

**Research Article****Inclusive Leadership and Innovative Behavior of Healthcare Employees**

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**Abstract**

Aim of this study was to investigate the direct effects of inclusive leadership (IL) with their respective three constructs on innovative behavior (IB). Survey approach design was used. Cross-sectional data was collected. SPSS was used for data analysis. Non-probability convenience sampling was used. Correlation and regression test were used for hypotheses testing while percentage, frequency and Cronbach alpha were also reported. It was found that all attributes of IL are significantly and positively related to IB. Managers with inclusive style allow the employees more to exhibit the IB. Their employees come up with new ideas. Future studies must add mediators and moderators to further investigate the complex models.

**Key words:** Inclusive Leadership, Innovative Behavior, Openness, Accessibility, Availability

**1. Introduction**

Economic growth and sustainability got propelled through innovation, due to which business competition got more vicious. Innovation is crucial to gain competitive advantage in this era (Wu & Li, 2023). For corporations to be innovative, their core innovation depends on employees' innovation for growth and survival (Broeng, 2018). Employees should get independence and encouragement to come up with innovative ideas. Among factors that impact innovative behavior, inclusive leadership is one of the important factors (Lee et al., 2022). Inclusive leadership is responsible for external motivation of innovation (Siyal et al., 2021). Inclusive leadership

characteristics include listening to problems of employees and solving these problems, tolerate employees' mistakes and errors, failures, their views opposite to leaders (Ma & Tang, 2022). Inclusive leaders praise their employees when they perform well, carefully listen to their ideas (Shafaei & Nejati, 2023). Colleagues remain intact with each other at workplace; through lens of basic needs theory this study tried to fill gaps which are overlooked in the literature. Numerous studies have been conducted on leadership (Ma & Tang, 2023; Shafaei & Nejati, 2023; Siyal et al., 2021). This study has tried to fill the gap between inclusive leadership and innovation in Saudi context. Where Saudi Arabia's vision 2030 provide a road map for all sectors, especially health sector which is one of the priority areas of Saudi Arabia. The current study has tried to answer the Following research questions:

RQ1: Is IL related to innovation?

RQ2: Does IL influence IB?

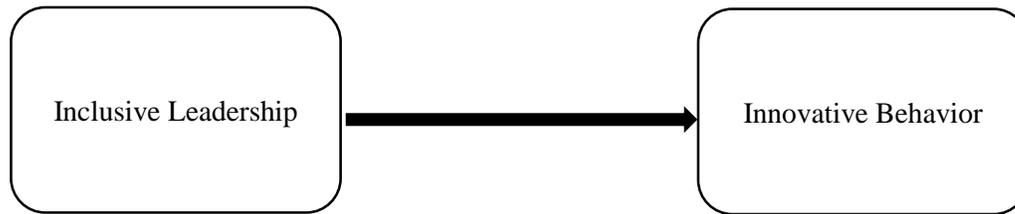
## **2. Theory and Hypotheses**

### **2.1. Inclusive leadership and Innovative Behavior**

According to Randel et al., (2018) inclusive leadership enhances workplace experience, efficiency, productivity and innovation. It is a new way of leading the employees which got attention in recent years to predict innovative behavior. Inclusive leaders provide working friendly environment at workplace where all workers are treated fairly and equally which in turn develops positive perception among employees that they are valued members with fair pay, pers and benefits and thinks constructively for organizations wellness (Fang et al., 2019). Inclusive leaders promote cooperation, freedom, right to think critically, independently, bring heterogeneity and improve operational performance of the organization (Qi et al., 2019). Studies conducted by (Elsaied et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021; Zhong et al., 2022) confirmed the positive and significant relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative behavior. Thus, based on above discussion following hypothesis is postulated:

H1a: IL positively related to IB

H1b: IL positively predicts IB



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework

### 3. Research Methods

The current study is quantitative in nature. The survey approach design was adopted. It is most common method of collecting data from big population. It has several benefits such as time and cost saving. Cross-sectional data was used for analysis which was gathered from employees of healthcare in Qassim Saudi Arabia. The population of healthcare employees included nurses, physicians, technicians, laboratory technicians, consultants and managerial staff members working in primary and secondary healthcare sectors. Convenience sampling is more appropriate for survey studies and to calculate the sample size table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was used. Three hundred and sixty-six complete questionnaires were used. Questionnaires were distributed online using different platforms. Inclusive leadership questionnaire was measured by three facets (openness, accessibility and availability) each construct was measured on 3 items, total nine items were used for inclusive leadership, for innovative behavior six item questionnaire was used adapted form (Wu & Li, 2023). Questionnaire was adopted and five-point scale was used.

#### 4. Results

**Table 1** Demographic Information

Variable	Group	n	%
Age	20-25	9	2.5
	26-35	137	37.4
	36-45	114	31.1
	46-55	81	22.1
	56 or above	25	6.8
Gender	Male	301	82.2
	Female	65	17.8
	Others	4	1.1
Professional Experience	1-5 Years	109	29.8
	6-10 Years	46	12.6
	11-15 Years	81	22.1
	16-20 Years	47	12.8
	21 or above	83	22.7
Designation	Nurses	147	40.2
	Physicians/Consultants	39	10.6
	Technicians	86	23.5
	Managerial position holders	94	25.7

Highest number of respondents belong to age group of 26-35 years i.e., 137 (37.4%) and lowest were age group of 20-25 9 (2.5%), majority of the respondents participated were male 301 (82.2%) and regarding experience most of them have experience of 1-5 years 109 (29.8%) and lowest experience was possessed by those who belong to 6-10 years group i.e., 46 (12.6%). Further analysis revealed that 147 (40.25) nurses participated in survey and 39 physicians 86 technicians and 94 respondents were holding managerial positions. (Table 1)

**Table 2** Reliability Analysis

<b>Variables</b>	<b><math>\alpha</math></b>	<b>A based on standardized items</b>	<b># of items</b>
Openness	0.747	0.753	3
Accessibility	0.830	0.828	3
Availability	0.759	0.760	3
Innovative behavior	0.768	0.766	6

Reliability was investigated through Cronbach alpha, criteria to assess the Cronbach alpha ranges between zero to one and acceptable is 0.7 or higher, Table 2 presented the alpha values of all constructs and their respective items, it is assumed that all constructs meet the threshold given by (Field, 2013) thus all scales are reliable.

**Table 3** Correlation

<b>Variables</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Openness	1			
Accessibility	.369**	1		
Availability	-.046	.100	1	
Innovative Behavior	.135**	.335**	.591**	1

Correlation is represented by small ‘r’ and its values range between -1 to +1, table 3 presented their respective relationship with other variables. For instance, relationship between openness and accessibility is ( $0.369^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ); level, openness and availability are ( $0.046$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ); level insignificant, while openness and innovative behavior is ( $0.135^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), accessibility and availability ( $0.100$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) insignificant, accessibility and innovative behavior ( $0.335^{**}$ ,  $p > 0.01$ ), availability and innovative behavior ( $0.591^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) level, thus H1a is substantiated and accepted. (Table 3)

**Table 4** Regression Analysis

DV	IV	R Correlation	R <sup>2</sup> Variance	Goodness of fit Index	beta	p. sig
IB	Constant	0.313 <sup>a</sup>	0.098	7.792		0.000
	Openness				0.156	0.005
	Accessibility				0.036	0.530
	Availability				0.163	0.006

Multiple linear regression was run to test hypotheses H1b. analysis of the results revealed that all three constructs of inclusive leadership i.e., openness, accessibility and availability have explained 9.8% variance upon innovative behavior (IB), with goodness of fit  $F= 7.792, p<0.01$ ; level, the beta value for openness and IB ( $0.156, p<0.05$ ); significant, accessibility and IB ( $0.036, p>0.05$ ) insignificant, availability and IB ( $0.163, p<0.05$ ) significant, it implies that one percent change in openness could possibly bring 15.6% change in IB and one percent increase and decrease in availability of a leader could possible impact IB up to 16.3%. Thus, H1b is also partially accepted. (Table 4)

## 5. Discussion

Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the mechanism between inclusive leadership (IL) and innovative behavior (IB), this is one of the pioneer studies conducted in Saudi context in Qassim region in health sector. Findings of this existing study are matched with findings of Wu and Li (2023) as well as the findings of this current study also got support from findings of Cetinkaya and Yesilada (2022). These studies confirmed the positive and significant relationship and impact among IL and IB, they further stated that the IL is held responsible to enhance the IB of employees. IL meets basic needs of employees, by meeting their needs, helping the employees to raise their voice, to share and express their ideas, suggestions for improvement. IL not only listen to creative ideas but listen carefully to opposing ideas which is called independent critical thinking. In addition, IL all attributes such as openness, accessibility and availability are significantly related with IB. It means the relationship between these constructs to IB is positive but weak which could be enhanced through some intervening variable as mediator and moderator.

This intervening variable could be psychological security, psychological capita; organizational support, knowledge sharing, voice behavior and trust (Wu & Li, 2023).

## **6. Conclusion**

From the findings it is concluded that the more inclusive the leadership style, it would be more likely to trigger innovative ideas exhibited by employees. When employees perceive their manager uses inclusive style, they would be more likely to exhibit innovative behavior. Therefore, it is crucial for organizations, in this competitive world they should continuously innovate to attract new investors, clients, customers, consumers and clients.

### **6.1. Policy Implications**

Managers should adopt inclusive style of leadership to encourage the employees to come up with new ideas so that they may get competitive advantage and sustainable performance in long run. In this fierce competition now a days, firms must focus on continuous innovation so that they can attract new customers and could save the interest of all stakeholders.

### **6.2. Limitations and Future Research Directions**

This study just investigated the direct effects of IL and IB, however, future research could add mediators and moderators to investigate the more complex models. These intervening variables could be psychological safety, self-efficacy, psychological security, resilience, perceived support, psychological empowerment and trust. This study has used SPSS for data analysis; future research could use PLS-SEM for more sophisticated results. This study has only focused on health sector so one must be careful while generalizing the findings on other sectors.

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**Informed consent:** Verbal consent was taken

**Ethical Approval:** N/A

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**Data Availability:** Available on request

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