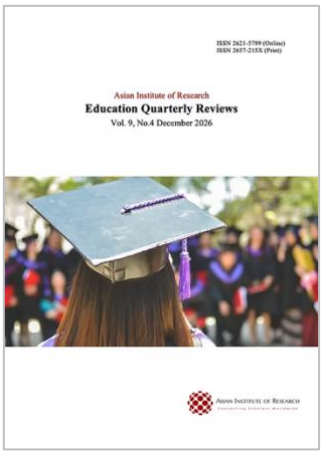


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The Role of Hybrid Leadership in Shaping an Inclusive Educational Reality

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Abstract
The present study focuses on the investigation and assessment of the perceptions of principals and vice principals in Primary and Secondary Education in the prefectures of Pieria and Heraklion regarding the concept of hybrid leadership and the implementation of inclusive education practices. The first part of the study presents and analyzes the main dimensions of hybrid leadership, the practices associated with inclusive education (such as differentiated instruction and the use of technology), as well as the inhibiting factors—indicatively including lack of resources, prejudices, and insufficient professional training—that emerge during their implementation. The second part concentrates on the methodological approach of the research, the analysis of the data derived from the responses of principals and vice principals, and the formulation of the final conclusions. A total of 120 principals and vice principals from Primary and Secondary Education participated in the study and were asked to complete structured questionnaires concerning hybrid leadership, inclusive education, the practices applied, and the obstacles they encounter.

Keywords: Hybrid Leadership, Inclusive Education, Inclusion Practices, Barriers to Inclusion

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduce the Problem

Within the context of contemporary societies, where changes occur at a rapid and intensive pace across all domains of social life, it is to be expected that the field of education is also profoundly affected. Education is therefore called upon to adapt to new conditions, evolving demands, and the multifaceted needs of modern society (Council of Europe, 2014). Educators are required to respond to this constantly changing environment, a requirement that presupposes a high level of pedagogical and instructional readiness, the effective integration of new technologies, and the adoption of alternative and innovative forms of teaching. At the same time, continuous professional development becomes essential, as it contributes significantly to ensuring the quality of educational practice (Foti, 2020). Within this framework, the role of educational leadership is considered pivotal, as school leaders are

expected to function in a supportive and guiding manner, to foster the development of educators' skills, and to cultivate a climate of collaboration and mutual respect (Angelidis, 2011).

According to Bourgeois (2006), a new type of leadership has emerged, namely hybrid leadership, in which the leader maximizes the skills and capacities of the human resources within the team they lead. Through this approach, the leader implements effective practices by taking into account the dynamics and distinctive characteristics of each member, with the aim of fostering initiative-taking and prompt action (Bourgeois, 2006). A central objective of hybrid leadership is flexibility and operational effectiveness, which are achieved through the combination of different leadership approaches in order to ensure adaptability to the continuously changing demands of the environment. Within the same framework, the inclusive school leader is defined as one who systematically monitors the functioning of the school unit and deliberately integrates elements from seven different leadership styles in order to guide the educational organization effectively (Kafas, 2023).

Inclusive education constitutes a pedagogical approach that aims at the meaningful inclusion of all students within a unified educational setting, regardless of differences in abilities, educational needs, or cultural characteristics. Its primary objective is the development of an educational system that promotes equality, equity, and social inclusion, ensuring equal learning opportunities for all (Stasinos, 2016). Within this context, the role of the school leader is pivotal in cultivating an inclusive culture, as they are called upon to assume an active role in the critical re-examination of existing structures, demonstrate adaptability, engage in ongoing reflection on democratic values, and set the sustainability of education as a strategic objective. Through this process, the school leader seeks to communicate their vision of inclusion to the teaching staff and to lay the foundations for continuous and long-term improvement of the educational system (Shriberg & MacDonald, 2013).

1.2 Hybrid Leadership and Inclusive Education

Hybrid leadership constitutes a synthesis of leadership skills and approaches to guidance, which substantially contributes to enhancing organizational effectiveness and achieving an organization's strategic objectives (Shabbir et al., 2017). According to Mitchell (2015, as cited in Nazir et al., 2014, p. 36), hybrid leadership plays a pivotal role in the development of employees' skills and competencies, exerting a positive influence on their job performance.

Bourgeois (2013) emphasizes that the formation of hybrid leadership is shaped by a range of factors, which significantly determine its overall effectiveness. Similarly, Bourgeois (2006) emphasizes that employees are able to develop and enhance their skills through collaboration and interaction within the workplace environment.
In this context, hybrid education is defined as an educational model that combines learning activities conducted in conventional settings, such as classrooms and laboratories, with synchronous or asynchronous distance learning processes supported by technological means (e-learning) (Paraskevas et al., 2013). The hybrid educational model addresses the requirements of traditional education by offering opportunities for face-to-face instruction and meaningful practical interaction among members of the learning community.

Hybrid learning can contribute to the creation of a more inclusive educational experience. The term *blended learning* refers to the combination of different learning environments, with or without the use of digital tools, aiming to promote inclusive education (European Education Area, 2023). At a societal level, national, regional, and local authorities can shape the appropriate conditions for effective hybrid learning by ensuring that school principals and teachers are provided with the necessary time and flexibility to implement innovative practices. At the same time, it is essential that adequate financial resources are allocated to schools in order to support the design, implementation, and evaluation of hybrid or blended learning programs (European Education Area, 2023). In conclusion, the role of leadership is to influence the behavior of an organization's members so that they willingly and meaningfully contribute to the achievement of its objectives (Mpourantas, 2002). The Hybrid Leader fully utilizes the skills and capabilities of the team they lead (Bourgeois, 2006). The development of such a leadership role requires experience and maturity. This contemporary form of leadership constitutes a dynamic combination of skills, characteristics, and leadership styles, enhancing organizational effectiveness and the targeted

implementation of strategic goals (Shabbir et al., 2017). Furthermore, it improves relationships between leaders and subordinates while strengthening leaders' capacity to manage challenges and demanding tasks.

1.3 Conceptualisation of Inclusive Education

The concept of Inclusive Education is grounded in the principle articulated in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. The notion of "inclusion" is complex and multidimensional, as it encompasses a range of issues related to humanitarian, educational, cultural and, above all, social dimensions, such as racism, democracy and social justice (Angelides, Stylianou & Gibbs, 2006; Angelides & Hajisoteriou, 2013). The adoption of an inclusive approach within school settings aims at the development of a society that ensures equal learning opportunities for all learners. At the same time, it contributes to strengthening a sense of safety, promoting acceptance, and fostering cooperation among members of the educational community (Stasinos, 2016). Consequently, inclusion constitutes a broader concept that guarantees the participation of all those involved in the educational process, providing access to a wide range of knowledge, information and skills within environments characterised by democratic values and collaboration (Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2014).

In brief terms, inclusion refers to an educational approach that aims to prevent the exclusion of any student from the learning process (Zoniou-Sideri, 2011). Inclusive education ensures that students attend their local school and receive the necessary support within the mainstream classroom, alongside peers of typical development, with the objective of achieving optimal learning and social development for all students (Angelides, 2011). Within the context of the present study, Inclusive Education is defined as a process that enhances the capacity of the educational system to welcome and support all students on an equal basis (UNESCO, 2017).

At this point, it is important to emphasise that Inclusive Education does not represent a fixed goal that can be fully achieved, but rather as a continuous and evolving process (Angelides, 2011). This process involves the participation of all children in mainstream education, their active engagement in the learning process, their academic progress, and their social inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). It therefore constitutes an ongoing effort to reduce exclusion, focusing on the identification of students who are at risk of marginalisation, the removal of barriers that hinder their development, and the implementation of supportive practices that promote inclusion (Stasinos, 2016).

1.4 Inclusive Education Practices

The adoption of inclusive practices by the school principal contributes substantially to the effective organization and overall functioning of the educational institution. In alignment with the principles of inclusion, the selection and appointment of a school leader is considered pivotal for the systematic and effective advancement of this educational approach (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). As noted by Leithwood and Beatty (2008), emotional intelligence constitutes a fundamental attribute of successful school leadership, as it enables leaders to recognize, interpret, and manage the emotional climate among members of the teaching staff.

The implementation of inclusive practices encompasses multiple dimensions, including the preparation and professional development of school leaders, the cultivation of a positive and supportive school climate, the provision of pedagogical support to teachers, the enhancement of students' active participation in the learning process, the meaningful engagement of parents or guardians, and the development of collaborative partnerships with the local community. Collectively, these practices facilitate the gradual institutionalization of an inclusive educational framework which, in the long term, contributes to the formation of a society grounded in the principles of acceptance, equity, and equal participation for all.

2.4 Inhibitors factors of inclusive education

Although educational pluralism (Gropas & Triandafyllidou, 2007) and the provision of equal opportunities for access to education and an inclusive society (Zoniou-Sideri, 2011) are promoted at the policy level, in practice the

implementation of inclusive education continues to face significant obstacles (Papapetrou et al., 2013). Within this context, the role of an effective leader becomes particularly important, as they can ensure the implementation of the philosophy of inclusion. Beyond the formal authority they hold, a leader has the ability to inspire and motivate teachers, fostering positive collaboration and their active participation. In this way, the team can be guided toward achieving the best possible outcomes (Saitis, 2014).

In summary, inclusion constitutes an educational approach that aims to ensure the participation of all children within the same school environment, regardless of differences in their abilities, needs, or cultural background. Its main objective is the development of an educational system that promotes equality and social inclusion, ensuring equal opportunities for all students (Stasinos, 2016). Within this context, the school leader holds a crucial role in fostering a culture of inclusion. They undertake the responsibility of re-examining and challenging existing structures, demonstrating flexibility, continuously reflecting on democratic values, and striving for the sustainability of education. Through this process, they seek to communicate their vision of inclusion to their colleagues and contribute to establishing the conditions for ongoing improvements within the educational system (Shriberg & MacDonld, 2013). Practices that promote inclusion include, among others, differentiated instruction, the adaptation of the curriculum, and the use of assistive technologies in order to meet the needs of all students. Nevertheless, the full implementation of inclusion often faces difficulties, such as limited funding, hesitation or resistance from teachers, social prejudices, and insufficient training.

2. Method

The limited Greek literature concerning the role and significance of Hybrid Leadership in the Greek educational system, in combination with the implementation of inclusive education, creates a promising field for investigation. This fact served as the main motivation for my engagement with this particular topic. The aim of the present study is to explore and record the views of principals and vice-principals in Primary and Secondary Education in the regional units of Pieria and Heraklion regarding hybrid leadership and the implementation of inclusive education.

2.1 Research questions

Based on the purpose of the study, the research questions to be examined are the following:

- **Research Question 1:** Which leadership style do leaders prefer?
- **Research Question 2:** How does hybrid leadership influence the implementation of inclusion within the educational organization?
- **Research Question 3:** How important do school leaders consider sustainable leadership for the promotion of inclusive education?
- **Research Question 4:** Which inclusive practices do school leaders prefer to implement?
- **Research Question 5:** What are the obstacles and inhibiting factors to the effective implementation of inclusive education?

2.2 Participant (Subject) Characteristics

A total of 120 school leaders from Primary and Secondary Education participated in the study. Of these, 49 were men (40.8%) and 71 were women (59.2%). Regarding the level of education at which they serve, the majority of participants, namely 79 individuals (65.8%), work in Primary Education, while 41 individuals (34.2%) work in Secondary Education. With respect to their administrative position, 78 participants (65%) hold the position of principal, whereas 42 (35%) serve as vice-principals/assistant principals.

2.3 Sampling Procedures

The study employed a quantitative research design. The sample consisted of 120 principals and vice principals of primary and Secondary Education schools in the prefectures of Pieria and Heraklion. Participants were selected through convenience sampling, using an online invitation distributed to school units via a Google Forms questionnaire. Participation was voluntary, and respondents self-selected into the study by choosing to complete

the questionnaire. Data were collected electronically between February and April 2024. The online survey enabled participants to respond at their convenience while facilitating efficient data collection across multiple school settings. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study prior to participation. Anonymity and confidentiality were fully ensured throughout the research process, and no financial incentives or compensation were provided for participation. The study was conducted in accordance with established research ethics principles and data protection regulations, ensuring the responsible handling and safeguarding of participants' information.

2.3.1 Sample Size, Power, and Precision

Prior to the main data collection phase, the research questionnaire was pilot-tested with five school principals and vice principals who did not participate in the final study. The pilot testing was conducted to identify potential errors, ambiguities, omissions, and areas requiring improvement. Based on the feedback provided by the pilot participants, the researcher implemented the necessary revisions to enhance the clarity, relevance, and validity of the instrument.

The study employed a quantitative research design. The final sample consisted of 120 principals and vice principals from primary and secondary education schools located in the regional units of Pieria and Heraklion, Greece. A convenience sampling method was adopted, whereby participants were selected based on their willingness and availability to participate in the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents self-selected into the sample by completing the online questionnaire distributed through Google Forms.

Data were collected between February and April 2024. The anonymity and confidentiality of participants were fully ensured throughout the research process, and no financial incentives or compensation were provided. The study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles and data protection regulations.

Given the use of non-probability convenience sampling and the geographical concentration of the sample within the regional units of Pieria and Heraklion, the findings may not be fully representative of the broader population of school leaders in Greece. Therefore, the results should be interpreted within the context of the study sample, and caution should be exercised when generalizing the findings beyond the participants included in the research.

2.3.2 Measures and Covariates

To measure Hybrid Leadership, the questionnaire *"Development of the Vannsimpco Leadership Survey: A Delineation of Hybrid Leadership Styles"* developed by Barry A. Vann, Aaron N. Coleman, and Jennifer A. Simpson (2014) was used. The instrument consists of 27 items measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree). The scale comprises seven leadership styles**.**

To assess inclusion, the questionnaire *"Promoting Inclusive Education through Sustainable Strategic Leadership"* developed by Ketikidou Georgia (2020) was employed. This instrument includes 46 items, also measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree). The scale is structured around six categories of inclusive practices.

Prior to the main data collection, the questionnaire was pilot-tested with five principals and vice-principals in order to identify potential errors or omissions. Based on their feedback, the necessary revisions were made. The sampling process followed a convenience sampling method, as participants were selected based on their willingness and availability to participate in the study.

2.3.3 Research Design

The present study employed a quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional research design to investigate school leaders' perceptions of hybrid leadership and inclusive education within primary and secondary educational settings. Data were collected through an online survey administered to school principals and vice-principals.

Participants were not assigned to experimentally manipulated conditions, nor was any intervention implemented by the researchers. Instead, the study examined naturally occurring perceptions and experiences as reported by educational leaders in their professional contexts. Consequently, the research adopted an observational approach based on self-reported data.

As no experimental conditions were created, random assignment procedures were not applicable. The study primarily followed a between-subjects design, allowing for comparisons across participant groups based on demographic and professional characteristics, such as leadership position, educational level, years of professional experience, gender, and other relevant variables. This design facilitated the examination of potential differences in perceptions of hybrid leadership practices and inclusive education among distinct groups of educational leaders.

2.3.4 Experimental Manipulations or Interventions

No experimental manipulations or interventions were implemented in this study. The research adopted a non-experimental survey design, and data were collected through an online questionnaire administered to school principals and vice-principals. Participants were not assigned to treatment or control groups, and no intervention was introduced during the data collection process. The study focused exclusively on capturing participants' perceptions and experiences regarding hybrid leadership and inclusive education within their professional contexts.

3. Results

The statistical analysis was conducted using the **Jamovi software (version 2.3.28)**, applying both descriptive and inferential methods. **Means (M)** and **Standard Deviations (SD)** were calculated in order to highlight the participants' preferences regarding leadership styles and inclusion practices. Reliability was tested using **Cronbach's Alpha**, while inferential methods were applied to examine statistical significance and parametric differences. In addition, **linear regression analysis** was conducted to investigate the degree of influence of each **Hybrid Leadership style** on the individual dimensions of **Inclusion practices**.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of Hybrid Leadership styles

	Transactional	**Autocratic-Transformational**	**Autocratic - Transactional**	**Democratic - Transformational**	**Democratic – Transactional**	**Transformational**	**Laissez – faire**
Mean	4.04	3.99	3.99	4.29	4.19	4.44	2.69
Standard deviation	0.49	0.71	0.70	0.51	0.64	0.40	0.98

Based on Table 1, the average of the (vice) principals who participated in the survey appears to prefer the Transformational style (M = 4.44 & SD = 0.40). This is followed by the Democratic–Transformational style (M = 4.29 & SD = 0.51), the Democratic–Transactional style (M = 4.19 & SD = 0.64), the Transactional leadership style (M = 4.04 & SD = 0.49), the Authoritarian–Transformational style (M = 3.99 & SD = 0.71), and the Authoritarian–Transactional style (M = 3.99 & SD = 0.70).

Table 2: Regression Table of practices related to the education/preparation of school leaders in terms of Hybrid Leadership styles (Transactional, Autocratic – Transformational, Autocratic – Transactional, Democratic – Transformational, Democratic – Transactional, Transformational and Laissez-faire style).

Independent variables	β	t	p
Transactional	0.19	1.81	.07
Autocratic- Transformational	-0.15	-1.36	.18
Autocratic – Transactional	0.43	3.64	.00
Democratic- Transformational	-0.19	-1.63	.11
Democratic – Transactional	0.08	0.66	.51
Transformational	-0.06	-0.62	.54
Laissez – faire	0.12	1.43	.16

Based on Table 2, with regard to "p," only in the case of the Authoritarian–Transactional style ($p = 0.00 < 0.05$) is the regression coefficient statistically significant. The Transactional style has $p = 0.07$ (> 0.05), the Democratic–Transactional style has $p = 0.51$ (> 0.05), the Transformational style has $p = 0.54$ (> 0.05), and the Laissez-faire style has $p = 0.16$ (> 0.05).

The "β" coefficient for the Authoritarian–Transactional style is 0.43 and explains the results better compared to the other independent variables: Transactional, Democratic–Transformational, Authoritarian–Transformational, Laissez-faire, Democratic–Transactional, and Transformational styles, whose β values are 0.19, -0.19, -0.15, -0.12, 0.08, and -0.06, respectively.

Table 3: Regression Table of Climate-Related Practices on Hybrid Leadership Styles (Transactional, Autocratic – Transformational, Autocratic – Transactional, Democratic – Transformational, Democratic – Transactional, Transformational and Laissez- faire Style).

Independent variables	β	t	p
Transactional	0.09	0.87	.39
Autocratic- Transformational	0.10	0.91	.36
Autocratic – Transactional	0.11	0.98	.33
Democratic- Transformational	0.30	2.71	.01
Democratic – Transactional	0.30	2.56	.01
Transformational	0.07	0.68	.50
Laissez – faire	0.10	0.23	.22

Based on Table 3, regarding "p," only in the cases of the Democratic–Transformational style ($p = 0.01 < 0.05$) and the Democratic–Transactional style ($p = 0.01 < 0.05$) is the regression coefficient statistically significant. The Transactional style has $p = 0.39$ (> 0.05), the Authoritarian–Transformational style has $p = 0.36$ (> 0.05), the Authoritarian–Transactional style has $p = 0.33$ (> 0.05), the Transformational style has $p = 0.50$ (> 0.05), and the Laissez-faire style has $p = 0.22$ (> 0.05).

The "β" coefficients for the Democratic–Transformational style and the Democratic–Transactional style are both equal to 0.30 and better explain the results compared to the other independent variables: Transactional, Authoritarian–Transformational, Authoritarian–Transactional, Transformational, and Laissez-faire styles, whose β values are 0.09, 0.10, 0.11, 0.07, and 0.10, respectively.

Table 4: Regression Table of the practice involving teachers in terms of Hybrid Leadership styles (Transactional, Authoritarian – Transformational, Authoritarian – Transactional, Democratic – Transformational, Democratic – Transactional, Transformational and Laissez-faire style).

Independent variables	β	t	p
Transactional	0.07	0.73	.47
Autocratic- Transformational	-0.03	-0.34	.74
Autocratic – Transactional	0.08	0.75	.46
Democratic- Transformational	0.40	3.72	.00
Democratic – Transactional	0.20	1.71	.09
Transformational	-0.04	-0.37	.72
Laissez – faire	-0.04	-0.51	.61

Based on Table 4, R^2 is 0.335, indicating that the model does not fit the data well. Regarding "p," only in the case of the Democratic–Transformational style ($p = 0.00 < 0.05$) is the regression coefficient statistically significant. The Transactional style has $p = 0.47$ (> 0.05), the Authoritarian–Transformational style has $p = 0.74$ (> 0.05), the Authoritarian–Transactional style has $p = 0.46$ (> 0.05), the Democratic–Transactional style has $p = 0.09$ (> 0.05), the Transformational style has $p = 0.72$ (> 0.05), and the Laissez-faire style has $p = 0.61$ (> 0.05).

The "β" coefficient for the Democratic–Transformational style is 0.40 and for the Democratic–Transactional style is 0.20, and they explain the results better compared to the other independent variables: Transactional, Authoritarian–Transformational, Authoritarian–Transactional, Transformational, and Laissez-faire styles, whose β values are 0.07, -0.03, 0.08, -0.04, and -0.04, respectively.

Table 5: Regression Table of student practice in relation to Hybrid Leadership styles (Transactional, Autocratic – Transformational, Autocratic – Transactional, Democratic – Transformational, Democratic – Transactional, Transformational and Laissez-faire style).

Independent variables	β	t	p
Transactional	0.10	1.02	.31
Autocratic- Transformational	0.01	0.09	.93
Autocratic – Transactional	0.04	0.36	.72
Democratic- Transformational	0.38	3.39	.00
Democratic – Transactional	0.17	1.43	.15
Transformational	0.06	0.56	.58
Laissez – faire	0.18	2.10	.04

Based on Table 5, R^2 is 0.285, indicating that the model does not fit the data well. Regarding "p," only in the case of the Democratic–Transformational style ($p = 0.00 < 0.05$) and the Laissez-faire style ($p = 0.04 < 0.05$) is the regression coefficient statistically significant. The Transactional style has $p = 0.31$ (> 0.05), the Authoritarian–Transformational style has $p = 0.93$ (> 0.05), the Authoritarian–Transactional style has $p = 0.72$ (> 0.05), the Democratic–Transactional style has $p = 0.15$ (> 0.05), and the Transformational style has $p = 0.58$ (> 0.05).
The "β" coefficient for the Democratic–Transformational style is 0.38 and explains the results better compared to the other independent variables: Transactional, Authoritarian–Transformational, Authoritarian–Transactional, Democratic–Transactional, Transformational, and Laissez-faire styles, whose β values are 0.10, 0.01, 0.04, 0.17, 0.06, and 0.18, respectively.

Table 6: Regression Table of community-related practice in terms of Hybrid Leadership styles (Transactional, Autocratic – Transformational, Autocratic – Transactional, Democratic – Transformational, Democratic – Transactional, Transformational and Laissez-faire style).

Independent variables	β	t	p
Transactional	0.16	1.44	.15
Autocratic- Transformational	0.03	-0.27	.79
Autocratic – Transactional	0.14	1.10	.27
Democratic- Transformational	0.03	0.24	.81
Democratic – Transactional	0.11	0.86	.39
Transformational	0.03	0.25	.80
Laissez – faire	0.12	-1.31	.19

Based on Table 6, R^2 is 0.115, indicating that the model does not adequately fit the data. Regarding "p," in all cases (Transactional, Authoritarian–Transformational, Authoritarian–Transactional, Democratic–Transformational, Democratic–Transactional, Transformational, and Laissez-faire styles), the regression coefficients are not statistically significant, as $p > 0.05$.

The "β" coefficient for the Transactional style is 0.16 and provides the best explanation of the results compared to the other independent variables—Authoritarian–Transformational, Authoritarian–Transactional, Democratic–Transformational, Democratic–Transactional, Transformational, and Laissez-faire styles—whose β values are 0.03, 0.14, 0.03, 0.11, 0.03, and 0.12, respectively.

Table 7: Mean and standard deviation of the concepts of Inclusive Education

	Sustainable leadership for the promotion of Inclusive education	**Practices related to the education/preparation of school leaders**	**Practices related to school climate**	**Practices related to teachers**	**Practices related to students**	**Community-related practices**
Mean	4.53	3.08	4.51	4.38	4.39	3.85
Standard deviation	0.45	0.62	0.50	0.52	0.48	0.50

According to Table 7, the average of the (vice) principals who participated in the survey consider sustainable leadership to be very important for promoting inclusion ($M = 4.53$ & $SD = 0.45$).

Regarding the question of "which practices school leaders prefer to implement," these are related to school climate (M = 4.51 & SD = 0.50), teachers (M = 4.38 & SD = 0.52), student-related practices (M = 4.39 & SD = 0.48), and community-related practices (M = 3.85 & SD = 0.50). Finally, with regard to practices related to leadership training (M = 3.08 & SD = 0.62), the results indicate that respondents neither agree nor disagree.

Table 8: What are the obstacles to an effective implementation of inclusive education?

	Count (n)	**Percent (%)**
Continuous legislative reforms	80	66.7%
Uncertainty in any inclusion practice	45	37.5%
Insufficient training of school leaders on inclusion issues	82	68.3%
Insufficient training of teachers on inclusion issues	89	74.2%
Limited autonomy of the school unit	49	40.8%
A school culture that is distant from the inclusive vision	65	54.2%
Lack of time	77	64.2%
Reduced financial resources	96	80.0%

Based on Table 8, it is summarized that the majority of the (vice) principals who participated in the survey agreed on several key barriers to inclusion. Specifically, 96 (80.0%) agreed that limited financial resources constitute a barrier to inclusion, 89 (74.2%) agreed that the lack of teacher training on inclusion issues is an obstacle, and 82 (68.3%) identified the lack of training of school leaders on inclusion as a barrier.

Furthermore, 80 (66.7%) agreed that continuous legislative reforms are an obstacle, 77 (64.2%) identified lack of time as a barrier, and 65 (54.2%) pointed to a school culture that is distant from an inclusive vision. Additionally, 49 (40.8%) agreed that limited school autonomy is a barrier, while only 45 (37.5%) agreed that insecurity regarding the implementation of inclusion practices constitutes an obstacle.

3.1 Recruitment

Data collection was conducted between February and April 2024. The final sample consisted of 120 participants serving as principals and vice-principals in primary and secondary education schools located in the regional units of Pieria and Heraklion, Greece. Participants were recruited using a convenience sampling approach, based on their accessibility and willingness to participate in the study.

The selection of school leaders was deemed appropriate given their administrative responsibilities and direct involvement in school management and educational processes, which positioned them as key informants regarding the phenomenon under investigation. Recruitment and data collection procedures were carried out within the aforementioned period, and all participants voluntarily agreed to take part in the research.

3.2 Statistics and Data Analysis

This study aims to record and evaluate the views of principals and deputy principals in primary and secondary education in the regional units of Pieria and Heraklion regarding hybrid leadership and the implementation of

inclusive education. According to the findings, participants appear to primarily favor the transformational leadership model, followed by a combination of democratic and transformational styles.

The linear regression analysis revealed that the democratic–transformational leadership style acts as a protective factor for the three key dimensions of inclusive education, which relate to school climate, teachers, and students. At the same time, principals and deputy principals recognize the importance of sustainable leadership in promoting inclusion.

Regarding inclusive practices, priority is given to those related to school climate, with the others following. Finally, the main barrier to the implementation of inclusive education was identified as the lack of sufficient financial resources.

3.3 Ancillary Analyses

No additional pre-specified or exploratory analyses were conducted beyond the primary statistical analyses designed to address the study's research questions. Accordingly, no subgroup analyses, sensitivity analyses, or other ancillary statistical procedures were performed. Therefore, no issues related to increased statistical error rates resulting from multiple additional analyses were identified.

3.4 Participant Flow

A total of 120 school vice-principals and principals from the regional units of Pieria and Heraklion participated in the study. These regional units were selected based on their accessibility to the researchers. Data were collected using an anonymous online questionnaire distributed through Google Forms.

3.5 Intervention or Manipulation Fidelity

This study employed a non-experimental, cross-sectional survey design and did not involve any intervention, treatment, or experimental manipulation. Consequently, issues related to intervention fidelity or manipulation checks were not applicable. Data were collected exclusively through a structured online questionnaire designed to assess participants' perceptions of hybrid leadership and inclusive education within their professional contexts.

3.6 Baseline Data

A total of 120 school leaders from Primary and Secondary Education participated in the study. Of these, 49 were men (40.8%) and 71 were women (59.2%). Regarding the level of education at which they serve, the majority of participants, namely 79 individuals (65.8%), work in Primary Education, while 41 individuals (34.2%) work in Secondary Education. With respect to their administrative position, 78 participants (65%) hold the position of principal, whereas 42 (35%) serve as vice-principals/assistant principals.

3.6.1 Statistics and Data Analysis

As this study employed a non-experimental, cross-sectional survey design, no intervention or treatment conditions were implemented. Therefore, intent-to-treat analyses were not applicable. Only fully completed questionnaires meeting the inclusion criteria were retained for statistical analysis.

4. Discussion

The discussion focuses on the analysis of the research findings and their association with existing empirical and theoretical evidence. The main objectives of the study were to assess Hybrid Leadership, Inclusive Education, and to determine the extent to which hybrid leadership influences inclusive practices. Data were collected using two valid and reliable questionnaires: the Vannsimpco Leadership Survey (Vann et al., 2014) and Ketikidou’s (2020)

questionnaire on Inclusive Education, which is based on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

With regard to the 1st research question, "Which leadership style do leaders prefer?", the results of the present study indicated that school principals and assistant principals tend to favor the Transformational leadership style, a finding that is consistent with previous research by Mews (2019).

Regarding the 2nd research question, "What is the impact of hybrid leadership on the implementation of inclusion within the educational organization?", the results of the linear regression analysis indicate that the "Democratic–Transformational leadership style" acts as a protective factor for the three core dimensions of Inclusive Education, namely those related to school climate, teachers, and students. However, the absence of comparable research data does not allow for the extraction of safe and generalizable conclusions.

With regard to the 3rd research question, "To what extent do school leaders consider sustainable leadership important for promoting inclusive education?", the findings reveal that educational leadership plays a decisive role in shaping the school climate (Zoniou-Sideri, 2011), while also fostering the creation of a supportive learning environment, thereby confirming the results of previous studies (Georgiou et al., 2001; Liasidou, 2014; Stasinos, 2016).

Regarding the 4th research question, it was found that school leaders primarily favor inclusive practices that enhance the school climate, a finding consistent with the studies of Souli (2008) and Botsfari (2018). These are followed by practices related to teachers, students, and the wider community, confirming the results of previous research by Angelides (2011) and Zoniou–Sideri (2011).

With regard to the 5th research question, participants in the present study identify two main barriers to the inclusion of students. First, the limited financial resources available within the school community, a finding that aligns with the research of Pissia and Pieroulli (2015). Second, the insufficient training of both teachers and school principals on issues of inclusion, which is supported by studies conducted by Angelides, Charalambous, and Vrasidas (2004), as well as Angelides, Nikolaou, and Cleanthous (2005).

4.1 Research Limitations

This section outlines the main limitations of the study. One key limitation is the relatively small sample size (N=120), which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Another important limitation concerns the sampling method, as the sample consists exclusively of (vice) principals from Primary and Secondary education in the regions of Pieria and Heraklion, with specific demographic characteristics. Finally, the absence of supervision during the completion of the questionnaire may have led to hurried or less carefully considered responses.

4.2 Suggestions for Future Research

This study opens up avenues for further investigation, recommending the use of qualitative methods, such as interviews, to allow participants to express themselves more freely compared to closed-ended questions. It also suggests combining qualitative and quantitative approaches in order to obtain more comprehensive and reliable results.

For future research, the following are proposed:

a. Conducting comparative studies on the implementation of inclusion in Primary and Secondary Education, with particular emphasis on environments where discrimination is present (racial, socioeconomic, educational, or disability-related).
b. Investigating the relationship between the effectiveness of hybrid leaders and the level of satisfaction among their subordinates.

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