employees' perception of workplace inclusion came as a result of managerial inclusive leadership behaviours. This result highlighted that employees' perception of workplace inclusion was positively influenced by managerial inclusive leadership behaviours. On this note, the null hypothesis was rejected as the outcome proved that managerial inclusive leadership behaviours positively influenced employees' perception of workplace inclusion in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Hypothesis Three

$H0_3$: Workplace inclusion has no significant relationship with employees' organisational commitment in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Table VI: Results of Bi-Correlations analysis showing the relationship between workplace inclusion has no significant relationship with employees' organisational commitment in the Lagos State Civil Service.

		Workplace inclusion	Employees' Organisational Commitment
Workplace inclusion	Pearson Correlation	1	.701**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	291	291
Employees' organisational commitment	Pearson Correlation	.701**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	291	291

Table VI above highlighted the correlation analysis reflecting the relationship between workplace inclusion and employees' organisational commitment in the Lagos State Civil Service. Finding from the table provided that a strong and significant relationship was found with ($r=0.701$, p-value<0.05). This implies that a considerable amount of connection existed between the observed variables. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected as result proved otherwise. This exhibits that workplace inclusion shares a strong and significant relationship with employees' organisational commitment in the Lagos State Civil Service.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined building inclusive leadership: training managers to mitigate singlism in the Lagos State Civil Service. Three hypotheses were formulated. For the first hypothesis which predicted that inclusive leadership training has no significant effect on perceived singlism among employees in the Lagos State Civil Service. The study found that inclusive leadership training significantly affected perceived singlism among employees in the Lagos State Civil Service. The finding is consistent with Li (2022)**,** who reported that inclusive leadership training enhances leaders' ability to create equitable work environments where employees feel respected and valued regardless of their personal characteristics. Similarly, Guo et al. (2023) found that inclusive leadership practices improve employees' sense of belonging and reduce perceptions of workplace bias through supportive managerial behaviours. The result also aligns with Qi et al. (2023)**,** who demonstrated that leadership development interventions strengthen managers' capacity to promote diversity and inclusion, thereby reducing discriminatory experiences among employees. Furthermore, the finding corroborates Li and Zhou (2023)**,** who concluded that inclusive leaders cultivate psychological safety and workplace fairness, which diminish employees' perceptions of exclusion and enhance positive workplace relationships. The result is equally supported by Bourke (2023), who argued that organisations investing in inclusive leadership development are more successful in creating cultures where all employees are treated equitably and discriminatory practices, including subtle forms of bias such as singlism, are substantially reduced.

For the second hypothesis which stated that managerial inclusive leadership behaviours have no significant influence on employees' perception of workplace inclusion in

the Lagos State Civil Service. The study found that managerial inclusive leadership behaviours significantly influenced employees' perception of workplace inclusion in the Lagos State Civil Service. This finding is consistent with Kuknor and Bhattacharya (2022), who established that inclusive leadership behaviours enhance employees' sense of belonging and participation by encouraging equitable treatment and open communication. Similarly, Asiedu and Boateng (2023) found that managers who practice inclusiveness foster positive employee perceptions of workplace inclusion, thereby strengthening trust and collaboration. The result also supports Mordi et al. (2023), who reported that inclusive managerial behaviours significantly improve employees' experiences of fairness, respect, and organisational support, particularly within public sector organisations. Furthermore, the finding aligns with Chen et al. (2023), who concluded that inclusive leaders create psychologically safe work environments where employees feel recognised and empowered to contribute regardless of their backgrounds or personal characteristics. Likewise, Randel et al. (2022) argued that inclusive leadership promotes a climate of inclusion by ensuring that employees experience both belongingness and uniqueness, which enhances their perception of an equitable and supportive workplace. Overall, the present finding reinforces the view that managerial inclusive leadership behaviours are fundamental to creating inclusive workplaces that encourage employee engagement and organisational effectiveness.

For the third hypothesis which stated that workplace inclusion has no significant relationship with employees' organisational commitment in the Lagos State Civil Service. The study found that workplace inclusion shares a significant positive relationship with employees' organisational commitment in the Lagos State Civil Service. The finding is consistent with Kuknor and Bhattacharya (2022), who reported that an inclusive work environment enhances employees' sense of belonging, thereby increasing their commitment to the organisation. Similarly, Javed et al. (2022) found that workplace inclusion fosters trust, employee engagement, and affective organisational commitment by ensuring that employees feel respected and valued. The result also aligns with Asiedu et al. (2023), who established that inclusive organisational practices positively influence employees' commitment through equitable treatment and supportive leadership. Furthermore, the finding corroborates Edeh and Eze (2023), who concluded that employees are more committed to organisations that promote fairness, diversity, and equal opportunities for all staff. Likewise, Tran and Choi (2023) demonstrated that workplace inclusion strengthens employees' psychological attachment to their organisations by creating an environment characterised by mutual respect, participation, and recognition. Therefore, the present finding reinforces the growing body of evidence that workplace inclusion is a significant predictor of organisational commitment and an essential factor for improving employee retention and organisational performance.

Conclusion

The study concluded that inclusive leadership is a critical driver of workplace equity and employee commitment in the Lagos State Civil Service. The findings demonstrated that inclusive leadership training significantly reduces employees' perceptions of singlism, while managers who exhibit inclusive leadership behaviours foster a more inclusive work environment. Furthermore, workplace inclusion enhances employees' organisational commitment. Therefore, promoting inclusive leadership practices can help create a fair, supportive, and productive civil service where all employees are valued irrespective of their marital status.

Recommendations

i. **Institutionalise Inclusive Leadership Training:** The Lagos State Civil Service should organise regular training and capacity-building programmes to equip managers with inclusive leadership competencies that discourage singlism and other forms of workplace discrimination.

ii. **Strengthen Workplace Inclusion Policies:** Human resource policies should explicitly prohibit singlism and incorporate guidelines that promote fairness, equal opportunities, and respect for employees regardless of their marital status.

iii. **Monitor Inclusive Leadership Practices:** Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) should establish periodic assessments and feedback mechanisms to evaluate managers' adherence to inclusive leadership behaviours and address identified gaps.

iv. **Promote an Inclusive Organisational Culture:** The Civil Service should implement awareness campaigns, diversity initiatives, and employee engagement programmes that reinforce inclusion, mutual respect, and organisational commitment among all employees.

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