

How does Inclusive Leadership Affect Employees' Innovative Behavior: The Role of Perceived Organizational Support and Psychological Safety

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Abstract: Innovative behavior of employees creates a competitive edge for firms over other firms; hence, organizations are putting measures in place to influence employees' innovativeness. The study investigated the effects of three constructs in connection with employees' innovations in the public sector of Zimbabwe. The researchers employed quantitative methodology for data collection analysis. Data were gathered through an online questionnaires administration system, and SPSS-AMOS version 23 was used to conduct the analysis. Data validity and internal consistency were evaluated using confirmatory factor analysis, composite Reliability, and Cronbach alpha, while the relationships between the variables were measured using a linear hierarchical regression model. The results show that inclusive leadership has positive effects on perceived organizational support and employees' innovative behavior, while perceived organizational support also has positive effect on employees' innovative behavior. Perceived organizational support mediate the relationship between inclusive leadership and employees innovative behavior, while psychological safety moderate the relationship between inclusive leadership and organizational support and inclusive leadership and employees innovation. The researchers recommend that management remove various barriers impeding psychological safety in their organizations and maximize inclusive leadership to enhance employees' innovativeness.

Keywords: Inclusive Leadership, Perceived Organizational Support, Innovative Behavior, Psychological Safety, Hierarchical Regression.

1. INTRODUCTION

The changing environment and technological advancement are driving organizations to keep adopting new procedures if they are to be active on the global stage [1]. While most innovative methods applied in firms are available in the market, organizations expect their employees also to function out new or improve operations, which could lead to increased performance or productivity [2]. Internally, the term innovative behavior synchronized all novelty activities that originated from the organization and are used within the organization [3]. Innovative behavior refers to developing and applying new ideas, procedures, and processes within an organization; it also includes improving existing methods to achieve better results [4]. Innovative behavior within an organization are driven by individuals or group of firms' employees [5]. In all circumstances, organizations must create an enabling environment for employees to develop and implement innovative behavior [6].

Studies focusing on innovative behavior have demonstrated two kinds of organizational environments that mostly exist. In these studies, organizational environments were pronounced either technical or human driving, and studies were conclusive

that human-driving organizational environments create room for employees to exhibit innovative behavior compared to the technical environment. Hence, psychological variables of inclusive leadership, perceived organizational support, and psychological safety has been evaluated concerning employees' innovative behavior in many organizations [1].

Inclusive leadership is key to bringing out the best in employees; many organizations are evaluating ways to make employees feel they are being counted at different levels of leadership [7]. Based on this, there have been several calls to recognize employees' effort no matter how little it is [8]. The inclusive leadership concept focuses on eliminating biasness in workplace, demonstrating equity by management, and practicing simple but clear communication channels by removing unnecessary hierarchies and giving constructive feedback [5]. All these values are also established as promoters of employees' innovative behavior [9].

Another factor that affects employees' innovative behavior is perceived organizational support; it defines employees' assertion of how the firms they work for care for them [10]. Perceived organizational support is measured from two points of view; the first is how organizations appreciate the effort they make to make employees feel comfortable, while the second measure of perceived organizational support is derived from employees' angle; how employees also perceived the efforts of their organizations [11]. Perceived organizational support positively influences employees' innovative behavior when accessed from employees' points of view [12]. Providing support that meets employees' expectations can be very difficult for an organization because while justices demand that employees be treated equally, the needs of employees differ [13].

The last factor known to influence the innovative behavior of employees is the psychological safety of employees [11]. Studies on psychological safety express the view that employees must be allowed to express themselves instead of operating in a hostile environment that impedes their right to express their consent [14].

To create an effective environment for workers to be innovative, exclusive leaders, perceived organizational support, and psychological safety needs to be given a critical look as they are significant in creating the enabling environment for building workers' confidence, which is important for the exhibition of innovative behavior [1].

Current activities in the global economy indicated that competition, which was a preserve for private firms, has moved to national levels as nations are urging their employees in the public sectors to be innovative to improve productivity [1]. Studies have explored inclusive leadership in the public sectors of sub-Saharan African countries and demonstrated the effectiveness of inclusive leaders in influencing innovative behavior among employees [1]. Other factors that play a role in employees' innovative behaviors are the support offered by their organization and psychological safety that create the enabling environment for employees to express themselves without the fear of victimization [1].

Looking at the public sector of Zimbabwe, which has been affected by sections and other difficulties over the years [2], there is a need to establish how to improve innovation for the public sector. Based on this, the study aimed at exploring how inclusive leadership, organizational support, and psychological safety promote innovative behavior of employees in the public sector.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT.

Below provide details of how literature was reviewed on inclusive leadership, employees' innovative behavior, perceived organizational support and psychological safety. The hypothetical relationships between these variables were also explored.

2.1. Inclusive Leadership and Employees' Innovative Behavior.

The leading organization goes beyond managing the organization, whereas managers of the organization work within strict rules; leaders, on the other hand, have the right to go beyond strict rules to forecast the future of an organization, set objectives, and drive workers toward the attainment of such objectives [15]. However, there are several leadership styles; many organizations are used to inclusive leadership style due to its ability to motivate employees to exhibit innovative behaviors [16].

Inclusive leadership is defined as eliminating biasness and discrimination within an organization[17]; it is the kind of leadership that accepts differences among employees and harness the different qualities and potentials of employees to improve firms' performance [15]. In critical terms, inclusive leadership influences the removal of racial abuse at work places [18]. It limits the pointing to the weakness of employees by looking at the talents that employees are placing where they can function to benefit organizations [19]. To achieve inclusive leadership, biasness should be avoided, management must have empathy toward workers, and objectivity should run through all sections of an organization [20]. Inclusive leaders enable organizations to build a formable team that is a pillar of firms' decision-making [21]. However, studies have

established that inclusive leadership is difficult to implement in workplaces, and its impacts on innovative behavior of works made it the preferred leadership style in several organizations [1].

Organizations practicing inclusive leadership quickly identify vulnerable workers and give them projection from others who sometimes trample on their workplace rights [22]. Refusal to practice inclusive leaders influences worker timidity as workers who are close to power or assumed to have special skills carve a niche of supremacy for themselves hence limiting the creative ability of others [18].

Studies have established positive relationships between employees' innovative behavior and inclusive leaders based on using inclusive leadership styles to gather the talents in the diversity of workers [23]. The positive relationship between inclusive leadership and employees' innovative behavior has been established in different industry sectors in developed and some developing countries. However, fewer studies in some developing countries also established that inclusive leadership has less effect on employees' innovative behavior [24].

Nonetheless, most firms depend on employees' experiences, provision of technology, and building capacity of workers as a model for achieving employees' innovative behavior [25]; existing studies have established that depending on technicalities, achieving employees' innovative behavior comes at huge cost and does not influence employees retention which is key to employees future organizational plans [26]. Hence, inclusive leadership drives employee retention and influences employees' innovative behavior at a low cost [27].

H1: Inclusive Leadership Has A Positive Effect On Employees' Innovative Behavior.

2.2. Relationship between Inclusive Leadership and Perceived Organizational Support

The relationship between inclusive leadership and organizational support has received less attention from researchers as they are mostly studied separately by investigating their influences on other variables [28]. Few studies investigating the relationship between inclusive leadership and organizational support produced different results, as some were conclusive that inclusive leadership promotes perceived organizational support. At the same time, other refuse that assertion [29].

Studies that established a positive relationship between inclusive leaders and perceived organizational support argued that making workers count during indecision-making and eliminating discriminative barriers give employees hope of organizational support for their actions [30]. Inclusive leadership eliminate all kinds of bias against workers, enhance workers' involvement, send signals employees about their value to their organizations and how organizations hold them in high esteem [27].

Studies that produced negative relationships between inclusive leadership and perceived organizational support argued that inclusive leadership alone is not enough to make employees feel belonging [1], as other factors make employees gain the support of their organizations [16]. For example, some studies stated that firms need resources to enable employees to feel supported; hence inclusive leadership is not enough to influence perceived organizational support within organizations [31]. The uncertainty in the relationship between the constructs of inclusive leadership and perceived organizational support made the relationship worth testing [27].

H2: Inclusive Leadership Has Positive Effect On Perceived Organizational Support.

2.3 Perceived Organizational Support And Employees' Innovative Behavior.

Employees' innovative behavior remains valuable to organizations due to its impact on firms' performance in the competitive world [32]. Creating an assistive environment that enables workers to draw lessons from experience and what they learn on the job to develop, help them to come out with new procedures and products [17]. when implemented properly, these procedures and products are key to an organization's competitiveness [33]. Nevertheless, the key issue of perceived organizational support must be addressed for employees to exhibit such innovative behavior [34].

Perceived organizational support for employees remains key in influencing employees' innovations [17]. The term perceived organizational support has mostly been limited to providing financial incentives to company workers, with several organizations perceiving the provision of employees with what is legally due them as the highest form of organizational support to employees [35]. Several studies evaluated perceived organizational support by recognizing employees' output and the symbolic mental image that employees hold that my firms will come to my aid when the need arises. Again, employees perceive that their companies view them as part of the organization's asset rather than merely a waged worker [36].

Perceived organizational support includes fairness being demonstrated in the workplace, managers, and supervisors showing human face to workers, providing an incentive to employees and their families, rewarding their efforts, and creating psychological acceptance for workers' mistakes, which gives workers the edge to take personal initiatives aimed at bringing out their talent at workplaces [3] and [4].

Largely perceived supports given to workers by their organizations help to eliminate or reduce the fear of being punished for making mistakes [17]; hence employees are eager to come out with new ways of doing things [38]. The effect of perceived organizational support for employees on their innovative behavior also emanates from the fact that organizational support help in creating the environment for personal initiative due to its influence in reducing technical barriers at work [39].

They were merely listening to employees and giving them attention to indicate their needs being handled, influencing the feeling of organizational support. However, not all employees' desires can be fulfilled by organizations [40]. For perceived organizational support to influence employees' innovative behaviors, leaders of firms must measure the volume of support given to employees from the employees' perspective instead of the organizational perspective since there exist a conflict of value evaluation [39]. Thus, on the one hand, the organization perceived their contribution to employees' well-being as greater than the value employees assign to the support the organization offered them [41].

Studies have established a positive relationship between perceived organizational support and employees' innovative behavior, as most studies were conclusive that perceived organizational support positively affects employees' innovative behavior [42].

H3: Perceived Organizational Support Has Positive Effects On Employees' Innovative Behavior.

2.4. Mediating Effects of Perceived Organizational support on the Relationship between Inclusive Leadership and Innovative Behavior.

Organizational support influences employees' social contracts with an organization [39]. Though many firms see the physical aspect of what they offer their employees, some employees become emotional when what the firm provides them exceed their expectation or when firms offer support to employees in some personal situations [38]. For example, employees expect firms to pay their salaries regularly and put in bonuses when they go the extra mile, but they do not expect firms to pay their domestic bills; hence employees are likely to become emotional when firms get to such realms [37].

Traditionally, the support firms offer employees is well known, and most organizations are developing methods to build emotional connections between firms and their employees as such support influences employee retention and creativeness [1]. Organizational support has been the influential driver of employees' innovative behaviours as it gives the employees the hope that firms will support them in their creative efforts with the needed resources [41]. Since innovative processes come with challenges that can result in resource wastages, organization support provides that cushion for employees to build the confidence that should they waste resources in their innovative attempts, firms will still appreciate their efforts [42].

For organizational support to be effective, studies have established that firms need to adopt an inclusive leadership style that drives the notion that all employees are important to the organization and are involved in decision-making at various levels [44]. The key role perceived organization support play in both inclusive leadership and innovative behaviour in firms made perceived organizational support mediating variable in the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative behavior [45].

Perceived organizational support has received attention as a suitable mediator between inclusive leadership and innovative behavior in several social science research [46]. Perceived organizational support is a major study variable in employees' innovation and inclusive leadership, as inclusive leadership enhances organizational support that, in effect, promotes employees' innovative behavior [47].

Though inclusive leadership can directly improve employees' innovative behavior as shown in several studies [1], other experts in the field of management studies see organizational support as a tool that can help enhance the existing relationship between inclusive leadership and innovation when explored well [41]. Based on the above literature, the hypothesis below was developed.

H4: Perceived Organizational Support Mediates The Relationship Between Inclusive Leadership And Innovative Behavior.

2.5. Moderating Effects of Psychological Safety on Other Relationships.

Creating enabling environment that reduces the fear of people taking personal risks is important to employees' task performance [5]. Psychological safety is a vital tool for employees demonstrating innovative behavior at their workplaces because workers are assured that they will not be victimized should their attempt to be innovative result in negative outcomes [43]. Psychological safety is defined as designing work environments to encourage, reward and document workers' contributions in forms that influence personal and team eagerness to be innovative [48]. Psychological safety is built on the belief that outspoken workers will not be punished, embarrassed or victimized [49].

In totality, psychological safety drives managers and leaders of firms to accept workers' views and encourage them to express their perceptions no matter how negative or positive they are [50]. Eliminating the barrier of control of workers' feelings and emotions allows workers to come out with personal or group innovations and implement them for organizational development [51].

Studies have established that the shared belief that people can speak without being victimized is a major concept of psychological safety and its impacts on inclusive leaders and organizational support are very significant [1]. Perceived psychological safety has been the ground for several managerial variables to drive; hence, it has been used as moderating variable in several studies. Building workers' mental fitness is paramount to any other steps organizations embark on [1]. Experts in management and other social sciences mostly point out for members to examine employees' psychological safety as fear of victimization derails the social contracts employees have with their organizations [1].

Psychological safety moderates the relationship between inclusive leadership and perceived organizational support based on this reason; though studies establish fewer effects of psychological safety on inclusive leadership or organizational support, experts have agreed that psychological safety provides fertile ground for such a relationship to be effective. Hence its use as moderating variable [1].

The strength of psychological safety employees attain in an organization is a determinant of their satisfaction with perceived organizational support and their ability to practice innovative behavior [53]. The moderating effects of psychological safety tend to strengthen the impact of organizational support on innovative behavior or reduce the effects of organizational support on innovative behavior [54]. Using psychological safety as the starting point, researchers are conclusive that relationships between perceived organizational support, exclusive leadership and innovative behavior should be viewed through workers' psychological safety perception [16]. The value of psychological safety in driving other relationships in social science made it useful in moderating other relationships [55].

H5: Psychological Safety Moderate The Relationship Between Inclusive Leadership And Perceived Organizational Support.

H6: Psychological Safety Moderate The Relationship Between Inclusive Leadership Innovative Behaviors.

The above hypotheses are represented on the conceptual framework below.

2.6. Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

The figure below show diagrammatic connectivity of how variables are connected to form various relationships within the study. The entire hypothesis are depicted on the conceptual framework diagram.

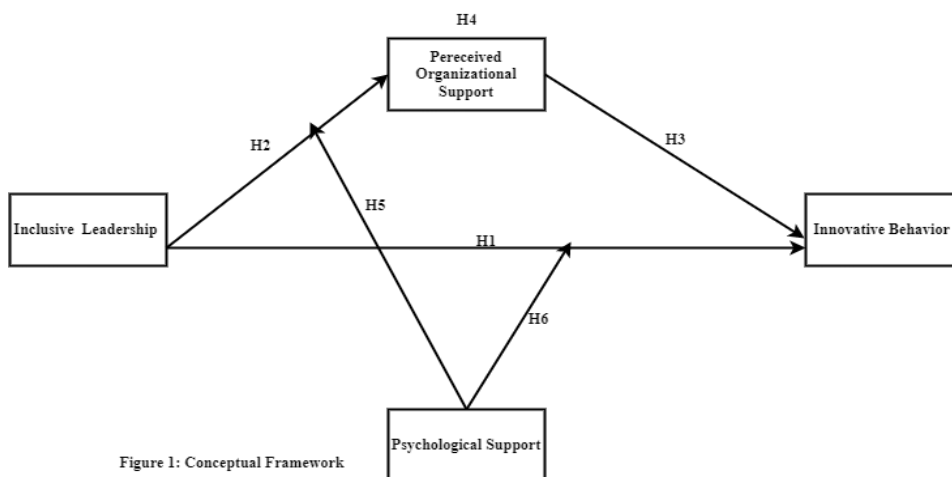


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Measures

3.1.1. Inclusive Leadership

The Inclusive leadership was measured with 9-items from [56], and the respondents accessed with five-point Likert scales ranging from (not at all – a large extent).

Psychological Safety

The construct of psychological safety was also accessed using 5 items from [56]; the respondents were made to assess their psychological safety on a 5-point scale from (not at all to a large extent). Detailed items are provided in the appendix.

3.1.2. Perceived Organizational Support

The researchers measured perceived organizational support with 6-items from [57]. The researchers accessed the respondents on a 7-point scale from ("1 = strongly disagree", "7 = strongly")

3.1.3. Innovative Behavior

Employees' innovative behavior was measured with 6 items adopted from [58]; these items were used in several studies in the fields of health and entrepreneurship.

3.2. Data Collection and Sampling.

The researchers adopted a stratified sampling technique for data collection by selecting respondents from the three-government department in the capital cities of Zimbabwe. In each department, 128 respondents who have worked there for more than 2 years were required to fill out the online questionnaires; therefore, 384 respondents participated in the study. Telephone numbers were provided for respondents to seek clarification about any ambiguity.

The respondents were informed about their right to opt out of the study at will, and other respondents were contacted as some of them opted out of the study. The researchers monitored the online platforms until the data collection process was done.

3.3. Data Analysis

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS-AMOS Version 23) was used to analyze data; research instruments were validated by checking the factor loading of how each latent variable measures the constructs, Cronbach alpha (α), composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of constructs were all checked to meet the minimum thresholds. Sample validity was tested using (KMO and Bartlett's Test). Finally, the correlation was employed to check relationships between variables, while a hierarchical linear regression model was used to test the hypotheses. The hierarchical linear regression model is preferred due to its usefulness in testing the effects of each different relationship (Fathian-Dastgerdi et al., 2021 and W. Wang & Ahoto, 2022).

4. STUDY RESULT

4.1. Background Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 410 respondents responded to the questionnaire, out of which 384 were used for the analysis, as the rest were not properly filled. The majority, 57.3%, were male, while the rest were females, 86.7% hold various degree certificates, and the rest hold diplomas. The majority of 65.5% have being working at their departments for more than 5years, and the rest were working at their departments between 2years to 5 years. The relationship status of respondents ranges from 73.8% married or engaged and the rest single.

4.2. Initial Analysis

Table one below shows the correlation between the variables, the means, and the standard deviation. The result shows that most of the variables are correlated.

Table 1: Correlations between the Variables.

		Mean	Std	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Age	3.35	0.928	1							
2	Gen	1.39	0.488	-0.169**	1						
3	Edu	2.95	0.918	0.233**	-0.269**	1					
4	Due	3.24	1.017	0.752**	-0.195**	0.220**	1				
5	IL	2.1621	0.78772	-0.053	-0.116*	0.035	-0.001	1			
6	PS	2.6922	0.80650	0.053	0.026	0.039	-0.017	-0.457**	1		
7	POS	2.2625	0.79804	-0.083	-0.042	-0.001	-0.023	0.493**	-0.425**	1	
8	WEB	2.9176	1.01827	-0.037	0.006	-0.081	-0.033	0.177**	-0.140**	0.118**	1

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; Gen= Genda; Dur = Duration; IL=Inclusive Leadership; POS=Perceived Organizational Support; PS= Psychological Safety; EIB = Employees Innovative Behavior

4.3. Measurement Models

The researchers conducted Reliability and internal consistency tests for the data by checking their Cronbach alpha (a) Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The Cronbach alpha for inclusive leadership is .863; psychological safety .856, perceived organizational support .694, and employees' innovative behavior is .792. Composite Reliability was as follows inclusive leadership.736, psychological safety.732, perceived organizational support .885. Employee's innovative behavior.731. Last, the Average Variance Extracted for each of the constructs is as follows, inclusive leadership was .663, psychological safety was .44, perceived organizational support was .854, and Employee's innovative behavior was .655. All constructs met the minimum thresholds for internal consistency and data reliability [60]. All factor loadings below 0.6 were deleted as specified by [61]

Table 2: Measurement Models

Constructs And Factors	Codes	Factor Loading	a	CR	AVE
Inclusive Leadership	IL1	.751	.863	.736	.663
	IL2	.763			
	IL3	.886			
	IL4	.753			
	IL5	.688			
	IL6	.931			
	IL7				
	IL8				
	IL9				
Psychological Safety	PS1	.697	.856	.732	.644
	PS2	.862			
	PS3	.846			
	PS4	.891			
	PS5	.783			
Perceived Organizational Support	POS1	.953	.694	.885	.854
	POS2	.781			
	POS3	.766			
	POS4	.853			
	POS5	.697			
Employees Innovative Behavior	EIB1	.873	.792	.731	.655
	EIB2	.892			
	EIB3	.657			
	EIB4	.853			
	EIB5	.784			
	EIB6	.767			

Key: a=Cronbach alpha, CR =Composite Reliability, AVE= Average Variance Extracted

4.4. Sample Validity Test

Sampling dependency and data suitability were tested using Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test. Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test produced the result of a value of 0.91, which was above the minimum threshold of 0.5. Bartlett's test was significant at 0.000, also below the 0.05 required with a P-value of 0.000; a Chi-square of 1468.723 at 120 degrees of freedom indicated the sample satisfied all the validity requirements [62].

4.5. Hypotheses Testing (Testing For Direct and Mediating Effects)

The results of hypotheses one to four testing were presented on various models in Table 3. Using the respondents' demography as control variables in modelD of table 3, the result of hypothesis 1 is presented in model1 of table3. It indicated that Inclusive Leadership (IL) positively affects employees' Innovative Behavior (IB) ($b = .488; p < 0.05$); hence hypothesis 1 is supported. Hypothesis 2 was tested in the model2 table3, and the results indicated that Inclusive Leadership (IL) positively affects employees' Perceived Organizational Support (POS) ($b = .264; p < 0.005$), indicating that hypothesis 2 is supported. Hypothesis 3 testing result was presented in model 3 in table 3. The results show that Organizational Support (POS) positively affect employees' Innovative Behavior (IB) ($b = .563; p < 0.005$), hence hypothesis 3 is supported. Model 4, in table 4, represents hypothesis 4, which examines the mediating effects of perceived Organizational Support on the relationship between Inclusive Leadership and employees' Innovative Behavior. The result shows that perceived Organizational Support mediates the relationship between Inclusive Leadership and employees' Innovative Behavior. The mediation was indicated in model 4 because both Inclusive Leadership and Innovative Behavior variables remained significant when perceived Organizational Support was introduced into the relationship with some coefficient changes. Again, the R square change on the model substantially depicted the presence of mediation.

Table 3: Testing For Direct and Mediating Effects

Variables	Modell Innovative Behavior	Model2 Innovative Behavior	Model4 Organizational Support	Model1 Innovative Behavior	Model2 Innovative Behavior
	B*(t)	B*(t)	B*(t)	B*(t)	B*(t)
(Constant)	2.622***(9.113)	4.004**(5.375)	2.361***(3.565)	1.162***(4.285)	3.744***(13.583)
Age	-.215*(-2.605)	.254(1.422)	.024*(.137)	-.118(-1.700)	-.122*(-1.687)
Gender	-.058(-.594)	-.122*(-1.687)	.021(.203)	.046(.571)	-.033(-.388)
Education	.006(-.119)	-.033(-.388)	.025(.201)	-.011(-.252)	.030(.648)
Duration	.142*(1.926)	.030(.648)	8(-1.803)	.076(1.237)	.061(.947)
IL		.488**(9.814)	.264**(3.1651)		.369***(7.648)
POS				.563**(11.543)	.361*(2.682)
R square	.024*	.421**	.324**	.323*	.321**
Adjusted R	.0431*	.311**	.067**	.412*	.311**
R2 change	.024*	.331**	.046**	.523*	.331**

KEY: β =beta, t =t-value * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, IL=Inclusive Leadership; POS=Perceived Organizational Support; PS =Psychological Safety; IB= Innovative Behavior;

4.6. Hypotheses Testing (Testing For Moderating Effects)

The result of hypotheses 5 and 6 are presented in the table4 below; hypothesis 5 result was presented in model 1 of table 4, and it indicates that Psychological Safety (PS) moderate the relationship between Inclusive Leadership (IL) and Perceived Organizational Support (POS) ($b = .142; p < 0.001$). Hypothesis 6 was tested on the model2 of table 4, and the result shows that Psychological Safety (PS) moderates the relationship between inclusive Leadership (IL) and employees' innovative behavior (IN) ($b = .154; p < 0.001$).

Table 4: Testing For Moderating Effects

Variables	Model1 Perceived Organizational Support	MODEL2 Innovative Behavior
	B* (t)	B* (t)
(Constant)	1.579***(10.923)	1.344***(17.044)
Age	-.006*(-.187)	-.011(-.588)
Gender	.016(.406)	-.034(-1.528)
Education	.031(1.435)	.030(2.540)
Duration	.019(.620)	.019(1.153)
PS*IL	.142***(23.237)	
PS*IL		.154***(51.403)
R ²	.651***	.901***
Adjusted R ²	.644***	.899***
R ² change	.651***	.901***

KEY: β =beta, t =t-value * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, PS= Psychological Safety; IL=Inclusive Leadership; POS=Perceived Organizational Support; IB=Innovative Behavior

5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Innovation has become a key determinant of firms' success since many organizations are competing to satisfy the changing demands of customers (Osman et al., 2015 and Deshpande, 2012). Though some firms can survive by playing the role of market follower, organizations that desire to lead in the market by building a solid brand image need to be competitive, and innovation remains the only path to secure the role of market leader [2]. This study explores the role of inclusive leadership, perceived organizational support, employees, and psychological safety employees on employees' innovative behavior in the public sector [5].

The study's outcome shows that inclusive leaders promote innovative behaviors among employees [1]. This result is similar to the findings of [5] in the public sectors of some countries in sub-Saharan African countries [63]. The effects of inclusive leadership on employees' creativity is not a new phenomenon since inclusive leadership helps remove barriers that affect effective communication and bring the best out of workers [2]. Inclusive leadership enhances the ability of workers to form teams that enable workers to bring their efforts together to bring out new models that are useful to organizational competitiveness [6] and [7].

Other studies that established a relationship between inclusive leadership and employees' innovative behavior provide evidence that inclusive leaders reduce stigma, abuse, and the feeling of workers being excluded from firms' decision-making processes [65]. Hence, inclusive leaderships drive innovativeness in workers, as they can communicate with management and leaders of their organizations with ease [8] and [9].

However, exclusive leadership has been identified as promoting employees' innovative behaviors, but the ability for firms to practice exclusive leadership mostly comes with challenges [66]. Creating an environment that meets employees' perception of being part of decision-making at different levels remains a challenge since some negative practices that make employees feel neglected may not come from management [10]. Some studies have pointed out that it is not enough for management to create an enabling environment for inclusive leadership; management must help reduce some intimidating attitudes among employees to impede the innovativeness of their co-workers [67].

Organizational support is a crucial influencer of employees' innovativeness. Management of firms should create that psychological understanding of employees, knowing that their organizations always have their back should their attempt to innovate produce unsatisfactory results [11] and [12]. The study established that inclusive leadership positively influences perceived organizational support among employees [65]. The effects of inclusive leadership on organizational support have produced positive results in some studies and negative results in others [13]and [14].

For studies to produce positive results indicate that management or an organization is building an environment that meets the needs of workers [1]. On the hand, workers have come to accept that their firms can provide relief for them under challenging times [15] and [16]. Employees are confident that their organizations will support them with the needed resources to carry out their innovative ideas and edge them to more [17]. The kinds of organizational support that drive innovation can be psychological or physical and studies have shown that workers need both psychological and physical organizational support to be innovative [18]. Nonetheless, providing materials needed by employees within an organization is very important for employees to be innovative [5]; firms must not ignore the personal support needs of employees since the support that drives employees to come out with innovation is not only physical but can be psychological as well [19]. Apart from inclusive leadership promoting perceived organizational support that shows workers' appreciation for firms including them in decision-making, the study also established that perceived organizational support equally influences employees' innovative behavior [20] and [21]. This made perceived organizational support paramount in improving employees' ability to come out with innovation [2].

To innovate calls for resources because the innovation processes might generate some waste before the innovation becomes useful [22]. Studies have revealed globally that firms with massive resources are innovative and the innovation drive them to be market leaders [23]. Though some of these innovations may not come from their employees, firms need that human and material resource capacity to support emerging technological processes [5]. In this vain, whether the innovation is coming from within or outside the firms, perceived organizational support is key factors in adopting or developing and implementing innovation within firms [68].

Perceived organizational support depicts the perception of employees' about the readiness of their firms to come to their aid at all times [65]. The value of Perceived organizational support on employees' innovativeness is also shown through its mediating effects on other relationships [66]. Perceived organizational support was introduced as a mediator between the relationship of inclusive leadership and employees innovative behavior and the result show partial mediation [2]. The partial mediating effects of perceived organizational support in the relationship between inclusive leadership and employees innovative behavior attested to how perceived organizational support is effective when used in indirect and direct relationship in studies that have to do with employees innovative behavior and leaderships [68].

Psychological safety focused on employees' freedom of expression was used to moderate the relationship between inclusive leadership and perceived organization support and the relationship between inclusive leadership and employees' innovative behavior. In both relationships, full moderation was attained. The moderating effects of psychological safety on such relationships have been established in other studies investigating inclusive leadership, perceived organizational support, and employees' innovative behavior in management fields [24]. The moderating effects of psychological safety on these relationships also indicate that adopting open communication and expression by organizations can shape employees' innovative behavior [69].

6. CONCLUSION

The study delved into constructs that predict employees' innovative behavior in state firms in Zimbabwe. The results show that inclusive leadership has positive effects on employees' innovative behavior and perceived organizational support, while perceived organizational support also positively affects employees' innovative behavior. Perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative behavior. Further exploration of the variables also shows that psychological safety moderates the relationship between inclusive leadership and perceived organization support and the relationship between inclusive leadership and employees' innovative behavior.

7. THEORETICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Presently, many studies focus on the innovativeness of employees mainly in private-sector firms. Nevertheless, researchers are beginning to establish the need for workers in the public sector to be innovative as nations put in measures to have a competitive edge over one another. This study accounts for how inclusive leaders, perceived organizational support, and psychological safety influence employees' innovative behavior in developing countries.

The study's theoretical significance emanated from the fact that though there are several studies on the topic, fewer researchers focused on sub-Sahara Africa; hence the study has provided theoretical information about countries in Africa in line with employees' innovative behavior. The subject of inclusive leadership, perceived organizational support, and psychological safety has been examined from the perspective of developing African countries. This is theoretically significant, as it has added specifics of Zimbabwe to the research theory.

8. PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The findings provide enough support that inclusive leadership and perceived organizational support positively predict employees' innovative behavior. This implied that the management of organizations must recognize the effort every worker under their control to make the workers feel they are essential to the organization. Again, practical steps should be taken to remove all forms of discrimination in the workplace. Management must design structures that protect junior workers or minority tribes at workplaces from being abused by their colleagues from the majority tribes. Finally, the organization should provide the needed tools, equipment, and other support that will enable workers to put their innovative ideas into practice. The policy of openness that influences employees to voice their feelings must be enhanced to provide that needed psychological safety for employees.

9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Though the researchers employed a stratified sampling method to select respondents from different segments of the civil service department in Zimbabwe, the sample size is not large enough. It is assumed that a larger sample size could yield results that represent the research population. Nonetheless, the sample size is not much. The sample selection process was rigorous enough to reduce the effects of a smaller sample size on the study.

10. FUTURE RESEARCH

The researchers recommended future research on how to improve employees' innovative behavior in public sectors of countries in Africa using a larger sample size or qualitative techniques to delve deeper into some specific issues that have to do with employees' innovation, inclusive leadership, organizational support and psychological safety of employees. Again, future studies on the subject must consider the possibility of cross-national research, which will use data collected from two or more African countries. This will enable regional policy development on how to boost employees' innovativeness through inclusive leadership, organizational support, and psychological safety in workplaces in sub-Saharan Africa.

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APPENDIX 1

Variables, sources and codes

Constructs And Factors	Codes
Inclusive Leadership source (Carmeli et al, 2010)	
The manager is open to hearing new ideas (openness)	IL1
The manager is attentive to new opportunities to improve work processes (openness)	IL2
The manager is open to discuss the desired goals and new ways to achieve them (openness)	IL3
The manager is available for consultation on problems (availability)	IL4
The manager is an ongoing 'presence' in this team—someone who is readily available (availability)	IL5
The manager is available for professional questions I would like to consult with him=her (availability)	IL6
The manager is ready to listen to my requests (availability)	IL7
The manager encourages me to access him=her on emerging issues (accessibility)	IL8
The manager is accessible for discussing emerging problems (accessibility)	IL9
Psychological Safety source (Muhammad et al., 2022)	
I am able to bring up problems and tough issues	PS1
People in this organization sometimes reject others for being different	PS2
It is safe to take a risk in this organization	PS3
It is easy for me to ask other members of this organization for help	PS4
No one in this organization would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts	PS5
Perceived Organizational Support: source (Meija-Morelos (2019).)	
The organization takes pride in my environmental accomplishments at work	POS1
My colleague really cares about my view on the environment".	POS2
My welfare is very important to the organization	POS3
My basic needs of my family were sometimes enquired by the organization	POS4
Safety of my work environment is important to the organization	POS5
Employees Innovative Behavior Source: (Scott & Bruce, 1994)	
While working in this institution, I have come up with innovative and creative notions	EIB1
While working in this institution, I try to propose my creative ideas and convince others.	EIB2
While working in this institution, I seek new service techniques, methods, or techniques	EIB3
While working in this institution, I provide a suitable plan for developing new ideas.	EIB4
While working in this institution, I try to secure the funding and resources needed to implement innovations.	EIB5
Overall, I consider myself a creative member of my team in this department.	EIB6