



Red Pill Leadership Behaviours and Discourse Ethics

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Received: 27 March 2025 / Accepted: 24 October 2025
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Abstract

Red Pill ideology, an online ecosystem that frames men as victims of feminist progress, has moved well beyond fringe forums to shape leadership norms in corporate and political arenas. Scholars have charted its spread across the manosphere, yet we know little about how these narratives crystallise into day-to-day leadership behaviours that undermine workplace ethics and equity. This study conceptualises Red Pill leadership behaviours as a distinctive, discourse-driven form of toxic leadership and examines how they distort organisational decision-making. Grounded in Habermasian discourse ethics and extended with Fraser's critique of power asymmetries, we investigate how Red Pill leaders subvert open deliberation and justify exclusion. Employing critical netnography and thematic analysis, we analyse a multi-source dataset comprising 66 keynote speeches and high-profile interviews, 227 social media artefacts posted by 34 executives, 23 corporate case files, 20 investigative media articles, and 13 podcast episodes, produced between 2018 and 2024. Our findings identify three interlocking behaviour clusters: (1) exploitative influence and manipulation; (2) control, supremacy, and suppression of dissent; and (3) dehumanisation with harmful outcomes that normalise male supremacist grievance, delegitimise diversity initiatives, and marginalise opposing voices. By theorising these behaviours and mapping their communicative tactics, we show how Red Pill leadership manufactures legitimacy, monetises grievance, and embeds misogyny in workplace culture. We conclude by outlining multilevel policy and organisational interventions that promote ethical deliberation, critical reflexivity, and inclusive governance.

Keywords Red Pill leadership · Discourse ethics · Misogyny at work · Toxic leadership · Organisational inclusion

Introduction

In recent years, the rise of online antifeminist communities, popularly referred to as the *manosphere*, has created new challenges for ethical leadership and organisational integrity. Groups such as Pick-up Artists (PUA, who promote manipulative strategies for sexual conquest), Men

Going Their Own Way (MGTOW, a movement advocating male withdrawal from relationships and traditional social roles), Men's Rights Activists (who frame men as victims of systemic bias in areas such as family law, education, and workplace policies), and Red Pill (groups who promote male dominance, anti-feminism, and evolutionary determinism) promote divergent ideologies, yet share a unifying narrative: the belief that contemporary gender relations have unjustly disempowered men, and that masculine authority must be reasserted (UN Women, 2025). Incels (involuntarily celibate men who blame women for their own failure to form romantic relationships with them), however, reject the self-improvement ethos of PUA and Red Pill communities, embracing a fatalistic Black-Pill worldview that frames success as biologically impossible. These groups form what we refer to as the male supremacist ecosystem, a networked, ideologically dense field of discourses that normalise male entitlement to dominance, sex, and recognition. Accordingly, we distinguish incel and Red Pill leadership, the former being an oxymoron, a rhetorical construct that cannot

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manifest as incels do not demonstrate leadership qualities, and the latter, i.e. Red Pill leadership, an emergent empirical leadership category.

While previous research has addressed toxic or destructive leadership through personality traits or abusive behaviours (Einarsen et al., 2007; Padilla et al., 2007), comparatively little attention has been given to how ideological discourses, particularly those rooted in misogyny, male supremacy, and anti-feminism, legitimate unethical leadership practices. In this paper, we develop the concept of Red Pill leadership as leadership behaviour and ideology that draws upon a discursive repertoire of male supremacist beliefs, especially those rooted in the Red Pill movement, a loosely organised antifeminist ecosystem that promotes male entitlement, evolutionary determinism, and gender hierarchy as natural and desirable (McCarthy & Taylor, 2024). Incels, PUA, and MGTOW adherents each represent branches of this ecology, but Red Pill discourse forms the connective tissue that justifies domination and marginalises deliberative ethics in leadership contexts. By focusing on this common discursive infrastructure, we show through discourse ethics how leadership informed by Red Pill logics undermines inclusive dialogue, delegitimises dissent, and embeds gendered harm in everyday organisational life.

Male supremacy, misogyny, and evolutionary determinism remain deeply embedded in workplaces, sustained by structural gender inequalities at work and home and evolving ideological undercurrents. While initially emerging as a support group for individuals struggling with intimacy, the changing dynamics of power have transformed into a collective ideology centred on male grievance, victimhood, supremacy, and misogyny (Zimmerman, 2024). This transformation reflects broader societal shifts, including the rise of alt-right movements and resistance to equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) initiatives, both of which have amplified the visibility of misogynistic discourses that had previously remained implicit or unchallenged (Ng et al., 2025). Further, these shifts are reflected in the global gender gap in ideology, which illustrates that young men shift towards the right while young women lean towards the left (The Economist, 2024).

Among these male supremacist and misogynistic beliefs, the Red Pill beliefs had the most significant inroads into leadership discourses and behaviours (James, 2024). Unlike incels and MGTOW, which focus on misogynistic grievance, Red Pill individuals aspire for and promote male supremacist leadership behaviours (Dignam & Rohlinger, 2019; Wright et al., 2020). In this paper, we introduce the concept of Red Pill leadership behaviours, referring to a specific configuration of leadership practices informed by misogynistic ideologies and grievance narratives. Red Pill leadership is theorised here not as a clinical category, but as a cultural and discursive configuration that reflects broader ideological

currents within and beyond organisations. This conceptualisation draws from the literature on toxic leadership, male grievance and supremacy politics, and reactionary cultures. While sharing certain characteristics with established toxic leadership constructs (Einarsen et al., 2007; Lipman-Blumen, 2005) in terms of harm and dehumanisation, Red Pill leadership behaviours represent a distinctive phenomenon characterised by systematic opposition to gender inclusion, deployment of pseudo-intellectual justifications for inequality, and mobilisation of male victimhood narratives to resist EDI at work (Dignam & Rohlinger, 2019). These behaviours are not limited to individuals who self-subscribe to Red Pill or other male-supremacist logics but reflect how the underlying ideological elements of the manosphere increasingly influence leadership practices in professional environments. We examine Red Pill leadership behaviours as emerging at the intersection of digital subcultures, reactionary ideological movements, and established workplace hierarchies. The aim of this study is to conceptualise and empirically investigate Red Pill leadership behaviours in corporate settings and to analyse how these behaviours distort ethical deliberation through the lens of discourse ethics. To investigate how Red Pill leadership behaviours manifest in professional environments, we employed netnography and thematic analysis, drawing on a multi-source dataset comprising over 50 executive speeches, 200 social media posts by corporate leaders, and more than 20 corporate case studies from 2018 to 2024, alongside legal documents and business media reports.

Unlike traditional leadership frameworks that focus on formal hierarchical structures, Red Pill leadership behaviours operate with structural fluidity, leveraging both informal digital communities and established organisational roles to gain legitimacy and influence. This structural flexibility enables Red Pill leadership behaviours to remain ideologically consistent while permeating multiple domains, from digital subcultures to corporate leadership, making them particularly resistant to conventional organisational interventions.

While leadership literature has extensively examined various destructive leadership manifestations (Boddy, 2021; Schyns & Schilling, 2013), limited attention has been paid to how emerging ideological movements shape workplace leadership practices. To bridge this gap, this study applies Habermasian discourse ethics as a lens to critically examine how Red Pill leadership behaviours systematically distort the communicative conditions necessary for workplace democracy and ethical deliberation.

Habermas' discourse ethics posits that moral norms should be justified through rational-critical dialogue and inclusive deliberation, ensuring that all affected individuals participate in decision-making without coercion or manipulation (Habermas, 1990). Ethical leadership, in this framework, requires communicative conditions that enable

fair and open debate, allowing different perspectives to be heard and contested. However, Red Pill leadership behaviours subvert these principles, using discourse not to promote rational deliberation but to justify exclusionary narratives that portray workplace inclusivity as a threat to male leadership (Ashcraft, 2022). Red Pill leadership behaviours exploit pseudoscience and pseudo-intellectualism to rationalise gender inequality, leveraging selective data to frame EDI initiatives as biased against men (McCarthy & Taylor, 2024). This discourse fosters grievance-based identity politics that position men as victims of corporate inclusion efforts (Banet-Weiser, 2021), legitimising hostility towards diversity initiatives and reinforcing power asymmetries in leadership structures.

This study makes three key contributions: First, it extends leadership theory by defining Red Pill leadership behaviours as a specific configuration of leadership behaviours that emerge in response to gender inclusion efforts through a netnographic study. Second, it applies discourse ethics to analyse how these behaviours systematically distort workplace communication to obstruct democratic deliberation. Third, it provides a multilevel framework for understanding and countering these behaviours across individual, organisational, and societal domains. Before we move on to describe the origins and ideology of Red Pill leadership, we outline the key terms and their respective definitions in Table 1.

Origins and the Ideology of Red Pill Leadership

The term Red Pill originates from the 1999 film *The Matrix*, in which taking the red pill symbolises awakening to a hidden and unsettling truth, while the blue pill represents a return to comforting illusion (UN Women, 2025). In online masculinist communities, however, to be redpilled has been reappropriated to mean recognising a supposed societal reality in which women are systematically privileged over men, and feminist gains are seen as distortions of natural gender hierarchies. Red Pill ideology frames this awakening as a moment of liberation from so-called feminist falsehoods and promotes a worldview grounded in pseudo-evolutionary psychology, male dominance, and distrust of women's motives and institutional power.

Red Pill individuals often frame their struggles within a narrative of victimhood, attributing their perceived exclusion and insecurity to societal changes induced by feminism and the behaviour of women (Bujalka et al., 2022). The manosphere has evolved into a multimillion-pound business where figures such as pick-up artists and self-proclaimed Red Pill gurus exploit the vulnerabilities of men, offering them dubious dating advice and so-called self-improvement and leadership strategies (Van Valkenburgh, 2021). Beyond this commercial aspect, Red Pill ideology also captures a collective identity and ideology shared within these communities.

Central to this worldview is questioning feminist ideology for men to reclaim what they lose through gender equality, diversity, and inclusion at work and life (Zapcic, 2024). Central to Red Pill ideology is a rigid masculine hierarchy that valorises the so-called *alpha male*, i.e., assertive, dominant, and sexually successful men, while denigrating the *beta male* as submissive, deferential, and unworthy of female attention; this binary framing reinforces a worldview where social and workplace hierarchies are naturalised as extensions of evolutionary logic and gendered dominance (Ging, 2019).

Situated within a shared male supremacist ecosystem that valorises the 'alpha' male, Red Pill and Incel ideologies represent fundamentally divergent responses to this perceived hierarchy. Red Pill discourse promotes an agentic pathway, prescribing a form of strategic self-improvement and social manipulation as the means by which any man can purportedly attain alpha status and reassert dominance (Vallerga & Zurbruggen, 2022). In stark contrast, the Incel subculture rejects self-improvement, making any notion of 'incel leadership' structurally contradictory. Red Pill actors weaponise this fatalism as a cautionary foil (Hoffman et al., 2020). Where Red Pill ideology cultivates leaders who monetise and prescribe strategies of intervention, the Incel worldview culminates in nihilistic resignation ('lay down and rot'), despair, and the endorsement of violence as the only remaining recourse. Within Red Pill ideology, incels are often viewed as failed or unawakened men, symbols of what happens when males do not embrace dominance or sexual market truths, serving both as cautionary figures and as emotional fuel for grievance-based masculinist narratives (Ging, 2019).

Certain leadership behaviours within the manosphere reinforce the core tenets of Red Pill ideology, providing a sense of purpose and directing followers' frustrations towards external targets, particularly women and modern societal norms (Solea & Sugiura, 2023; Utterback, 2024). Jordan B. Peterson (Nesbitt-Larking, 2022) and Rollo Tomassi (Bujalka et al., 2022) are two prominent figures from Canada and the USA who published their views upholding traditional gender norms, based on biological determinism and male supremacy, criticising gender equality and feminist approaches that push for social and institutional change. Andrew Tate is a controversial media influence with Red Pill views based on male supremacy, advocating so-called alpha male behaviours (Abdul, 2025).

Red Pill leadership emerges where supremacist masculinities intersect with exclusionary organisational discourses, producing leadership styles that resist inclusion and legitimise gender hierarchy. These behaviours extend beyond individuals who explicitly identify with the manosphere and reflect a broader leadership style and cultural phenomenon present in organisational settings, professional environments,

Table 1 Key terms and their definitions

Term	Definition (as used in the paper)
Red Pill	Originally from <i>The Matrix</i> (1999), reappropriated by online masculinist communities to denote an 'awakening' to the alleged systemic privileging of women and decline of male power. Promotes evolutionary determinism and male dominance.
Red Pill leadership	A discursive and behavioural form of toxic leadership that draws on male-supremacist ideology to undermine EDI efforts, distort ethical deliberation, and reinforce gender hierarchy in organisational contexts.
Black pill	A nihilistic belief embraced by incels that improvement is futile due to immutable biological flaws; contrasts with the aspirational self-optimisation of the Red Pill.
Manosphere	A networked online ecosystem of antifeminist communities (e.g., incels, MGTOW, pick-up artists) promoting divergent but intersecting narratives of male victimhood, entitlement, and supremacy.
Incel	Short for involuntarily celibate; refers to men who blame women and feminism for their perceived romantic and social rejection. Incels embrace fatalistic Black Pill ideology that explicitly rejects leadership aspirations as futile. They view Red Pill self-improvement as fraudulent snake-oil.
Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW)	An ideology encouraging men to withdraw from relationships and societal roles perceived as dominated or corrupted by feminist values.
Pick-up artist (PUA)	Individuals or communities offering manipulative tactics to gain sexual access to women, often commodifying gender relations and reinforcing hypermasculinity.
Alpha male	In Red Pill ideology, a dominant, assertive, sexually successful man who epitomises idealised masculinity.
Beta male	The derogatory counterpart to the alpha male, seen as submissive, deferential, and undeserving of female attention or leadership roles.
Ultram (ultra altern) counterpublic	A term from Copeland (2024) describing groups that create communicative spaces to restore exclusionary hierarchies and justify reactionary ideologies.
Pseudo-intellectualism	The strategic misuse of scientific or academic language to rationalise exclusionary beliefs and challenge EDI under the guise of objectivity or meritocracy.
Responsibilisation	The process of shifting the burden of inclusion onto minoritised individuals, making them responsible for overcoming systemic barriers without structural support.
Discourse ethics	A normative framework developed by Habermas, emphasising rational, inclusive dialogue in moral decision-making. Red Pill leadership is shown to distort these communicative conditions.
Grievance politics	The discursive strategy of framing inclusion or diversity efforts as unfair to men, promoting male victimhood and resentment toward feminist or egalitarian policies.
Misrecognition	The denial or distortion of identity and experience that prevents individuals or groups from being acknowledged within discourse; used in reference to Fraser's critique of Habermas.
Strategic communication	Communication oriented toward power retention or manipulation, rather than mutual understanding, presenting a distortion of Habermas' concept of communicative rationality.

and digital spaces. Although typically associated with male actors, Red Pill leadership behaviours are not exclusive to men. Women, too, can perform and propagate these ideologies through strategic gender roles that reward conformity to patriarchal expectations (Hoebanx, 2025). Some women adopt submissive or traditional roles to gain protection, prestige, or economic security while reinforcing structures that marginalise others. Lauren Southern, a Canadian political commentator and alt-right influencer (Leidig, 2023), and Hannah Neeleman, a Mormon ‘trad-wife’ and social media influencer (Moskin, 2024), illustrate this dynamic by publicly advocating for traditional gender roles and rejecting feminist ideals. Their influential online presence positions them as Red Pill women leaders who reinforce patriarchal narratives from within.

The alt-right and populist turn across many societies (Özbilgin, 2024), fueled by reactionary movements inspired by anti-EDI, anti-woke, anti-civil rights, and anti-human rights, forms the antecedents of Red Pill leadership behaviours becoming legitimate and acceptable in contemporary organisations (Hermansson et al., 2020). Economic precariousness and increasing neoliberal pressures exacerbate these dynamics (Bujalka et al., 2022). As labour markets grow more competitive, young men, particularly those from underprivileged or marginalised backgrounds, struggle to achieve the economic success and social status historically tied to masculine identity. In regions like East Asia, these frustrations are further intensified by economic stagnation, the erosion of stable employment models, and women’s rising educational and professional achievements (The Economist, 2024). Such insecurities and a sense of powerlessness often manifest as reactionary movements that Red Pill leadership behaviours exploit, redirecting frustrations towards societal changes and perceived threats to male dominance. The evolution of manosphere from its male support group origins into a subculture rooted in male supremacy, misogyny and resentment highlights the critical role of Red Pill leadership behaviours in shaping its identity and expanding its influence (Kaiser, 2022). By reframing systemic failures as a targeted attack on men and men’s failure to embrace their so-called dominant nature, Red Pill narratives and behaviours amplify feelings of anger and traditional masculine behaviours, solidifying their appeal among disaffected groups.

While the initial focus was on addressing personal struggles with what they often refer as reverse discrimination, the movement’s commercialisation and ideological shift have entrenched narratives of male dominance (Zapcic, 2024). Leadership within the manosphere operates through fluid and adaptive structures, combining informal digital influence with increasingly formalised positions of power in organisational and political spheres. While digital platforms provide the ideological foundation and recruitment grounds,

the penetration of Red Pill behaviours into corporate and political spheres demonstrates how this form of leadership behaviours adapts and formalises while maintaining its core misogynistic principles (Botto & Gottzén, 2024). This structural adaptability allows Red Pill leadership behaviours to maintain ideological consistency while penetrating different societal domains, making its influence particularly pervasive and challenging to address.

Red Pill Leadership Behaviours in Organisations

The rise of alt-right and anti-woke movements in corporate and political arenas has facilitated the mainstreaming of Red Pill leadership behaviours (Prasad & Śliwa, 2024). Tourish (2013) argues that coercive persuasion in leadership constructs systems of control that are difficult to challenge. While previous scholarship on toxic leadership has largely focused on its manifestations within formal organisations (Mergen & Özbilgin,), fewer studies have examined how emergent ideological movements shape workplace leadership dynamics. As workplaces become ideological battlegrounds, Red Pill leadership behaviours flourish by leveraging cultural anxieties and resistance to progressive change.

Scholarship on the dark side of leadership has produced a range of valuable, overlapping concepts to diagnose harmful leader conduct. These frameworks focus on different facets of the phenomenon, such as the leader’s dysfunctional character, the subordinate’s perception of hostility, or the violation of the organisation’s legitimate interests. While our paper is foundational, fewer studies have examined how specific, emergent ideological movements from the digital world provide a comprehensive playbook, including motivations, goals, and rhetoric, for a new form of destructive leadership. To demonstrate how Red Pill leadership extends this literature, a direct comparison is necessary. Table 2 contrasts Red Pill leadership with established constructs in the field, focusing on the core drivers and justification logic that make each distinct.

Crucially, this study focuses on Red Pill behaviours rather than individual leaders, recognising that Red Pill leadership behaviours can be embedded in workplace cultures without individuals explicitly identifying with Red Pill ideology or the manosphere. These behaviours shape leadership styles and organisational climates in ways that sustain exclusionary norms and resistance to gender equality. Male supremacy in Red Pill leadership behaviours is evident in overt resistance to workplace diversity efforts, such as the rejection of mentorship programmes designed to support women in leadership roles (McCarthy & Taylor, 2024). Male victimhood narratives surface in opposition to gender equity, framing EDI initiatives as threats to male career advancement (Banet-Weiser, 2021). Male grievance fosters hostility towards women in professional environments, often manifesting

Table 2 Matrix of dark leadership constructs

Construct and seminal Author(s)	Primary locus of analysis	Core driver and motivation	Justification logic and rhetoric	Primary goal
Toxic leadership Lipman-Blumen (2005)	Leader character and psychology	Leader's internal, dysfunctional character traits (e.g., ego, amorality)	Psychological manipulation; framing self-interest as a noble cause	Power consolidation and self-aggrandisement
Destructive leadership Einarsen et al. (2007)	Leader behaviour and organisational interests	Varies; can be pro-organisational (tyrannical) or anti-organisational (derailed)	Varies; focused on control, sabotage, or enforcing standards through bullying	Varies; organisational goals (via tyranny) or personal gain (via sabotage)
Abusive supervision Tepper (2000)	Subordinate perception	Leader's desire to control and dominate; perceived hostility	Focus is on perceived behaviour, not leader's logic	Subjugation of followers
Pseudo-transformational leadership Bass & Steidlmeier (1999)	Leader morality and self-interest	Leader's personal ambition and self-interest masked by pro-social values	Deceptive and manipulative charisma; mimics inspirational leadership	Exploitation of followers for personal gain
Red Pill leadership	Ideology and discourse	Adoption of an external, networked political ideology from the manosphere	Translates ideological grievance into a seemingly rational critique by co-opting the language of science and economics to legitimise anti-progressive narratives.	To restore followers' perceived status loss by validating male grievance and re-establishing a 'natural' gender hierarchy within organisations, while creating dominant in-group identity that resists progressive change

in behaviours that undermine female colleagues or disrupt organisational policies on inclusion (Ashcraft, 2022). These Red Pill leadership behaviours mirror broader sociopolitical shifts, reflecting anxieties about masculinity, gender roles, and workplace inclusion. Their systemic nature makes them particularly resistant to conventional corporate interventions and necessitates a multilevel response that addresses structural inequalities, leadership cultures, and organisational governance.

Red Pill leadership behaviours are ideologically reinforced and commercially exploited. The expansion of digital subcultures has facilitated the monetisation of grievance-based masculinity, where self-proclaimed thought leaders market misogynistic rhetoric for financial and social capital (Bujalka et al., 2022). High-profile figures such as Andrew Tate illustrates how Red Pill leadership extends beyond digital spaces into corporate and political discourses, reinforcing narratives that portray EDI as an existential threat to men's natural place as superior and dominant gender in work and life. Our analysis identifies three critical mechanisms through which Red Pill leadership behaviours gain legitimacy and influence. First, digital communities provide echo chambers where misogynistic beliefs are reinforced through shared narratives of male grievance, transforming personal frustration into collective entitlement and moral justification for exclusionary ideologies (Carian et al., 2024). Second, the commercialisation of Red Pill rhetoric by online influencers sustains grievance-based identity formation, encouraging men to attribute their struggles to feminist progress rather than systemic social or economic conditions (Botto & Gottzén, 2024; Van Valkenburgh, 2021). Third, workplaces

with entrenched masculinist cultures and anti-EDI sentiment serve as fertile ground for the institutionalisation of Red Pill leadership behaviours (Özbilgin et al., 2025).

The impact of these mechanisms is evident in corporate workplaces, where Red Pill leadership behaviours obstruct gender equality, entrench leadership hierarchies, and delegitimise diversity policies. For instance, high-profile business figures such as Elon Musk and Bill Ackman have publicly dismissed EDI initiatives as threats to meritocracy, reflecting Red Pill leadership rhetoric that reframes inclusion efforts as systemic bias against men (Bennett, 2024). Recent months have seen a meteoric rise in displays of masculine domination in the workplace, particularly in the Global North (Morgan, 2025). By applying discourse ethics, this study demonstrates how Red Pill leadership disrupts workplace democracy and manipulates communicative spaces to sustain exclusionary power structures.

From Jürgen Habermas to Nancy Fraser: Discourse Ethics and Counterpublics

In his seminal work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas (1962/1991) describes the public sphere as a domain of rational-critical discourse where citizens engage in reasoned argumentation, shaping public opinion and influencing democratic governance. Within the context of the public sphere, discourse ethics, as developed by Habermas, is a normative ethical theory that argues moral norms are justified through rational dialogue and consensus among individuals engaged in communication. It is rooted in the concept of communicative rationality, which emphasises

that ethical validity emerges through open and reasoned discussion rather than predetermined principles or authoritative decrees. For a norm to be considered morally valid, it must be one that all affected individuals could rationally agree to under conditions of free and open discourse. Central to discourse ethics is the idea of the ideal speech situation, where all participants engage without coercion, power imbalances, or strategic manipulation. This ensures that ethical discussions are conducted on an equal footing, allowing every voice to be heard. Habermas formalised this idea through the principle of universalisation, which holds that a norm is only justified if all those affected could rationally endorse it. Similarly, the principle of discourse asserts that only those norms that could achieve agreement in an open and fair discourse are legitimate.

Discourse ethics has significant applications in various fields, particularly in deliberative democracy, where it provides a framework for legitimising laws and policies through public debate. It also informs ethical decision-making in organisations by encouraging stakeholder dialogue and fostering inclusive discussions in corporate and political settings. Additionally, it offers a foundation for intercultural ethics, providing a method for resolving moral conflicts across different cultural and ideological perspectives.

Despite its strengths, discourse ethics has been criticised for its reliance on idealised conditions. Critics argue that real-world power dynamics, inequalities, and structural constraints make free and equal discourse difficult to achieve (Fraser, 1992). Furthermore, the assumption that rational consensus is possible across diverse cultures and belief systems has been challenged by scholars who highlight the complexities of pluralistic societies (Copeland, 2024). The practical application of discourse ethics also remains a challenge, as translating its principles into legal and institutional frameworks requires mechanisms that ensure fair participation and deliberation. Empirical studies further illustrate these limitations. For instance, Mendes et al. (2018) examine online misogynistic communities, showing how digital platforms do not always foster democratic deliberation but instead amplify exclusionary and reactionary discourse. Fuchs (2012) argues that social media algorithms reinforce existing inequalities, shaping public discourse in ways that privilege dominant narratives while sidelining marginalised perspectives. These examples demonstrate how real-world discourse often deviates from the idealised conditions of free and equal participation, raising questions about the applicability of discourse ethics in complex and digitally mediated societies.

Discourse ethics remains an influential approach to moral reasoning, particularly in contexts where democratic legitimacy and ethical justification depend on inclusive and reasoned deliberation. Online counterpublics demonstrate this process as marginalised groups create spaces that challenge

dominant ideologies. For example, Copeland (2024) examines the Red Pill community as a digital counterpublic that operates on the fringes of democratic discourse. While Fraser (1992) describes subaltern counterpublics as spaces of resistance, Copeland (2024, p 890) introduces the concept of the ‘ultern (ultra altern) counterpublic’ to show how some groups do not counter dominant narratives but work to restore exclusionary hierarchies. This perspective highlights the need for discourse ethics to engage with counterpublics that use deliberation not to promote inclusion but to justify reactionary exclusion.

In this paper, we apply discourse ethics, as a lens through which we critique the rise of certain exclusionary leadership discourses and concomitant behaviours. In doing so, we extend discourse ethics by integrating Nancy Fraser’s critique of idealised deliberation, acknowledging how real-world power asymmetries, structural exclusions, and counterpublic dynamics distort the conditions necessary for ethical discourse. This enriched approach allows us to critically examine how Red Pill leadership behaviours manipulate communicative spaces by excluding voices and legitimising exclusion through strategic appeals to reason, meritocracy, biological determinism, and traditional gender norms.

Red Pill Leadership Behaviours Through the Lens of Discourse Ethics

These critiques of discourse ethics become particularly relevant when analysing Red Pill leadership behaviours. The reliance on idealised conditions for ethical discourse is problematic, as real-world power asymmetries shape whose voices carry authority and who is silenced. Red Pill leadership exploits these imbalances by reframing male grievance as a form of exclusion, thereby constructing communicative spaces where dissenting perspectives are dismissed as part of an oppressive system. This process ensures that Red Pill leadership behaviours gain legitimacy by presenting themselves as counter-narratives rather than exclusionary ideologies.

Cultural relativity further complicates ethical engagement with Red Pill leadership behaviours, as these discursive strategies claim legitimacy through their own subcultural logic. Rather than engaging in broader societal conversations about gender equity and leadership ethics, these behaviours reject external moral scrutiny by constructing insulated ideological spaces where opposition is reframed as an attack on traditional hierarchies, reflecting a process of ultern counterpublics (Copeland, 2024). Additionally, the commercialisation of grievance-based and dominant masculinity plays a critical role in sustaining Red Pill leadership behaviours, allowing them to extend beyond digital subcultures into corporate and political spheres. Figures within these communities not only disseminate exclusionary rhetoric; they

also monetise these narratives, selling everything from self-improvement courses to leadership coaching that reinforces male victimhood and opposition to diversity (James, 2024). This ideological and commercial entrenchment ensures that Red Pill leadership behaviours remain resilient, even when confronted with regulatory or institutional scrutiny.

Emboldened by the anti-woke and alt-right turn, Red Pill leadership behaviours exploit and manipulate institutional structures to reinforce power asymmetries. Online forums and social media amplify these behaviours, providing echo chambers where misogynistic narratives are validated and dissent is actively silenced. This dynamic mirrors broader trend in reactionary leadership, where exclusionary discourses are framed as resistance against a perceived overreach of progressive policies, reinforcing narratives that portray gender inclusivity as a direct threat to male leadership authority (Hoebanx, 2025).

These communicative distortions ensure that Red Pill leadership behaviours extend beyond fringe digital communities and infiltrate professional environments, shaping workplace interactions, leadership decisions, and organisational cultures. In these spaces, discourse ceases to function as a mechanism for ethical reflection and instead becomes a tool for grievance-based identity formation and resistance to inclusion. This departure from deliberative ethics raises critical questions about how workplace leadership discourse is weaponised to sustain exclusionary hierarchies.

Given these discursive distortions, our study examines how Red Pill leadership behaviours shape corporate discourse, influence decision-making, and obstruct workplace inclusivity. Leadership studies have traditionally engaged with discourse ethics to explore normative and inclusive leadership models, paying less attention to how reactionary and exclusionary movements weaponise discourse to justify leadership authority and obstruct participatory governance. The rise of misogynistic and alt-right ideologies, particularly within the manosphere, underscores the need for a discursive examination of how these leadership behaviours manifest in corporate settings. The next section details our research design, data collection, and analytical process, outlining how we developed a structured coding framework to examine the communicative strategies that sustain Red Pill leadership behaviours in professional environments.

Methods

In this study, we employ critical netnography (Bouvier & Rasmussen, 2022; Kozinets, 2010) as a qualitative research method to examine how Red Pill (male supremacist) leadership discourses operate across digital and organisational settings. Critical netnography, an adaptation of ethnography for digital environments, provides a systematic approach to

understanding how male supremacist leadership discourses emerge, evolve, and gain legitimacy within corporate settings. This approach is particularly apt for tracing conversations that shuttle between anonymous online forums and the public utterances of high-profile executives. Given the increasing visibility of anti-EDI rhetoric and masculinist leadership styles in business environments, netnography enables a critical examination of how male supremacist narratives shape workplace culture, leadership legitimacy, and corporate decision-making.

Using discourse ethics as an analytical framework, we assess how corporate leaders adopt rationalised argumentation strategies that simultaneously appear neutral or meritocratic while reinforcing exclusionary gender dynamics. Drawing on Habermas' (1990) theory of discourse ethics, we evaluate how corporate leadership discourse adheres to or violates the principles of fair deliberation, inclusivity, and ethical justification. To address misrecognition (Fraser, 1992), we attend to how neutral merit claims mask gendered asymmetries. By integrating netnographic methods with a discourse ethics perspective, this study explores the communicative mechanisms through which corporate leaders resist workplace inclusion efforts, reframe leadership hierarchies, and position themselves as victims of progressive reforms.

Data

We compiled a multi-layered corpus (2018–2024) to trace how male supremacist (Red Pill) discourse circulates from online subcultures into corporate communication and leadership practice. The dataset comprises five complementary evidence streams: executive speeches and leadership communications, social media artefacts, legal and corporate misconduct cases, media reports, and business journalism, and long-form podcast interviews. We analysed corporate communication materials—including speeches, investor calls, internal memos, and company reports—through which executives articulated resistance to EDI initiatives or reframed diversity efforts as threats to merit and efficiency. These formal communications were complemented by social media posts, blogs, video content, and podcasts on platforms such as LinkedIn, YouTube, and Spotify, where corporate figures express grievance-driven narratives in less regulated, real-time discursive spaces. We also examined high-profile legal cases and corporate scandals involving senior leaders accused of fostering exclusionary workplace cultures, resisting EDI, or promoting misogynistic values. These cases provided insight into how exclusionary discourses are operationalised, defended, or contested in organisational settings. Additionally, we reviewed investigative journalism and business media coverage, which shed light on how masculinist leadership discourse is shaped, debated, and legitimised in public and professional arenas. Finally, we

included long-form interviews and podcasts featuring business leaders associated with Red Pill narratives, capturing how ideological scripts translate into leadership styles.

Our data collection unfolded over four phases spanning seven months and involved systematic social media monitoring, retrieval of legal documents, review of business press, and triangulation across sources. Our data collection spans 2018–2024, covering the post-#MeToo backlash (2018–2019), the workplace upheavals of the COVID-19 years (2020–2022), and the surge of antiwoke corporate rhetoric (2021–2024) that cast diversity initiatives as threats to merit (McCarthy & Taylor, 2024; Ng et al., 2025). We retained a small number of early-2025 artefacts where they extended existing controversies. The final corpus comprises 66 keynote speeches and high-profile interviews, 227 social media artefacts from 34 executives, 23 corporate case files from courts and regulators, 20 long-form investigative articles, and 13 podcast episodes featuring either self-identified Red Pill figures or executives cited in manosphere contexts. All materials were originally in English and accessible. Table 3 summarises the scope and provenance of the dataset.

We applied a purposive sampling strategy. As Kozinets (2015) notes, netnographic sampling should be purposive rather than representative, allowing for a focus on information-rich cases that yield meaningful insights. Three criteria guided our selection. First, each executive or organisation must have made at least three public statements on EDI between 2018 and 2024, with at least one generating either mainstream media coverage or 10,000+ online engagements. Second, sources had to be verifiably attributed, publicly accessible, and demonstrably influential. Third, we excluded satirical or parody content, anonymous or pseudonymous material, and uncorroborated claims—except where included in official court filings. A key limitation of the dataset is that public-facing discourse can be performative and

may diverge from internal organisational actions; we return to this issue in our interpretation of findings.

Data Analysis Process

The study employed thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to systematically identify and categorise Red Pill leadership behaviours in corporate discourse. Thematic analysis allowed us to move beyond surface-level descriptions and examine how leadership narratives are structured to sustain exclusionary ideologies. Following an abductive logic (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012), we cycled iteratively between emergent data patterns and our theoretical approach. We employed discourse ethics (Habermas, 1990) as a theoretical lens to frame our analysis, focusing on how communicative distortions reinforce power asymmetries and obstruct ethical deliberation. This approach enabled us to examine not only what was said but also how leadership discourse shaped organisational norms and decision-making structures.

We conducted the coding in three stages: The coding process unfolded in three iterative stages grounded in critical qualitative inquiry. In Stage 1, each author independently engaged in reflexive coding of the full dataset, using a preliminary codebook informed by the study's theoretical framing. Coding decisions were accompanied by analytical memos that interrogated implicit assumptions and positionality, prioritising epistemic reflexivity over mechanical consensus. In Stage 2, rather than treating intercoder agreement as a statistical endpoint, we used it as a prompt for critical discussion (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Although an initial agreement rate of 68 per cent was calculated (using Krippendorff's alpha, appropriate for interpretive, multi-coder analysis), this rate aligns with critical qualitative research traditions where complete consensus is neither expected nor epistemologically

Table 3 Overview of the Red-Pill discourse corpus

Data type (unit of analysis)	n	Date span captured	Primary medium	Control level	Intended audience	Source longevity
Keynote speeches & CEO interviews	66	2018–2024	Video and verbatim transcript	Company-controlled and journalistic	Investors, employees, and general public	Permanent
Social-media artefacts	227	2019–2024	Text and short-video	Self-published	Followers and general public	Ephemeral (edit/delete risk)
Corporate case files	23	2018–2024	Court dockets, regulator PDFs, and emails	Third-party (courts, EEOC, DOJ)	Legal stakeholders and media	Permanent
Investigative features	20	2019–2024	Long-form HTML and PDF	Independent journalism	General public	Permanent
Long-form podcasts (≥ 90 min)	13	2021–2024	Audio and transcript	Independent media	Male-centric and general public	Semi-permanent (platform-hosted)

appropriate, as it contradicts the interpretive paradigm that values multiple perspectives and researcher subjectivity as resources rather than threats (Braun & Clarke, 2023). Our focus centred on unpacking interpretive tensions through recorded and transcribed peer dialogues, especially concerning gendered framings and ideological content. This process led to a collaboratively negotiated analytical framework and a stabilised codebook of 55 first-order codes. Stage 3 involved robustness checks consistent with our critical epistemology: member checking with EDI practitioners, peer debriefing with feminist scholars, and maintaining a transparent audit trail of interpretive dilemmas. We also conducted negative case analysis to contest dominant readings and ensure analytical openness. Rather than aiming for closure, this phase embraced discursive complexity and situated ambiguity.

Once coding was finalised, we organised the data into subthemes representing distinct Red Pill leadership behaviours (e.g. charismatic appeals, pseudo-intellectual justifications, blame shifting, polarising behaviours). These were then categorised under three overarching themes: (1) exploitative influence and manipulation, (2) control, supremacy, and suppression of dissent, and (3) dehumanisation and harmful outcomes. Table 4 presents the hierarchical data structure (codes, subthemes, and themes) along with exemplar extracts. This structure provided a clear framework for understanding how leadership discourse operationalises Red Pill leadership behaviours.

The integration of discourse ethics within thematic analysis was key to capturing the communicative distortions underpinning Red Pill leadership behaviours. Rather than treating leadership discourse as a neutral phenomenon, we critically examined how exclusionary narratives were rationalised, legitimised, and sustained within corporate settings. Embedding Habermas's (1990) criteria of communicative rationality into the thematic matrix underscores how pseudoscientific justifications, grievance-based identity politics, and beta-male shaming systematically subvert ethical deliberation, normalise exclusion, and entrench gendered power asymmetries in the workplace. This allowed us to position Red Pill leadership behaviours as a discursive practice that not only excludes marginalised voices but also restructures workplace dialogue to sustain power asymmetries.

Findings

Our analysis categorises Red Pill leadership behaviours into three interrelated categories: (1) exploitative influence and manipulation, (2) control, supremacy, and suppression of dissent, and (3) dehumanisation and harmful outcomes. Each category encapsulates distinct behavioural patterns that reinforce hierarchical control, obstruct inclusion, and sustain grievance-based narratives in professional environments. These findings empirically demonstrate how Red Pill leadership behaviours compromise inclusive organisational discourse by violating the principles of rational-critical debate

Table 4 Data structure

Codes	Subtheme (Red Pill leadership behaviour)	Theme (Category)
'Amplifying grievances', 'Framing inclusion as a threat', 'Leveraging personal appeal', 'Rejecting diversity efforts', 'Positioning authority as unquestionable'	Charismatic appeals	Exploitative influence and manipulation
'Blaming gender equity efforts', 'Constructing masculinity as under siege', 'Framing women as threats', 'Portraying male disadvantage', 'Using stereotypes to justify exclusion'	Manipulation of gendered vulnerabilities	
'Applying selective science', 'Disguising ideology as objectivity', 'Framing diversity as irrational', 'Presenting exclusion as meritocracy'	Pseudo-intellectual justifications	
'Exploiting male insecurities', 'Framing grievance as identity', 'Mobilising resentment', 'Weaponising victimhood', 'Portraying leadership as a saviour'	Emotional manipulation	
'Centralising decision-making', 'Framing dissent as disloyalty', 'Suppressing opposition', 'Limiting workplace democracy', 'Using punitive measures'	Authoritarian control and command	Control, supremacy, and suppression of dissent
'Depicting diversity as extremism', 'Framing inclusion as political', 'Normalising hostility', 'Positioning male dominance as threatened'	Polarising behaviours	
'Deflecting blame', 'Dismissing allegations', 'Portraying misconduct as exaggerated', 'Reframing scrutiny as persecution'	Resistance to accountability	
'Elevating personal ideology', 'Marginalising dissent', 'Rejecting collaboration', 'Positioning leader as sole visionary', 'Undermining workplace democracy'	Narcissistic behaviours	Dehumanisation and harmful outcomes
'Dismissing inclusion', 'Normalising exclusion', 'Resisting equity policies', 'Treating diversity as a threat', 'Undermining ethical workplace structures'	Unempathetic behaviours	
'Framing gender diversity as obstacles', 'Justifying harassment', 'Normalising gendered exclusion', 'Using misogynistic rhetoric'	Dehumanisation rhetoric	
'Scapegoating diversity efforts', 'Holding women responsible for inequality', 'Portraying men as victims', 'Shifting blame onto inclusion policies', 'Framing equity as workplace dysfunction'	Blame shifting	
'Creating cultures of fear', 'Reinforcing exclusionary environments', 'Normalising coercion', 'Undermining ethical governance'	Destructive and harmful behaviours	

outlined in discourse ethics. Instead of fostering rational-critical debate (Habermas, 1984), these behaviours manipulate discourse to legitimise exclusionary leadership norms while marginalising alternative viewpoints. By controlling how workplace discussions are framed, Red Pill leadership behaviours ensure that resistance to diversity and inclusion efforts appears as a rational defence of institutional meritocracy rather than an ideological rejection of equity. This dynamic illustrates how communicative spaces are co-opted to sustain structural power asymmetries, obstructing ethical engagement with issues of gender, authority, and workplace equity. Research has highlighted how marginalised groups often struggle to voice their experiences in corporate spaces, as dominant leadership narratives suppress counter-discourses, reinforcing existing power structures (Alm & Guttormsen, 2023). The following sections provide an in-depth examination of these three Red Pill leadership behaviours categories, outlining how specific Red Pill leadership

behaviours manifest in corporate environments and disrupt inclusive workplace cultures (Table 5).

Exploitative Influence and Manipulation

Exploitative influence and manipulation are defining behaviours of Red Pill leadership, shaping how authority is maintained and how workplace discourse is structured. These behaviours distort communicative spaces by reinforcing hierarchical control, obstructing inclusivity efforts, and sustaining grievance-based narratives. Our analysis highlights four key behaviours within the exploitative influence and manipulation category: charismatic appeals, manipulation of gendered vulnerabilities, pseudo-intellectual justifications, and emotional manipulation. Each of these works to legitimise exclusion, distort deliberation, and reinforce systemic biases in professional environments, ensuring that discussions about equity remain structured in ways that privilege

Table 5 Red Pill leadership behaviours and examples displayed by leaders of global organisations

Category	Red Pill Leadership Behaviours	Description	Example of Red Pill leadership behaviours among corporate leaders
Exploitative influence and manipulation	Charismatic appeals	Using personal appeal to legitimise misogynistic and exclusionary narratives.	Elon Musk (Tesla) used social media influence to amplify polarising views on gender roles and dismiss diversity initiatives.
	Manipulation of gendered vulnerabilities	Exploiting societal biases to reinforce male victimhood and female blame.	Roger Ailes & Bill O'Reilly (Fox News) created a workplace culture rooted in hyper-masculine values, where sexual harassment and intimidation were systemic, reinforcing male privilege and sidelining female dissent.
	Pseudo-intellectual justifications	Using distorted or misleading arguments to justify exclusionary ideologies.	Greg Clarke (FA Chairman) claimed female footballers might suffer cardiac arrests if using the same ball as male players, perpetuating unfounded gender-based stereotypes.
	Emotional manipulation	Exploiting insecurities and grievances to maintain loyalty and control.	Adam Neumann (WeWork) created a cult-like atmosphere, marginalising dissenters, including women.
Control, supremacy, and suppression of dissent	Authoritarian control and command	Rigid enforcement of ideological conformity and silencing of opposition.	Jeff Bezos (Amazon) enforced strict hierarchies, contributing to gender inequality in the workplace.
	Polarising behaviours	Framing interactions as an 'us vs. them' battle, reinforcing division and hostility.	Bill Ackman (Pershing Square Capital Management) publicly criticised EDI initiatives, framing them as divisive and counterproductive.
	Resistance to accountability	Deflecting responsibility and avoiding scrutiny for unethical actions.	Alki David (Hologram USA) found liable for sexual assault and harassment but deflected responsibility.
Dehumanisation and harmful outcomes	Narcissistic behaviours	Prioritising personal ideology and grievances over collective well-being.	Steve Jobs (Apple) marginalised female colleagues and dismissed collaborative input.
	Unempathetic behaviours	Demonstrating indifference or hostility towards women and diversity initiatives.	John Schnatter (Papa John's) made derogatory comments and resisted organisational diversity efforts.
	Dehumanisation rhetoric	Treating marginalised groups as objects of resentment rather than as individuals.	Travis Kalanick (Uber) normalised an environment where women faced harassment and were dehumanised.
	Blame shifting	Holding women and progressive policies responsible for personal and societal struggles.	James Damore (Google Memo) blamed women and diversity programmes for creating a "hostile" environment for men.
	Destructive and harmful behaviours	Enacting exclusionary practices that erode workplace inclusion and social cohesion.	Harvey Weinstein (The Weinstein Company) created a culture of fear, exclusion, and silence, disproportionately harming women's careers.

dominant groups while marginalising dissenting voices. Within discourse ethics, the integrity of communicative spaces relies on the possibility of free and rational deliberation (Habermas, 1984), yet Red Pill leadership behaviours manipulate these conditions, undermining ethical engagement. Rasche and Esser (2006) highlight that when leadership narratives prioritise strategic communication over communicative action, discourse ceases to function as a mechanism for mutual understanding and instead serves to reinforce exclusionary power structures.

One way Red Pill leadership behaviours manifest is through charismatic appeals, where leaders with significant social and economic influence exploit personal appeal to reframe diversity initiatives as ideological threats. This behaviour involves leveraging personal authority to shape discourse, presenting opposition to inclusion as a defence of institutional integrity rather than an exclusionary stance. Elon Musk and Bill Ackman exemplify this behaviour, leveraging their platforms to position inclusivity efforts as forms of systemic bias rather than ethical commitments. Musk's assertion that EDI initiatives "must die" (Hart, 2023) and his claim that EDI is "just another word for racism" (SHRM, 2024) illustrate how grievance-based identities are cultivated among followers, redirecting frustration over structural inequalities into opposition towards inclusion. Rather than fostering an ideal speech situation (Habermas, 1990), where all voices have equal opportunity to contribute to discourse, such behaviours structure workplace discussions in ways that exclude marginalised perspectives. The effect is not just a rejection of inclusivity efforts but a systematic obstruction of communicative rationality, ensuring that power asymmetries remain unchallenged. These behaviours distort deliberative conditions by personalising discourse authority, making leadership charisma a substitute for shared reasoning and inclusive debate.

Another salient Red Pill leadership behaviour is the manipulation of gendered vulnerabilities. eLeaders exploit societal biases to reinforce male dominance while portraying women and diversity efforts as sources of disruption. Our analysis shows that this behaviour operates at individual and organisational levels, recasting opposition to inclusion as a defence of meritocracy. Roger Ailes and Bill O'Reilly's leadership at Fox News illustrates how hyper-masculine environments legitimise systemic intimidation and exclusion. A comparable manosphere-inflected workplace culture surfaced at Activision Blizzard, a leading game studio, in 2021–2022, where a U.S. EEOC (2022) investigation ended in an \$18 million settlement over sexual-harassment and pregnancy-discrimination claims. In each case, authority was marshalled to prioritise male privilege, sideline dissents, and frame diversity initiatives as threats to established hierarchies (Spector, 2017). By casting equity as an attack on corporate values, such leaders deepen resistance, fostering

covert hostility and disengagement (Aiolfi et al., 2024). This strategic manipulation recodes opposition to inclusivity as rational institutional defence, thereby normalising exclusionary practices under the guise of protecting workplace culture. Such behaviours weaken the conditions for ethical deliberation by casting gender equity as a destabilising force and portraying dissenting views as illegitimate.

Drawing on Habermasian discourse ethics, Alm and Guttormsen (2023) highlight how exclusionary leadership discourses distort communicative rationality by framing marginalised perspectives as irrational disruptions, thereby reinforcing hierarchical dominance while obstructing ethical deliberation. By structuring workplace discourse in ways that preclude genuine deliberation, Red Pill leadership behaviours obstruct the conditions necessary for communicative action, replacing open, rational debate with strategic communication aimed at sustaining hierarchical control and alpha male dominance.

Pseudo-intellectualism entrenches Red Pill leadership behaviours by misusing scientific and academic discourse to justify exclusionary ideologies. Greg Clarke's comments as Chairman of the Football Association reflect this pattern, as he claimed without scientific basis that female footballers could suffer cardiac arrests if using the same ball as male players (MacInnes, 2020). This claim distorts the conditions necessary for genuine discourse ethics. This assertion relied on unfounded gender-based stereotypes, and by presenting these alleged physiological differences as a justification for maintaining gender divides in sport, Clarke framed inequality as a matter of natural determinism rather than structural bias. Özbilgin (2024) highlights how alt-right discourses frequently adopt this strategy, transforming exclusionary rhetoric into seemingly neutral analysis that resists scrutiny by cloaking itself in scientific objectivity. This behaviour disrupts the ideal conditions of discourse ethics, as arguments intended to rationalise exclusion become positioned as legitimate contributions to workplace debate. Instead of enabling an uncoerced exchange of ideas, communicative rationality is subverted, ensuring that power remains in the hands of those advancing exclusionary leadership norms. Such pseudo-intellectual strategies represent the erosion of communicative spaces, where instrumental reasoning distorts the conditions necessary for inclusive and rational-critical dialogue. Framing exclusion as objective truth limits the possibility for reasoned disagreement and undermines the inclusive principles central to ethical deliberation.

Emotional manipulation sustains Red Pill leadership behaviours by directing grievances and insecurities outward, framing equality-driven change as an unfair and discriminatory demand on men and turning discomfort into a shared sense of grievance and calls for recognition of innate forms of male supremacy. Many individuals drawn to Red Pill discourses experience social isolation, as their views are often

considered reactionary, going against the demands of modern life and gender equality in work and life. Rather than fostering reflection or critical engagement, Red Pill leadership externalises these frustrations, framing so-called systemic biases against men to justify how alpha men should reclaim their power and status in the supposed natural gender order (Maryn et al., 2024). Adam Neumann's leadership behaviours at WeWork reflect such Red Pill leaders' behaviour, as he cultivated an exclusionary organisational culture where dissenting voices were marginalised and hyper-masculine ideals were reinforced. Wiedeman (2020) notes that such cultures intensify male grievances, generating hostility towards diversity initiatives and strengthening hierarchical leadership control. This manipulation of discourse prevents deliberative processes from operating as intended. Instead of engaging in communicative action, where discussion is oriented towards mutual understanding (Habermas, 1984), workplace interactions become mechanisms for sustaining exclusion, reinforcing existing power asymmetries. By amplifying grievance and portraying inclusion as antagonistic, these behaviours convert emotional appeals into discursive tools that limit mutual understanding and rational engagement.

Control, Supremacy, and Suppression of Dissent

Red Pill leadership behaviours silence opposition, delegitimise dissent, and reinforce authority while obstructing ethical challenges. Leaders consolidate power by imposing rigid hierarchies, framing inclusion efforts as ideological threats, and avoiding accountability for unethical actions. These behaviours create exclusionary workplace cultures where decision-making remains insulated from scrutiny, leadership narratives dictate organisational discourse, and misconduct goes unpunished. Our analysis identifies three key behaviours that drive this process: authoritarian control and command, polarising behaviours, and resistance to accountability. These behaviours distort communicative spaces, allowing leaders to maintain dominance while marginalising alternative perspectives.

Red Pill leaders enforce gender hierarchies to eliminate challenges to their authority. Jeff Bezos's leadership at Amazon illustrates authoritarian control and command, as he centralised power within a rigid corporate structure and restricted employees' ability to influence company policies (Del Rey, 2017). His hierarchical model prevented discussions on workplace equity, ensuring that leadership decisions remained unchallenged (Mergen & Özbilgin, 2021a). Instead of encouraging open deliberation, Amazon's leadership structure relied on top-down control, blocking employee participation in governance. Authoritarian control and command behaviours enable such leaders to suppress alternative viewpoints by enforcing ideological conformity and

punishing dissent. In such environments, leaders replace communicative action with strategic communication (Habermas, 1984), ensuring that their authority remains unquestioned while rational-critical debate is obstructed.

Red Pill leaders escalate divisions by turning workplace discussions into ideological battles. For instance, Bill Ackman's (2024a), an American billionaire hedge fund manager and the CEO of Pershing Square Capital Management, depicts inclusion programmes as ideological impositions, not ethical commitments. He brands EDI as ideological discrimination and weaponises a pure merit-based rhetoric, presenting merit as neutral while using it to delegitimise equity measures and portray ordinary Americans as victims of a technocratic elite (Ackman, 2024b). Such framing generates an 'us vs. them' dynamic in which diversity policies appear to attack established norms instead of correcting systemic exclusion. In turning conversation into a zero-sum struggle for authority, Red-Pill leaders deepen hostility, obstruct deliberative democracy (Habermas, 1996), and preserve their ideological control while blocking ethical engagement with inclusion efforts.

Red Pill leaders deflect blame to avoid accountability for unethical behaviour. In our analysis, this behaviour frequently emerges in high-profile workplace misconduct cases, where leaders dismiss allegations, reframe scrutiny as persecution, and portray themselves as victims. Alki David, a media and technology entrepreneur, exemplifies this pattern. Despite facing multiple lawsuits and legal rulings, including a £700 million sexual assault verdict (People, 2024), he denied responsibility, attacked the credibility of the legal system, and dismissed allegations as baseless. Instead of addressing institutional failings, he used his public platform to position himself as the target of an unjust campaign, diverting attention from the ethical concerns at the centre of the case. Red Pill leaders manipulate accountability mechanisms to shield themselves from consequences and reinforce their authority. They transform legal and ethical scrutiny into narratives of victimhood, framing themselves as unfairly targeted rather than as responsible actors. This resistance to accountability allows them to evade institutional oversight, shift blame onto external forces, and suppress challenges to their leadership. As a result, workplace discourse no longer serves as a space for ethical deliberation. Still, it becomes a tool for self-preservation, ensuring that power remains intact at the expense of meaningful reform. By obstructing deliberation, Red Pill leaders deflect scrutiny, shift blame, and portray accountability measures as unjust persecution. They prevent open discussions on ethical failings and strengthen hierarchical control by dictating the terms of discourse while silencing opposition. This manipulation of workplace dialogue disrupts rational-critical debate, redirecting conversations about institutional failings towards the defence of leadership authority. Rather than relying on direct coercion,

Red Pill leaders sustain exclusionary structures through the systematic distortion of communication, preventing meaningful institutional reform.

Dehumanisation and Harmful Outcomes

Red Pill leadership behaviours do more than exclude; they reshape workplace culture to legitimise dehumanisation and reinforce harmful hierarchies. These behaviours prioritise personal ideology over collective well-being, express hostility towards diversity, dehumanise marginalised groups, shift blame onto progressive policies, and establish environments of exclusion and fear. We demonstrate how these behaviours distort workplace discourse, suppress ethical engagement, and normalise exclusionary leadership structures. In this context, communicative spaces no longer serve as arenas for open debate but become tools for reinforcing power imbalances while obstructing deliberative processes.

Narcissistic behaviours emerge when leaders prioritise their personal vision and grievances over the needs of the collective, marginalising dissenting voices and reinforcing hierarchical dominance. These behaviours position the leader's perspective as the sole legitimate narrative, dismissing collaborative input and preventing participatory decision-making. Steve Jobs exemplified this leadership model, as he routinely devalued the contributions of female colleagues and disregarded collective decision-making in favour of his own authority. His leadership style institutionalised exclusionary norms, ensuring that decision-making remained insulated from diverse perspectives. Rather than fostering workplace environments where individuals could engage in ethical deliberation, these behaviours restricted communicative spaces, obstructing opportunities for rational-critical engagement and reinforcing asymmetrical power structures.

Unempathetic behaviours reflect a leader's indifference, or outright hostility, towards diversity and inclusion. Leaders who engage in these behaviours resist efforts to create equitable workplaces, portraying inclusivity as unnecessary or even disruptive. John Schnatter, the former CEO of Papa John's, engaged in unempathetic behaviours by making derogatory remarks and resisting diversity initiatives, positioning inclusivity efforts as external threats rather than ethical obligations. This discourse legitimises opposition to diversity, reinforcing a workplace culture where exclusionary norms remain uncontested (Habermas, 1996). By rejecting the ethical necessity of inclusivity, Red Pill leadership distorts deliberative processes, ensuring that communicative spaces prioritise maintaining authority over engaging in open discussion.

Dehumanisation rhetoric is one of the most extreme forms of Red Pill leadership behaviour, reducing marginalised individuals to objects of resentment rather than recognising them as legitimate participants in workplace discourse. Leaders

engaging in this behaviour foster environments where harassment, discrimination, and systemic exclusion become embedded within workplace culture. Travis Kalanick's leadership at Uber institutionalised these dynamics, as his hyper-masculine corporate culture enabled the mistreatment of women and normalised their exclusion (Griffith, 2018). In such contexts, communicative spaces do not merely restrict participation; they actively construct gendered hierarchies that justify exclusion while preventing ethical challenges to these norms. These practices illustrate how Red Pill leadership obstructs discourse ethics by ensuring that communicative action is subordinated to power preservation.

Blame shifting is a key Red Pill leadership behaviour. Leaders redirect responsibility for systemic inequalities onto women and progressive policies, presenting diversity efforts as the source of organisational dysfunction. By casting inclusion as an ideological burden, they deflect scrutiny from exclusionary practices and reinforce resistance to change. Relatability and so-called truth-telling become tools of influence that resonate with socially or romantically excluded men, amplifying grievances towards women. Within this dynamic, responsibilisation (Vincent et al., 2024) shifts the burden of inclusion onto those already disadvantaged, treating women as individually accountable for overcoming discrimination while ignoring structural barriers (Meliou & Özbilgin, 2024). By framing gender disparities as the result of women's failure to adapt rather than structural exclusion, Red Pill leadership behaviours justify opposition to diversity initiatives while reinforcing narratives of male victimhood. A vivid illustration is Dave Portnoy (2023), founder of Barstool Sports, who labelled multiple harassment claims attacks by cancel-culture warriors, recasting accountability as persecution of hard-working men rather than scrutiny of systemic misconduct. James Damore's Google memo operates similarly to blame shifting, arguing that diversity programmes create a hostile environment for men instead of addressing structural gender gaps (Lee, 2018). Such narratives foster an 'us-versus-them' mentality in which women appear as adversaries responsible for organisational dysfunction. By framing progressive policies as unjust impositions, Red-Pill leaders construct a broader scapegoating strategy that re-centres male grievance, reshapes workplace discourse to serve leadership interests, and obstructs rational-critical deliberation.

Destructive and harmful behaviours escalate beyond exclusionary discourse and manifest in workplace environments where fear, coercion, and systemic silencing define organisational culture. Leaders engaging in these behaviours use their authority to suppress opposition, disproportionately harming marginalised employees while sustaining hierarchical dominance. Harvey Weinstein's leadership at The Weinstein Company demonstrates this, as he cultivated a culture of fear that disempowered women and prevented

accountability. This form of Red Pill leadership does not just distort communicative spaces; it eliminates them, ensuring that power remains insulated from ethical scrutiny and preventing rational-critical engagement with workplace inequalities. Instead of fostering ethical dialogue, leaders manipulate discourse to maintain dominance, obstructing the deliberative conditions necessary for institutional reform.

Discussion

This paper advances the conceptualisation of Red Pill leadership by defining and operationalising its behaviours, structures, and strategies through the lens of discourse ethics. Rather than simply categorising Red Pill leadership within existing leadership frameworks, we argue that it represents a distinct and emerging form of ideological leadership that manipulates discourse to consolidate influence, perpetuate exclusion, and resist ED initiatives (Ng et al., 2025). By situating Red Pill leadership behaviours within broader sociopolitical, organisational, and digital contexts, this study offers a new theoretical lens that examines how exclusionary leadership discourses and behaviours gain legitimacy in contemporary workplaces and online spaces.

Notably, we conceptualise Red Pill leadership as a distinct condition migrating from digital subcultures into the modern workplace. We move beyond generic descriptions of leader behaviours to make several specific contributions to the literature on the dark side of leadership. Our analysis extends character-centric theories like toxic leadership by demonstrating that toxicity can originate not just from a leader's innate dysfunctional personality, but from the adoption of a coherent, external ideology that provides a pre-packaged and pseudo-intellectual justification for harmful actions. We also enrich systemic models like the destructive leadership by identifying the manosphere as a potent environment that manufactures leaders and susceptible followers, arming them with a specific ideology of hate aimed squarely at violating an organisation's legitimate interest in equity and inclusion. Finally, while prior work links dark triad personality traits to anti-social behaviours, our research provides the missing mechanism: it shows how Red Pill ideology offers a motivational script and discursive playbook that translates these personal dispositions into a systematic, communicable, and politically charged leadership style. Together, these contributions offer a sharper and more contemporary lens for understanding how online grievance politics fuel new challenges to workplace ethics and democratic deliberation.

Another key theoretical contribution of this research is its integration of discourse ethics into leadership studies. From a Habermasian perspective, Red Pill leadership behaviours represent a profound failure of communicative rationality, where leaders distort discourse to reinforce ideological

grievances rather than engage in open, ethical deliberation. Instead of facilitating inclusive and rational-critical debate, Red Pill leaders manufacture legitimacy through pseudo-intellectual narratives, grievance-based identity politics, and strategic exclusion, creating closed communicative spaces that suppress dissent. This study extends discourse ethics by demonstrating how digital and organisational discourse can be systematically manipulated to entrench exclusionary leadership behaviours, showing that leadership legitimacy emerges not just from hierarchical authority but also through digital influence, subcultural validation, and resistance to progressive reforms.

Unlike traditional leadership models that rely on formal structures and decision-making processes, Red Pill leadership behaviours thrive in loosely networked, digital-first environments, where leaders gain influence through cultural framing, discursive repetition, and algorithmic amplification. The systemic conditions that enable this leadership behaviour, such as gender inequality, masculine anxieties, and resistance to inclusion, provide fertile ground for its expansion into workplaces, educational institutions, and policymaking spheres. By examining Red Pill leadership behaviours through a discourse ethics framework, we provide new insights into how exclusionary ideologies become embedded within leadership narratives and behaviours, resisting rational critique and ethical accountability.

Implications for Policy and Practice of Mitigating Red Pill Leader Behaviours

To counteract Red Pill leadership behaviours, a multilevel approach is required across global, national, and organisational levels. At the global level, international organisations must prioritise combating hate-driven leadership discourses through policy frameworks, digital governance, and media literacy initiatives. Regulatory measures, such as holding online platforms accountable for the spread of extremist narratives, can prevent Red Pill leadership from gaining further traction. Institutions like the United Nations and OECD should integrate ethical leadership principles into their governance frameworks, ensuring that discourse ethics informs leadership practices across industries and sectors.

At the national level, governments, educational institutions, and policy bodies should implement systemic reforms that disrupt the conditions enabling Red Pill leadership. Embedding digital literacy, gender equality, and critical thinking into educational curricula can counteract pseudo-scientific narratives and grievance-based ideologies before they gain institutional legitimacy. National regulation of digital platforms, coupled with strong anti-discrimination and workplace harassment policies, is essential for limiting the reach of exclusionary leadership. Additionally, mental health and social support interventions are necessary to address

the root causes of isolation and resentment that often lead individuals to adopt Red Pill leadership positions.

Within organisations, ethical leadership training should integrate discourse ethics to ensure that decision-making processes prioritise inclusivity, critical reflexivity, and open deliberation. Leadership development should move beyond traditional skills-based approaches to incorporate discursive accountability frameworks, ensuring that leaders engage in ethical and inclusive dialogue rather than exclusionary rhetoric. Succession planning and hiring policies should assess candidates' commitment to EDI values, ensuring that future leadership structures reflect principles of collaboration, transparency, and ethical deliberation. Transparent accountability mechanisms, including whistleblower protections, structured feedback systems, and independent oversight committees, can prevent Red Pill leadership discourses from shaping organisational cultures. Organisational cultures must also proactively reclaim discourse spaces, ensuring that ethical leadership is not undermined by reactionary resistance to diversity initiatives.

Mitigating the influence of Red Pill leadership behaviours requires a comprehensive approach that addresses individual behaviours, workplace dynamics, and organisational structures (see Table 6). This effort demands strategies that not only counteract the immediate effects of such leadership behaviours but also tackle the systemic conditions that allow these behaviours to emerge. A critical starting point is raising awareness and providing education to help employees recognise and challenge manipulative behaviours (Zhao et al., 2024). Organisations should implement leadership training programmes that prioritise ethical decision-making, fostering a culture of accountability and inclusivity, open dialogue, deliberative democracy, and highlighting the long-term consequences of manipulative or exclusionary behaviours that undermine women (Özbilgin et al., 2025). By embedding these practices into workplace culture, organisations can create environments that are less vulnerable to Red Pill leadership behaviours and more supportive of collaboration and fairness.

Organisations may support community-level interventions to tackle Red Pill behaviours. For individuals vulnerable to Red Pill ideologies, creating spaces that address feelings of loneliness and isolation is essential (Bralo, 2022). Such spaces can provide healthier avenues for connection and support, reducing the appeal of harmful subcultures. Within workplaces, fostering inclusive organisational cultures that prioritise transparency and feedback mechanisms can help employees feel valued, mitigating the grievances that Red Pill leadership behaviours exploit to consolidate their influence (Gandolfi & Stone, 2022).

Organisations must enhance accountability mechanisms to address the unchecked leadership behaviours by authority and promote ethical practices. Implementing

transparent performance evaluations allows for the systematic assessment of leadership behaviours, helping to identify and address issues proactively. Clear reporting systems, supported by robust whistleblower protections, empower employees to raise concerns about unethical behaviours without fear of retaliation, fostering a culture of trust and transparency (Wright & Holland, 2014). Furthermore, workplace platforms and communication channels should adopt stricter policies to prevent the dissemination of harmful ideologies, demonstrating organisational accountability in creating inclusive and equitable environments (Pao, 2018).

Providing targeted mental health support is also essential in addressing challenges employees face with Red Pill leadership behaviours. Many workers experiencing the effects of exclusionary practices may struggle with low self-esteem, isolation, and unmet expectations. Tailored mental health resources can help employees navigate these challenges, offering pathways to rebuild confidence and well-being (Scaptura & Boyle, 2020). Counselling services within organisations can also mitigate psychological harm, enhance employee resilience, and restore trust in leadership, creating a healthier and more collaborative workplace culture (Gandolfi & Stone, 2022).

Regulating platforms and organisational governance is essential to discouraging harmful leadership practices and fostering healthier workplace environments (Gillespie et al., 2014). Online spaces that propagate Red Pill ideologies require strict moderation and oversight. At the same time, organisations must implement governance standards to identify and prevent toxic leadership behaviours that negatively affect employees (Mergen & Özbilgin, 2021b). Enforcing EDI policies effectively can safeguard against exclusionary practices and support a more inclusive workplace culture (Ronnie, 2024). Empowering employees through training to identify and challenge toxic behaviours is critical, as it undermines the influence of Red Pill leadership behaviours. Encouraging employees to report unethical behaviours, supported by whistleblower protections, helps expose and dismantle harmful leadership practices, creating safer, more equitable workplaces. Promoting alternative leadership models that emphasise empathy, collaboration, and inclusivity can inspire a more positive and supportive organisational culture. Diverse leadership is key to breaking entrenched power structures that often enable exclusionary practices. Policy and legislative action, such as laws addressing hate speech, incitement to violence, and harassment, combined with organisational policies targeting abuse of power, ensure a safer and fairer environment for employees. Addressing systemic issues like gender pay gaps and representation in leadership can reduce the conditions that allow Red Pill leadership dynamics to thrive, ultimately benefiting workplace morale and employee well-being (Blau & Kahn, 2017).

Table 6 Mitigation strategies for tackling Red Pill leadership

Category	Red Pill Leadership Behaviours	Mitigation Strategies	Responsibility Level	Examples of mitigation
Exploitative Influence and Manipulation	Charismatic appeals	Promote healthy online influencers who advocate positive values and self-improvement.	Macro (government, policymakers)	UK Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport regulating harmful influencer content.
	Manipulation of gendered vulnerabilities	Raise awareness of manipulative behaviours and equip followers with tools to recognise and resist exploitation.	Meso (organisations, HR, education systems)	Corporate HR departments implementing gender sensitivity training.
	Pseudo-intellectual justifications	Promote digital literacy and critical thinking to counter pseudoscience and misinformation.	Macro (government, education policy) Meso (universities, NGOs)	The European Commission funding digital literacy programmes for young people. University curricula incorporating media literacy to challenge misinformation on gender roles.
	Emotional manipulation	Provide mental health resources tailored to individuals vulnerable to Red Pill ideology.	Micro (individual counselling, community interventions) Meso (workplace mental health programmes)	Community mental health organisations running outreach programmes for young men at risk of radicalisation. Corporate Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) offering psychological support for workplace stressors.
Control, Supremacy and Suppression of Dissent	Authoritarian control and command	Encourage alternative leadership models focused on collaboration and empathy.	Meso (corporate training, leadership development programmes)	Companies implementing emotional intelligence and inclusive leadership training in executive coaching.
	Polarising behaviours (valorising alpha males and devaluing beta males)	Engage in one-on-one interventions to counter Red Pill ideology and reduce polarisation.	Micro (community mentors, social workers) Meso (NGOs, youth programmes)	Community-led mentorship programmes targeting young men vulnerable to manosphere ideology. NGO initiatives supporting dialogue between groups with opposing ideological perspectives.
	Resistance to accountability	Establish mechanisms to hold leaders accountable for unethical or harmful actions.	Meso (corporate governance, compliance bodies)	Corporate ombudsman offices investigating workplace harassment and toxic leadership complaints.
Dehumanisation and Harmful Outcomes	Narcissistic behaviours	Support diverse and inclusive leadership that counters toxic ideologies or practices.	Meso (corporate boards, leadership pipelines)	Diversity and inclusion initiatives enforcing diverse leadership hiring practices in FTSE 100 companies.
	Unempathetic behaviours	Build systems where individuals feel empowered to intervene against harmful leadership without fear of retribution.	Meso (HR, employee unions, whistleblower protections) Micro (employee-led initiatives)	Anonymous reporting systems within organisations to protect employees reporting discrimination. Employee networks creating safe spaces to discuss workplace exclusion.
	Dehumanisation rhetoric	Develop policies targeting hate speech, incitement to violence, and harassment.	Macro (government legislation, regulatory bodies)	UK Online Safety Act enforcing stronger regulation against online misogynistic content.
	Blame shifting	Advocate for systemic regulation of spaces where harmful leadership flourishes.	Macro (international regulations, tech governance) Meso (platform-level content moderation)	European Union digital policy requiring tech platforms to curb misogynistic discourse. LinkedIn and other professional networks strengthening content moderation on exclusionary narratives.
	Destructive and harmful behaviours	Address systemic issues such as gender inequality and lack of mental health resources.	Macro (international policy, government interventions) Meso (corporate EDI initiatives)	UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 promoting gender equality globally. Corporate gender equity audits ensuring fair promotion and hiring practices.

Finally, addressing systemic issues requires a focus on de-radicalisation and the underlying societal factors that enable toxic leadership (Mergen & Özbilgin, 2021b). Tailored interventions aimed at individuals entrenched in Red Pill ideologies, alongside rehabilitation programmes for Red Pill leadership behaviours, can help redirect harmful behaviours into positive and constructive outcomes. There is currently

limited attention to the rehabilitation of Red Pill behaviours and values.

Organisational reforms that emphasise collaboration, transparency, and inclusivity are equally critical in preventing the emergence and perpetuation of such dynamics (Edmondson, 2018). An integrated approach combining individual, community, and systemic strategies is essential

for mitigating the influence of Red Pill leadership behaviours. By addressing the structural conditions that enable these behaviours and fostering inclusive, ethical practices, organisations and societies can build environments resilient to the destructive impact of toxic leadership.

Conclusion

This study contributes to leadership ethics by theorising *Red Pill leadership behaviours* as a distinctive form of ideological leadership that systematically distorts communicative conditions to resist EDI. Traditional frameworks in leadership ethics emphasise personal traits such as integrity, fairness, and responsibility, often assuming a normative commitment to inclusive deliberation (Meliou & Özbilgin, 2024). However, our findings reveal how ideological subcultures, specifically the Red Pill movement, undermine these ethical assumptions by manipulating communicative practices. Authority is not only exercised but discursively legitimised through grievance-based identity politics, pseudo-intellectual rationalisations, and moral inversion. This mode of discursive distortion functions similarly to the use of conspiracy theories, which Soytemel and Saglam (2025) identify as communicative tactics that rationalise exclusion and obscure power asymmetries.

By mobilising Habermas's discourse ethics with Fraser's critique of misrecognition and communicative inequality, we reconceptualise ethical leadership not solely in terms of moral intent or outcomes, but through the inclusivity and reflexivity of its communicative infrastructure. We argue that ethical leadership must be evaluated by the conditions it creates for dialogue, in terms of who is heard, who is silenced, and how dissent is framed. In doing so, we advance a discursive approach to leadership ethics that accounts for emerging ideological formations and their capacity to erode the normative foundations of deliberative engagement. This theoretical extension calls on scholars and practitioners to attend not only to what leaders say and do, but also to how they configure the terms of recognition, legitimacy, and ethical participation within organisational life.

Future Research

This study opens several avenues for future research. Longitudinal studies could examine how Red Pill leadership behaviours evolve, particularly in response to policy interventions, digital regulation, and organisational countermeasures. Further research into the role of discourse ethics in mitigating exclusionary leadership discourses could provide a normative framework for ethical leadership that resists manipulation and grievance-based identity politics. Additionally, interdisciplinary research should explore how

Red Pill leadership intersects with populist political movements, alt-right discourse, and reactionary digital cultures, offering insights into the transnational dimensions of Red Pill leadership and its adaptability across different sociopolitical contexts.

Future research should examine alternative leadership models that promote ethical deliberation, critical reflexivity, and discursive inclusivity, offering viable pathways for organisations to resist the ideological normalisation of exclusionary leadership discourses. Such inquiry should also consider how women contribute to sustaining exclusionary leadership norms through their participation and influence. By addressing these gaps, leadership studies can move beyond reactive strategies towards proactive frameworks that safeguard communicative spaces and promote ethical leadership accountability.

This paper provides a novel theoretical framework for understanding Red Pill leadership as a discourse-driven leadership failure, demonstrating how ideological leadership can emerge, sustain itself, and resist accountability through the manipulation of communicative spaces. By addressing Red Pill leadership at global, national, and organisational levels, societies can dismantle exclusionary leadership discourses and foster leadership models grounded in ethical, inclusive, and accountable decision-making. Future efforts should continue to refine and expand strategies for countering Red Pill leadership, ensuring that communicative spaces reflect the values of justice, rationality, and ethical participation rather than ideological exclusion.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest. No financial, personal, or professional relationships have influenced the content or outcomes of this research.

Informed Consent Not applicable. As this study is theoretical and based on literature analysis and secondary sources, no human participants were involved, and informed consent was not required.

Research Involving Human Participants and/or Animals This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by the authors.

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