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The role of inclusive leadership in fostering organisational learning behaviour

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Abstract

Purpose: Organisational learning is fundamental in establishing a fearless organisation, creating a competitive advantage, and maintaining a sustained growth. While research suggests that leaders can influence organisational learning, there are currently no empirical evidence on how inclusive leadership fosters organisational learning behaviour. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between inclusive leadership and organisational learning behaviour. It also seeks to explore the mediating role of psychological safety and climate for initiatives in the mentioned relationship.

Design/methodology/approach: The study employed a two-wave quantitative examination with 317 respondents. Online survey was utilised to collect data from randomly selected full-time Australian employees in two times. The data were then analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to provide insights.

Findings: The study found empirical evidence on the positive association of inclusive leadership and organisational learning behaviour. Moreover, the two mediation paths of psychological safety and climate for initiative were supported for the relationship between inclusive leadership and organisational learning behaviour.

Originality: The current study provides empirical evidence on the role of inclusive leadership in fostering organisational learning behaviour through two mediating paths of psychological safety and climate for initiatives. The proposed model sets the ground for future research to further develop insights on positive impacts of inclusive leadership within organisations.

Research limitations/implications: The current study contributes to theory by examining the role of inclusive leadership on organisational learning behaviour through two relatively unexplored mediating paths. It suggests how inclusive leadership can create a fearless

organisation through fostering learning behaviour within the organisation which empower organisations to sustain growth. Despite controlling for and assessing endogeneity, due to the cross-sectional design of the study, it is limited in demonstrating causal links.

Keywords: Organisational learning, inclusive leadership, psychological safety, climate for initiative, fearless organisation

Introduction

The world is getting more volatile, uncertain, ambiguous, and complex which makes it paramount to use the workforce hidden potential to find solutions to challenging problems. If an organisation's climate makes employees afraid of sharing their ideas, concerns, challenges, questions, and knowledge, then everyone will lose (Edmondson, 2018). To make effective decisions and sustain growth, organisations need to seek multiple perspectives. This requires a fearless organisational culture that allows employees to express ideas and learn from each other. The term fearless organisation was first coined by Edmondson (2018) who defined it as an organisation that allows a free flow of knowledge by curtailing interpersonal fear. In other words, in a fearless organisation, employees can freely express their ideas and views, and share knowledge without having the fear of being abused, criticised, or humiliated.

Fear of mistake impedes learning, cooperation, critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity. While there is little doubt that a fearless organisation is an ideal place to work in, there remains key questions on how fearless organisations are created, and what plays a critical role in fostering a fearless organisation.

According to Edmondson (2018), psychological safety is a key factor to create a fearless organisation. Psychological safety was defined by Kahn (1990) as an employee's "sense of being able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image,

status or career" (p. 708). Later, Edmondson (1999) described psychological safety as a perception that "people are comfortable being themselves" (p. 354). Since the conception of psychological safety construct, there has been extensive research investigating its antecedents and outcomes. For instance, some of the outcomes of psychological safety include employee engagement (May et al., 2004, Nembhard and Edmondson, 2006), satisfaction (Frazier et al., 2017), commitment (De Clercq and Rius, 2007, Rathert et al., 2009), task performance (Frazier et al., 2017), learning behaviours (Bstieler and Hemmert, 2010), learning from failures (Carmeli and Gittell, 2009), and innovation and creativity (Carmeli, 2007, Chen et al., 2014). Past research suggests that leaders play a crucial role in creating an organisational climate that allows for engagement, interaction, and learning (Fletcher, 2007). Leaders can directly and indirectly contribute to employees' desire for collaboration, learning behaviours and engagement (Carmeli and Gittell, 2009, Carmeli et al., 2009). A number of studies have focused on investigating different leadership styles as the antecedents of psychological safety including transformational leadership (e.g., Detert and Burris, 2007), ethical leadership (e.g., Walumbwa and Schaubroeck, 2009), and servant leadership (e.g., Schaubroeck et al., 2011).

Although prior studies have provided support for the antecedents and outcomes of psychological safety and have examined it as a key factor to create fearless organisations, there are yet some gaps that need attention and further investigation. As Hirak et al. (2012) highlighted, leader inclusiveness is critical to create psychological safety and ensure positive outcomes. As such, some prior studies focused on the effect of inclusive leadership on psychological safety and other outcomes including thriving at work (Zeng et al., 2020), project stress (Khan et al., 2020), learning from errors (Ye et al., 2019), psychological distress (Zhao et al., 2020), employee creative work (Carmeli et al., 2010), and innovative work behaviour (Javed et al., 2019, Aboramadan et al., 2021). While these studies examined the mediating role of psychological safety in the link between inclusive leadership and positive outcomes, gap

remains in examining the association between inclusive leadership and learning behaviours which is crucial for creating a fearless organisation.

Baer and Frese (2003) suggested that along with psychological safety, climate for initiative is important to ensure positive outcomes for organisations. In fact, there is a strong association between psychological safety and climate for initiatives and they complement each other because employees take initiatives when they feel safe and work in a supportive culture (i.e., psychologically safe). Despite its importance, climate for initiative has not been given much attention in prior studies that focused on leadership and psychological safety.

Our study fills these identified research gaps and extends the state-of-the-art research in the field of organisational learning by providing original empirical evidence on the role of inclusive leadership in supporting organisational learning behaviour. We also aim to investigate the mediating role of psychological safety and climate for initiatives in the relationship. Moreover, through a comparative analysis of competing mediators (i.e., psychological safety and climate for initiative), we are interested to find out which one of the two mediating mechanisms play a more important role in explaining the link between inclusive leadership and organisational learning behaviour.

This study draws upon social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) to argue that for creating a fearless organisation - which allows employees to speak up, express ideas and views, and learn from each other - there should be an inclusive leader who can provide psychological safety and climate for initiative to promote organisational learning behaviour. To have successful performance and sustained growth, organisations need to be fearless. This study provides some empirical evidence on how to foster a fearless organisation in today's world. Our study provides theoretical and practical contributions by examining the important role of inclusive leadership in creating psychological safety and climate for initiatives that can promote organisational learning behaviour.

Literature review and hypotheses development

Inclusive leadership is an evolving area of research. It has been studied in various disciplines such as business and management (e.g., Randel et al., 2018, Weiss et al., 2018), education (e.g., Ryan, 2006, Sugiyama et al., 2016), psychology (e.g., Carmeli et al., 2010, Choi et al., 2017), nursing (e.g., Wang et al., 2019, Ahmed et al., 2021), and hospitality (e.g., Bhutto et al., 2021, Jolly and Lee, 2021). A bibliometric analysis of the abstracts for peer-reviewed research outputs published in the 2000-2022 timespan in journals, books or conference proceedings which have been indexed in Web of Science (WOS) using "inclusive leadership" as the key search term reveals 242 outputs on the topic. A descriptive analysis of these outputs indicates the top five author keywords used in publications include inclusive leadership, leadership, psychological safety, inclusion, and diversity.

Moreover, using Bibliometrix's machine learning based visualisation of the author keywords in R software following the guidelines by Aria and Cuccurullo (2017), several key themes emerge for the current literature on inclusive leadership based on keywords co-occurrences (Figure 1). These include work, performance, and organisational behaviour such as turnover, creativity, and work engagement.

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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The current study focuses on examining the links between inclusive leadership and organisational learning behaviour, while investigating the mediating role of psychological safety and climate for initiative.

Inclusive leadership and organisational learning behaviour

Fletcher (2007) postulated that leaders influence organisational climate through modelling behaviours. They can also engage and interact with employees and create high quality relationships. Therefore, the way leaders behave can impact employees' learning behaviours both directly and indirectly (Carmeli et al., 2009). According to Confessore and Kops (1998), teamwork, creativity, collaboration and knowledge process are valued in a learning organisation.

Organisational learning behaviour refers to the improvement and change process in organisational actions through better understanding and knowledge (Edmondson, 2002). Learning is an iterative process that requires constant reflection and critical thinking which can be enhanced in a climate that promotes openness, participation, and contributions (Carmeli, 2007). As such, both leaders and organisational climate are the two key factors in fostering organisational learning behaviour (Edmondson et al., 2004).

Specifically, seven actions are essential to promote an organisational learning culture, including an embedded system, continuous learning, empowerment, team learning, inquiry and dialogue, system connection and leadership (Yang et al., 2004). In fact, leaders are considered as the key agents who represent organisation's values (Amabile, 2011, Javed et al., 2017). If a leader invites and values ideas and contributions from employees, it can engender a perception among employees that the organisation values knowledge sharing and learning (Tran and Choi, 2019). By allowing employees to express their views, share their knowledge and experiences, stimulate new ideas, and challenge the status quo, leaders can promote knowledge sharing and learning in organisations (Zagoršek et al., 2009). Study by Sun and Anderson (2012) shows that leaders' support in permitting lower-level decision making and risk taking, and their

confidence in employees' innovation capability are essential in fostering organisational learning and absorptive capacity.

Carmeli et al. (2010) refer to inclusive leadership as leaders who demonstrate openness, availability and accessibility to their employees and support them to produce novel and unique contributions. Compared with different leadership styles such as empowering leadership, transformational leadership, servant leadership, ethical leadership and authentic leadership that impact employees and positive organisational outcomes (See for example: Zeb et al., 2020b, Zeb, 2020), inclusive leadership highly focuses on providing an open environment in which employees can contribute their unique ideas (Randel et al., 2018). Inclusive leadership as defined by Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) refers to "words and deeds by a leader or leaders that indicate an invitation and appreciation for others' contributions". In fact, to an inclusive leader, everyone matters, and every employee's contribution is respected and valued (Roberson, 2006). Inclusive leaders attempt to include employees in discussions and decision making whose input would otherwise be absent (Nembhard and Edmondson, 2006). This leadership style invites and appreciate inputs from followers. Therefore, inclusive leaders make a harmonious relationship with employees that promote their involvement in organisational knowledge sharing and learning (Guo et al., 2022).

In the current study, we examine the relationship between inclusive leadership and organisational learning behaviour based on the tenets of social learning theory. According to social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), humans learn from their interactions in a social context. People observe others' behaviours, then assimilate and imitate that behaviour, especially, when the observed behaviour is positive and involves rewards. Imitation of behaviour refers to reproducing the observed behaviours. Social learning theory posits that people learn from each other through observation, imitation, and modelling. Imitation and modelling of behaviours

will take place when a person observes a desired or positive outcome (Newman and Newman, 2007). Leaders act as role models for employees through perform the acceptable behaviours. According to the principles of social learning theory, inclusive leader is a role model whose behaviours and decisions are observed by employees. By providing a safe environment, supporting employees, engaging in honest communication with employees, encouraging knowledge sharing and learning, and valuing employees' unique and novel contributions, inclusive leaders demonstrate positive behaviours that can be modelled by employees (e.g., Hirak et al., 2012, Walumbwa and Schaubroeck, 2009). Moreover, inclusive leader's availability, openness, and accessibility to help employees and address their problems and concerns demonstrates to employees that their organisation is committed to continuous improvement and learning (Ratten, 2008). Prompt response, help, and support from inclusive leaders can offer learning opportunities to employees to develop critical thinking skills and knowledge sharing and learning (Carmeli et al., 2010, Choi et al., 2015). Additionally, inclusive leaders provide an environment in which employees feel safe to contribute their ideas and share their knowledge and vision with each other that can facilitate organisational learning (Real et al., 2014, Tran and Choi, 2019). Thus, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H1: Inclusive leaderships has a positive influence on organisational learning behaviour.

Psychological safety as a mediator

Organisational learning behaviour generally involves the process of reflecting and taking actions based on the acquired and shared knowledge (Argote et al., 2001). Specifically, having a quest for learning new knowledge, speaking up, challenging the status quo and validity of the work assumptions, and spending time to find out ways to improve the process and performance are the ongoing processes of reflection and action (Edmondson, 1999), which involve regular interactions among organisational members (Elkjaer, 2003). According to Kozlowski and Bell

(2007), learning takes place when members of an organisation share knowledge and work together to create new solutions to problems, which makes learning a dynamic process of sharing and exchanging knowledge in the workplace.

One of the key factors that facilitate organisational learning behaviour is the relationships among the members (Kozlowski and Ilgen, 2006, Carmeli, 2007). Research shows that psychological safety is one of the important factors that explains how people collaborate and work together to achieve a common goal (Edmondson, 1999, Edmondson et al., 2004), share knowledge and information (Collins and Smith, 2006, Siemsen et al., 2009), provide suggestions for improvement (Detert and Burris, 2007, Liang et al., 2012), and take initiative (Baer and Frese, 2003).

Psychological safety refers to a setting where "people are comfortable being themselves" (Edmondson, 1999) and "feel able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status or career" (Kahn, 1990). Prior studies indicate that psychological safety enables organisational learning (Bunderson and Boumgarden, 2010, Carmeli and Gittell, 2009). As a catalyst for organisational learning, psychological safety allows employees to feel safe at work in order to grow, learn, contribute, and perform effectively in a rapidly changing world (Edmondson and Lei, 2014). Researchers have referred to psychological safety as either an individual or group level construct. For instance, Edmondson (1999) referred to psychological safety as the extent to which the team share the belief to take interpersonal risks, while Kahn (1990) emphasised on the individual's perceptions of feeling safe to take risks and express views. Regardless, one of the significant antecedents of psychological safety is leadership (Kahn, 1990). Consequently, prior studies have focused on the role of various leadership styles and factors in relation to psychological safety including transformational leadership (e.g., Detert and Burris, 2007), ethical leadership (e.g., Walumbwa and Schaubroeck, 2009), servant leadership (e.g., Schaubroeck et al., 2011),

authentic leadership (Zeb et al., 2020a), leader-member exchange (e.g., Coombe, 2010), trust in one's leader (e.g., Madjar and Ortiz-Walters, 2009), and management style (e.g., Halbesleben and Rathert, 2008). This highlights the salience of leader's role in determining the work context for employees and promoting psychological safety (Frazier et al., 2017).

As Fletcher (2007) suggested, leaders can model the learning behaviour among their employees. Leaders who welcome employee's participation and involvement in decision making, and are concerned with learning and improvement, foster high levels of psychological safety (Halbesleben and Rathert, 2008, Wong et al., 2010). In the same vein, if leaders are inclusive, open, accessible, and available to their employees and value their unique contributions and ideas (Carmeli et al., 2010, Bienefeld and Grote, 2014), they foster a psychologically safe environment that can result in organisational learning behaviour (Sanner and Bunderson, 2013).

Looking from the lens of social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), it is reasonably understandable that by demonstrating openness, accessibility and availability, valuing employees' contributions, encouraging employees to speak up and share their views, and promoting knowledge sharing and learning, inclusive leaders create a psychologically safe environment that can foster organisational learning behaviour. Inclusive leaders encourage employees to participate in decision making and contribute their unique views in a psychologically safe environment without the fear of being criticised. According to Sanner and Bunderson (2013), psychological safety leads to organisational learning behaviour. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Psychological safety is a mediator in the relationship between inclusive leadership and organisational learning behaviour.

Climate for initiative as a mediator

Climate for initiative is defined as both formal and informal practices and procedures within an organisation that support a determined, self-starting and proactive approach towards work. Baer and Frese (2003) conceptualised climate for initiative based on the personal initiative construct developed by Frese et al. (1996) and Frese et al. (1997). Research on taking charge provides support for the notion of climate for initiative. Morrison and Phelps (1999) found that factors which motivate employees to engage in extra-role behaviour include self-efficacy, self-responsibility, and perception of top management openness.

The management and leaders in organisations can play a critical role in creating a climate for initiative. The role of leaders in creating a climate for initiative is highlighted by Scott and Bruce (1994) who postulated that employees' interaction with their manager, supervisor and co-workers shape up their perceptions about work climate. Support, openness and encouragement of manager and co-workers for taking initiative and being proactive lead to climate for initiative (Morrison and Phelps, 1999). A climate for initiative emerges when employees work on a common goal, share views and ideas without the fear of being criticised, and support each other towards a quality output (Tripathi and Ghosh, 2020).

According to Hollander (2009), inclusive leaders support their employees and pay attention to their needs. In addition, by displaying openness, accessibility, and availability to their employees, inclusive leaders provide an environment in which employees can express their ideas, offer contribution, participate in decision making, and share their opinions (Hassan and Jiang, 2021). Specifically, inclusive leaders create a climate for openness and encourage employees to participate in decision making and taking a proactive role to achieve a common goal (Ashikali et al., 2021). Inclusive leaders' engagement with employees in open and effective communication and valuing their unique contributions stimulate employees to take initiatives (Park and Zhu, 2017) and perform work effectively which could be beyond the mandatory job duties (Akbari et al., 2016).

Working in a climate that encourages participation, sharing of resources, openness, and expression of views and ideas expand the capacity for learning. Evidently, learning behaviours are stimulated when employees have high quality interpersonal relationships with supervisors and co-workers. The relationship between inclusive leadership, climate for initiative and organisational learning behaviour is understandable from perspective of social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) that puts an emphasis on the behaviours of a leader who could model behaviour to employees. The role of an inclusive leader is significant to create a climate for knowledge, initiative, and learning. Displaying openness, valuing employees' unique contribution, encouraging employees' participation in decision making, and promoting learning and sharing from each other are the traits of an inclusive leader that shape up employees' perceptions regarding the extent to which organisational processes are proactive, supportive and persistent towards work and learning (Baer and Frese, 2003). Hence, working with an inclusive leader in a climate that welcomes new initiatives and participation help employees perceive that their organisation values learning behaviours. As such, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3: Climate for initiative is a mediator in the relationship between inclusive leadership and organisational learning behaviour.

Developing organisational learning behaviour is the key towards creating a fearless organisation in which employees feel comfortable to share knowledge and ideas and are encouraged to learn from each other. The requirement for making a candour workplace as highlighted in the literature is creating psychological safety and climate for initiative. The present study bridges the gaps in the literature regarding the role of inclusive leadership in creating psychological safety and climate for initiatives that are crucial in enhancing organisational learning behaviour. The study focuses on two mediation mechanisms - the

relationship between inclusive leadership and organisational learning behaviour mediated by

1) psychological safety and 2) climate for initiative. The study further explores which of the

two mediators is stronger in the association between inclusive leadership and organisational

learning behaviour. Figure 2 depicts the hypothesised research model.

Insert Figure 2 about here

Method

Sample and data collection

The data for this paper, which is part of a larger research project on inclusive leadership and

organisational behaviour, was collected in 2020 from 317 full-time employees in Australia

from a broad range of occupations (both service and manufacturing), tenure, level, and

organisations. After obtaining institutional ethics approval, respondents were recruited by the

Qualtrics Panel Management, which is a third-party online survey administration platform that

contains panels of currently employed individuals. This is a common practice in management

discipline and yields valid and reliable responses (See for example: Shafaei et al., 2020). Study

participants were assured that the survey is anonymous, and the collected data will be analysed

confidentially after receiving their consent to participate in the study. The data for the study

was collected in two waves, 2 weeks apart, to minimise common method bias. The sampling

criteria for the study was randomly selected respondents who were full-time employees

working in Australia at the time of data collection. The demographic profile of respondents

reveals that 54.6% of respondents were female, 48% were aged between 36 and 45, 46.4% had

a bachelor's degree, and majority had more than 3 years of working experience in their current

organisation (85.2%). Moreover, 41.6% of respondents held a managerial role in their current

workplace.

Measurement

To ensure we are appropriately operationalising and capturing the concept of the measured

study variables, we adapted measurement items from established scales with demonstrated

validity and reliability in previous empirical studies. Inclusive leadership (Mean = 3.807,

Standard Deviation = 0.775, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.934) was measured in Time 1 using 8 items

adapted from Carmeli et al. (2010). We used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly

disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree" to measure this variable. Respondents were asked to evaluate

their direct manager (i.e., supervisor or line manager) using the items provided and were

assured about the anonymity of their responses. A sample item for this scale was "My manager

is open to hearing new ideas". Psychological safety (Mean = 3.538, Standard Deviation =

0.872, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.830) was measured in Time 2, which was approximately two

weeks after Time 1, using 2 items adapted from Edmondson (1999). We used a 5-point Likert

scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree" to measure this variable. A

sample item for this scale was "As an employee in my organisation one is able to bring up

problems and tough issues". Climate for initiative (Mean = 3.429, Standard Deviation = 0.813,

Cronbach's Alpha = 0.861) was measured in Time 2 using 4 items adapted from Frese et al.

(1997). We used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly

agree" to measure this variable. A sample item for this scale was "Whenever something goes

wrong, people in my organisation search for a solution immediately". Finally, organisational

learning behaviour (Mean = 3.484, Standard Deviation = 0.804, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.855)

was measured in Time 2 using 4 items adapted from Edmondson (1999). We used a 5-point

Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree" to measure this

variable. A sample item for this scale was "In this organisation, we regularly take time to figure out ways to improve our organisation's work processes".

Assessments of common method bias

To minimise the threat of common method bias, data for this study was collected at two different times, two weeks apart. We also incorporated several suggestions by Schwarz et al. (2017) during the research design, such as not using any ambiguous or complex items, to minimise the threat of common method bias. In addition, using procedural remedies as described by Podsakoff et al. (2003) such as ensuring survey anonymity through de-identified surveys and separated predictors and criteria on the survey, we tried to reduce common method bias. Nonetheless, as this study uses a single source for its data collection, we examined the data to look for any potential threat of common method bias. This involved performing the full collinearity test, as recommended by Kock and Lynn (2012), which examines both the vertical and lateral collinearity, to assess common method bias between the item correlations of two constructs. Our analysis results did not suggest the existence of any collinearity threat as full collinearity estimates (Table 1) were below the recommended threshold of 3.3 for variance-based SEM. Results of the full collinearity test also provide support for the discriminant validity of the latent variables, indicating that the study constructs are different enough from each other.

Insert Table 1 about here

Data analysis

Partial Least Squares (PLS) structural equation modelling (SEM), which is the second generation of data analysis techniques, was used to analyse the data to achieve a balance between explanation and prediction due to the relative scarcity of theory and knowledge for the current study. This is supported by Pearl et al. (2016) who argue that the causal-predictive nature of PLS path modelling helps to predict relationships between variables rather than testing causality to confirm theories.

The study used a three-step approach of 1) assessing the outer model (i.e., measurement model) to check the validity and reliability of the measurement variables, 2) assessing the inner model (i.e., structural model) for hypothesis testing, and 3) performing some robustness tests to examine the predictive relevance of the model and examine any potential systematic biases. In running the data analysis through SmartPLS 4 software (Ringle, 2022), several specific settings were applied before running the software including the selection of path weighting scheme with the maximum number of iterations set at 300 and a stop criterion of 10^{-7} (= 1.0E-07) for assessing the measurement model, bootstrapping with 5000 subsamples and bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) confidence interval method, with one-tailed test at 0.05 significance level, for assessing the structural model, and an omission distance of 7 for the blindfolding procedure to evaluate the predictive relevance of the model.

Results

Measurement model

Prior to testing the study hypothesis, the measurement model was assessed to examine model fit, and ensure internal validity and reliability. Evaluation of the measurement model revealed that all manifest items loaded highly and significantly on their latent construct. In addition, the data fit the model well meeting the criteria for the goodness of fit indices [$\chi^2/df = 2.243$; CFI = 0.941; AGFI = 0.843; TLI = 0.934; RMSEA = 0.063].

The measurement model assessment also involved evaluating the convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability of all study constructs. In the current study, convergent validity was met as the average variance extracted (AVE) values for all constructs were above 0.5 and lower than Composite Reliability (CR), indicating that the variance explained by the construct is greater than the measurement error. In addition, discriminant validity was established both through the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio (Hair et al., 2021). Using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the square root of each construct's AVE exceeded their respective inter-correlation. Moreover, all HTMT values were below the recommended 0.9 threshold. Lastly, the differential validity was established as the AVE values were higher than the maximum shared variance (MSV). Tables 2 presents a summary of the measurement model assessment.

Insert Table 2 about here

Structural model

Upon confirming the validity and reliability of the measurement model, we tested the hypotheses through assessing the structural model. Prior to testing the hypotheses, we assessed the structural model in terms of coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). Results revealed acceptable coefficients of determination for the endogenous constructs with R^2 ranging from 0.197 to 0.621. The f^2 effect size values for the predictor variables were also acceptable ranging from 0.015 to 0.459, falling across the small to large categories. In addition, the Q^2 predictive relevance values were greater than zero (lowest Q^2 = 0.188), indicating the predictive relevance of the proposed theoretical model.

Results of the bootstrapping (Table 3) supported all study hypotheses. Specifically, the direct effect of inclusive leadership (Time 1) on organisational learning behaviour (Time 2) was significant (ß=0.087, p<0.01). In addition, the total effect of inclusive leadership on organisational learning behaviour was also significant (ß=0.370, p<0.01). Therefore, H1 was supported. Results of the mediation tests also revealed both psychological safety and climate for initiative to act as mediators in the link between inclusive leadership and organisational learning behaviour. Specifically, the path from inclusive leadership to organisational learning behaviour through psychological safety was significant (ß=0.083, p<0.01), supporting H2. Moreover, the path from inclusive leadership to organisational learning behaviour through climate for initiative was significant (ß=0.286, p<0.01), supporting H3. Comparing the path coefficient beta values for the two mediating paths reveals that climate for initiative plays a more important role than psychological safety in explaining the link between inclusive leadership and organisational learning behaviour.

Insert Table 3 about here

Assessment of endogeneity

Endogeneity is a serious challenge in the leadership research which hinders presenting a causally valid explanation of a phenomenon (Antonakis et al., 2014). To address the robustness of the structural model results, we assessed potential endogeneity by following Hult et al.'s (2018) systematic procedure. Upon verifying that none of the variables which potentially exhibit endogeneity were normally distributed, by running the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test with Lilliefors correction (Sarstedt and Mooi, 2014) on the latent variable scores of *INC*, *PSS*, and *CLI*, we performed Park and Gupta's (2012) Gaussian copula approach in R. The results for all

combinations of Gaussian copulas included in the model (Table 4) show that none of the Gaussian copulas were significant (p value > 0.05). Therefore, we conclude that endogeneity is not present in this study, supporting the robustness of the structural model (Hult et al., 2018).

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Insert Table 4 about here

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Discussion and conclusion

Leaders play a crucial role in fostering organisational learning behaviour. Leaders can influence organisational learning through impacting employees' learning behaviours (Carmeli et al., 2009). Organisational learning is essential for maintaining competitive edge and sustained growth. While several leadership styles have been specifically examined in the literature (See for example: Zeb et al., 2020a), very little is known on the question of whether and how inclusive leadership influences organisational learning behaviour.

Study implications

The present study set out to examine the role of inclusive leadership in fostering organisational learning behaviour. In doing so, it also investigated the mediating effect of psychological safety and climate for initiative in this relationship. The study has shown that inclusive leadership positively and significantly contributes to organisational learning behaviour. Another significant finding emerging from this study is the mediation role of psychological safety and climate for initiative in this relationship, with climate for initiative playing a stronger role in explaining how inclusive leadership fosters organisational learning behaviour. This finding was unexpected and suggests that a working environment which supports a self-starting and

proactive approach towards work is more important than psychological safety in creating a learning organisation.

Managers who exhibit inclusive leadership capabilities of openness and valuing employees' unique contributions help create a climate for initiative. This environment enables employees to share their views and ideas without the fear of being criticised. It can also empower employees to support each other towards a quality output. Such authentic and proactive dialogues and interactions can help lead organisational learning (Mazutis and Slawinski, 2008). Moreover, as a potential trickle-down effect of inclusive leadership, employees' self-confidence might be boosted as they experience a greater level of supervisor support which has been linked with improved employees' job performance (Zeb et al., 2022).

Drawn from social learning theory, this study presents an explaining theory (Sandberg and Alvesson, 2021) to elucidate how working with inclusive leaders who provide an open environment in which employees' ideas and contributions are respected and valued, can influence employees to perceive a greater sense of psychological safety and climate for action, which subsequently enhance organisational learning behaviour.

Findings of this study shed light on a specific leadership type (i.e., inclusive leadership) which can foster a fearless organisation through creating a climate for initiative and a psychologically safe environment which encourages employees to think outside the box and learn from errors. Evidence from this study suggests that inclusive leadership is a catalyst for creating a fearless organisation. Although this study focused on organisational learning behaviour, the findings may well have a bearing on transformation towards a fearless organisation. Effective organisational learning helps an organisation to create advanced knowledge (Yang, 2007) and maintain a good position in a rapidly changing environment (Sohaib et al., 2013). Therefore, organisational learning is ever so important in the uncertain and complex business environment on the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic. Results of this study indicate that inclusive leadership

can help an organisation in its transformation journey towards becoming a fearless organisation through promoting organisational learning behaviour. Therefore, the insights gained from this study may be of interest and benefit to managers and team leaders who aim to stimulate creativity and organisational learning.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

This research is not without limitations. The study is limited by its focus on the leadership style of direct supervisor (i.e., middle management) which might be different from the leadership style of top management. Sun and Anderson (2012) investigated the influence of combined transformational and transactional leadership styles of top and middle management on exploratory, transformative, and exploitative learning processes of absorptive capacity. They argued that different combination of these styles across the middle and top management were optimal for various learning processes. To this end, building on the current research, future studies can examine the role of inclusive leadership across middle and top management on different learning processes.

The present study has gone some way towards enhancing the understanding of how inclusive leadership promotes organisational learning. Yet, the significant direct link between inclusive leadership and organisational learning behaviour, while testing for mediators, suggests more research is needed to identify other mediating mechanisms, such as creative self-efficacy, perceived organisational support, and psychological capital, that can explain this relationship. Moreover, the use of an online panel of respondents may limit the current study. Despite controlling for and assessing endogeneity, due to the cross-sectional design of the study, it is limited in demonstrating causal links. Scholars may consider conducting experimental or longitudinal studies to provide a stronger support for the causality between the study variables. Lastly, notwithstanding the procedural and statistical measures to minimise and control for

common method bias, it can still influence study results in social science. Thus, findings of the

study, while potentially applicable to other contexts, should be generalised to other contexts

with caution.

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Table 1: Full collinearity estimates

Inclusive Leadership	Psychological Safety	Climate for Initiative	Organisational Learning Behaviour
1.360	2.069	3.004	2.637

Table 2: Summary of measurement model assessment

	CR	AVE	MSV	1	2	3	4
1. Inclusive Leadership (INC)	0.946	0.687	0.229	*0.829*	0.502	0.527	0.506
2. Psychological Safety (PSS)	0.922	0.885	0.477	0.444	*0.925*	0.815	0.759
3. Climate for Initiative (CLI)	0.906	0.708	0.593	0.479	0.691	*0.841*	0.897
4. Organisational Learning Behaviour (OLB)	0.903	0.699	0.593	0.457	0.640	0.770	*0.836*

Note: Diagonal and *italicised* elements are the square roots of the AVE (average variance extracted). Below the diagonal elements are the correlations between the construct values. All correlations are significant at p < .01 or better. Above the diagonal elements are the HTMT values.

Table 3: Summary of hypothesis testing

Relationships	ß values	*t* values	*p* values	Decision
Direct effect				
INC → OLB	0.087	2.222	0.013	Supported
Indirect effects				
INC → PSS → OLB	0.083	2.901	0.002	Supported
INC → CLI → OLB	0.286	6.879	0.000	Supported

Table 4: Assessment of endogeneity test using the Gaussian copula approach

Test	Construct	Coefficient	p value
Gaussian copula of model 1 (endogenous variables; *INC*)	*INC*	0.087	0.129
	PSS	0.188	0.002
	CLI	0.598	0.000
	^{c}*INC*	0.001	0.986
Gaussian copula of model 2 (endogenous variables; *PSS*)	*INC*	0.086	0.026
	PSS	0.163	0.046
	CLI	0.598	0.000
	^{c}*PSS*	0.019	0.614
Gaussian copula of model 3 (endogenous variables; *CLI*)	*INC*	0.088	0.025
	PSS	0.188	0.001
	CLI	0.609	0.000
	^{c}*CLI*	-0.009	0.864
Gaussian copula of model 4 (endogenous variables; *INC, PSS*)	*INC*	0.093	0.125
	PSS	0.160	0.061
	CLI	0.598	0.000
	^{c}*INC*	-0.006	0.872
	^{c}*PSS*	0.021	0.620
Gaussian copula of model 5 (endogenous variables; *INC, CLI*)	*INC*	0.085	0.144
	PSS	0.188	0.002
	CLI	0.610	0.000
	^{c}*INC*	0.002	0.952
	^{c}*CLI*	-0.010	0.856
Gaussian copula of model 6 (endogenous variables; *PSS, CLI*)	*INC*	0.086	0.028
	PSS	0.149	0.088
	CLI	0.636	0.000
	^{c}*PSS*	0.030	0.499
	^{c}*CLI*	-0.033	0.585
Gaussian copula of model 7 (endogenous variables; *INC, PSS, CLI*)	*INC*	0.091	0.128
	PSS	0.148	0.102
	CLI	0.635	0.000
	^{c}*INC*	-0.004	0.912
	^{c}*PSS*	0.031	0.508
	^{c}*CLI*	-0.032	0.603

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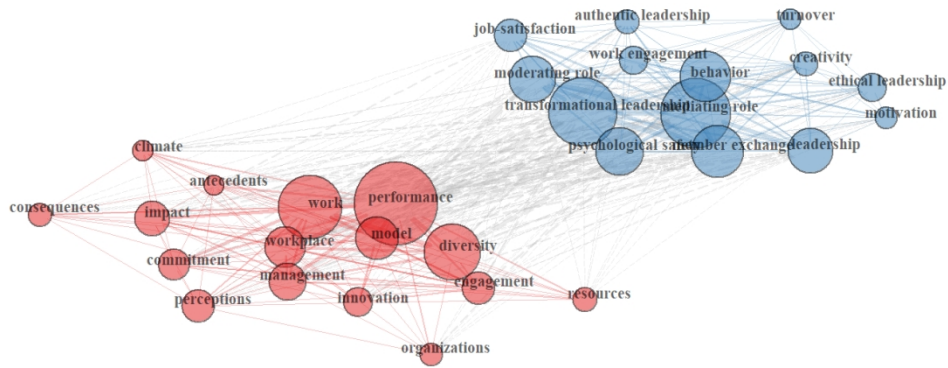
Figure 1: Keywords co-occurrences of inclusive leadership research
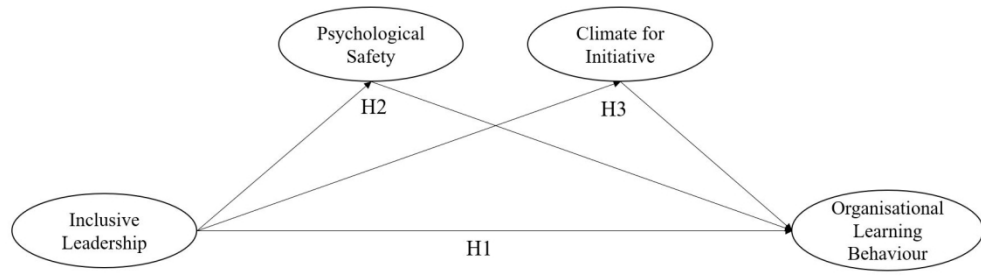
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Figure 2: Research model

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Responses to Reviewers' Comments
Manuscript Title: The Role of Inclusive Leadership in Fostering Organisational Learning Behaviour
MRR-10-2022-0716.R1

Responses to Reviewers' Comments

We would like to thank reviewers for their feedback. We are glad that both reviewers have found the revisions made on the previous review round have substantially improved the manuscript. In this review round, there were no additional comments to be addressed by Reviewer 1 and there were only a few minor revisions requested by Reviewer 2. These revisions and suggestions have now been completely addressed and incorporated in the manuscript. Below is a summary of our responses to the comments and suggestions by reviewers.

[Reviewer 1]

Thank you for making the suggested changes and for your efforts.

Thank you for marking the changes within the text, it helps.

There are still some errors in reference list according to Emerald Style. E.g. using & instead of using and. Please check: https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/journal/mrr

Best wishes for your manuscript.

Response: We would like to thank reviewer for the positive feedback. We have checked all references again to ensure they comply with the required referencing style. As indicated on the author guidelines of the journal, "All references in your manuscript must be formatted using one of the recognised Harvard styles. You are welcome to use the Harvard style Emerald has adopted – we've provided a detailed guide below. Want to use a different Harvard style? That's fine, our typesetters will make any necessary changes to your manuscript if it is accepted". We have inserted all citations and references using EndNote and have used the Harvard Style available on EndNote. We therefore believe as indicated on the journal's guideline, this is an acceptable practice and Emerald's typesetters can work with the Harvard style used in the article.

[Reviewer 2]

1. The article is improved as compared to previous one. But need some necessary changes more.

Response: We would like to thank the reviewer for the positive. We have done our best to address and incorporate all the requested revisions and recommendations.

2. All the suggested paper has not been cited.
The following related research work can cite in the article.
Zeb, A., ur Rehman, F., Imran, M., Ali, M., & Almansoori, R. G. (2020). Authentic leadership traits, high-performance human resource practices and job performance in Pakistan. International Journal of Public Leadership.
Zeb, A. (2020). Relationship between organizational factors and job performance (Doctoral dissertation, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia).

Response: We have now added these citations to the manuscript as recommended.

Responses to Reviewers' Comments
Manuscript Title: The Role of Inclusive Leadership in Fostering Organisational Learning Behaviour
MRR-10-2022-0716.R1

3. The results of the study not very clear. The following paper can be followed especially in the table of PLS-SEM results.

Zeb, A., Goh, G. G. G., Javaid, M., Khan, M. N., Khan, A. U., & Gul, S. (2022). The interplay between supervisor support and job performance: implications of social exchange and social learning theories. Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education.

Zeb, A., ur Rehman, F., Imran, M., Ali, M., & Almansoori, R. G. (2020). Authentic leadership traits, high-performance human resource practices and job performance in Pakistan. International Journal of Public Leadership.

Response: Following the recommendation, we have now added a new table to the manuscript (Table 3) which presents the results of PLS-SEM hypothesis testing in the study.

4. Paper can copyedit again by the native English speaking.

Response: The paper has been thoroughly proof-read and it meets the standards of an academic journal.