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Unlocking innovation: The mediating role of perceived organizational support in inclusive leadership and employee innovative behavior in Malaysia's service sector

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Abstract

While leadership plays a crucial role in fostering employees' innovative behavior, limited research has explored the specific relationship between inclusive leadership and employee innovation. This study aims to address this gap by examining how inclusive leadership influences innovative behavior in the workplace through the mediating role of perceived organizational support (POS). A quantitative research approach was employed, utilizing survey data collected from 15 Malaysian companies across various industries. The study's theoretical framework guided the data analysis, ensuring a robust examination of the relationships between inclusive leadership, POS, and employee innovative behavior. The results indicate that inclusive leadership has a significant positive impact on both employee innovative behavior and perceived organizational support. Additionally, POS is strongly and positively associated with innovative behavior, acting as a mediator that strengthens the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee innovation. The study underscores the critical role of inclusive leadership in enhancing employees' innovative behavior, particularly through its influence on perceived organizational support. By fostering an inclusive work environment, organizations can create conditions that empower employees to generate and implement innovative ideas. These findings highlight the importance of organizations investing in inclusive leadership development and strengthening perceived organizational support to maximize employee innovation. By doing so, companies can enhance productivity and overall performance. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the service sector, offering new insights into how inclusive leadership and perceived organizational support contribute to organizational success.

Keywords: Economic productivity, Inclusive leadership, Innovative behavior, POS, Service sector.

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1. Introduction

In today's competitive market, organizations must embrace continuous innovation to stay ahead. Key factors such as globalization, shorter product life cycles, rapid technological advancements, and increasing competition drive the need for innovation [1]. Business leaders and scholars emphasize innovation as essential for sustainable growth and long-term success. Innovation thrives when employees actively engage in creative problem-solving and contribute to new initiatives. A culture that nurtures innovation empowers employees to experiment, think critically, and implement solutions that enhance organizational resilience. This leads to improved productivity, motivation, and a stronger market position. Organizations that foster creativity and collaboration benefit from better problem-solving and adaptability. Leadership plays a crucial role in encouraging innovation by promoting open communication, valuing employee contributions, and providing resources for experimentation. By cultivating an inclusive and forward-thinking work environment, companies can unlock employees' creative potential and remain agile in a rapidly evolving global marketplace [2].

Experts stress the importance of understanding factors influencing employee innovation, including HR practices, a culture of innovation, job requirements, organizational support, employee participation, and leadership [3]. Among these, leadership plays a crucial role. While research has examined ethical, paternalistic, and transformational leadership, the impact of inclusive leadership on innovation remains underexplored [4]. Inclusive leadership has unique characteristics that distinguish it from other styles [5, 6]. Studying its influence on employee innovation could offer valuable insights, but empirical research in this area remains limited, necessitating further exploration.

This study explores the connection between inclusive leadership and employee innovative behavior [7, 8]. Innovation requires organizational changes, which are only successful with comprehensive support, openness to change, and inclusive management that values employee input. To examine this relationship, the study introduces Perceived Organizational Support (POS) as a mediator. POS represents the structured support organizations provide to employees, helping them manage stress and fulfill responsibilities effectively. While research has highlighted the impact of inclusive leadership and organizational support on innovation, few studies have explored the role of POS in strengthening this relationship [9]. Understanding this connection offers valuable insights into fostering innovation through inclusive leadership and a supportive work environment.

This study examines how inclusive leadership influences employee innovative behavior with POS as a mediator. It contributes to understanding leadership's role in building a competitive advantage in two ways. First, it highlights inclusive leadership, an area still lacking sufficient research [10-12]. Second, it extends previous studies by analyzing how contextual factors like inclusive leadership (Time 1) and POS impact employee innovation (Time 2). This research emphasizes the need for a longitudinal approach to assess leadership's impact on creativity. It also encourages further exploration of factors such as employees' cognitive behavior in fostering innovation.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Inclusive Leadership

Garrison [13] defines inclusive leadership as actions that invite and appreciate others' contributions. They were the first to introduce and detail this concept. Hollander [14] describes it as a "Win-Win" approach, where leaders and employees openly share ideas, fostering interdependence, Korkmaz et al. [15]. Anane-Simon and Atiku [16] an inclusive leader values input from all levels while remaining accountable for group actions. This leadership style promotes collaboration and shared responsibility in organizations.

Research identifies three key dimensions of inclusive leadership:

1. Encouraging Employee Input – Leaders welcome employees' opinions, tolerate mistakes, and provide guidance and motivation to reduce stress and foster learning.
2. Employee Development & Recognition – Leaders identify training needs, support skill development, and celebrate employee achievements rather than competing with them.
3. Fairness & Employee Well-Being – Leaders treat all employees equally, address their fundamental needs, and engage in conversations to understand their interests and concerns.

Inclusive leadership stands out with its focus on inclusion, acceptance, belonging, and distinctiveness. Despite its role in organizational success, research in this area remains limited [17]. This study explores how inclusive leadership nurtures employee creativity and how POS influences innovative behavior in a supportive work environment.

2.2. Employee Innovative Behavior

Innovation involves generating, adopting, and implementing new ideas that did not previously exist [18]. It can apply to processes, systems, techniques, products, or services. Employee innovative behavior focuses on active participation in innovation rather than solely generating ideas or outcomes. Employees may contribute by refining or applying others' ideas, enhancing their relevance and effectiveness [19]. This study builds on Kwon and Kim [20], who suggest that reviewing literature on innovative behavior and creativity development aids in forming a theoretical model. Qi et al. [21] highlight that

leadership styles influence employee innovation differently. Inclusive leadership, organizational support, and managerial encouragement foster creativity. Motivation from superiors plays a crucial role in driving employees' engagement in innovation. These factors collectively shape how employees interact with and contribute to innovative processes, ultimately influencing organizational success.

Nazir et al. [22], it is suggested that inclusive leadership fosters justice, equity, and a collaborative culture, strengthening employees' sense of belonging. This encourages innovation within their expertise and responsibilities, with leaders serving as role models. Su et al. [23] highlight that inclusive leadership naturally enhances participation in quality assurance efforts. Zhu and Zhang [24] argue that it promotes open communication across organizational levels and ensures fair access to resources, empowering employees. This transparency increases engagement and nurtures a creative work culture. Grounded in organizational support theory and focusing on POS, this study formulates the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between inclusive leadership and employee innovative behavior in the service sector in Malaysia.

2.3. Perceived Organizational Support

Vandenberghe [25] suggests that employees develop skills and expertise when organizations prioritize their well-being. POS, rooted in organizational support theory, treats employees as valuable assets, fostering their growth and contributions [26]. However, the link between inclusive leadership and employee innovation remains underexplored. This section examines POS as a mediator between inclusive leadership and employee innovation [27]. First, we discuss the role of POS in inclusive leadership, then its influence on innovative behavior in supportive environments. According to organizational support theory, when employees perceive clear and positive support from their organization, POS becomes highly relevant [28]. Managers and supervisors are key sources of this support, and inclusive leadership is often seen as the most beneficial style. Inclusive leaders foster clarity, ensure employees feel heard, and prioritize well-being [29]. This strengthens POS, as employees feel valued and supported. Thus, inclusive leadership directly and positively influences POS, leading to the second hypothesis.:

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between inclusive leadership and perceived organizational support in the service sector in Malaysia.

Enhancing the organizational environment can significantly boost employee innovation. A motivating workplace culture encourages creativity and idea-sharing among employees, supervisors, and team members [30]. Social exchange theory supports this perspective, emphasizing reciprocal relationships. Conditional POS is often more effective than unconditional support. When employees recognize that their organization prioritizes their well-being and provides the necessary tools for success, they, in turn, feel compelled to contribute fully and share innovative ideas to enhance competitiveness [31].

According to Hochwarter et al. [32], strong POS fosters a sense of obligation to contribute, benefiting both employees and organizations. This leads to lower absenteeism, improved teamwork, and increased engagement. Sluss et al. [33] suggest that POS enhances employees' sense of responsibility and accountability, making them more innovative and efficient. Jeung et al. [34] further state that positive organizational treatment directly influences POS, driving employee motivation. Conversely, when employees perceive weak or absent support, their engagement and innovation decline. Based on this, we propose the third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between perceived organizational support and employee innovative behavior in the service sector in Malaysia.

Social exchange theory suggests that POS mediates the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee innovation [35]. When POS is high, employees are more likely to reciprocate the support and rewards they receive from inclusive leadership. Employees closely observe their leaders' actions to understand what they can expect from the organization. To express their creativity, they need to feel supported in various ways [36]. Employee engagement and loyalty increase when leaders show care, offer emotional support, keep employees informed about changes, and assist with job-related challenges. These factors strengthen POS, boost morale, and align employees' actions with organizational goals. Employees who perceive strong organizational support are more likely to contribute innovative ideas, especially when leaders actively involve them in decision-making [37].

Perceived support for creativity is a key driver of innovation. Leaders play a crucial role in fostering an environment where POS is prominent, empowering employees to experiment with new approaches. Inclusive leadership energizes employees to explore innovative solutions. Dawley et al. [38] found that inclusive leadership helps nurses become more patient-centered, responsible, and innovative. By providing targeted support, inclusive leaders inspire creativity, ultimately leading to more innovative workplace solutions. Based on these insights, we propose the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4: POS acts as a mediator between inclusive leadership and employee innovative behavior in the service sector in Malaysia.

The hypothesis model of our study is illustrated in Figure 1.

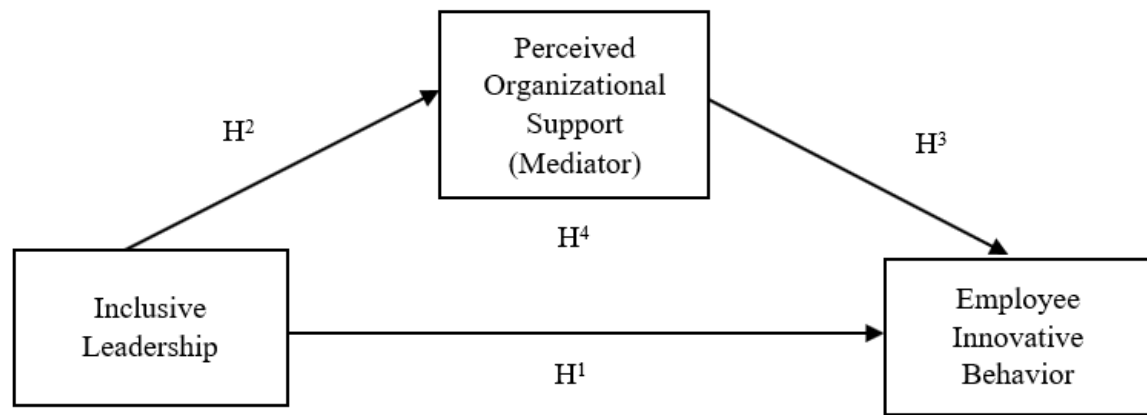


Figure 1.
Conceptual Frame of the Study.

3. Methods

3.1. Sample and Procedures

A survey was conducted across 15 service-oriented organizations, including banks, insurance companies, and law firms, in seven Malaysian cities. Data was collected from both managers and employees, with three measures implemented to minimize bias. First, surveys were conducted in two sessions with a 90-day gap to reduce memory influence and minimize common method variance bias [39]. Second, a two-source data collection approach was used, where both managers and employees answered the same questions. Greater emphasis was placed on managers' evaluations of employee innovation. Third, strict monitoring was applied to questionnaire design and distribution. The HR departments of participating companies reviewed the questions and sought clarifications before distribution. A total of 223 employees and their managers responded to the questionnaires, with participation being voluntary. To ensure anonymity, survey forms were sealed, coded, and handed directly to participants. Employees were instructed to return completed questionnaires to the researchers, preventing disclosure of responses from managers or senior executives. This approach ensured honest feedback while maintaining confidentiality.

3.2. Time 1 (T1)

The questionnaires were distributed to 455 employees, organized into 127 teams based on their respective managers. These questionnaires gathered demographic details, including gender, age, education level, and tenure with the company. Additionally, employees provided their perspectives on perceived inclusive leadership. To ensure clarity and accuracy, the survey was designed with straightforward and unbiased questions, encouraging participants to express their opinions freely. Among the 455 employees, 331 responded with suitable answers, representing 106 teams, resulting in a response rate of 72.7%. This strong participation rate reflects the employees' engagement with the survey process. The collected responses provided valuable insights into how employees perceive inclusive leadership within their organizations and its potential impact on workplace innovation and team dynamics.

3.3. Time 2 (T2)

The second survey session took place 90 days after the first, with 330 employees from the initial session and 112 managers available for participation. This time, employees rated their managers' inclusive leadership behaviors, while managers assessed their employees' perceived organizational support. A total of 319 employees and 105 managers submitted their responses. Across both survey sessions, we collected matched responses from 223 employees and 72 managers. The employee response rate was 69.9%, while the manager response rate was 68.5%. Demographically, 79% of employees were under 35 years old, 53% held undergraduate degrees, 4.7% had postgraduate qualifications or higher, and 41.2% had a college degree or lower. Additionally, 61.1% of the respondents were female. Employee tenure varied, with 41% having worked for 1–3 years, 19% for 4–6 years, and 17% for 7–10 years. The longest tenure recorded was 10 years. The structured two-phase approach ensured reliable data collection, minimizing bias and enhancing the study's credibility. By analyzing responses from both employees and managers, this study gained deeper insights into the relationship between inclusive leadership and perceived organizational support, strengthening the validity of the findings.

3.4. Measures

To ensure accuracy and reliability, we utilized well-established measurement scales referenced from top academic journals. Most of these scales were originally in English, so we followed [40] translation guidelines to adapt them into Malay. A bilingual management scholar proficient in both English and Malay handled the initial translation. For verification, another management professor fluent in both languages translated the Malay version back into English. A management professional then reviewed the translations for quality assurance. Any discrepancies were resolved through thorough discussions to maintain linguistic and conceptual consistency. To refine the survey further, a pilot test was conducted before the actual data collection. Based on participant feedback, certain questionnaire items were modified and scrutinized for clarity and effectiveness. This pre-testing phase ensured that the final survey was both comprehensive and understandable. A five-point

Likert scale was applied to most questions, where 1 indicated strong disagreement and 5 indicated strong agreement. This scale helped quantify participants' perceptions accurately, ensuring meaningful data collection for analysis. By implementing these rigorous translation and validation processes, we enhanced the survey's credibility and minimized potential biases, making the findings more robust and reliable.

3.5. Inclusive Leadership

Inclusive leadership was measured using a 9-item scale developed by Carmeli et al. [41]. In the first survey session (T1), employees rated their managers based on this scale. Previous studies, including those by Çevik et al. [42] and Gallegos [43], have also validated the effectiveness of this scale in assessing inclusive leadership. A sample item from the scale, "The manager was open to hearing new ideas," demonstrated a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.927, indicating a high level of reliability. This strong internal consistency confirms that the scale effectively captures inclusive leadership behaviors. To further ensure accuracy, the scale underwent a review process to confirm its suitability for the study context. The wording of the items was carefully examined to maintain clarity and relevance. Given its robust reliability and widespread use in previous research, this scale was deemed appropriate for evaluating how employees perceive their managers' inclusivity. Using a standardized and validated measurement approach strengthened the credibility of our findings, allowing for meaningful comparisons with prior studies. This rigorous assessment method provided deeper insights into the role of inclusive leadership in shaping workplace innovation and employee engagement.

3.6. Perceived Organizational Support

Perceived organizational support was assessed using an 8-item scale in the second survey session (T2), with employees reporting their perceptions. This scale, originally developed by Rhoades and Eisenberger [44] has been widely used in organizational research. Notably, Eisenberger et al. [45] and Kurtessis et al. [46] successfully applied the same scale in their studies, reinforcing its validity. A sample item from the scale, "My organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work," reflects how employees perceive their organization's support and recognition. The scale demonstrated a high reliability coefficient of 0.952 (Cronbach's Alpha), confirming its strong internal consistency and dependability in measuring POS. To ensure its suitability for this study, the scale underwent a careful review and pre-testing process. The questionnaire was refined to align with the organizational context and participant understanding. The high reliability score indicates that employees consistently interpret and respond to the items in a meaningful way. By employing a well-established and validated measurement tool, we ensured the robustness of our findings. This approach provided deeper insights into the relationship between POS and employee innovation, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of workplace dynamics under inclusive leadership.

3.7. Innovative Behavior

Employee innovative behavior was assessed using a 9-item scale, where managers rated their employees' innovation levels during the second survey session (T2). This scale, originally developed by Janssen [47], was also applied in his earlier research and later validated in studies by Janssen [48]. The scale evaluates three key dimensions of innovative behavior:

- Idea generation – Employees' ability to propose new and creative ideas.
- Idea application – The practical implementation of these ideas within the workplace.
- Idea promotion – Efforts to advocate and gain organizational support for new ideas.

A sample statement from the scale includes "Creating new ideas for difficult issues (idea generation)," highlighting employees' roles in problem-solving and innovation. The scale demonstrated a high reliability coefficient of 0.951 (Cronbach's Alpha), confirming its strong internal consistency. To further validate its relevance, the scale underwent expert review and minor refinements to align with the study's organizational context. Its high reliability score indicates that managers provided consistent and meaningful evaluations of employee innovation. By utilizing a well-established measurement tool, this study ensured an accurate assessment of employee innovative behavior, offering valuable insights into the impact of inclusive leadership on workplace creativity and problem-solving initiatives.

3.8. Control Variables

This study incorporated gender, age, education, and tenure in the current organization as key control variables. These factors are widely recognized for their influence on POS and Employee Innovative Behavior [49, 50]. Gender and age can shape employees' perceptions of organizational support and leadership inclusivity, while education level and tenure may impact their willingness to engage in innovative activities. Employees with longer tenure may exhibit higher levels of innovation due to increased familiarity with organizational processes, whereas higher education levels can enhance creative problem-solving abilities. By controlling these variables, this study ensured that the relationship between inclusive leadership, POS, and employee innovation was not confounded by demographic factors. This approach strengthened the validity and reliability of the findings, providing a clearer understanding of the factors influencing workplace innovation.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics and correlation results are presented in Table 1, providing key insights into the relationships among inclusive leadership, POS, and employee innovative behavior. The findings indicate a positive correlation between inclusive leadership and employee innovative behavior ($r = 0.37$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that when leaders adopt an inclusive approach, employees are more likely to engage in innovation-driven activities. Moreover, there is a strong positive

relationship between inclusive leadership and POS ($r = 0.67, p < 0.01$). This highlights that inclusive leadership significantly enhances employees' perception of organizational support, fostering a work environment where employees feel valued and motivated. Additionally, the correlation between POS and employee innovative behavior ($r = 0.39, p < 0.01$) underscores the importance of organizational support in encouraging employees to think creatively and contribute innovative ideas. These findings support the hypothesis that inclusive leadership plays a crucial role in both fostering employee innovation and enhancing perceived organizational support. The results also align with prior research, reinforcing the notion that POS acts as a key mediator between leadership style and employee innovation. To further validate these relationships, additional statistical analyses, including regression models and mediation tests, were conducted to explore the underlying mechanisms driving employee innovation in an inclusive workplace.

Table 1.
Inter-Correlations and Descriptive Statistics.

Variable	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender	0.36	0.71	1.00						
2. Age	3.25	0.62	-0.41**	1.00					
3. Education	1.91	0.69	-0.39**	-0.05	1.00				
4. Tenure	3.24	1.59	0.21	0.37**	-0.11	1.00			
5. Inclusive leadership	3.57	0.73	0.16*	-0.06	-0.05	0.08	1.00		
6. POS	3.76	0.63	0.17	0.08	-0.04	0.11	0.67**	1.00	
7. Innovative behavior	3.81	0.71	0.24	0.19**	-0.18	0.22**	0.37**	0.39	1.00

Note: N=223. * $p < 0.05$ and ** $p < 0.01$, gender = 1, age = 2, education = 3, tenure = 4, inclusive leadership = 5, perceived organizational support = 6, innovative behavior = 7.

4.2. Tests of Hypotheses

To test the relevance of the four hypotheses in this study, we analyzed two key effects: main effects and mediation effects. We employed two robust statistical approaches:

1. Hayes' approach [51]
2. Bias-corrected bootstrapping approach, which included 5,000 bootstraps in Mplus version 7.4 software, using 95% bootstrap confidence intervals (CI) [52]

The coefficient estimates for the model, presented in Table 2, were reported after adjusting for control variables. The results confirmed Hypothesis 1, demonstrating a significant positive relationship between inclusive leadership and employee innovative behavior ($\beta = 0.297, SE = 0.078, p < 0.01, 95\% CI = [0.174, 0.512]$). This implies that as employees perceive more inclusive leadership, their innovative behavior increases. Hypothesis 2 was also supported, showing a strong positive correlation between inclusive leadership and perceived organizational support (POS) ($\beta = 0.738, SE = 0.077, p < 0.01, 95\% CI = [0.692, 0.883]$), indicating that inclusive leadership significantly enhances perceived organizational support. The findings also confirmed Hypothesis 3, highlighting a positive link between POS and employee innovative behavior ($\beta = 0.322, SE = 0.081, p < 0.01, 95\% CI = [0.124, 0.421]$). Employees who perceive higher organizational support tend to exhibit more innovative behaviors. Finally, Hypothesis 4 was supported, as inclusive leadership had a strong indirect effect on employee innovative behavior through POS (estimated effect = 0.283, $p < 0.01, 95\% CI = [0.062, 0.317]$), as shown in Table 2. These findings reinforce the mediating role of POS in the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovation, emphasizing the significance of fostering an inclusive work environment.

Table 2.
Unstandardized Coefficients.

Effects	Estimate	SE	95% CI
Direct effect			
Hypothesis			
Inclusive Leadership → Innovative behavior	0.297**	0.078	[0.174, 0.512]
Inclusive Leadership → POS	0.738**	0.077	[0.692, 0.883]
POS → Innovative behavior	0.322**	0.081	[0.124, 0.421]
Indirect effect			
Inclusive leadership → POS → Innovative behavior	0.283**	0.062	[0.087, 0.317]

Note: N=223. * $p < 0.05$ and ** $p < 0.01$.

5. Conclusions

This study is primarily based on two theoretical frameworks: Organizational Support Theory (OST) and Social Exchange Theory (SET). These theories provide a foundation for understanding how and why inclusive leadership influences employee innovative behavior. The main objective of this research is to explore both the direct impact of inclusive leadership on innovation and the underlying mechanisms driving this relationship.

Our findings suggest that perceived organizational support acts as a key mediator in the link between inclusive leadership and employee innovation. When employees feel supported and valued by their organization, their motivation to engage in innovative behaviors increases. Leaders who actively foster inclusivity by encouraging diverse perspectives, welcoming creative input, and valuing employee contributions create an environment that promotes psychological safety, engagement, and empowerment. Employees in organizations with inclusive leadership are more likely to experiment with new ideas, take calculated risks, and share innovative solutions without fear of rejection or criticism. This aligns with Social Exchange

Theory, which posits that when employees perceive strong organizational support, they are more inclined to reciprocate with positive behaviors, including enhanced creativity and problem-solving. Ultimately, this study highlights the critical role of inclusive leadership in shaping a culture of innovation, where employees feel supported, valued, and encouraged to contribute their best ideas, fostering long-term organizational growth and success.

6. Implications

6.1. Theoretical Implications

This study offers several theoretical contributions. First, it establishes a clear link between inclusive leadership and employee innovative behavior, aligning with previous research emphasizing the importance of managerial support in fostering workplace innovation [15, 53, 54]. By addressing gaps in the literature, this study highlights the supportive factors that drive employee innovation within organizational settings. Notably, this research applies to Social Exchange Theory (SET) in an organizational context, demonstrating that support-driven outcomes depend on perceived organizational support. As inclusive leadership gains recognition among management professionals and scholars [55, 56], the lack of theoretical understanding and empirical studies has limited its practical application. This study is among the first to examine inclusive leadership's effect on employee innovation, considering POS as a mediator. However, further research is needed to explore additional moderating variables for deeper insights.

Second, this study confirms that POS plays a critical mediating role between inclusive leadership and employee innovative behavior. It contributes new empirical findings and hypotheses, shedding light on the interdependent relationships between inclusive leadership, POS, and innovation. Unlike previous studies, this research investigates the underlying mechanisms of these relationships, reinforcing [57] the argument that organizational support enhances employee creativity, commitment, and diligence is compelling. Finally, this study demonstrates that inclusive leadership positively influences innovative behavior, offering a valuable reference for future research on leadership-driven innovation. Encouraging employee innovation is crucial for sustainable growth and competitive advantage in today's dynamic business environment [58, 59].

6.2. Practical Implications

Competitiveness is closely linked to innovation. In today's dynamic business landscape, understanding how inclusive leadership fosters employee creativity is essential [60-62]. The theoretical model developed in this study provides managers with a holistic perspective on the factors that drive innovation. Traditional leadership methods may not always be effective, and deviating from conventional practices might be necessary to nurture innovation. This study encourages managers to adopt unconventional approaches when required. Inclusive leadership skills can significantly benefit organizations, and leadership training programs are strongly recommended to help managers understand how inclusiveness can be embedded into organizational culture. Since the study confirms POS as a crucial link between inclusive leadership and employee innovation, managers should actively foster an inclusive environment that encourages idea-sharing. Recognizing employees' contributions and providing organizational support such as resources, flexible work arrangements, and dedicated innovation spaces can further enhance innovation. Ultimately, this study highlights the dual role of inclusive leadership and POS in promoting innovation. Managers must identify and eliminate obstacles to change while fostering a workplace culture that inspires creativity and innovation among employees.

7. Limitations

7.1. Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Identifying these constraints is essential to encourage future research aimed at addressing gaps and expanding theoretical insights on the topics explored in this study. One major limitation is the relatively small sample size drawn from a single industry, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. The results should be interpreted with caution, as the observed effects may be more pronounced in industries with inherently higher levels of innovation, such as technology or research-driven sectors. Future studies should consider replicating this research across diverse industries with a larger and more varied sample to enhance the robustness and applicability of the findings.

Additionally, this study focused on a single mediating mechanism, POS, to understand the link between inclusive leadership and employee innovation. However, other potential mechanisms, such as psychological empowerment, trust, or work engagement, may also play significant roles. Exploring these alternative mediators in future research could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how inclusive leadership influences innovation. Moreover, studying potential moderating factors that could impact the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovations, such as organizational culture, variations in leadership style, or industry-specific constraints, could yield valuable insights. Future research may also explore other aspects of employee performance, such as task efficiency, adaptability, and collaboration, to broaden the scope of leadership studies.

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