

## **INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATIVE WORK BEHAVIOR: MEDIATING ROLE OF THRIVING AT WORK**

Sachitaa Srivastava<sup>1</sup> and Lata Bajpai Singh<sup>2</sup>

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### **Abstract**

*The goal of this study is to examine the direct relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative work behaviour. In addition, the study examines the indirect influence of inclusive leadership on innovative work behaviour through thriving at work. With the aid of a validated instrument, 380 respondents from the hospitality industry provided primary data for the study. Using PLS-sem, the measurement model, structural model, and mediation analysis were analysed. The study's structural model explored the direct and indirect effects of inclusive leadership on innovative work behaviour, as mediated by thriving at work. Positive and significant correlations were found between inclusive leadership and thriving at work, as well as inclusive leadership and innovative work behaviour. In addition, a favourable and statistically significant correlation was also identified between thriving at work and innovative work behaviour. Moreover, thriving at work strongly mediated the positive association between inclusive leadership and innovative work behaviour. The offered research is beneficial to both academics and practitioners. The study makes a substantial contribution to the literature on thriving at work and innovative work behaviour. HR professionals and managers in the hospitality industry should be made more aware of the advantages of being inclusive and how it helps employees be more innovative and performing better at work.*

**KEYWORDS-** Inclusive Leadership, Thriving At Work, Innovative Work Behavior, Hospitality Employees

**JEL Classification-** M1, M12, M19

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<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Management Studies, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In today's competitive marketplace, firms must discover ways to foster innovation in order to remain relevant to their customers (Mansoor et al., 2021 [1]). According to previous studies, innovation is not just a concern for researchers and developers, but for the long-term sustainability of the business, all employees and departments must be receptive to innovation in their respective roles (Kivimaa et al., 2021 [2]; Lee & Wong, 2017 [3]).

The significant risks associated with innovative work behavior (IWB) suggest that it is a kind of unusual behaviour where workers reject conventional thinking and are able to discuss novel concepts (Kanter, 1988 [4]; Kessel et al., 2012 [5]). This demonstrates that subordinates question the power structure by dissenting with their managers; hence, to advance IWB, they require a significant degree of autonomy (Wang et al., 2021 [6]). When leaders empower their team members, employees develop autonomy and the flexibility to share their thoughts (Foss et al., 2013 [7]). Research on the causes of IWB has been conducted for many years at the organisational, work group, and individual levels (Purwanto et al., 2021 [8]; Van Zyl et al., 2021 [9]; Karani et al., 2021 [10]). According to these research, IWB has a strong connection to leadership, group dynamics, atmosphere at work, personal differences, job attributes and demand, identity, and value systems, among other things. Among all of these IWB predictions, leadership has a significant impact on workers' IWB.

The growing number of corporate scandals and failures, together with the negative repercussions of poor corporate governance at the micro and macro level, has highlighted the need for strong organizational governance. The importance of the leader's role and obligation in implementing strong corporate governance has increased (Modise, 2021 [11]). This research investigates how relational leadership promotes IWB which signifies the good governance in the organisation (Mansoor et al., 2021 [1]). We narrow our focus to a certain type of relational leadership known as inclusive leadership (IL), because the association between IL and IWB has garnered less attention. Inclusive leaders encourage participation in all phases of decision-making, demonstrating their accessibility to employees (Van Knippenberg & van Ginkel, 2022 [12]). Consequently, they urge their workforce to develop innovative & unique solutions (Javed et al., 2021 [13]).

We also intend to investigate the mediation process between the IL-IWB link. It is vital to understand the mechanism by which IL can foster IWB. According to Spreitzer et al. (2005) [14]

The organisational notion of "thriving" has a strong correlation with employees' feelings of progressing forward and keeping the momentum in their careers (Huo et al., 2021 [15]; Ahmed Iqbal et al., 2021 [16]). Innovative work behaviour is an employee's extra-role activity that avoids traditional thinking and involves fresh work ideas; thus, thriving at work is required to enhance the process of innovation (Edmondson et al., 2004 [17]). Connectivity and trust have been linked to TAW (Carmeli et al., 2009 [18]) as have individual attributes such as regulatory attentiveness (Wallace et al., 2016 [19]) according to research. It's possible that satisfied workforce in their jobs are more willing to reciprocate by being more innovative themselves. Carmeli et al., (2009) [18] examined the effect of TAW and discovered it as a significant element in promoting IWB. TAW is dependent on situational variables and it is conducive boost innovative conduct (Porath et al. 2012 [20]; Spreitzer et al. 2012 [21]).

Drawing upon prior researches, we intend to investigate the relationship between IL and IWB via TAW. Moreover, regardless of the fact that there has been theoretical advancement in the literature on inclusive leadership, majority of the studies is limited to western context. Crucial to understanding this, previous research has indicated a paucity of literature on how thriving at work plays a pivotal influence in fostering IWB of employees in hospitality sector.

Consistent with the requirement of the present scenario, First, the present research study proposes to study the association between IL, TAW & IWB. Further, the research study proposes to investigate if TAW mediates the link between IL and IWB and its impact on the employees in hospitality industry.

## **2.LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Inclusive leadership**

Leaders are primarily responsible for ensuring that employees' demands for individuality and belonging in (diverse) organizational units are met, i.e., for fostering inclusion (Shore et al., 2022 [22]). The term "inclusive leadership" was used to describe "Leaders who exhibit availability, visibility and accessibility in their discourse with their followers" (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006 [23]) and later expanded to include "leaders who show a willingness to accept and value the contributions of others" (Carmeli et al., 2010 [24]). In decision-making processes, inclusive leadership emphasises methods that value employee diversity (Van Knippenberg & van Ginkel, 2022 [12]). People are more willing to share their ideas if they aren't intimidated by distinctions in authority or position (Hassan and Jiang, 2019 [25]). According to the existing literature, its

connection has previously been studied with organizational citizenship behaviour (Younas et al., 2021 [26]), employee belongingness development (Randel et al., 2018 [27]), IWB (Javed et al., 2019 [28]), and the development of employees' inventiveness (Zhu et al., 2020 [29]).

## **2.2 Thriving at work**

A psychological state known as "thriving at work" occurs when individuals have a sense of learning at work & vitality (Spreitzer et al., 2005 [14]). Vitality can be explained as being motivated and being enthusiastic about one's own work (Nix et al., 1999 [30]). Learning is the process of obtaining and using expertise or skills to boost one's self-assurance and capabilities (Edmondson, 1999 [31]). The cognitive and affective facets of thriving are represented by vitality and learning, respectively. Vitality can be characterised as either a notion of energy or enthusiasm for the work that one does (Nix et al., 1999 [30]), whereas learning might be seen of as the conviction that one is continually becoming better at what they do through the accumulation of skills and knowledge that is specific to a domain (Porath et al., 2012 [20]). Particularly, if a person believes he or she is improving on the job while also enjoying doing it, the individual is said to be thriving. It is crucial to highlight that in order for an individual to thrive, both vitality and learning must be high.

## **2.3 Innovative work behavior**

In today's tough economy, businesses must be creative to thrive and gain a competitive advantage. To that purpose, firms prioritise human capital and aim to implement innovative working techniques, operations, and styles, among other things, that will effectively face the difficulties of a dynamic environment and result in productive outputs (Khan et al., 2012 [32]). According to Scott and Bruce (1994) [33], who first used the phrase "innovative work behaviour," it is "a complex activity consisting of the production, introduction, or usage of fresh appropriate ideas, approaches, and solutions." However, Janssen (2000) [34] presented the most widely accepted definition, which defines IWB as "the conduct of individuals with the intention of actively creating, introducing, and utilising novel approaches to improving performance in settings such as the workplace, a group, or an organisation." An innovative work environment generates new and inventive business prospects and gives opportunities and solutions for increasing organisational performance (Alheet et al., 2021) [35].

### **3.HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT**

#### **3.1 Inclusive leadership and innovative work behavior**

Employees benefit from IL because it fosters a good working relationship and encourages subordinates to accept innovative ideas that encourage creative thinking (Bannay et al., 2020 [36]). Workers are empowered and inspired to participate actively in the creative process when their managers exhibit these attributes of inclusive leadership. According to a number of empirical studies, workers who have a greater level of passion and dedication for their work are more likely to be inventive and creative (Javed et al., 2018 [37]). Furthermore, this drives individuals to use their capabilities, resources, and skills to the utmost extent feasible in order to meet or even exceed the existing expectations of the business. As per the extant literature, there is a significant correlation between IL and IWB. In light of these findings, it's possible to hypothesize that:

*H1: Inclusive leadership is positively associated with innovative work behavior.*

#### **3.2 Inclusive leadership and thriving at work**

Numerous studies have looked into the components that affect TAW in organisational contexts. These studies have addressed issues like leadership style (Hildenbrand et al., 2018 [38]; Mortier et al., 2016 [39]) & organisational justice (Abid et al., 2015 [40]) as well as aspects of the workplace like autonomy in decision-making (Prem et al., 2017 [41]), prompt feedback & innovation (Liu et al., 2019 [42]). Between leaders and followers, inclusive leadership promotes respect for one another, progress toward a common goal, and win-win collaboration.

First, inclusive leadership fosters a respectful, encouraging environment that satisfies employees' autonomy while encouraging personnel to work freely and take part in decision-making. Developing IL creates a strong impetus for success. Secondly, the fair & engaging environment contributes to the creation of a welcoming and equitable environment. The organization's members frequently forge pleasant and supportive bonds with one another, cater to the requirements of the workers, and provide opportunities for learning and vitality. In order to meet the demands of competent personnel, a company can interchange and share information more easily when it adopts a fault-tolerant working style. The collision of ideas fosters creativity, encourages more prosperity, and identifies the development of individuals (Zeng et al., 2020 [43]). Furthermore, an inclusive leader promotes success at work by providing resources for the job (such as information, emotions, and interpersonal resources). We hypothesize, owing to self-determination theory, that inclusive

leaders who make an effort to meet the core psychological requirements of their workforces will be able to assist their employees in thriving in their work settings.

*H2: Inclusive leadership is positively associated with thriving at work.*

### **3.3 Thriving at work and innovative work behavior**

People might feel more inspired to take on creative endeavors and go above and beyond their regular roles and obligations when they experience more thriving (Carmeli et al., 2009 [18]; Yang et al., 2021 [44]). Sonenshein et al. (2006) [45] assert that thriving is different from internal motivation since it receives its vitality from the desire to carry out such action in an efficient manner for enjoyment as well as from the learning drive of the individual for goal achievement and self-awareness.

Identifying a problem and finding a solution, as well as applying ideas that may be new or previously adopted, are the first steps in innovative behaviour (Scott and Bruce, 1994 [33]). Additionally, TAW may serve as an inspiration for IWB (Carmeli et al., 2009 [18]; Liu et al., 2020 [46]). The combined sensation of learning and vigour known as "thriving" at work is significant for the blossoming of creative work practises. Nix et al. (1999) [30] defined viability as a sense of life, enthusiasm, & joy at workplace while learning was defined as the process of gaining information that increases confidence (Edmondson, 1999 [31]). Thriving fosters an individual's personal growth and helps them fit within the framework of their workplaces (Wallace et al., 2016 [19]).

*H3: Thriving at work is positively associated with innovative work behavior.*

Based on the above proposed hypothesis, it is proposed that IL leads to TAW, and this further enhances IWB of employees. Thus, the same is as:

*H4: Thriving at work mediates the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative work behavior.*

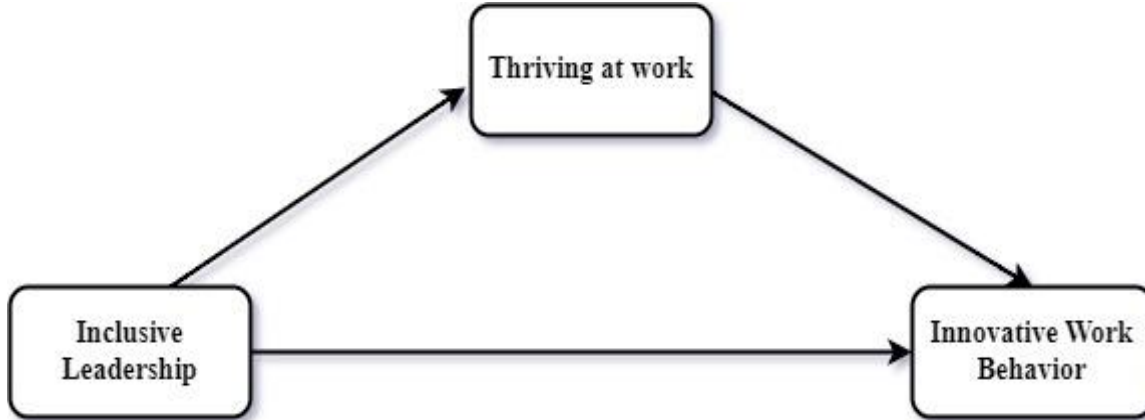


Fig 1: Conceptual model

#### 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**4.1 Sampling method & Procedure:** The association between IL, TAW, and IWB is investigated in this study. Primary data was gathered using validated scales; IL was assessed using 9-item scale (Carmeli et al., 2010 [24]), TAW and IWB were assessed using a 10-item scale (Porath et al., 2012 [20]) and another 10-item scale, respectively (De Jong and Den Hartog, 2010 [47]).

For the purpose of the study, a total of 380 participants were considered. The managers of various hotels and eateries in Guwahati, Assam, were approached by the researchers, who utilised a simple random sampling technique to gather a suitable number of respondents. Some of the supervisors agreed to let us collect information from their staff members for the research. The respondents received a box of questionnaires, a letter asking for their response, a link to the questionnaire, and a guarantee that the information they provided would be kept confidential. Only 380 of the 1290 responders agreed to take the survey and provided a response. The data analysis was done on 380 responses using Smart PLS 3.3.2. The data was collected using a convenience sampling method. The researchers employed PLS-SEM software to analyze the data with accuracy and precision.

According to the demographic profile of respondents, 58.9 percent of the total were males and 41.1 percent were females. In addition, 66.3% of respondents had less than five years of work experience, 27.6% had between five and ten years of work experience, and 6.1% had over 10 years of work experience. In addition, 76.8 percent of respondents had worked for the current organisation for 0-3 years, 20 percent for 4-7 years, and 3.2% for more than 7 years.

**Table 1: Constructs validity and reliability**

	Items	Loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach's alpha	Rho_a
IL	IL1	0.78	0.644	0.935	0.921	0.922
	IL2	0.806				
	IL3	0.862				
	IL4	0.809				
	IL5	0.795				
	IL6	0.846				
	IL7	0.762				
	IL8	0.762				
IWB	IWB1	0.746	0.608	0.933	0.918	0.921
	IWB2	0.678				
	IWB3	0.815				
	IWB4	0.786				
	IWB5	0.808				
	IWB6	0.804				
	IWB7	0.686				
	IWB8	0.854				
	IWB9	0.82				
Learning	L1	0.757	0.619	0.83	0.693	0.696
	L2	0.805				
	L3	0.797				
Vitality	V1	0.893	0.697	0.9	0.85	0.888
	V2	0.932				
	V3	0.854				
	V4	0.63				

Source: Author's Computation

#### 4.2 Validation of measures

The information in tables 1 and 2 indicates that the constructs' Cronbach's alpha values & composite reliability (CR) values were both higher than the suggested value of 0.7. (Hair et al., [48]). Consequently, the constructs' reliability has been demonstrated (Hair et al., 2014 [48]).



Additionally, each construct's average variance extracted (AVE) is greater than 0.50. (Hair et al., 2014 [48]).

Also, the outer loading of each item was greater than 0.70. As a result, the convergent validity of each construct is demonstrated (Hair *et al.*, 2014 [48]). Furthermore, each pair's AVE was greater than the squared correlation of each variable with any other variable, suggesting discriminant validity (Hair *et al.*, 2014 [48]).

Table 2 and 3: Discriminant validity

**Table 2: Discriminant validity: Fornell- Larcker's Criterion**

	IL	IWB	Learning	Vitality
IL	0.802			
IWB	0.617	0.779		
Learning	0.476	0.467	0.788	
Vitality	0.538	0.55	0.503	0.835

Source: Author's Computation

**Table 3 Discriminant validity: HTMT ratio**

HTMT Ratio				
	IL	IWB	Learning	Vitality
IL				
IWB	0.667			
Learning	0.601	0.589		
Vitality	0.609	0.611	0.645	

Source: Author's Computation

**Table 4: Assessment of higher order Construct**

Higher order construct	Formative indicator	Outer weights	t- value	Confidence interval	Variance inflation factor
TAW	Learning	0.537	16.563**	[3.52; .445]	1.339
	Vitality	0.616	25.050**	[.683; .799]	1.339

\*\*P<0.001 Source: Author's Computation

**Table 5: Assessment of structural model**

Parameter	$\beta$	SE	t-value	Confidence interval	Remarks
IL-IWB	0.344	0.062	5.512**	[.326; .517]	Supported
IL-TAW	0.59	0.052	11.308**	[.481; .685]	Supported
TAW-IWB	0.414	0.048	8.628**	[.217; .462]	Supported
IL-TAW-IWB	0.203	0.042	4.832**	[.123; .289]	Supported

Source: Author's Computation

### 4.3 Structural model

This study's structural model looked at both the direct and indirect effects of IL on IWB through TAW. Table V contains the results of the experiment.

The results indicate a significant association between IL and IWB ( $b = 0.344, t = 5.512, p < 0.001$ ). This provides support for H1 The correlation between TAW and IWB was statistically crucial ( $b = 0.414, t = 8.628, p < 0.001$ ). This reinforces the study's hypothesis (H2). The study looked at both the direct effect and the indirect influence between IL and IWB via TAW. The results show that TAW mediates the significant relationship between IL and IWB to some extent ( $b = 0.203, t = 4.832, p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 6: Result of  $f^2$ ,  $R^2$  and  $Q^2$  predict**

Construct	F square	Q square- predict	R Square
TAW	1.258	0.254	0.557
IWB	0.07	0.273	0.582

Source: Author's Computation

All endogenous variables, TAW and IWB had coefficients of determination ( $R^2$ ) of 0.557 and 0.582 respectively. The effect size of the structural model was also estimated as the value of  $f^2$  and compared to Cohen's (1988) [49] recommended values of small (0.02), medium (0.15), and large (0.35). The effect size of IL on TAW is large, and for IWB-small.

In addition to  $R^2$  and  $f^2$ , "Stone-Q2 Geisser's value" was used to evaluate the predictive relevance of the model (Woodside, 2013 [50]). The findings of blinded cross-validation for TAW ( $Q^2 = 0.254$ ) and IWB ( $Q^2 = 0.273$ ) indicate that. The predictive relevance of the model is regarded satisfactory because the  $Q^2$  values for these variables are greater than 0 (Henseler et al., 2015 [51]). Finally, the NFI is .055, suggesting that the structural model is well-fitting overall. The standardised root-mean square residual (SRMR) value is .823, which is less than the required value of 0.10. (Henseler et al., 2015 [51]).

## 5.DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to determine how significantly IL affects IWB. Additionally, indirect effects of IL on IWB via TAW were examined as well.

According to the findings, IL and IWB were positively related. Relational leaders that are inclusive integrate their followers directly in decision-taking process and provide them opportunity to display participatory behaviour in work procedures (Javed et al., 2017 [52]). In an inclusive workplace, individuals' perceptions of being appreciated are boosted when they perceive leaders are receptive to their creative procedures and ideas, resulting in increased innovative activities. Previous studies (Qi et al. 2019 [53], and Wang et al. 2019 [54]) validated the findings that IWB of employees is impacted by IL.

Psychology scholars did the earliest research on thriving. In past few years, the study on thriving has become increasingly popular in management research. The functions of leadership (Paterson et al., 2013 [55]) and personal traits in the advancement of thriving (Nawaz et al., 2018 [56])

remain understudied, according to some experts. This research adds additional support for the findings of Zeng et al. (2020) [43] by proving the favourable effects IL has on TAW. Inclusive leadership is a crucial organisational framework that empowers workers to make decisions and fosters an environment of trust, regard, and acknowledgment to meet employees' independence, belongingness, and competency, which helps promote thriving at work.

Finally, in our study, we have also explored inclusive leadership through mediation analysis. As a result of our study, the existing body of knowledge has been enriched by testing IL-TAW-IWB linkage. Our study is first of a kind which demonstrates that employees who are included in the various processes of the organization, they thrive at work and this eventually leads to their innovative work behavior.

## **6.IMPLICATIONS**

Our research supports the premise that IL is essential for thriving of employees at their workplace and innovative work practices. We advise managers to develop an IL style by placing a strong emphasis on openness, availability, and accessibility in order to foster an environment where employees feel free to discuss novel concepts and express their thoughts. As a result, it is imperative for leaders to interact with staff members and launch training initiatives in order to develop strong bonds with them. The supervisor, from the viewpoint of the employees, should be approachable, sympathetic with the requirements of employees, tolerant of alternative points of view, and to some extent, tolerant of mistakes. Leaders should also provide resources for employment and aid to their followers. For instance, mentorship from a superior is advantageous to employees. With subordinates, the supervisor forges a mentoring relation, offers career and psychosocial assistance, and acts as a mentor and role model.

When it comes to customer satisfaction, which is of utmost significance to the brand image of any service industry, it is imperative that employees be able to think creatively and find innovative solutions to complex challenges. Therefore, in order to foster IWB, leaders must be aware of what is expected of them and how they might act. Top management has the authority to start and specifically plan IL-related training programmes. These programmes must highlight the benefits of displaying inclusivity, accessibility, and openness. This study also discovered that workers will become innovative in their work if their leaders exhibited inclusivity. To listen to and accept the employees' suggested ideas, it is necessary to remain reachable. Additionally, a supportive climate

must be created where employees feel free to raise issues and do so without fear, which ultimately fosters IWB.

The study revealed that TAW, a mental state of "vitality" and "learning," occurs before IWB. Managers should create an environment that is conducive to TAW since it plays a crucial mediating function in fostering employee IWB. It is possible to keep employees motivated and enthusiastic about learning by fostering a culture of trust and respect, as well as by giving them access to constructive social interactions and supportive emotional resources.

In the Indian cultural context, where rigid structures and major power imbalances between leaders and subordinates exist, an IL is essential, to pique individuals' interest and inspire them to take initiative. Second, the study revealed that TAW, a mental state of "vitality" and "learning," occurs before IWB. Managers should create an environment that is conducive to TAW since it plays a crucial mediating function in fostering employee IWB. It is possible to keep employees motivated and enthusiastic about learning by fostering a culture of trust and respect, as well as by giving them access to constructive social interactions and supportive emotional resources.

## **7.LIMITATIONS**

Despite the substantial contribution that this literature has made, our study has a few drawbacks. First, because our study focused on gathering information from a single source, namely employees, single source effects may prevent us from increasing the confidence in our findings. Additionally, we exclusively collected data from Guwahati (a city in Assam)-based hotel workers. This may raise questions about generalizability in various cultural settings. Other unobserved traits could exist as well, like internal motivation, psychological empowerment, and self-efficacy that can explain employees' IWB that we did not examine in our research. Finally, this study had a smaller sample size due to the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a significant influence on the business & resulted in layoffs or terminations of people from the workplace. As a result, extrapolating broad conclusions from the study's findings was likely hampered.

## **8.CONCLUSION**

This study examined the relationship between IL and its outcomes, namely TAW and IWB, in the Indian hospitality industry. The study also studied the role of TAW as a mediator between IL and IWB. The study indicated that firms can benefit from IL in terms of workers' innovative work practices. The study's hypotheses were evaluated on a sample of full-time employees in the Indian hospitality industry. The results demonstrate how IL fosters positive subordinate behavior in terms

of TAW, which in turn fosters IWB. The data suggest that all of the analyzed factors are interrelated, and that IL is associated with IWB, with TAW serving as a mediator.

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