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Driving Success: The role of inclusive leadership in fuelling employee performance through the mediating role of job motivation

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The study aims to contribute to the literature on inclusive leadership by establishing and testing the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee outcomes i.e., task performance and innovative work behaviour. The study further seeks to establish the mediating role of job motivation in the said association.

Design and Methodology: The study used a quantitative research methodology to test the hypothesis and derive conclusions. Survey-based data was collected from 164 managerial and non-managerial level employees from IT sector organizations in the twin cities of Punjab province, Pakistan. The collected data was analysed through the statistical software SPSS to generate findings that support the established hypothesis.

Findings: The results confirmed several key relationships. Inclusive leadership not only directly improves innovative work behaviour but also plays a crucial role in enhancing job motivation, ensuring employees feel valued and motivated. This motivated state of employees is linked to enhanced innovative work behaviour, reinforcing the notion that motivated employees contribute significantly to organizational success. However, the study reveals non-significant direct and indirect relationship of inclusive leadership with employee task performance.

Implications: The research will provide IT sector organizations with detailed comprehension into the dynamics of leadership style and its subsequent impact on employee motivation and workplace behaviours.

Keywords: Inclusive leadership, job motivation, task performance, innovative workplace behaviour.

1. Introduction

Several factors, including the rise in multicultural teams, foreign investments, and shifting societal views in the workforce, drive organizations to recognize diversity and inclusion as essential

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to improving organizational performance (Kuknor et al., 2023). In a workforce where variances abound, leaders find it challenging to value and harness these distinctions to improve organizational performance (Roberson & Perry, 2022). At the same time, scholars and management acknowledge that it is not just about diversity; a company's approach to managing diversity influences whether diversity initiatives have positive or negative outcomes (Morris, 2023). Therefore, businesses now concentrate on how their structures and processes are set up to recognize and capitalize on the diversity of their workforce, including removing barriers to enable employee's full involvement and contribution (Roberson & Perry, 2022).

Both experts and practitioners agree that inclusion is important in order for a firm to maintain a competitive standing and the well-being of its workforce (Korkmaz et al., 2024). Therefore, it is anticipated that inclusive leadership techniques improve employee motivation and superior performance throughout organizations (Dogru, 2023). Leaders influence how employees feel, think and behave in the workplace (Khan & Iqbal, 2023). In a highly competitive environment such as in the services sector, one can only agree with the notion that innovation and the involvement of its workers can be a company's primary source of competitive precedence. As a result, businesses must adopt and support leadership styles that inspire people to acquire the drive required to succeed and bring about constructive change in the organization. An inclusive leader, characterized by mindfulness, admiration and receptiveness, appreciates subordinates' input, increases trustworthiness and provides emotional support that improves their innovative work behaviour (Khan & Iqbal, 2023) and job performance (Qurrahtulain et al., 2022). Such leaders are required in organizations as they provide a favourable workplace environment by making employees feel special, thus promoting the freedom of expression, creativity and, subsequently, performance (Randel et al., 2018). It is established in the literature that inclusive leadership has a positive relationship with different organizational variables. Inclusive leaders increase people's belongingness and support their opinions, which in turn increases innovative behaviour (Randel et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011) and creativity among employees (Shah et al., 2021). Carmeli et al. (2010) noted that positive relationships exist between inclusive leadership practices and employees' firm commitment and engagement as key indicators of the high levels of performance required to function effectively in the IT sector. Wang et al. (2016) point out that inclusive leadership in IT firms establishes a culture of respect and collaboration, which ultimately boosts the team's innovation and efficiency.

Theoretical investigations demonstrate that the most effective leadership behaviours include integrating and transforming approaches to foster creativity and high productivity in the workplace (Tierney, 2024). This is important, especially in the context of Pakistan, where the growth of the IT sector depends on innovation skills and efficiency of engagement with employees. Prominent management theories show that encouragement and involvement of workers' ideas are promoted when leadership embraces supportive and participative styles in the workplace; this leads to higher satisfaction rates and active involvement in organizational creativity (Khan et al., 2020). Hunsaker and Ding (2022) stressed the need for leaders to involve diverse employees and listen to them to foster creativity. This creates a working environment where the employees are encouraged to make suggestions and assume some risk, which is critical in the dynamic IT business that requires constant

change and innovation. In the same regard, Suryanarayana (2023) noted that if the management encourages creativity and novel working styles, creativity improves, and job performance is enhanced in high-stress workplace environments. Studies carried out among the employees of IT firms have shown that information technology workers' heterogeneity should be harnessed through the role of inclusive leadership to enhance proactivity and innovation (Wang et al., 2016). Applying the conceptual framework of inclusive leadership in IT companies, (Wang et al., 2016) discovered that inclusive leadership boosts respect and cooperation climate in the teams that improve performance and innovation. Therefore, based on the increasing trend of research on inclusive leadership, the current research intends to extend prior research specifically in the context of the IT sector in Pakistan.

While significant technology-driven advances are being made in the IT sector, employee motivation and retention remain a cause of concern for the management. The discrepancy between leadership behaviours and how well they support an atmosphere at work that fosters employee engagement, creativity, and productivity is an important concern. Contemporary IT firms necessitate inclusive leadership techniques instead of top-down command-based traditional leadership models. Pertaining to the lack of inclusive leaders, Pakistani IT firms still have trouble inspiring and involving their staff in a way that fosters creativity and better work productivity. According to research, inclusive leaders can greatly increase team creativity and performance by fostering an atmosphere of psychological safety and respect (Carmeli et al., 2010). Nevertheless, there is still a lack of empirical data about the specific dynamics of Pakistani IT companies and how different leadership approaches impact them.

The existing literature on employee motivation highlights several gaps, particularly regarding inclusive leadership, job motivation, task performance, and employee innovative behaviour. One significant concern is the association between inclusive leadership and job performance. Research by Siyal (2023) sheds light on this relationship yet acknowledges that certain dimensions remain insufficiently explored. Firstly, the research highlights the lack of depth in existing studies about how inclusive leadership, as an independent variable, directly influences job motivation. This aspect is crucial as it forms the foundation for subsequent impacts on task performance and innovative behaviour. Understanding the dynamics of inclusive leadership is essential for firms that aim to cultivate a motivated work environment. Secondly, the mediating effect of job motivation between leadership practices and employee outcomes remains under-researched. This is specifically true in the unique context of Pakistan's IT sector, where the organization's dynamics might significantly influence these relationships. Finally, further empirical research is needed to better comprehend the variables' association. The extant literature primarily covers qualitative research from other industries and geographical areas, which may not adequately represent the context of Pakistan's IT industry (Farrukh et al., 2022; Khalid, 2021). This kind of research is required in the fast-paced IT industry to create dedicated strategies that improve organizational efficiency and leadership effectiveness.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Hypothesis Development

The research model investigates the association between inclusive leadership and job motivation, which in turn affects task performance and innovative work behaviour. To comprehend the theoretical basis of the research model, the current research employs the Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985). While SDT explores the intrinsic motivation driven by psychological needs, Expectancy theory focuses on extrinsic motivation. Hence, the two theories will be integrated to justify the research framework through a holistic perspective towards employee job motivation.

According to SDT, people inherently possess three basic psychological needs such as relatedness, competence, and autonomy. People who experience increased intrinsic motivation as a fulfilment of requirements have increased engagement, creativity, and performance outcomes. The need for autonomy is the sense of control over one's own choices and actions. When it comes to inclusive leadership, managers who provide staff members with a sense of autonomy are fostered by the ability to express one's opinions freely and take the initiative. Employees who feel trusted and acknowledged for their contributions have better levels of intrinsic motivation as a result of empowerment (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The need for competence relates to feeling capable and effective in reaching goals. By giving them chances to improve their abilities and praising their achievements, inclusive leaders encourage their team members. Employees who receive this kind of support feel more competent, which increases their inner urge to do well at work (Gagné & Deci, 2005). The need for relatedness is the need to have a sense of belonging. Open, approachable, and encouraging, inclusive leadership fosters a sense of community and respect for one. When employees have a connection to their group and company, there is a notable improvement in internal desire and dedication to their task (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). SDT demonstrates how inclusive leadership may foster an atmosphere that meets these psychological requirements and hence raises intrinsic motivation. More motivated employees feel more engaged and empowered to experiment with new ideas, which promotes innovative behaviour in addition to improving task performance (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Vroom's (1964) formulation of expectancy theory provides an alternative viewpoint on motivation. Vroom (1964) posits that motivation is contingent upon the anticipated consequences of one's activities and the relative importance accorded to those consequences. Three essential elements form the basis of the theory. The first is expectancy. It is the conviction that one's efforts will result in the intended performance level. In an inclusive leadership setting, managers establish clear guidelines and give staff members the tools and assistance they need to fulfil them. Employee motivation to work hard rises when they think their efforts will pay off in a successful performance (Vroom, 1964). The second is instrumentality. It indicates individual's expectations that a particular performance level will result in a particular consequence or reward. Fair recognition

and rewards for excellent performance are likely to be implemented by inclusive leaders. Employee motivation to perform well is increased when they perceive a clear connection between their efforts and the desired results (Vroom, 1964).

The third aspect of the theory is valence. The value that people assign to the incentives connected to their performance is known as valence. How employees view these benefits differs. Inclusive leaders acknowledge and accommodate the varied requirements and inclinations of their team members, making sure that the incentives provided hold significance and inspire them. Through comprehension and management of these elements, inclusive leadership may successfully increase employee motivation. When people think their efforts will pay off, they work harder and more enthusiastically on activities. Consequently, motivated workers are more likely to approach problems creatively and make significant contributions to the company, which improves task performance and innovative behaviour (Van Eerde & Thierry, 1996).

An understanding of how inclusive leadership affects task performance, creative behaviour, and job motivation can be obtained by combining expectancy theory and self-determination theory. While expectancy theory emphasizes expected outcomes' role in motivating an individual's effort and performance, SDT highlights the role of employees' psychological needs that increase intrinsic motivation. The two theories emphasize the role of leadership in furthering employee empowerment and involvement. Inclusive leadership fosters a culture of value, support, and motivation among employees. Such a workplace meets their necessities and directs their efforts towards shared or perhaps significant goals. This dual strategy guarantees that employees are driven by the gratification and enthusiasm they derive from their job as well as the advantages that their output yields, which foster creativity and increased production.

2.1 Inclusive leadership and Employee innovative behaviour

Leadership styles significantly impact the workplace culture and employee attitudes. The existing literature suggests that leaders influence an organization's culture and drive innovation by aligning resources and motivating employees to engage in creative processes (Mumford et al., 2023). Inclusive leadership, which emphasizes openness, accessibility, and a supportive atmosphere, is critical in empowering employees and encouraging diverse ideas and perspectives (Randel et al., 2018; Carmeli et al., 2010). Such a leadership style furthers employee-employer trust and respect, which facilitates psychological safety and allows employees to take risks without fearing negative consequences (Siyal, 2023).

Also, inclusive leadership significantly reduces relational silence, thereby enhancing innovative behaviour among employees (Wu et al., 2023). This is because open communication and a receptive leadership approach cultivate an innovative climate (Wu et al., 2023). Guo et al. (2023) highlight that inclusive leadership promotes job-crafting behaviours among employees, resulting in an increase in innovative work behaviour. We therefore hypothesize the following:

***H1a:** Inclusive leadership positively enhances employee innovative behaviour.*

2.2 Inclusive leadership and Task performance

Current research highlights the relationship between inclusive leadership and task performance, highlighting how leadership behaviours influence employee performance outcomes. The literature suggests that leaders directly affect organizational productivity and employee efficiency across different sectors (Khan & Mahmood, 2021).

Inclusive leadership positively impacts employee performance. Inclusive leadership, characterized by openness, not only enhances team dynamics but also improves individual task performance (Ali, 2022). This leadership style is particularly effective because it fosters an environment where all team members feel valued and supported, which is crucial for motivating employees to perform at their best (Fatima & Iqbal, 2023).

Gong et al. (2024) identified that inclusive leadership positively influences task performance through mechanisms such as resilience capacity and work meaningfulness. When leaders manage inclusively, they boost employees' resilience and perception of their work's meaningfulness, which in turn enhances their performance, especially in high-pressure situations (Gong et al., 2024). Self-determination theory (SDT) also suggests that inclusive leadership can fulfil employees' basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thereby enhancing their motivation and performance. On the other hand, Expectancy Theory states that inclusive leadership increases employees' expectations of achieving desirable performance outcomes, thus motivating them to improve their effort and commitment to task performance. We therefore hypothesize the following:

H1b: Inclusive leadership positively enhances task performance.

2.3 Inclusive leadership and Job motivation

Inclusive leadership promotes openness, availability, and a supportive attitude by creating a work environment where all employees feel involved and take active roles in their jobs. It is because, inclusive leaders foster job crafting, where employees tailor their tasks and interactions to fit their strengths and interests better. This adaptability, in turn, enhances their motivation and the team's overall innovative output (Guo et al., 2023). Additionally, inclusive leadership has been linked to higher psychological safety levels, which allows employees to express their ideas without fear of negative consequences, thus promoting greater engagement and motivation at work (Carmeli et al., 2010).

From a theoretical perspective, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Expectancy Theory provide frameworks for understanding these dynamics. SDT suggests that inclusive leadership meets employees' fundamental psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thereby enhancing their intrinsic motivation. Conversely, the Expectancy Theory states that inclusive leadership increases employees' expectations regarding rewards, thus boosting their motivation to perform. These findings are essential for organizations aiming to enhance employee

motivation and performance, particularly in workplace that require high levels of creativity and innovation (Chen, 2023). We therefore hypothesize the following:

H2: Inclusive leadership positively enhances job motivation.

2.4 Job motivation and Employee innovative behaviour

Various psychological and organizational factors contribute to employee job motivation and, hence, their innovative behaviour. Motivated employees exhibit higher levels of innovative behaviour, which is crucial for organizational growth and adaptability. Guo et al. (2023) highlights that inclusive leadership significantly fosters job crafting, which in turn enhances employee innovative work behaviour. This association emphasizes the role of leadership in facilitating environments where employees feel empowered to reshape their work experiences, thereby boosting their motivation and innovative outputs (Guo et al., 2023). In line with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Expectancy Theory, these findings illustrate how appropriate leadership styles can satisfy motivational needs and set clear expectations and rewards for innovative efforts. These theories help explain why environments characterized by inclusive leadership can enhance job motivation and thereby promote higher levels of innovation among employees. We therefore hypothesize the following:

H3a: Job motivation positively relates to employee innovative behaviour.

2.5 Job motivation and Task performance

Those employees who give their best so they can receive recognition are likely to perform tasks with high levels of accuracy. The main reason for this phenomenon is the fact that highly motivated people are more likely to start doing their work with increasing enthusiasm, constant effort and high ability to fight out even the most complicated difficulties (Ahmed & Mahmood, 2021). Additionally, when staff has the necessity, they are more engaged with its work, which eventually leads to better performance achievements (Khan & Siddiqui, 2022).

Moreover, other studies note that internal motivation which is internalized and originates from the feeling of the will to perform well, is the most informative factor and is even more likely to improve performance (Noviani, 2021; Setrojoyo, 2023). Workers who possess the internal drive may be more productive and skilfully demonstrate an outstanding accomplishment as they enjoy the inborn joy of doing work at a high level (Malik & Naeem, 2023). In addition, extrinsic motivation, relating to bonuses and promotions, confirms that the task performance rises, though this effect is more temporary compared with the intrinsic factors (Iqbal & Anwar, 2022). We therefore hypothesize the following:

H3b: Job motivation positively relates to task performance.

2.6 Mediating role of Job motivation

The mediating role of job motivation plays an important role in understanding which factors translate into increased organizational productivity, particularly within the dynamic organizational environment. Job motivation functions as the bridge that transforms personal and environmental factors into employee engagement, productivity, and, eventually, organizational outcomes (Tampubolon, 2017). Job motivation could be a critical intermediary variable in the link between employee recognition programs and productivity. Recognition, in addition to satisfying jobs, enhances motivation, which can increase job performance and productivity (Khalil & Abbas, 2022). It demonstrates that employees feel motivated to put forward more strategic efforts when their contributions are recognized.

Leadership styles, particularly those that are democratic and considerate, can also influence work motivation significantly (Rifaldi et al., 2019). This kind of approach provides staff with a greater feeling of autonomy and belonging, which in turn boosts their intrinsic motivation and ensures excellent execution of tasks and innovation. The mediating role of motivation for work here is critical as it helps see how leadership behaviour can indirectly affect organizational performance via first motivating employees (Javed & Rashid, 2023). Moreover, the function of work motivation in moderating the influences of work-life balance programs on an employee's productivity is becoming more apparent these days. When employees obtain a harmonious mix of work and personal life, the motivation for their job and, subsequently, the productivity level increase (Malik & Raheem, 2023). We therefore hypothesize the following:

H4a: Job motivation acts as a mediator in the relationship between inclusive leadership and task performance.

H4b: Job motivation acts as a mediator in the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative work behaviour.

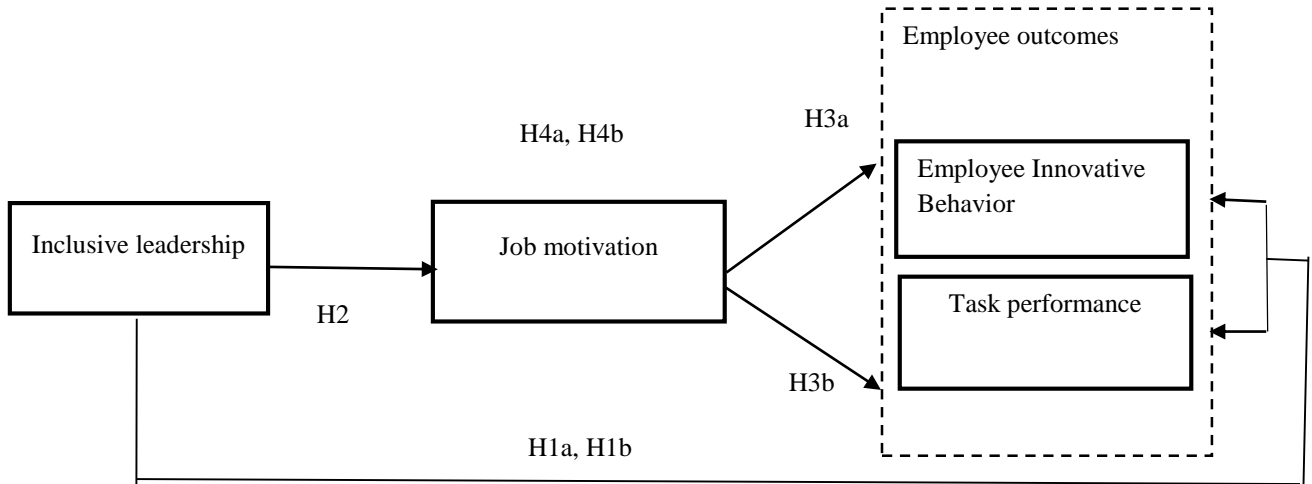


Figure 2.1. Research Model

3. Methodology

3.1 Population and Sampling

The current study utilized a cross-sectional approach (one-time explanatory data collection). A cross-sectional research design is a descriptive research strategy that allows researchers to analyse data from a population at a specific point in time (Babbie, 2017). Unlike longitudinal studies that examine data over a period, cross-sectional studies offer a snapshot, providing insights into the prevalence, characteristics, or other variables within a population at a single time (Fowler, 2013).

In this study, data collection is necessary to evaluate the hypothesis. Therefore, the target demographic for the study is the IT sector, more specifically the software houses in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. A total of 164 responses were received. The subjects of this study are employees in IT companies in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Considering the difficulty of gathering data from the whole population, G power software is used to determine the necessary sample size i.e., 128. As the focus of this study is to collect data from the employees of IT firms located in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, convenience sampling was utilized. This means participants were selected for the study because they were easy to reach and willing to contribute. This method is practical because it helps save money, makes organizing the study simpler, and lets researchers quickly get information from a group of people who are easy to find in the desired geographic area.

3.2 Research Instruments

All the responses of this research were measured by utilizing the five-point scale which ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). For this research, inclusive leadership was measured through a five-item scale by Al-Atwi and Al-Hassani (2021) with a sample item: “My leader is open to hearing new ideas”. Six items from Heritage et al. (2015) job motivation scale were used with a sample item: “I feel a sense of personal satisfaction when I do this job well”. Employee task performance was measured through a Four-item scale adapted by Bodla and Ningyu (2017). with a sample item: “I adequately complete assigned duties”. Employee innovative behaviour was measured through a six-item scale by Bani-Melhem (2018) with a sample item: “At work, I come up with innovative behaviour and creative notions”.

Table 3.1: Distribution of Instrument Variables

S. No	Variables	Items	Sources
1.	Inclusive Leadership	05	(Al-Atwi & Al-Hassani, 2021)
2.	Job motivation	06	(Heritage et al., 2015)
3.	Employee task performance	04	(Bodla & Ningyu, 2017)
4.	Employee innovative behaviour	06	(Bani-Melhem, 2018)

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Statistical Analysis

The data analysis comprised two steps. In the first step, a preliminary analysis was conducted, and in the second step, linear regression modelling was performed.

4.2 Demographic Analysis and Descriptive statistics

The demographic variables in the dataset include age, gender, and years of experience. Among the age group, the largest subset is the 20-30-year age group, which constitutes 99 (60.4%)

participants, and the next is 58 (35.4%) participants who are 30-40-year-olds while the remaining 7 (4.27%) participants are in the 40-50 years age bracket. Females comprise the majority of the sample, i.e., 105 participants (64%), while males comprise 59 participants (36%). The professional experience shows that employees fall in the range of 1-3 years (81, 49.3%), 4-6 years (46, 28%), and 7-9 years (37, 22%).

4.3 Preliminary Data Analysis

Table 4.1: Reliability

Variables	Cronbach Alpha	Items
Inclusive Leadership	0.792	5
Job Motivation	0.936	6
Innovative Behaviour	0.958	6
Task Performance	0.949	4

Cronbach's alpha is a measure that relates to internal consistency and which estimates how close to each other are the items of a given construct. Like any other established instrument, inclusive leadership has a Cronbach alpha of 0.792, job motivation of 0.936, innovative behaviour of 0.958 and task performance yields a coefficient of 0.949, indicating great internal reliability.

4.4 Correlation analysis

Table 4.2: Correlation

		Inclusive Leadership	Job Motivation	Innovative Behaviour	Task Performance
Inclusive Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	0.931**	0.937**	0.845**

	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	164	164	164	164
	Pearson Correlation	0.931**	1	0.956**	0.807**
Job Motivation	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000
	N	164	164	164	164
	Pearson Correlation	0.937**	0.956**	1	0.879**
Innovative Behaviour	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000
	N	164	164	164	164
	Pearson Correlation	0.845**	0.807**	0.879**	1
Task Performance	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	164	164	164	164

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table4.3: Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta	SE	T value	P	LLCI	ULCI	Decision
values								
H1a	IL-IB	0.3688	0.0608	6.0668	0.000	0.2487	0.4888	Accepted
H1b	IL-TP	0.6687	0.1090	6.1334	0.000	0.4534	0.8841	Accepted
H2	IL-JM	0.9853	0.0303	32.995	0.000	0.9255	1.0454	Accepted
H3a	JM-IB	0.6368	0.0575	11.0183	0.000	0.5233	0.7502	Accepted
H3b	JM-TP	0.1345	0.1031	1.3055	0.1936	-0.0690	0.3381	Rejected
H4a	IL-JM-IB	0.6274	0.0686			-0.4798	0.7498	Accepted
H4b	IL-JM-TP	0.1326	0.1152			0.1094	0.3403	Rejected

All the correlations are found to be statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). The results of the exploratory factor analysis demonstrated a significant positive relationship between the study variables.

4.5 Hypothesis Testing

N=164, IL= Innovative Leadership, JM= Job Motivation, TP= Task Performance, IB= Innovative Behaviour

We employed regression analysis to test the hypothesized relationships between the independent and dependent variables. The findings of the study are outlined in Table 4.3. The results accept H1a as there is significant positive direct effect of IL on IB ($\beta = 0.3688$, $t = 6.0668$, $p > 0.01$). The results also show acceptance for H1b as significant direct relationship exists between IL and TP ($\beta = 0.6687$, $t = 6.1334$, $p > 0.01$). There is an overall support for H2 as IL positively impacts JM ($\beta = .9853$, $t = 32.995$, $p < 0.01$). The findings show support for H3a as JM has a significant positive impact on IB. Table 4.3 shows that H3a is accepted ($\beta = .6368$, $t = 11.0183$, $p < 0.01$). The findings reject H3b such that JM has a positive association with TP ($\beta = .1345$, $t = 1.3055$, $p > 0.01$). Process Macro was used to conduct the mediation analysis. The results in Table 4.3 suggest a mediating effect of JM between the relationship of IL and JB. The bootstrapped confidence interval (0.4798 to 0.7498) further indicates that this mediated effect is significant since the confidence

interval is not equal to zero. The indirect impact of JM through IL on TP is depicted in Table 4.3. There is no significant positive mediation as indicated by the confidence interval (-0.1094 to 0.3403). Hence, H4a is accepted and H4b is not supported.

5. Discussion

Based on the empirical findings, some key insights can be made that are consistent with the proposed hypothesis. First, based on the above research findings, the hypothesis (H1a and H1b), which posited that inclusive leadership enhances employee task performance and innovative behaviour, is supported. Positive leadership style and employee inclusion lead to positive employee outcomes in terms of improved performance and innovative behaviour. This is consistent with past literature (e.g., Mumford et al., 2023; Siyal, 2023; Wu et al., 2023), which states the positive impact of inclusive leadership on employee creativity and innovative behaviour. At the same time, the research findings are congruent with existing literature that supports the inclusive leadership-task performance relationship (e.g., Ali, 2022; Gong et al., 2024). Secondly, H2 proposed that inclusive leadership is a key determinant of job motivation. Inclusive leadership enhances job motivation by creating a perception that individuals are valued among employees. Inclusive leaders who make their employees feel valued considerably influence their motivation levels. The findings align with the current literature, which confirms the relationship between inclusive leadership and job motivation (Chen, 2023; Crameli et al., 2010). Further, the hypothesis laid out in the research, the H3a hypothesis, supports that high job motivation results in higher levels of innovative behaviour among employees. However, no significant impact of job motivation on employee task performance is shown. Hence, H3b is rejected. This could be because interest or motivation on one task may lead employees to perceive the other as negative.

While motivation increases pull toward working on one task, it may create a push away from interest in other tasks, ultimately decreasing the overall task performance (Shin & Grant, 2019). Hence, H3a is supported while H3b is rejected. The research hypothesis H4a and H4b posits the mediating role of job motivation in the inclusive leadership-task performance and inclusive leadership-innovative work behaviour relationship, respectively. H4a is supported, and H4b is not supported. The significant mediation effect of job motivation between inclusive leadership and innovative behaviour affirms the extant literature (e.g., Javed & Rashid, 2023; Tampubolon, 2017). The non-significant mediating role of job motivation between inclusive leadership and task performance could be in a multiple-task environment wherein passion towards one task may impact the motivation towards the other, overall neutralizing the effect of motivation on task performance (Shin & Grant, 2019). Hence, the more the leaders empower employees towards one task, the less the resulting impact on other tasks.

5.1 Implications of the Study

5.1.1 Theoretical Implications

Literature (e.g., Choi et al., 2017; Randel et al., 2018; Umrani et al., 2024) has underscored the importance of expanding upon the literature on inclusive leadership and employee-level outcomes. However, the role of inclusive leadership in the Pakistani context remains relatively under-researched. Therefore, the findings of this study provide significant theoretical advances in inclusive leadership literature and provide context-specific insights. Conducted in Pakistan's dynamic IT sector, the results demonstrate that inclusive leadership functions as a source of motivation in a setting that values continuous innovation. Our study extends the existing inclusive leadership-employee outcome theoretical models to a non-Western, technology-driven context. At the same time, the current study supports the relationship of inclusive leadership with job motivation and innovative behaviour by integrating two theoretical bases, that are expectancy theory and self-determination theory. The integrative perspective of the theories above has not been studied as such. This provides an additional avenue for future researchers to explore how two theories may influence the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of job motivation. Furthermore, while the relationship between job motivation and innovative behaviour was supported, the relationship between job motivation and employee task performance was not supported, adding contradictory yet novel results to the literature. This evolves the literature into a new direction, whereby factors other than job motivation is neutralizing the impact on employee outcomes.

5.1.2 Practical Implications

The practical implications indicate significance for organizations, specifically IT firms, that thrive on innovation and sustained employee performance. The conclusions should be viewed as a signal to organizations promoting inclusive leadership as a way to increase motivation and performance and encourage innovation. First, leadership development programs must ensure that diversity and inclusion are central to the program and leaders are equipped with tools to make the workplace diverse. This could involve giving leaders regular instruction on how to avoid stereotyping and how to avoid getting caught in self-confirmation bias, how to include subordinates, and how to design systems that allow workers to be psychologically safe. Second, workplace practices such as diversity and inclusion activities, employee resource groups, and mentorship should be adopted to achieve an inclusive workplace culture. Management can include steps that would make the organizational environment more sensitive to diversity, which in turn can boost the motivation and creativity of workers. Third, the management should create a motivational climate within organizations that will enhance innovation and high performance. This could include offering personal and career growth options, promoting and encouraging employees' innovative ideas, and fostering an organizational culture that encourages cooperation.

5.2 Limitations and Recommendations

Nevertheless, a few limitations remain. First, the cross-sectional survey data in the research may lead to a lack of causal conclusions on the relationships between the variables. Future research should further take into account other research designs, where dynamic relationships between inclusive leadership, motivation, innovation and performance, as well as the causal mechanisms that tie these together, can be investigated. Secondly, there was an observed mediation of the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative work behaviour by job motivation, but other possible mediators or moderators of the relationship were not explored in the study. Future researchers should consider including other variables that may mediate or moderate the effect of inclusive leadership on employee outcomes, such as organizational culture, job satisfaction, and employee engagement. Thirdly, convenience sampling was used. This may lead to sampling bias and a lack of representativeness of the larger population. Hence, future researchers may choose a probability sampling technique to address this issue. Last of all, the study was carried out in one sector, and therefore, the results may not be generalizable to other sectors in different settings. Future studies should seek to extend the study to different organizational settings and industries to validate the results.

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