Effect of Inclusive Leadership on Teachers' Involvement in Creative Tasks: The Mediating Role of Psychological Safety

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Abstract

This study focuses on the link between inclusive leadership and teachers' involvement in creative tasks with mediating role of psychological safety. The particular contexts of the study are service based organizations, i.e. public and private high schools. Data were collected from 290 teachers performing their duties across urban & rural area schools of Sargodha, Punjab. The data collection tool is the quantitative questionnaire. The study was quantitative in nature that made use of descriptive as well as inferential statistics to analyze the data. The data had been collected through convenience sampling on the basis of availability of the research participants. For data collection, cross sectional method was used. The results of SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) analysis indicated that inclusive leadership is positively related to teachers' creativity at their workplace. Moreover, analysis also indicated that inclusive leadership is associated with psychological safety, which, in turn, stimulates teachers' participation in creative tasks. That association showed indirect effect. It was analyzed that a strong and statistically significant effect of inclusive behavior of head teacher on teachers' creativity became insignificant when teachers psychological safety as a mediator was inserted into the module. The study recommended that our school leaders need to practice inclusive leadership for enhancing creativity in teachers. Also steps should be taken by higher schools administration to train school heads on inclusive leadership.
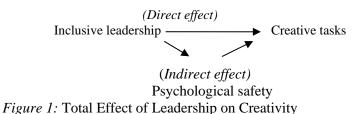
Keywords: teachers' creativity, inclusive leadership, psychological safety, participation, schools, organization.

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Introduction

All organizations across the country are connected to each other due to the globalization of world and this globalized world increased the need for creativity and productivity among the workers of every organization. Globalized world increased the competition and pushed the organizations to work on new course of action. This is the reason that creativity has become a mean objective of many organizations. Creativity is attractive matter of concern to organizational leaders. It creates challenge for leadership to look for means to enhance and keep up creativity at work. Thus, a question arises, how leaders stimulate followers to connect, in creative responsibilities. Leader's supportive behaviour can inspire individuals to take on creative errands. Hollander (2012) explained that inclusive leaders always value and respect their employees and give them the tasks of challenging nature, and facilitate them to achieve specific goals. When leaders are supportive, they show concern for employees' opinion and necessities, and encourage them to express their own concerns and provide feedback. Supportive leaders may nourish that skill. Inclusive leaders are among those leaders who have supportive behavior. If staff members practice inclusive behavior from their leaders, they will feel psychologically safe because they feel secure to come close to their leaders. When leaders are open in discussion, convenient to approach, and also provide accessibility to their employees they increase the psychological safety among employees at work place. They see it less risky to go beyond their job requirements because there are no harmful effects to their personal job or career. Psychological safety is oneself belief about how others will respond when he or she will suggest a new idea. It promotes self confidence among employees to perform their duties in better way. In psychologically safe environment employees share their ideas fearlessly because they know that no one will deny their ideas and thoughts. Psychological safety in organization does not mean that employees are friends or have close relationship but it is the environment in which someone explores her/his feelings. Unlike most research on psychological safety, this study has focused specifically on the experience of teachers in school work teams. Creativity is a skill of individuals that leads to wealthy creative tasks in their work environment. The total effect of leadership on creativity is represented in figure 1.

(Direct effect)
Inclusive leadership ⟶ Creative tasks

(Indirect effect)
Psychological safety

Figure 1: Total Effect of Leadership on Creativity

The study presents relationship among three variables; inclusive leadership style of head teacher, psychological safety among school teachers and school teachers' creativity. The independent variable is inclusive leadership and dependent variable is teachers' creativity and psychological safety is the third variable, which plays the role of mediating variable. The study offers that in the presence of inclusive leaders (head teachers), teachers feel mentally secure and satisfied, if mental security continues this will increase psychological safety. The current study is about the role of psychological safety in boosting creativeness among teachers in their working environment. Specifically, the study indicates that when leaders demonstrate openness to teachers opinion and they are easy to approach by teachers to discuss new ideas. Such leaders create a social environment in which their employees feel that they are psychologically safe and can speak up and also can come up with new & creative ideas. This presents that social environment is important to support employee's creativity. It is important to use psychological safety variable as a mediator because in this connection researchers have robust justification that if teachers are psychologically safe, their output will be at their best. There have been research studies on inclusive leadership but still there is need to make further studies on that leadership style. As leadership style plays important role in the success of any organization so there is also need for more studies on the other traits of leadership like authentic and ethical leadership's impact on organization success within the context of Pakistan.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:
i.   To find out the effect of inclusive leadership on teachers' involvement in creative tasks.
ii.   To seek out intermediating relationship of teachers' creative tasks, psychological safety and inclusive leadership.
iii.   To provide awareness about inclusive leader (head teacher) and teachers' involvement in creative tasks.
iv.   To promote two-way communications between head teacher and teachers, and support for new idea.

Review of Literature

Learning is the essential point of each school on the earth. The principle plan of international instructive approach is school administration. The attention toward enhancing nature of coaching among schools has made it a hard task for school leaders to adopt specific leadership style (Dempster & MacBeath, 2009; Stoll & Temperley, 2009). As expressed in a study on textile industry that supervisors' role is very important for employee output and organization success (Javed, 2012). To run instructive establishment proficiently and effectively, the most valuable and vital piece of any associations is human asset (Mosaddegh & Rad, 2003). Very much qualified and capable specialists are essential in accomplishing objectives and goals of organization.

Leadership is definitely an interpersonal phenomenon between leaders and subordinates. The leader's abilities and characteristics can affect leadership behaviour to solve the multiple societal issues that occur in institution (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacob & Fleishman, 2000).

The characteristics like openness and tolerance in uncertain situation could affect motivation of the leaders to engage in problems of novel nature and achieve success despite of working under these problems. Risk taking, adaptability, and independence are among the other features that could affect the working of a leader under demanding environment by encouraging them to use the resources in a more effective way (Fiedler & Garcia, 1987). Definitely creativity is the potential and talent of someone to produce, develop and invent something new that could be a service or product (Mumford, 2003; Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Creativity is considered as phenomenon related to individuals. And this phenomenon becomes cultural phenomenon when accepted by others. Through this phenomenon possibility are transformed into realities (Tan, 2007).

The operational definition of psychological safe environment includes different dimensions like supportive and flexible leadership, individual perception, beliefs about how others will respond and self-expression. It was found that leader have direct and indirect (mediated by safety climate) effects on safety behaviour (Clarke, 2010). Some experts indicate the relationship between conflicts which is situated between the person and their effect on commitment of the individual with the organization. Supportive leaders take action as a moderator to resolve the contrary bond between the interpersonal disagreements by empowering the employees (Liu, Spector & Jex, 2005). Individuals show creativity when they experience empowerment from their leaders in work (Chaudhry & Shah, 2011). Inclusive leaders often behave in such ways that appreciate

employees (e.g., listening the employees' opinions, valuing their contributions in decision making), they get confidence and assurance from employees (Hsiung, 2012).

It was found that employees feel safer when their supervisors are allowing access, friendly and employees feel easy to talk them (Edmondson, 2004). In the presence of inclusive supervisors, employees perceive higher psychological safety because they feel safer to approach their supervisors (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). Organizations performance is based on their employee dedication and personnel are fairly committed with the organization if they recognize more assistance from the leader, leader play fundamental role in this respect and if leader provide support to employee in each aspect the employee is more committed with organization. So it is suggested that the supportive leadership will moderate the relationship between psychological poise and organizational dedication (Chaudhry & Shah, 2011).

When employees feel that their personal image, position, and job are safe from negative effects, then it is perceived that they will take risk to go beyond their specific job requirements (Carmeli, Gelbard and Gefen, 2010; Detert & Edmondson, 2011). Psychologically safe individuals show initiative and proactive behaviour (Edmondson, 2004). A study found that leadership technique can make supporting environment for working. The leaders' ability to put together objects and to provoke interest, professional skill and to carry out routine work with devotion, all these things encourages creativity (Ekvall and Andersson, 1986). Inclusive leaders' impact on creativity and the intervening role of psychological safety was investigated. The expected positive relationships were found (Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, & Ziv, 2010).

The direct and indirect effect of inclusive leadership on employees' voice behavior was studied by Yin (2013). In that study psychological safety and leader member exchange were mediating their relationship. Yin found helpful findings in all expected relationship. More recently Javed, Naqvi, Khan, Arjoon & Tayyeb (2017) examined that inclusive leadership can affect innovative behaviour; moreover the effect was strengthened with psychological safety. The study also found that the innovative behavior was positively related to inclusive leadership that was a direct relation from inclusive leadership to innovative behaviour. There was also indirect relation from leadership towards innovation through psychological safety as mediator.

Research Methodology

In the study, the effect of Inclusive behaviour of head teacher on creative behavior, with the mediating effect of psychological safety, was measured on basis of teachers' perception about themselves and their head teachers. For descriptive analysis SPSS 19 was used and correlation analysis was also done through SPSS 19. Finally, AMOS software was used for SEM (Structural Equation Modeling).

Population and Sampling

Population is a group of people, events, things connected with interest that the researcher wants to investigate. The current study population was teachers of public and private high schools from Sargodha, Punjab. Sample is composition of the population that represents the whole population for the study concerned. For the current study convenience sampling was used on the availability of research participants. Researchers collected data from 350 teachers working in public and private high schools. They were internee, primary, elementary and secondary school teachers by their designation working in high schools.

Data Collection Instrument

Questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents. It is a tool in which responses can be analyzed with quantitative methods by assigning numerical values to Likert-type scales. In the following study close ended questionnaire was used to measure three latent variables like inclusive leadership, psychological safety and creativity among teachers. The first section of questionnaire was about demographic information of respondents.

To measure inclusive behaviour of head teacher 9 items were adopted. These items were developed and used by Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, and Ziv (2010). The aim of using these items were to assess three dimensions of inclusive behaviour: communicativeness, friendliness, and convenience. Items included,
"The head is open to hearing new ideas."
"The head is attentive to new opportunities to improve work processes."
"The head is open to discuss the desired goals and new ways to achieve them."
"The head is available for consultation on problems."

"The head is available for professional questions I would like to consult with him/her."
"The head encourages me to access him/her on emerging issues."
"The head is accessible for discussing emerging problems."
"The head is ready to listen to my requests."

Psychological safety measures the extent to which a teacher in a school feels psychologically safe to take risks, speak up, and discuss issues openly. Researchers used five items for measuring psychological safety, created by Edmondson (2004). Responses from teachers were geared up on a five-point scale with minimum point 1 = 'not at all' and maximum point 5 = 'to a large extent'. The items statements were:
"I am able to bring up problems and tough issues."
"People in this organization sometimes reject others for being different."
"It is safe to take a risk in this organization."
"It is easy for me to ask other members of this organization for help."
"No one in this organization would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts."

To measure teachers' involvement in creative tasks, four items were used. Tierney, Farmer and Graen (1999) created these four items which measure creativity.They also used those items in their study for measuring creative behaviour of workers. Other researchers also used those items to measure degree of creativeness. Teachers were requested to show the level of their agreement about their creative behaviour in the workplace. Responses of teachers were geared up on a five-point scale minimum point was 1 = 'not at all' and maximum point was 5 = 'to a large extent'.

Following items were used to measure creativity:
"I demonstrate originality at my work."
"I try out new ideas and approached to problems."
"I identify opportunities for new products/processes."
"I generate novel, but operable work-related ideas."

The questionnaire adopted was translated into Urdu to make more understandable for teachers of high schools with the support of experts of education. It is more interesting and easy to understand for school teachers to respond in Urdu language on the questionnaire. Further, the questionnaire has been validated by four experts from the field of education.

Reliability Analysis

The process of measuring scale consistency is called reliability analysis. Table 1 shows the reliability analysis of instruments. Researcher collected 40 questionnaires from respondents and considered for analysis. Cronbach's Alpha reliability was 0.84.Reliability coefficient >0.70 is considered good one (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

Table 1

Reliability Statistics of Questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
.844	18

Limitations of the Study

Due to time constraint just one mediators were tested, future research can improve the model and also check the other mediators and moderators. Second, convenience sampling method was used, the most obvious criticism about convenience sampling is sampling bias and that the sample is not representative of the entire population. Third the data only collected from limited number of schools. The researchers can improve the data collection method and collect data from different cities and countries.

Results and Interpretation

In this part of study descriptive as well as structural equation modeling results are discussed.

Table 2 is showing frequency and percentage of teachers' qualification, job status and designation.

Table 2

Demographic Information of High School Teachers

Teachers qualification, Job Status, designation		Frequency	Percent
Gender wise frequency	Male	125	43.1
	Female	165	56.9
Teachers Qualification	SSC	5	1.7
	F.A/F.Sc	8	2.8
	B.A/B.Sc	37	12.8
	B.S/M.A/M.Sc	194	66.9
	M.Phil 33		11.4
Teachers Job Status	Interne	7	2.4
	Contractual	104	35.5
	Regular/Permanent	161	55.5
Teachers' Designation	PST	77	26.6
	EST	122	42.1
	SST	62	21.4

Total effect of Leadership on Creativity

Figure: 2 Path analysis module showing Total effect of Leadership on Creativity

Table 3 shows that total effect of inclusive leadership on creativity. When Inclusive leadership goes up by 1%, creativity goes up by 0.653%.The corresponding p value indicates that effect of inclusive leadership on creativity is statistically significant.

Table 3

Inclusive Leadership and Creativity

	Estimate	t
Creativity <--- Inclusive leadership	.653***	11.40***

*p<.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001
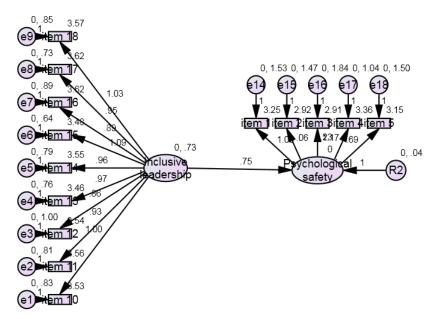
Inclusive Leadership Effect on Psychological Safety

Figure: 3 Path Analysis Module for positive association between Inclusive leadership and psychological safety

Table 4 shows that effect of inclusive leadership on psychological safety and estimated value of that effect is 0.754, Showing that when inclusive leadership goes up by 1%, psychological safety goes up by 0. 754%. The p value explains that effect of inclusive leadership on psychological safety is statistically significant.

Table 4

Association between Inclusive Leadership and Psychological Safety

	Estimate	t
Psychological safety<---Inclusive leadership	.754***	8.66*

*p<.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

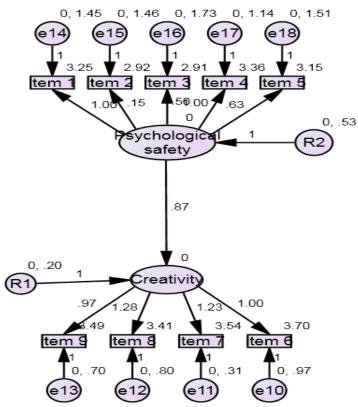**Association Between Psychological Safety and Creativity**

Figure: 4 Path Analysis Module for positive association between psychological safety and Creativity

Table 5 shows that there is positive effect of psychological safety on creativity. Estimated value of that effect is 0.868. Showing that when psychological safety up by 1%, creativity goes up by 0.868%. The p value indicates that effect of psychological safety on creativity is statistically significant.

Table 5

Association between psychological safety and Creativity

	Estimate	t
Creativity <--- Psychological safety	.868***	7.95*

*p<.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

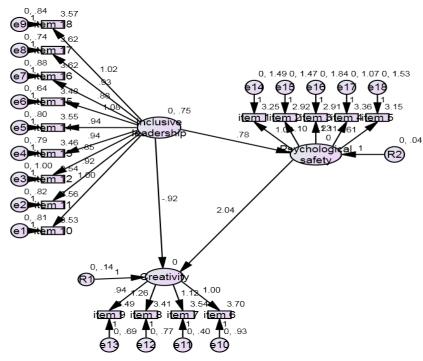**Mediating Effect of Psychological Safety between Inclusive Leadership and Teachers' Creativity**

Figure: 5 Path analysis module of mediation between inclusive leadership and teachers' creativity by psychological safety

The effect of inclusive leadership on psychological safety is shown in the 1st row and estimates 0.778, shows that when inclusive leadership goes up by 1%, psychological safety goes up by 0.778%. The p value explains that effect of Inclusive leadership on psychological safety is statistically significant. The effect of inclusive leadership on creativity is shown in the 2nd row, the estimated value of that effect is -0.923, shows that when inclusive leadership goes up by 1%, creativity goes down by -0.923%. The corresponding p value shows that effect of inclusive leadership on

creativity is statistically not significant. Negative but statistically insignificant result implies that independent and dependent variables are not associated with each other. The 3rd row in Table 6 shows effect of psychological safety on creativity. When psychological safety goes up by 1%, creativity goes up by 2.039% and statistically not significant.
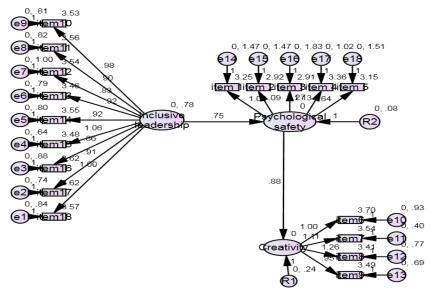
Table 6

Mediating effect of psychological safety between Inclusive leadership and Teachers' creativity

			Estimate
Psychological safety	<---	Inclusive leadership	.778***
Creativity	<---	Inclusive leadership	-.923
Creativity	<---	Psychological safety	2.039

Note*p<.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Indirect Effect of Inclusive Leadership on Teachers' Creativity

Figure.6. Path Analysis model of indirect effect of Inclusive leadership on Teachers' creativity

Table 7 shows the effect of inclusive leadership on psychological safety is shown with 1st estimated value of that effect is 0.745, shows that when inclusive leadership goes up by 1%, psychological safety goes up by 0.75%. The p value explains that the effect of inclusive leadership on

psychological safety is statistically significant. The effect of inclusive leadership on creativity is shown in 2nd row estimate value of effect is 0.878, shows that when inclusive leadership goes up by 1%, creativity goes up by 0.88%.The corresponding p value explains that effect psychological safety on creativity is statistically significant.

Table 7

Indirect Effect of Inclusive Leadership on Teachers' Creativity

			Estimate
Psychological safety	<---	Inclusive leadership	.745***
Creativity	<---	Psychological safety	.878***

Note.$*p<.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001$

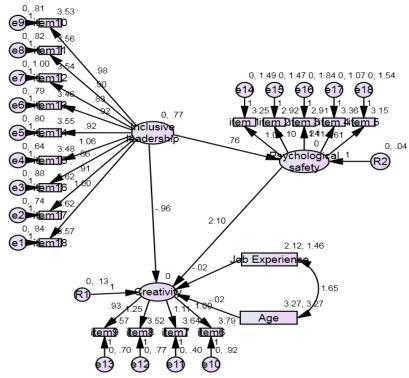**Mediation effect including control variables**

Figure 7: Path analysis module of mediation by psychological safety between inclusive leadership and teachers' creativity and inclusion of control variables i.e. age and job experience.

The effect of inclusive leadership on psychological safety is shown in the 1st row of Table 8 and estimated value is 0.763, shows that when inclusive leadership goes up by 1%, psychological safety goes up by 0.763%. The p value shows that effect of inclusive leadership on psychological safety is statistically significant. The inclusive leadership effect lying on creativity is shown in the 2nd row, the estimated value is -0.956, shows that when inclusive leadership goes up by 1%, creativity goes down by 0.956%. The corresponding p value shows that inclusive leadership effect on creativity is statistically not significant. The 3rd row in Table 4.10 shows effect of experience on creativity. When psychological safety goes up by 1% creativity goes up by. 2.102%. The corresponding p value shows that experience effect on creativity is statistically not significant. The 4th row shows that experience goes up by 1% creativity goes down by.018%. The corresponding p value indicates that age effect on creativity is statistically not significant. The 5rd row shows effect of age on creativity. When age goes up by 1% creativity goes down by .017%. In our developed model, there are unstandardized factor load values, which are greater than 1. According to Grace and Bollen (2005), unstandardized factor load values can be more than 1. In our study all the figures given above have unstandardized factor load values.

Table 8

Mediation by psychological safety between inclusive leadership and teachers' creativity and inclusion of control variables i.e. age and job experience

			Estimate
Psychological safety	<---	Inclusive leadership	.763***
Creativity	<---	Inclusive leadership	.956
Creativity	<---	Psychological safety	2.102
Creativity	<---	Experience	-.018
Creativity	<---	Age	.017

Note.*p<.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Conclusion and Discussion

It is concluded that inclusive leadership stimulates teachers' creativity at the workplace. In the presence of inclusive heads, teachers feel mentally secure and satisfied, as mental security sustains and increases psychological safety and psychological safety boosts up creativity among teachers in their working environment. Our study was based on leader–member exchange theory to develop a model which demonstrates that how inclusive leadership is related to teacher's creative tasks in schools. Inclusive leadership of head teacher was positively associated with creativity and predicts creativity of teachers at their workplace. Distinctive examinations agreed to the relationship, for instance, Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, & Ziv (2010) have explained that inclusive authority has a critical positive effect on achievement. Inclusive leaders have qualities to facilitate higher levels of relationship with their workers. These qualities cause job satisfaction, intention to stay at job, job performance, commitment, and creativeness. Organization success is achieved through these effects (Shore, Randel, Chung, Dean, Ehrhart, & Singh, 2011). Our study's examination also matches their findings. Inclusive leaders understand that everybody's information is profitable, where their words and deeds welcome commitments from all their colleagues whose shared exertion make an undertaking effective. More recently Javed, Naqvi, Khan, Arjoon & Tayyeb (2017) examined that inclusive leadership can affect innovative behaviour; presenting that overall recognized leaders ability to provide support may be important facet of the work atmosphere. Moreover, in our study, the positive effect of inclusive leadership on creative tasks was strengthened in an indirect relation via psychological safety. There was also direct relation between inclusive leadership and creative tasks and that effect becomes negative because of inserting psychological safety as mediator. When employees feel that they will be answerable to negative consequences of the organizational activities they are likely to show disengagement from work, i.e., when there is lack of psychological safety, employees are likely to carry out their work roles in a predetermined and guided manner and hence they exercise no creativity (Brown & Leigh 1996). Similarly, in our study, a strong and statistically significant effect of inclusive behavior of heads on teachers' creativity became insignificant when teachers' psychological safety was inserted

into the module. The study recommends that our school leaders need to practice inclusive leadership for enhancing creativity and innovations in teachers. Also steps should be taken by higher schools administration to train school heads on inclusive leadership. In future research, work engagement, workaholism, person job fit, employees' optimism and psychological empowerment may be used as mediators between inclusive leadership and teachers' creative tasks in schools.

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