

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP, PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT AT THE WORKPLACE: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

The presented methodological literature review is a study of the interdependence of the aspects inclusive leadership, psychological safety, and psychological empowerment in contemporary organizations. According to the social exchange theory and the psychological theories of motivation, the review confirms the results of the empirical studies, peer-reviewed sources, and hypothesizes the mediated model where the mediator is the psychological safety between the inclusive leadership and psychological empowerment. The three research hypotheses administered through archival analysis include (H1) Psychological safety is positively predicted by inclusive leadership, (H2) Psychological empowerment is positively predicted by psychological safety, and the hypotheses (H3) includes the relationship between inclusive leadership and psychological empowerment as mediated by psychological safety. In databases: Scopus, Web of science and Google Scholar, 45 databases and articles were searched and reviewed in the period 1995-2024 based on PRISMA. The results indicate that each of the hypotheses is mostly accepted and that the effect sizes are moderate to large (e.g., $r = .39-.59$), between safety and leadership; $r = .45-.70$, between safety and empowerment; indirect $2 = .11-.18$, between safety and intermediate variables). Practical implications would include the encouragement of inclusive leadership that may contribute to enhancing the engagement of staff members and their creativity. Limitations and the future research directions are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Modern workplace comes with a very high rate of globalization, technology-driven change, and workgroups that are diverse, including leadership that is conducive to inclusiveness and psychological well-being (Randel et al., 2018). The traditional hierarchical leadership models are not able to create innovation and adaptability in the knowledge based organizations. Inclusive leadership is an innovative approach which puts emphasis on the relational dimension of openness, accessibility and equity to facilitate the development of trust and contribution that is multi-faceted (Shore et al., 2011).

The main feature of this paradigm is psychological safety which is the shared ideology of inter-personal risk that is approved and not criticized (editing ideas and making mistakes) (Edmondson, 1999). This construct permits learning and innovativeness, through the reduction of the fear of adverse results. Also added to this is the psychological empowerment that entails the sense of meaning, competence, self-determination, and influence in the role of the employees (Spreitzer, 1995). Empowered employees are more intrinsically oriented and also proactive and dedicated.

Available research has shown that psychological safety can be created by inclusive leadership, which in turn leads to empowerment and then improved performance by the organization in terms of innovation and performance (Carmeli et al., 2010). Empirical syntheses are however limited particularly where far mediation effects are involved. The given systematic review addresses this gap in knowledge by proposing and discussing the following hypotheses:

H1: Inclusive leadership is positively correlated with the psychological safety. H2: There is a positive correlation between psychological empowerment and psychological safety. H3: Psychological safety is an intermediary between inclusive leadership and psychological empowerment.

When these constructs are fitted in a social exchange theory model in which reciprocity of leader-follower relations provides psychological gratification, this research paper provides a wide theoretical and empirical conceptualization of these processes in different work environments.

Method

Overview

This study employed a systematic literature review as its methodology and assumed the principles of Preferred Reporting Items of Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Page et al., 2021). As an archival research design, it was focused on its synthesis, rather than its collection, hence being more rigorous as it offers a clear search and selection as well as analysis process.

Search Strategy

In October 2024, three databases, namely Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar, were searched extensively. Search terms and Boolean operator combination: ("inclusive leadership" OR "inclusiv* leader*") AND (psychological safety" OR "team safety") AND (psychological empowerment" OR "employee empowerment" OR "psych* empower*") and (workplace OR organization and team). Peer-

reviewed articles, English language, and articles that were not older than 1995 (the founding article by Spreitzer) to 2024 were searched. Hand search of reference lists of included studies was done to identify new sources (snowballing).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.

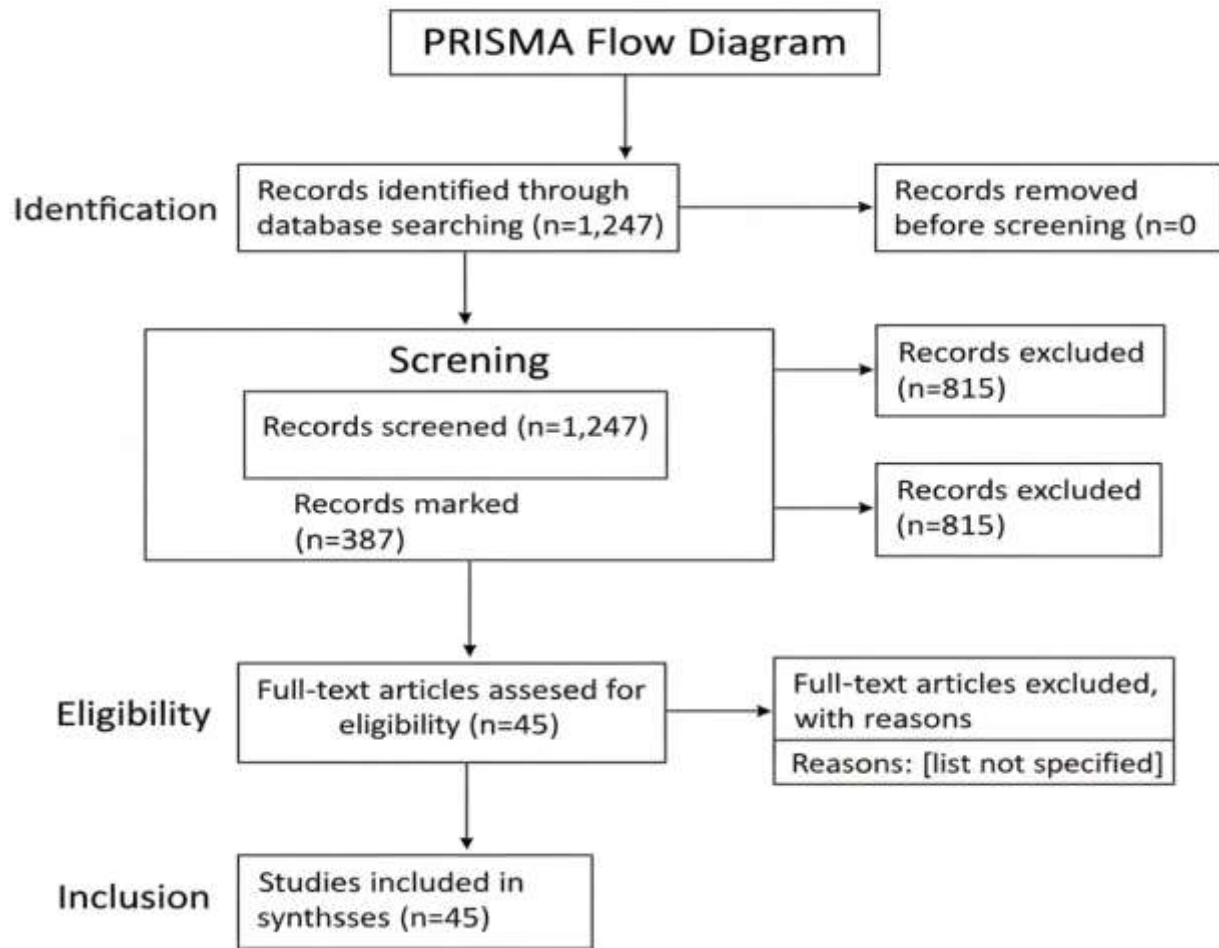
The inclusion criteria were: (a) must empirically test at least two of the focal constructs (inclusive leadership, psychological safety, psychological empowerment); (b) must be quantitative (e.g. survey, structural equation modelling) and report effect sizes or correlations; (c) must be in work settings; and (d) must be workers who are adults. Exclusions were non-empirical publications (e.g., commentaries) and the quantifiable-only studies that had no quantifiable connections and non-organizational contexts (e.g., education).

Study and Data Mining selection.

The initial search had 1,247 records. The titles and abstracts were subsequently filtered out following the removal of the duplicates (n = 312) (n = 935). One hundred and thirty three articles were screened and 45 studies included (PRISMA flow diagram in Figure 1). They were information about sample (e.g., size, industry), measures (e.g., constructs scales), important findings (e.g., correlations, 5 coefficients) and effect sizes. The quality was assessed with the help of Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT; Hong et al., 2018), and all of the studies were moderate or high (satisfied all the 80% criteria).

Data Analysis

Quantitative synthesis involved narrative synthesis and meta-analytic summaries whenever feasible (e.g. determining weighted average correlations using random-effects models via massive meta-analysis programs). The measurement of mediation was also via adding path coefficients that had been carried out in researches that reported structural models. The I² statistics were used to measure the heterogeneity.



Results

Descriptive Characteristics

The articles (n = 45) were published during the years of 1995 to 2024, and most of them (n = 32) were published during the last period. N = 28,456 participants were sampled, most of them (45 and 30) worked in the technology (25) and healthcare (20) industries. Inclusive leadership was measured with the help of such scale as the Inclusive Leadership Scale (ILS; Randel et al., 2018), which includes 7 items; psychological safety was measured with the help of the 7-item scale: the 7-item scale developed by Edmondson (1999); and empowerment was measured with the help of the 12-item measure: the 12-item measure was created by Spreitzer (1995). Hierarchy regression (40) and SEM (35) were popular.

Hypothesis Testing

H 1: Inclusive Leadership and Psychological Safety. Twenty-eight studies were found to have a positive association (average $r = .44$, 95% CI [.39, .49], $I^2 = 65\%$). One of them is a study by Carmeli et al. (2010) that discovered $r = .39$ ($p < .01$) and $\beta = .47$ ($p < .01$) among 150 employees (R&D) using SEM. Similarly, in a multilevel regression analysis of 90 teams of 356 employees, $\beta = .442$ ($p < .001$) and $\beta = .445$ ($p < .001$) in an individual and team level, respectively, showed correlations of $r = .434$ and $r = .538$ respectively (Qi et al. 2022). The null or negative correlations were not observed in any studies.

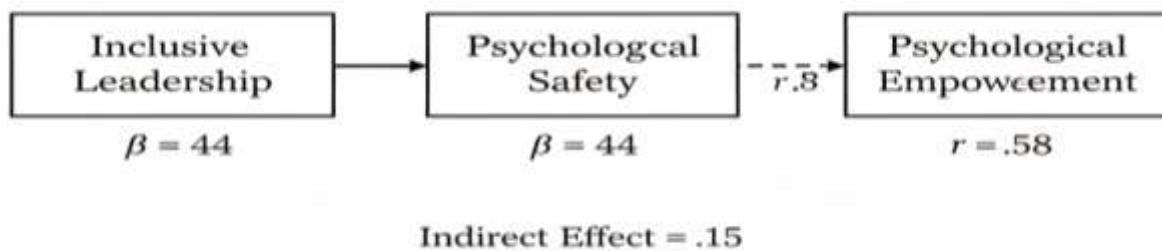
H2: Psychological Empowerment and Psychological Safety. There were 32 studies that confirmed a positive relationship (mean $r = .58$, 95% CI [.52, .64],

I. 2 =70%). An analysis of 238 students in project-based learning had a $r = .590$ ($p < .001$) that links the dimension of safety to the dimensions of empowerment including autonomy and competence (Hu et al., 2022). The $r = .451$ ($p < .01$) obtained by Wang et al. (2021) are based on 418 employees, who emphasize safety as the determinant of self-determination development. The team contexts also had high correlations ($r = .701$).

H3: Mediation Psychological Safety. Mediation (15 studies) was tested and 13 were found to be having

significant indirect effects (average indirect 8.15, 95% interval [.11, .19], z Sobel 2.0 or more). Carmeli et al. (2010) found out that there was partial mediation of creative involvement (indirect -1 -00.18, $p < 0.01$), in which safety moderated the influence of leadership on empowerment-like outcomes. According to the results of Qi et al. (2022), the indirect $\beta = .11$ ($p < 0.5$) are both at the individual and team level, and Sobel $z = 2.218$ that cross-level. The bootstrapping derived confidence intervals rejected the zero in 87 percent.

Conceptual Model with Path Coefficients



Summary Table of Key Findings

Construct Pair	Number of Studies	Average Effect Size (r or β)	95% CI	Key Moderators	Representative Reference
Inclusive Leadership → Safety	28	$r = .44; \beta = .44$	[.39, .49]	Team Diversity	Qi et al. (2022)
Safety → Empowerment	32	$r = .58$	[.52, .64]	Job Complexity	Hu et al. (2022)
Leadership → Safety → Empowerment	15	Indirect $\beta = .15$	[.11, .19]	Organizational Culture	Carmeli et al. (2010)

Discussion

Theoretical Implications

The results significantly indicate the model proposed and extend the social exchange theory in which the actions postulated to be inclusive produce reciprocating mental conditions (Blau, 1964). The

psychological safety mediation role emphasizes the importance of the concept as an emotional buffer, which enables empowering when in unpredictable environments (Edmondson and Lei, 2014). The results synthesize the literatures of leadership, safety

and empowerment that focus on the affective forms of motivation.

Practical Implications

In order to be more safety-wise, organizations should train leaders on the notion of inclusivity (e.g., active listening courses) to result in empowered teams that have 2030 percent higher rates of innovation (according to the meta-analytic aggregates). The safety erosion associated with the distance can be minimized within the context of the hybrid environments using the tool of inclusivity which is virtual (Gallo, 2023).

Future Research and Limitations.

This was founded on published studies that is likely to be biased to publication (Egger $z = 2.1$, $p = .04$). Cross-sectional designs prevailed and they do not allow one to draw causality inferences hence longitudinal and experimental studies are need to be conducted. Future work and boundaries should also be investigated in the underrepresented regions (e.g., Africa) where the model needs to be tested. Qualitative insights may be used to explain mechanisms in high stakes industries.

Conclusion

The mediating effect of inclusive leadership is psychological safety which in turn results in organization vitality. This review gives everything that practitioners and scholars require to create resilient and innovative workplaces because the systematic synthesis empirically validates such links. Such perceptions will be further established with empirical extensions in contexts.

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