Research Article

Inclusive leadership and innovative work behavior: exploring the impact of employee voice as a mediating factor

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this field study is to examine the mediating role of employee voice in the effect of inclusive leadership perceptions on innovative work behaviors of employees working at different hierarchical levels in the manufacturing sectors. 415 employees in total were voluntarily included in the survey study. The findings obtained in this direction revealed that employees' perceptions of inclusive leadership positively affect their innovative work behavior attitudes and that employee voice has a mediating role in the relationship between these two variables. In this context, the sectoral results of the research are discussed, the limitations of the study are stated and certain suggestions are made for the employees working in managerial positions.

Keywords: inclusive leadership; employee voice; innovative work behavior

1. Introduction

One of the most important factors that contributes to the growth of an organization and its ability to gain a competitive advantage is the cultivation of innovative work behavior throughout the production industries[1–4]. The need for innovation is becoming more closely linked to the caliber of leadership within these firms. Inclusive leadership, which involves embracing multiple ideas, actively encouraging employee participation, and fostering a supportive environment, has been acknowledged as a crucial driver in fostering creativit[5–8]. The implementation and impact of this leadership style vary in production sectors due to the inherent variances in the operational dynamics of these businesses[9–11].

When it comes to establishing a culture in which innovation is frequently fostered and developed, this can be a challenging endeavor for production organizations because of their emphasis on efficiency, process optimization, and output quality[12–14]. As the relationship between innovative work behavior practices and inclusive leadership is examined, the idea of "employee voice" becomes clear and calls for a more in-depth analysis of its effects in work environments[15]. Employee voice refers to the degree to which employees feel empowered to communicate their ideas, opinions, and concerns regarding workplace matters[16–18]. It serves as an important indicator of the effectiveness of inclusive leadership. The fundamental basis of this

relationship is that inclusive leadership techniques inherently cultivate an environment where employee voice can thrive[19]. Transparency, accessibility, and support for a range of viewpoints are traits of this type of leadership, and they foster an environment where staff members feel appreciated and comfortable offering their opinions[20-22]. This mutually beneficial relationship implies that the existence and promotion of employee voice may not only be a consequence of inclusive leadership, but also a reinforcing factor that amplifies its influence on organizational innovation[23]. Inclusive leadership promotes a professional work environment that values open communication and a variety of perspectives[24]. It harnesses the input of employees to encourage innovative work behavior[25]. Therefore, studying the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative work behavior is crucial.

Prior research has thoroughly examined the influence of leadership on innovation[88–90]. However, there is a significant lack of information regarding the precise contribution of inclusive leadership in promoting innovative work behavior by means of employee voice. Existing research frequently examines leadership styles in a broad manner, without exploring the intricacies of inclusive leadership and its distinct role in fostering an innovative culture within hierarchical and varied workplaces. research conducted by Bel[88] and Mokhber et al.[90] have emphasized the overall significance of leadership in fostering innovation. However, these research have not particularly examined the inclusive leadership paradigm.

Recent research conducted by Javed et al.[2] and Qi et al.[5] has begun to investigate the connections between inclusive leadership and innovation. However, they frequently fail to prioritize the crucial importance of employee voice. Our study aims to fill these gaps in knowledge and offer practical insights for professionals in the manufacturing industry.

This study aims to address this gap by investigating how employee voice mediates the impact of inclusive leadership on the innovative work behaviors of employees across various hierarchical levels in the manufacturing sectors. This research contributes to the wider knowledge of leadership and innovation by emphasizing the importance of inclusive leadership. It also provides specific insights into how inclusivity in leadership can improve employee participation and creativity. Furthermore, this study integrates up-to-date discoveries and approaches to guarantee a modern comprehension of the subject. This inquiry is crucial for leaders and managers, as it emphasizes the necessity of creating customized strategies to address employee voice. By doing so, it enables the realization of the complete potential of inclusive leadership in cultivating a sustainable culture of innovation.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 Inclusive Leadership

Organizational studies have recently focused on inclusive leadership because of its impact on creativity, employee engagement, and organizational performance. Inclusive leadership values multiple perspectives and creates an environment where all employees feel appreciated and empowered to contribute, unlike directive or transactional leadership[43].

Inclusive leadership has its roots in wider conversations about diversity and inclusion in the corporate environment. Originally grounded in the civil rights movements and the advocacy for equal job opportunities, the notion has now developed to cover a more comprehensive comprehension of how varied views might be utilized for the achievement of organizational success[91]. The initial theoretical underpinnings were shaped by transformational leadership ideas, which emphasized the significance of leaders in inspiring and motivating employees. Nevertheless, inclusive leadership goes beyond just inspiring others and involves

actively cultivating an atmosphere of psychological safety, where employees feel confident in expressing their thoughts and concerns without worrying about facing any negative consequences[11].

Inclusive leadership differs from other leadership styles in some fundamental aspects. For example, transformational leaders prioritize the task of inspiring and motivating individuals to surpass their personal interests in order to benefit the firm. Although this approach acknowledges the importance of employee feedback, it does not prioritize the deliberate inclusion and utilization of various perspectives as a valuable strategic resource. Besides, transformational leadership motivates employees to be innovative, while inclusive leadership guarantees that a wide range of ideas are consistently incorporated into decision-making processes, hence expanding the range and effectiveness of new solutions[92]. Transactional leadership on the other hand, is a management approach that relies on a system of incentives and consequences to effectively oversee staff. This approach is successful in attaining immediate objectives but frequently fails to cultivate a culture of ongoing innovation and creativity. As a result of this, transactional leadership's emphasis on regularity and organization may hinder innovation, while inclusive leadership actively promotes unconventional thinking by valuing all contributions equally[93]. Another example of leadership style is servant leadership. Servant leaders place a high priority on the needs of their people and strive to assist them in developing and achieving their maximum capabilities. This approach exhibits similarities with inclusive leadership in its emphasis on prioritizing the welfare of employees. Thus, servant leadership promotes the growth of employees, while inclusive leadership explicitly focuses on incorporating multiple viewpoints and opinions to foster creative practices[57,94].

2.2 Innovative Work Behavior

The term "Innovative Work Behavior" (IWB) is becoming an increasingly significant topic in the fields of organizational psychology and business management[26,27]. It refers to the behaviors and processes that employees engage in in order to contribute to innovation inside their respective firms[28,29]. This concept comprises more than just the development of new ideas; it also entails the execution and application of these ideas in a manner that leads to a beneficial influence on the processes, products, or services of a company. The concept of IWB is complex and may be described by three primary aspects: the development of ideas, the promotion of ideas, and the execution of ideas.

The "idea generation" stage is the part that forms the basis of the concept of innovative business behavior and reveals the first stage in the operationalization of this concept. In this stage of the innovation process, individuals recognize issues, requirements, or opportunities and come up with new ideas or solutions[30]. This stage marks the beginning of the innovation process. When it comes to this phase, creativity is quite important because it requires thinking creatively and imagining options that have not been considered to this point in time[26,31,32]. After the conception of an idea, it is necessary to effectively convey and supporting it. Idea promotion stage entails supporting the idea, receiving support from others, and persuading stakeholders of the idea's worth and viability[33]. Proficiency in communicating and adeptness in managing organizational politics and dynamics are essential for this[34]. The ultimate phase - idea realization - entails transforming the concept into actuality. Proficiency in project management, adeptness in surmounting obstacles, and unwavering determination to successfully conclude the project are necessary for this endeavor[35]. It encompasses the pragmatic utilization of the idea, including the creation, advancement, and execution of modifications to procedures, products, or services. In short, the "idea realization" process is the act of applying novel concepts in the form of novel products or procedures within a business[36].

Innovative Work Behavior is shaped by a multitude of factors, encompassing both individual and organizational aspects[26,31]. Individually, factors such as creativity, intrinsic motivation, specialized abilities

(domain-specific skills), and a proactive personality can improve individual innovative work behavior. Organizational variables encompass elements such as the style of leadership, organizational culture, the resources allocated for innovation, and the existence of enabling structures and processes that encourage innovation[37,26]. The importance of Innovative work behavior resides in its capacity to boost organizational performance and flexibility in a swiftly evolving business environment[38]. Organizations that cultivate a culture of innovation and encourage innovative work behavior among their employees can attain long-lasting growth, sustain a competitive edge, and adapt more efficiently to market needs and technology advancements[39-42].

2.3. Inclusive Leadership, Employee Voice and Innovative Work Behavior

By exerting a diverse influence on multiple aspects of workplace dynamics, including creativity, employee voice behavior, and innovation, inclusive leadership has risen to a prominent position within the dynamic environment of organizational management[43,23,44]. This has allowed it to achieve a prominent position. This leadership paradigm is increasingly acknowledged for its ability to empower and leverage the diverse range of ideas, experiences, and skills present inside a business, hence creating an environment that promotes creativity[45,43]. The primary impact of Inclusive Leadership is in its capacity to foster a deep sense of inclusion and esteem among employees, hence enhancing their inclination to generate ideas and actively participate in innovative initiatives[46].

Inclusive Leadership is distinguished by behaviors and practices that recognize and value the contributions of all employees, irrespective of their history, identity, or position within the organization. This leadership strategy is defined by researchers based on several important features, including openness, accessibility, and the creation of a supportive climate that fosters dialogue and the exchange of varied ideas[47,48]. Inclusive leaders have the skills to effectively promote cooperation, identify and address prejudices, and establish avenues for all employees to engage in decision-making procedures. This leadership style entails not just acknowledging diversity but also utilizing it to achieve the overall success of the firm[49].

The relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative work behavior is characterized by a dynamic interaction, with inclusive leadership serving as a catalyst for innovative work behavior[50-25]. Inclusive leadership cultivates an organizational atmosphere that highly regards diversity and inclusivity, hence stimulating the creation, advancement, and achievement of creative ideas [45]. Inclusive leaders foster a conducive climate that promotes the appreciation and respect of employees, thereby encouraging the expression of their distinct thoughts and viewpoints, which are crucial for fostering innovation[51]. These leaders are skilled at harnessing the diverse cognitive resources and creative potential of their teams, resulting in improved problem-solving abilities, increased adaptability, and superior innovation outcomes[52]. This leadership strategy diminishes the apprehension of failure and fosters psychological security, empowering people to undertake risks and explore novel concepts without the dread of retaliation or mockery[53-54]. Moreover, the implementation of inclusive leadership techniques improves the cooperation between different departments and the incorporation of many perspectives, which are essential for the intricate problem-solving necessary in the field of innovation[55]. Studies show that organizations with inclusive leaders are more likely to have higher levels of innovative work behavior[50,56,45,57,58,46,59]. From this perspective, the first hypothesis in the research is formed as given below.

H1: Inclusive leadership has a positive effect on innovative work behavior.

Employee voice refers to the ability of employees to openly express their thoughts, suggestions, concerns, and opinions about their work and the workplace[60]. However, the term is not just about communication; it serves as a crucial channel for organizations to gain insight into the extensive pool of

information, experiences, and viewpoints inside their workforce[61]. This mechanism plays a crucial role in improving decision-making processes, strengthening organizational practices, and stimulating innovation[62]. By promoting the inclusion and careful evaluation of varied perspectives, employee voice not only fosters a more democratic and inclusive organizational atmosphere but also greatly contributes to the cultivation of a culture that is open to change and ongoing enhancement[23]. The strategic significance of employee voice rests in its capacity to connect individual perspectives with organizational development, thereby cultivating a dynamic environment where innovation is encouraged, and organizational resilience is enhanced[63].

The relationship between employee voice and innovative work behavior is tightly intertwined through the dynamics of feedback, engagement, and empowerment[64-66]. When employees perceive that their opinions are acknowledged and respected, it not only improves their sense of psychological security and readiness to offer suggestions, but also fosters a climate of innovation and originality[67]. The employee's voice serves as a catalyst for innovative work behavior by offering an opportunity for the presentation of new and creative ideas and solutions that may not arise through conventional hierarchical routes[68]. Moreover, the process of expressing ideas verbally, along with support from the organization, facilitates the conversion of individual discoveries into collaborative efforts towards creativity. This process is made easier by leadership styles that promote active involvement and acknowledge the importance of varied perspectives[69]. Studies indicate that fostering an environment that promotes employee voice leads to increased opportunities for experimentation, risk-taking, and collaborative problem-solving, all of which are essential for fostering innovation[70,71, 62]. This perspective leads to another hypothesis to be tested in the research model.

H2: Employee voice has a positive effect on innovative work behavior.

Employee voice behavior refers to a role behavior in an organization that promotes employees to constructively question their supervisors or colleagues in order to recommend adjustments and improvements to work-related procedures, even if they have differing opinions[72]. Employee voice refers to a constructive behavior that focuses on support, development, and improvement, rather than opposition, complaining, or protesting[72]. Morrison[73] defines employee voice behavior as the deliberate expression of employees' thoughts, recommendations, and worries regarding work-related matters, with the aim of enhancing organizational or unit-based activities[73]. Van Dyne et al.[74] propose that voice behavior can be assessed using two different ways. The first strategy involves employees implementing measures and providing ideas for change, while the second approach focuses on procedures that guarantee employee involvement in decision-making processes and enhance the evaluation of fairness.

Given that inclusive leaders demonstrate favorable relational leadership qualities such as transparency, pertinence, and accessibility in their engagements with subordinates, it is regarded that inclusive leadership as a significant asset for enhancing employee voice[21]. Choi et al.[75] found that inclusive leaders are effective in generating valuable resources for their workforce. Inclusive leaders demonstrate a willingness to actively listen and engage in discussions on both current and novel methods in order to accomplish desired organizational objectives[21]. Inclusive leaders establish a non-threatening atmosphere for employees to discuss their opinions by consistently aligning their voices and actions. Inclusive leaders cultivate high-quality relationships and demonstrate fairness in allocating resources to employees, irrespective of their ability. This made it easier for employees to feel that their efforts were valued fairly and that they met the requirements for voice behavior[76]. Furthermore, inclusive leaders fostered an environment where employees were motivated to share their distinctive thoughts, concerns, and suggestions. They accomplished this by appreciating and demonstrating genuine interest in their contributions and overall welfare[77].

Empirical research confirms that inclusive leadership is directly linked to a higher level of employee voice[22,16,19,77]. This means that when leaders demonstrate behaviors that foster inclusivity, employees are more inclined to express their opinions with confidence.

H3: Inclusive leadership has a positive effect on employee voice.

Moreover, the inclusion of employee voice as a mediating factor in the impact of inclusive leadership on innovative work behavior emphasizes its function in not only enabling the articulation of innovative concepts, but also in guaranteeing that these concepts are listened to, taken into account, and put into action[50,22,15]. This approach successfully connects the potential for innovation that is naturally present in inclusive leadership with the actual execution of creative activities. The employee voice acts as a feedback system that guides leaders about the efficacy of inclusion initiatives and the innovation requirements of the business, thereby establishing a dynamic cycle of communication and innovation[15]. Consequently, this leads to a more dynamic, innovative, and adaptable organization[57,50]. The relationship between inclusive leadership, employee voice, and innovative work behavior can be considered as a synergistic interaction. In this dynamic, leadership inclusivity promotes employee engagement and participation, which in turn enhances the organization's innovative capacities[15]. In the light of these inferences, the final hypothesis within the scope of the research is as follows and the figure presenting the hypotheses is provided below.

H4: Employee voice has a mediating role in the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative work behavior.

The research model, in which the relationships between the dependent, independent and mediating variables used within the scope of the study are shown schematically, is as follows.
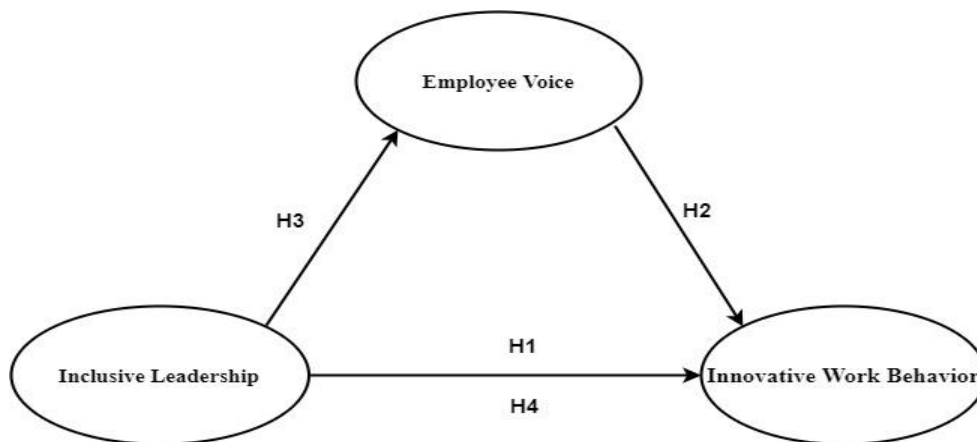

Figure 1. Research Model

3. Materials and Methods

The study's materials and procedures are thoroughly described in this section. The material provides an explanation of the measures, analysis, and demographics of the respondents as well as the data gathering process.

3.1 Respondents and Data Collection

The population of the research consists of production companies in Gaziantep province. The sample consists of the employees of the manufacturing companies in Gaziantep province, selected by convenience sampling method. Due to time and cost constraints, the questionnaire was applied to the employees of the

manufacturing companies (2 carpet, 3 machinery) that have R&D centers. The reason for the selection of manufacturing companies is the capacity of enterprises with R&D departments to exhibit innovation as a business behavior. Interviews were made with the human resources departments of the manufacturing companies and the questionnaires were collected through the human resources departments of the companies that accepted to participate in the research. Since 47 of the 500 surveys distributed were not answered and 38 were incomplete, the sample of the research consists of 415 people. 21.4% of the employees are women, and 78.6% are men. 33.7% of the employees are between the ages of 18-29, 51.6% are between the ages of 30-45, and 14.7% are between the ages of 46 and over. In terms of education level, 12.5% of the participants are primary school graduates, 50.8% are high school graduates, 21.7% are associate degree graduates, 12.3% are undergraduate graduates, and 2.7% are graduate graduates. In terms of work experience, 25.1% of the employees have 1-4 years of work experience, 40.2% have 5-10 years of work experience, and 34.7% have 11 years or more of work experience.

3.2 Measures

Inclusive leadership and Employee voice scales in the study were carried out with a five-point Likert-type scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree). Innovative work behavior scale was carried out on a 7-point Likert-type scale (Never =0, Almost Never=1, Rarely=2 Sometimes=3 Often=4 Very Often=5 Always=6).

Inclusive Leadership Scale: In the study, the scale developed by Carmeli et al. [21], which consists of 9 expressions and three dimensions as openness (3 expressions), availability (4 expressions) and accessibility (2 expressions) was utilized. The Turkish validation of the scale was conducted by Sürücü and Maslakçı [78]. The reliability of the scale was found to be 0,91.

Employee Voice Scale: The scale developed by Van Dyne & LePine[72], which consists of sixth expressions. The Turkish validation of the scale was conducted by Arslan and Yener[79]. The reliability of the scale was found to be 0,91.

Innovative Work Behavior Scale: The scale developed by Janssen[32], which consisting of nine expressions and three dimensions as idea generation (3 expressions), idea development (3 expressions) and idea realization (3 expressions), was used. Eroğlu et al.[80] used the scale, which they validated in Turkish, in their study. The reliability of the scale was found to be 0,91.

4. Data Analysis and Results

4.1. Measurement Model

Data analysis descriptive, correlation, and regression analyses were performed with SPSS 22.0, and confirmatory factor analysis was performed with AMOS 22.0.

Table 1. The Goodness of Fit Statistics

Goodness of Fit Values	χ^2	df	CMIN/DF	AGFI	IFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Inclusive Leadership	51.888	18	2.883	.931	.992	.992	.985	.067
Employee Voice	15.242	5	3.048	.966	.996	.996	.992	.057
Innovative Work Behavior	44.426	21	2.116	.952	.994	.994	.989	.052
Measurement Model	477.425	234	2.040	.900	.980	.980	.976	.050

As shown in **Table 1**, according to the criteria of goodness of fit values of the scales and measurement model used in the study, it is seen that the scale values are between the limits of good fit[81].

Along with the validity analysis statistics obtained, the average variance (AVE) values explained by the structure of the structural variables, composite reliability (CR) values, Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients and the relationships between the variables are presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Mean, Std. Deviation, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), Cronbach Alpha, and Correlations

	MEAN	SD	CR	AVE	1	2	3
1.Inclusive Leadership	3.54	1.18	.98	.85	(.92)		
2. Employee Voice	3.72	1.26	.97	.83	.494**	(.95)	
3. Innovative Work Behavior	3.52	1.17	.97	.80	.595**	.641**	(.93)

*Note:** , p < 0.01, Significant at the 0.05 level, n = 415, Cronbach's Alpha reliability values are given in parentheses.*

When **Table 2** is examined, it is seen that there is a positive relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative work behavior and between inclusive leadership and employee voice. Additionally, it has been found that employee voice and innovative work behavior are positively correlated. In order to ensure convergent validity in a CFA model, the CR value must be greater than .70 and the AVE value must be greater than .50[82]. It is seen that the CR values of the research variables are between .92 and .97, the AVE values are between .77 and .82 and CR>AVE and the scales provide component validity[82].

In the next part of the research, the structural equation model shown in **Figure 2** was established to test the research hypotheses.
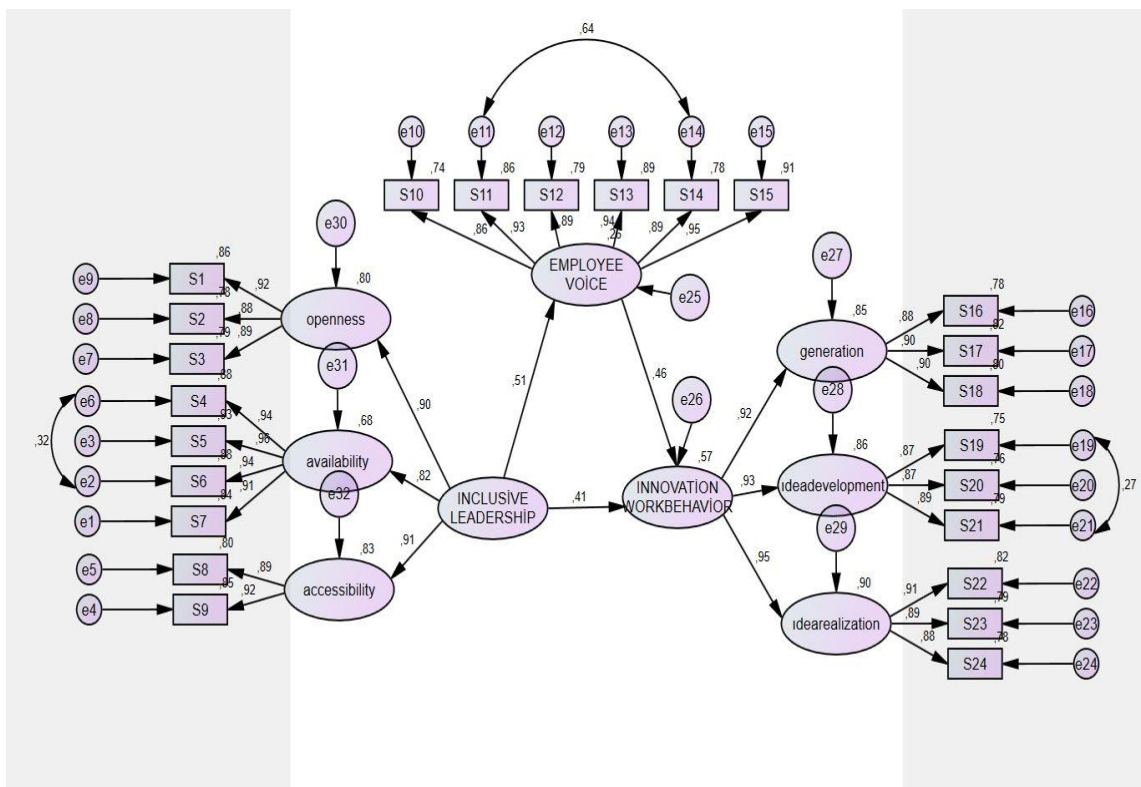

Figure 2. Structural Equation Model

Table 3. SEM findings

	Tested Path		Estimate	SE.	CR	P
Inclusive Leadership	---->	Innovative Work Behavior	.455	.57	8.047	***
Employee Voice	---->	Innovative Work Behavior	.450	.47	8.047	***
Inclusive Leadership	---->	Employee Voice	.587	.06	9.690	***

The hypotheses were tested on the structural model with latent variables. The research model provided goodness of fit values ($\chi2/df$=2.357; AGFI= .896; IFI=.973; TLI =0.973; CFI =.969.; RMSEA=0.04). As illustrated in Table 3, the structural equation modeling analysis results indicate that inclusive leadership positively and significantly affects employee voice and innovative work behavior. It was also found that employee voice affects innovative work behavior. As a result, Hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 are supported.

In order to test the mediating role of employee voice in the effect of inclusive leadership on innovative work behavior, regression analysis based on the bootstrap method in **Figure 3** was conducted. Analyses were conducted using Process Macro developed by Hayes (2018). Analyses were conducted by selecting Model 4. In the analyses, the bootstrap technique and 5000 resampling options were preferred. In order to support the research hypothesis in mediation effect analyses conducted with the bootstrap technique, the values in the 95% confidence interval (Confidence interval, CI) obtained as a result of the analysis should not include the value (0)[96].
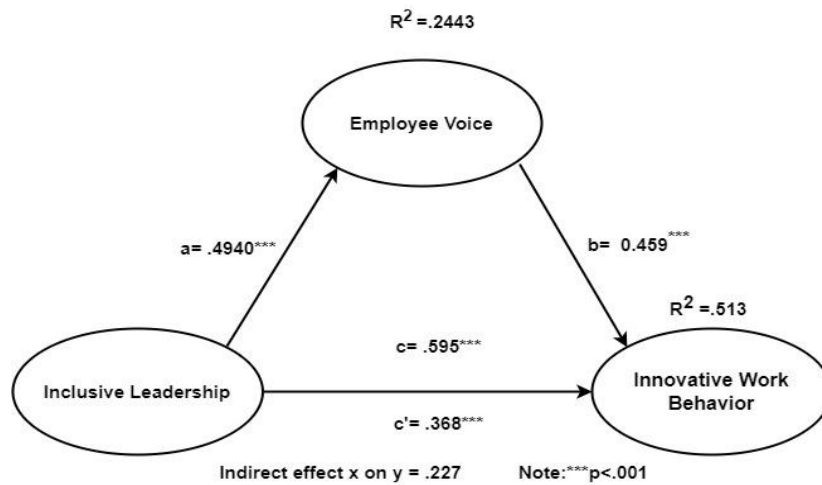

Figure 3. Mediating Model

Table 4. Process Macro Analysis Results

Estimate Variables		M (Employee Voice)			Y (Innovative Work Behavior)	
		β	S. E.		β	S.E.
X (Inclusive Leadership)		.494***	.045	,	.368***	.039
M (Employee Voice)		-	-		.459***	.037
Constant		1.855***	.170		.472	.390
		R^2=.2443			R^2=.513	
		F (1;413) =133,4933; p<.001			F (2;412) =217,132; p<.001	

*** p<0.001, n= 415

As a result of the analysis, inclusive leadership has a significant positive effect on employee voice (path a) (β = .494, p<.001, 95% CI [.43, .61]). The coefficient of determination shows that 24.43% of employee voice (R2=.2443) is explained by inclusive leadership. Employee voice has a significant positive effect on innovative work behavior (path b) (β = .459, p<.001, 95% CI [.15, .45]). Inclusive leadership has a significant positive effect on innovative work behavior (β = .368, p<.001, 95% CI [.25, .54]). The coefficient of determination shows that 51.30% of innovative work behavior (R2=.513) is explained by inclusive leadership and employee voice. In the absence of mediating employee voice, the total effects of inclusive leadership on innovative work behavior (path c), that is, the total effects (β = .595, p<.001, 95% CI [.52, .67]) were also found to be significant. With the inclusion of employee voice as a mediating variable in the model, the calculated indirect effects of inclusive leadership on innovative work behavior (β = .227, p<.001, 95% CI [.17, .29]) were found to be significant. As a result, Hypotheses H4 is supported. According to these findings, employee voice has a partial mediating role in the effect of inclusive leadership on innovative work behavior. Because Boostrap confidence interval values do not include the value of 0 (zero)[95].

The analysis revealed the indirect effects of inclusive leadership on innovative work behavior through employee voice. This result shows that employees who can easily express their ideas and thoughts through a communication and interaction-oriented work environment created by the inclusive leader increase their innovative work behaviors.

5. Discussion

Within the scope of this field study, the relationships between inclusive leadership, employee voice and innovative work behavior, which were the subject of the research, were revealed, and in this regard, the mediating role of employee voice between inclusive leadership and innovative work behavior was examined. Upon examining the existing literature, it becomes apparent that there is a scarcity of studies that simultaneously address these three factors within the same research paradigm. Furthermore, these studies vary in terms of their focus and objectives.

It was found that employees' perceptions of inclusive leadership positively and significantly predicted their innovative work behavior attitudes (p<0.001). This outcome aligns with the findings derived from numerous studies in the field of management and organizational behavior literature [50,45,2,25,57,58,83,59,5,84]. Employees' increased awareness of inclusive leadership directly boosts their involvement in creative processes, enabling them to actively contribute to the organization's growth and adaptation in a fast-evolving business environment. The presence of this positive association emphasizes the significance of leadership strategies that encourage diversity in order to foster a dynamic and innovative organizational climate [85].

Another finding that emerged as a result of the research analysis is that employee voice is a significant predictor of innovative work behavior (p<0.001). Similar findings have been found in studies conducted on the two variables mentioned in the literature[68,86]. Employee voice provides an environment for employees to communicate and exchange new ideas, concerns, and suggestions. These inputs are essential during the stages of generating and implementing innovative solutions. By establishing this accessible means of communication, it promotes employees to offer distinct viewpoints and ideas, cultivating an environment that values innovation and trial and error. Employees' sense of ownership and responsibility towards innovative solutions is strengthened by the validation of employee input through voice mechanisms. This not only fosters a climate that is conducive to innovation, but it also increases employees' motivation to engage in and drive innovative behavior processes[86].

Another important finding of this study, which reveals the relationships between inclusive leadership, and employee voice is that inclusive leadership has a positive and significant effect on predicting employee voice. Upon examining the literature in the relevant field, it is evident that studies with comparable results can be identified in this particular direction[16,22,19,20,77].

As a result of the mediation analysis conducted, which is the main purpose of the research, to determine the mediating role of employee voice in the effect of inclusive leadership on innovative work behavior, it was determined that employee voice has a mediating role in the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative work behavior. This finding suggests that employee voice has an increasing role in the effect of inclusive leadership on innovative work behavior. In this respect, it is possible to evaluate the necessity of creating a participatory and embracing environment with inclusive leadership and increasing employee voice to ensure employee participation in innovation processes.

The relationship between inclusive leadership and employee voice is both positive and significant since it is based on the fundamental aspects of trust, psychological safety, and respect that inclusive leadership fosters inside a company. Inclusive leaders foster diversity, equity, and inclusion to establish an organizational atmosphere that values and respects all employees, regardless of their position or background [22,19].

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Previous studies have frequently indicated a clear correlation between inclusive leadership and innovative work behavior. Our research, however, shows that employee voice plays a vital role as a mediating component. This finding emphasizes the need of cultivating a setting in which employees feel empowered to articulate their views and concerns. Inclusive leadership not only fosters direct innovation but also strengthens the structures that support it. This research also offers useful insights into the customization of inclusive leadership approaches for businesses with hierarchical structures and operational complexity, with a specific focus on the manufacturing sector. This specialized focus addresses a gap in the existing literature, which has mostly examined these dynamics in broader or service-oriented settings.

The results of the field study emphasize the interdependence between inclusive leadership, employee voice, and innovative work behavior, indicating a direct route for firms to cultivate a culture of innovation. The observed positive associations indicate that firms aiming to improve innovation should give priority to the advancement and execution of inclusive leadership practices. Effective leadership fosters an environment that promotes employee satisfaction and engagement, resulting in greater employee input and involvement. Additionally, it stimulates the innovative potential of the workforce by harnessing the varied perspectives and ideas that arise from an inclusive culture.

Based on these outcomes, it is advised that businesses allocate resources towards leadership development initiatives that prioritize the values of inclusion, including active listening, empathy, and the promotion of varied perspectives. Leaders should undergo training to identify and minimize prejudices, as well as establish effective ways for employees to share their opinions and have them addressed. In addition, implementing structured channels for employee input, including as suggestion boxes, regular town hall meetings, and inclusive decision-making bodies, can promote the sharing of ideas and concerns, therefore fostering innovative work behavior.

Creating a psychologically safe workplace for employees, in which they are able to take risks and express dissenting ideas without fear of adverse consequences, should also be a primary goal for organizations. This is something that may be accomplished by the clear communication of organizational

principles that place an emphasis on diversity and inclusion, as well as through the acknowledgment and reward of innovative initiatives and the constructive use of employee feedback.

A concerted effort from all levels of the organization, from the highest level of management all the way down to individual team leaders, is required in order to put these recommendations into practical use. Organizations are able to unlock the potential for innovation that lies within their workforce by cultivating an organizational culture that values inclusive leadership and employee voice. This allows the organizations to drive development and ensure sustainability in a business landscape that continuously evolves.

The implications of our findings have broader significance beyond the specific context of this study. They propose further applications in other organizational contexts where innovation is crucial. For example, the concepts of inclusive leadership and encouraging employee input can be adjusted to fit various cultural and organizational settings in order to boost global creativity. Subsequent investigations could examine these dynamics in various sectors and geographical areas to verify and expand upon our discoveries.

6.1 Limitations of the Research

When conducting an analysis of the findings of a research study, it is important to take into account the associated limitations. The method of surveying was utilized in order to acquire the data for this study, which investigated the impact of employees' degrees of inclusive leadership and employee voice perceptions on the levels of innovative work behavior. Since the variables that are the subject of the research include the perception of the employees in the managerial level at the workplace, the ability of the employees at the workplace to express their own ideas, concerns and perspectives in an original way and without fear of social or workplace consequences, and the evaluation of the behaviors of the employees in the workplace in which they generate new ideas and implement new ideas and then use new ideas to solve problems, it was deemed more appropriate to obtain the data through self-assessment. The survey method, on the other hand, has the potential to generate the problem of common method variance because all of the data are collected at the same time, from the same people, and cross-sectionally -at a single point in time- [87]. It was decided to do a confirmatory factor analysis on the survey items in order to ensure that this issue would not impede the findings of the research.

This study was conducted using correlational analysis. In future studies, designing longitudinal and experimental study designs may be appropriate to enhance cause-effect correlations. Furthermore, the findings in this study are restricted to the specific sample group. Future research should be undertaken comprehensively across other sectors and with greater sample sizes.

Author contributions

Conceptualization, HA, AA and BGY; methodology, HA.; software, HA; validation, HA, AA and BGY; formal analysis, HA; investigation, HA and AA.; resources, AA.; data curation, BGY; writing—original draft preparation, HA, AA and BGY; writing—review and editing, HA, AA and BGY; visualization, AA; supervision, HA; project administration, AA and BGY. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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