

Predicting Employee Creativity Based on Inclusive Leadership and Psychological Safety: The Mediating Role of Work Engagement

Katarzyna. Nowak¹, Ryan. Stewart²

¹ Department of Strategic Management, University of Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland

² Department of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Canada

* Corresponding author email address: ryan.stewart@mun.ca

Editor

Azar Kafashpoor^{id}
Professor, Department of
Educational Management and
Human Resource Development,
Ferdowsi University of Mashhad,
Mashhad, Iran
kafashpor@um.ac.ir

Reviewers

Reviewer 1: Abbas Monavarian^{id}
Professor, Management Department, Tehran University, Tehran, Iran.
Email: amonavar@ut.ac.ir
Reviewer 2: Rezvan Hosseingholizadeh^{id}
Associate Professor, Department of Educational Management and Human Resource
Development, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran. Email:
rhgholizadeh@um.ac.ir

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The paragraph beginning “One particularly important psychological mechanism is psychological safety” conceptualizes psychological safety primarily as an enabling condition for interpersonal risk-taking. However, the structural model treats psychological safety as an exogenous predictor parallel to inclusive leadership rather than as a mediator between inclusive leadership and work engagement or creativity. This choice requires stronger justification because much of the cited literature, including several studies discussed in the manuscript, positions psychological safety as a consequence of leadership. The authors should explain why the present model specifies inclusive leadership and psychological safety as correlated exogenous constructs and should consider testing a theoretically plausible alternative model in which inclusive leadership predicts psychological safety, which subsequently predicts work engagement and creativity.

In the Introduction paragraph stating that “The proposed model also extends previous work by positioning work engagement as the central mediating mechanism linking both inclusive leadership and psychological safety to employee creativity,” the

claimed contribution should be sharpened. Several cited studies already connect inclusive leadership, psychological safety, work engagement, and innovation-related outcomes. The authors should identify precisely what remains unresolved in prior research and how the present study advances knowledge beyond applying an existing model to Canadian employees. For example, the contribution could involve the simultaneous testing of two antecedents, direct versus indirect pathways, the specific focus on creativity rather than innovative behavior, or contextual replication in a Canadian multi-industry sample, but these elements should be articulated explicitly.

In the Data Analysis section, the manuscript states that confirmatory factor analysis was used and reports AVE and composite reliability, but discriminant validity is not directly evaluated. Given the substantial correlation between inclusive leadership and psychological safety ($r = .58$), evidence that these constructs are empirically distinct is essential. The authors should report a formal discriminant-validity assessment, preferably HTMT ratios and, if desired, the Fornell–Larcker criterion. Comparison of the hypothesized four-factor measurement model with theoretically plausible three-factor, two-factor, and one-factor alternatives would further strengthen evidence against construct redundancy and common method variance.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the new document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the Study Design and Participants paragraph, the manuscript reports that “Participants were recruited using a combination of convenience and purposive sampling through professional networks, organizational contacts, online professional communities, and electronic distribution of the study invitation.” This description is insufficiently reproducible. The authors should specify which professional platforms or organizational channels were used, how organizations were approached, whether recruitment occurred nationally or within particular provinces, the data-collection period, whether respondents received incentives, and how duplicate participation was prevented. These details are necessary for evaluating selection bias and the external validity of the sample.

The Study Design and Participants section reports that 347 individuals initially accessed the questionnaire and that 35 were excluded because of “substantial missing data, failure to meet the inclusion criteria, or patterned and incomplete responses.” The exclusion process should be reported more transparently. The authors should specify the number excluded for each reason, define what constituted “substantial missing data,” explain how patterned responding was identified, and state whether completion-time criteria or attention checks were employed. A transparent participant-flow description is particularly important because exclusion decisions can influence covariance structures and SEM estimates.

In the same Methods section, the statement that participants were required to have worked in their organization “for at least six months” is reasonable, but the rationale should be linked more directly to the constructs being measured. Specifically, six months is assumed to provide sufficient exposure to an immediate leader and organizational climate, yet no evidence is provided that this duration is adequate for stable perceptions of inclusive leadership and psychological safety. The authors should justify this threshold conceptually or empirically and clarify whether employees who had recently changed supervisors but remained in the same organization were eligible.

The Data Collection Tools section states that employee creativity was measured using the 13-item Zhou and George scale through employee self-report. This is a potentially important methodological limitation because the original scale is frequently used with supervisor ratings, and self-reported creativity may be particularly susceptible to self-enhancement and common method bias. The authors should provide a stronger rationale for adapting the measure to self-report, explain whether item wording was modified from third-person to first-person format, and report any validation evidence supporting this administration mode. Ideally, the limitation associated with using the same respondent for predictors, mediator, and outcome should also be addressed empirically.

In the measurement description, the manuscript notes that “Several items are negatively phrased and were reverse-scored” for psychological safety. The authors should report the exact scoring procedure and clarify whether the scale was modeled as

a single latent construct after reverse coding. Reverse-worded indicators can sometimes produce wording-method factors or anomalous loadings. Because the lowest reported standardized loading for psychological safety was .62, it would be useful to report individual factor loadings or at least indicate whether modification indices suggested correlated residuals among reverse-worded items.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the new document.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.