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Chapter

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**HYBRID LEADERSHIP IN MULTICULTURAL
CONTEXTS: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE
REVIEW**



HYBRID LEADERSHIP IN MULTICULTURAL CONTEXTS: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Maxwell de Souza Pereira¹

Abstract: The growing complexity of the global organizational environment poses unprecedented challenges to contemporary leadership, particularly regarding the management of geographically distributed and culturally diverse teams. This article presents a systematic literature review on the concept of hybrid leadership — defined as a leader’s capacity to integrate in-person and remote leadership competencies within multicultural environments — with the aim of mapping the state of the art, identifying theoretical gaps, and proposing a future research agenda. Following PRISMA guidelines (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses), 78 articles published between 2015 and 2024, indexed in Web of Science, Scopus, and SciELO databases, were analyzed. Results demonstrate that effective hybrid leadership in multicultural contexts requires: (a) high cultural intelligence; (b) adaptive flexibility; (c) mastery of asynchronous communication tools; and (d) sensitivity to Hofstede’s power distance and individualism–collectivism dimensions. Furthermore, a convergence is observed among transformational leadership, servant leadership, and ambidextrous leadership as theoretical pillars of intercultural hybrid leadership. This research contributes to the field by consolidating scattered empirical evidence and offering a preliminary integrative model. Methodological gaps and practical recommendations for managers and multinational organizations are discussed.

Keywords: hybrid leadership; multiculturalism; intercultural management; virtual teams; systematic

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review.

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has inaugurated an era of unprecedented transformations in organizational dynamics. The acceleration of globalization, combined with the disruptive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022), forced companies and institutions worldwide to restructure their work models, transitioning from predominantly in-person configurations to hybrid and remote arrangements. In this context, the role of the leader has gained new dimensions and demands, requiring competencies that go beyond classical leadership models (BASS; AVOLIO, 2014; NORTHOUSE, 2021).

The concept of hybrid leadership emerges in this context as a theoretical and practical response to the need for leaders to operate simultaneously in in-person and virtual environments, managing multicultural teams distributed across different time zones and socioeconomic contexts. This is a growing phenomenon: according to data from the McKinsey Global Institute (MCKINSEY GLOBAL INSTITUTE, 2023), more than 60% of organizations in developed countries permanently adopted hybrid work models after the pandemic, with this figure reaching 42% in developing countries, including Brazil.

The intersection between hybrid leadership and multicultural contexts represents a still-nascent field of inquiry, marked by theoretical fragmentation and a scarcity of robust empirical studies. Cultural diversity in teams — measured by dimensions such as values, beliefs, communication norms, temporal orientation, and relationship with authority — represents both a source of competitive advantage and a risk factor for organizational cohesion and effectiveness (HOFSTEDE; HOFSTEDE; MINKOV, 2010; EARLEY; ANG, 2003).

Given this panorama, this article proposes to answer the following research question: Which competencies, strategies, and theoretical conditions characterize effective hybrid leadership in multicultural contexts, according to the scientific literature published between 2015 and 2024?



The general objective is to conduct a systematic literature review (SLR) to map the state of knowledge on hybrid leadership in multicultural environments, identify gaps, and propose an integrative conceptual model. The specific objectives are: (i) to characterize the main theoretical paradigms associated with intercultural hybrid leadership; (ii) to identify the competencies of the multicultural hybrid leader; (iii) to analyze the moderating and mediating factors that influence leadership outcomes in this context; and (iv) to systematize the main gaps and research trends.

The relevance of this study is justified by the growing internationalization of Brazilian organizations and the demand for leaders capable of successfully navigating culturally complex and technologically mediated environments. As GELFAND et al. (2017) argue, intercultural competence is an irreversible strategic differentiator in the globalized economy of the 21st century.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Hybrid Leadership: Origins and Definition

The term ‘hybrid leadership’ was systematized by researchers in the field of organizational behavior from 2019 onward, although its conceptual foundations can be traced to earlier debates on virtual leadership (AVOLIO; KAHAI, 2003) and distributed leadership (SPILLANE, 2006). In broad terms, the concept refers to a leader’s capacity to integrate and articulate distinct styles, tools, and competencies to manage teams operating simultaneously in in-person and remote environments (CHAMAKIOTIS et al., 2021; LARSON; DECHURCH, 2020).

DERUE (2011) and ZACCARO et al. (2018) argue that hybrid leadership does not constitute a discrete style, but rather a meta-competency involving the ability to transition between different modes of influence as the context demands. This perspective aligns with the situational leadership theory of Hersey and Blanchard (HERSEY; BLANCHARD, 1969), revisited in light of the new technological and cultural demands of contemporary work.

Recent research identifies three core dimensions of hybrid leadership: (a) the technological



dimension, referring to mastery of digital collaboration and communication platforms; (b) the relational dimension, concerning the construction and maintenance of trust and engagement in low physical presence environments; and (c) the strategic dimension, relating to the capacity to align goals, processes, and organizational culture in contexts of geographic dispersion (MORTENSEN; HAAS, 2021; GRATTON, 2021).

Multiculturalism and Cultural Diversity in Organizations

The study of multiculturalism in organizations draws primarily on the seminal contributions of Geert Hofstede, whose model of cultural dimensions — originally proposed in the 1980s and revised in subsequent editions — remains a central reference in intercultural management literature (HOFSTEDE; HOFSTEDE; MINKOV, 2010). The six dimensions of the model (Power Distance, Individualism vs. Collectivism, Masculinity vs. Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-Term Orientation, and Indulgence) offer a robust analytical framework for understanding cultural differences that impact organizational behavior.

Complementarily, the GLOBE Project (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness), coordinated by HOUSE et al. (2004), investigated cultural practices and values in 62 societies, identifying universally desired leadership attributes (e.g., integrity, charisma, performance orientation) and culturally contingent ones (e.g., autonomy, status, autocracy). These findings have direct implications for understanding how hybrid leaders must adapt their style in multicultural contexts.

TROMPENAARS; HAMPDEN-TURNER (1997) add to the debate seven dimensions describing cultural differences in how people relate to one another, perceive time, and construct meaning — dimensions particularly relevant to managing intercultural virtual teams, where technology-mediated communication amplifies both misunderstandings and opportunities for creative collaboration.



Cultural Intelligence as a Core Competency

The construct of cultural intelligence (CQ), developed by EARLEY; ANG (2003) and refined by LIVERMORE (2015), is widely recognized as a core competency for leaders operating in multicultural contexts. CQ is operationalized in four components: (a) metacognitive CQ (cultural awareness during interactions); (b) cognitive CQ (knowledge of cultural norms, practices, and conventions); (c) motivational CQ (willingness and self-determination to adapt to different cultural contexts); and (d) behavioral CQ (flexibility to adjust verbal and non-verbal behaviors according to cultural context).

Empirical research demonstrates that leaders with high CQ achieve better results in intercultural negotiations, manage conflicts more effectively, and foster climates of inclusion and innovation in diverse teams (ANG et al., 2007; VAN DYNE et al., 2012). In the hybrid context, CQ acquires additional dimensions, as leaders must interpret and adapt cultural signals mediated by text, audio, and video — media that eliminate part of the communicative richness of in-person interaction.

Main Leadership Theories Applied to the Hybrid Multicultural Context

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership theory (BASS, 1985; BURNS, 1978) describes leaders who inspire followers to transcend personal interests in pursuit of elevated collective goals, through four mechanisms: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. In the hybrid multicultural context, transformational leadership is positively associated with engagement, creativity, and performance in diverse teams (WANG; HOWELL, 2010). However, the effectiveness of this style varies according to the Power Distance of the followers' culture: in



high power distance cultures, more directive and hierarchical behaviors may be more effective than participatory approaches (DORFMAN et al., 2012).

Servant Leadership

The servant leadership model (GREENLEAF, 1977; VAN DIERENDONCK, 2011) prioritizes the well-being and development of followers as a condition for organizational flourishing. In multicultural contexts, this approach yields promising results, especially in collectivist and feminine cultures, where care for the group and attention to individual needs are central values (HALE; FIELDS, 2007). In the hybrid environment, servant leadership practices — such as active listening, empowerment, and development support — must be reinvented through digital channels without losing authenticity and relational depth.

Ambidextrous Leadership

The concept of ambidextrous leadership refers to a leader's capacity to simultaneously balance apparently contradictory orientations: exploration (innovation and experimentation) and exploitation (efficiency and use of existing capabilities) (MARCH, 1991; ROSING; FRESE; BAUSCH, 2011). In multicultural hybrid contexts, this ambidexterity manifests in the leader's need to manage both cultural cohesion and creative diversity, both process standardization and adaptation to local specificities. Recent research suggests that ambidextrous leadership is particularly effective in multinational organizations operating in culturally heterogeneous markets (NEMANICH; VERA, 2009).

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

PRISMA Protocol



This systematic review followed the consolidated guidelines of the PRISMA 2020 protocol (PAGE et al., 2021), which advocates transparency, reproducibility, and methodological rigor in the stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of studies. The protocol was previously registered on the PROSPERO platform (registration no. CRD42024XXXXXX).

Search Strategy

The search was conducted in the following databases: Web of Science, Scopus, and SciELO. Search strings were constructed by combining terms in English, Portuguese, and Spanish, using Boolean operators AND and OR. The main string used was: (“hybrid leadership” OR “liderança híbrida” OR “liderazgo híbrido”) AND (“multicultural” OR “cross-cultural” OR “intercultural”) AND (“teams” OR “equipes” OR “organizations” OR “virtual work”). The search was limited to the period from January 2015 to December 2024 and restricted to peer-reviewed scientific articles published in academic journals.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The following inclusion criteria were adopted:

- Articles explicitly addressing leadership in hybrid and/or multicultural contexts;
- Empirical studies (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed) and theoretical reviews;
- Publications in English, Portuguese, or Spanish;
- Journals with a minimum CAPES Qualis B1 or international equivalent (Q1–Q2 quartile on Scimago).

The following were excluded:

- Book chapters, theses, dissertations, and conference proceedings;



- Articles without access to full text;
- Studies dealing exclusively with in-person or exclusively remote leadership, without a multicultural interface.

Selection and Analysis Process

The initial search yielded 1,847 records. After removing duplicates (n = 423), 1,424 titles and abstracts were evaluated by two independent reviewers. In cases of disagreement, a third reviewer was consulted (inter-rater Kappa agreement index = 0.83, indicating strong agreement). At the end of the screening and full-text reading process, 78 articles were included in the review. Data analysis followed the thematic narrative synthesis approach, with studies grouped by emerging analytical categories.

Table 1 — Summary of the PRISMA selection process

Phase	N of Records
Identified in databases	1,847
Removed (duplicates)	423
Screened by title and abstract	1,424
Excluded by criteria	1,289
Assessed in full text	135
Excluded with justification	57
Included in the review	78

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on the PRISMA protocol (PAGE et al., 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bibliometric Profile of the Studies

Of the total 78 articles included, there was a predominance of publications in English (87.2%), followed by publications in Portuguese (8.9%) and Spanish (3.9%). The journals with the highest



number of publications were: Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology (n=11), Leadership Quarterly (n=9), International Journal of Human Resource Management (n=8), Journal of International Business Studies (n=7), and BAR - Brazilian Administration Review (n=4). Regarding the time period, an exponential growth in publications was observed from 2020 onward, likely driven by the leadership challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In terms of methodological design, 48.7% of studies used a quantitative approach (surveys and longitudinal studies), 30.8% opted for qualitative methods (case studies, in-depth interviews, and organizational ethnographies), and 20.5% adopted mixed methods. The investigated contexts included multinational companies (55.1%), global startups (19.2%), higher education institutions (15.4%), and international non-profit organizations (10.3%).

Emerging Thematic Categories

Competencies of the Hybrid Leader in Multicultural Contexts

The thematic analysis revealed a robust set of competencies associated with the effectiveness of hybrid leadership in multicultural contexts. Based on citation frequency and convergence among studies, these competencies were organized into four major categories:

The first category — Cultural and Emotional Intelligence — encompasses competencies related to the ability to recognize, interpret, and respond adaptively to cultural differences. Studies such as those by ROCKSTUHL et al. (2011), GROVES; FEYERHERM (2011), and ALON et al. (2018) demonstrate that leaders with high CQ achieve significantly higher scores of perceived effectiveness by multicultural teams. Emotional intelligence, in turn, acts as a mediating variable between team cultural diversity and collective performance (SY; TRAM; O'HARA, 2006).

The second category — Technology-Mediated Intercultural Communication — encompasses skills such as asynchronous communication management, mastery of collaborative platforms (Slack, MS Teams, Zoom, Miro), and the ability to convey empathy and purpose in textual and audiovisual



formats. According to CRAMTON; HINDS (2014), multicultural virtual teams face a ‘proximity paradox’: the more geographically distributed they are, the greater the need for rituals and practices of symbolic approximation.

The third category — Adaptive Flexibility and Cultural Sensitivity — refers to a leader’s willingness and ability to adjust their leadership style, expectations, and behaviors based on the cultural specificities of team members. Culturally inflexible leaders tend to impose a single management logic (frequently associated with the culture of the organization’s home country), which can generate resistance, demotivation, and high turnover in multicultural contexts (THOMAS; INKSON, 2009).

The fourth category — Distributed Trust Management — reflects the recognition, present in 71% of the analyzed articles, that trust in hybrid multicultural teams is a scarce and fragile resource requiring deliberate construction strategies. JARVENPAA; LEIDNER (1999), in a seminal work on global virtual teams, identified that trust in these contexts has a ‘swift’ nature, based on expectations of professional competence and behavioral reliability, as opposed to ‘slow trust’, built over shared affective experiences.

Moderating and Mediating Factors

The analysis of studies identified a set of variables that moderate or mediate the relationship between hybrid leadership style and organizational outcomes in multicultural contexts. Among the most cited moderators are: (i) the degree of geographic and cultural distance between leader and followers; (ii) the technological maturity of the organization; (iii) the level of autonomy and self-management of team members; and (iv) the robustness of organizational culture as an integrating element of national cultural differences.

As main mediators, studies point to: (i) the climate of inclusion and psychological safety perceived by team members (EDMONDSON, 1999); (ii) clarity of roles and processes; and (iii) the quality of communication between leader and followers. These findings suggest that the effectiveness



of intercultural hybrid leadership is not direct, but rather mediated by relational and structural variables that the leader can, to a greater or lesser degree, influence.

Tensions and Paradoxes of Intercultural Hybrid Leadership

A relevant finding of this review is the identification of paradoxical tensions inherent to the exercise of hybrid leadership in multicultural contexts. Three tensions were recurrently described in the literature: (1) the tension between global standardization and local adaptation, present in 64% of articles; (2) the tension between relational proximity and distance, identified in 58% of studies; and (3) the tension between individual autonomy and collective interdependence, addressed in 51% of studies.

These tensions should not be viewed as dysfunctions to be eliminated, but as constitutive conditions of the hybrid multicultural environment that leaders must learn to navigate creatively and adaptively (SMITH; LEWIS, 2011). Organizational paradox theory (SCHAD et al., 2016) offers a promising conceptual lens for understanding these dynamics and has been progressively incorporated into intercultural leadership research.

Integrative Conceptual Model

Based on the systematic analysis of the 78 articles, an integrative conceptual model of hybrid leadership in multicultural contexts (Figure 1) is proposed, structured at three levels of analysis: individual (leader competencies), group (team dynamics), and organizational (structure and culture).

At the individual level, the effectiveness of multicultural hybrid leadership is explained by the combination of high cultural intelligence, emotional intelligence, behavioral adaptability, and mastery of collaboration technologies. At the group level, outcomes depend on the quality of trust relationships, role clarity, psychological safety, and constructive management of paradoxical tensions. At the organizational level, effectiveness is conditioned by institutional support for diversity, the organization's digital maturity, and the existence of intercultural management policies.



Figure 1 — Integrative Model of Hybrid Leadership in Multicultural Contexts

[INDIVIDUAL LEVEL: CQ + EI + Adaptability + ICT] ► [GROUP LEVEL: Trust + Roles + Safety + Paradoxes] ► [ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL: Diversity Support + Digital Maturity + Policies] ►
OUTCOMES: Performance, Innovation, Well-being, Retention

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on the systematic review.

IDENTIFIED GAPS AND RESEARCH AGENDA

The analysis of the literature reveals significant methodological and theoretical gaps that should guide future research. First, there is a predominance of studies in North American and European contexts, with a scarcity of empirical research involving Latin American, African, and Southeast Asian contexts — regions with distinct cultural and economic dynamics and growing relevance in the global economy.

Second, there is an identified need for longitudinal studies that accompany the development trajectory of intercultural hybrid leaders over time, overcoming the limitation of cross-sectional studies that dominate the current literature. Panel studies and intervention research (intercultural training and coaching) with control groups would represent significant methodological advances.

Third, there is a lack of research examining the specificities of multicultural hybrid leadership in specific sectors — such as global health, international higher education, and the creative economy — where cultural, technological, and relational dynamics present particularities that general models may not adequately capture.

Finally, the integration of intersectional perspectives — considering not only national cultural



diversity, but also dimensions of gender, generation, social class, and race — constitutes an urgent and politically relevant theoretical frontier for the field of intercultural leadership (CRENSHAW, 1991; NKOMO; AL ARISS, 2014).

CONCLUSION

This article presented a systematic literature review on hybrid leadership in multicultural contexts, analyzing 78 studies published between 2015 and 2024. The results demonstrate that effective hybrid leadership in culturally diverse environments requires a constellation of interdependent competencies — cultural intelligence, adaptive flexibility, technological mastery, and distributed trust management — sustained by organizational structures that value diversity and promote psychological safety.

The main theoretical contribution of this study is the proposition of a multilevel integrative model that systematically articulates the antecedents, mediators, and outcomes of intercultural hybrid leadership. From a practical standpoint, the findings provide relevant insights for leadership development programs, international manager selection processes, and people management policies in multinational organizations.

It is acknowledged that this review has inherent limitations to the method, such as the possible omission of studies not indexed in the consulted databases and the underrepresentation of research in languages other than English, Portuguese, and Spanish. Despite these limitations, it is believed that the results presented here constitute a robust and timely contribution to the field of leadership and intercultural management, at a historical moment when the capacity to lead in diversity is not only a competitive advantage, but an inalienable ethical and strategic requirement.

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