THE EFFECT OF INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP ON PROJECT SUCCESS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AND JOB MEANINGFULNESS

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Abstract

The role of leadership is considered critical for project success, however, the leadership style that produces the best results are still under debate. Among different leadership styles, less attention has been paid to the role of inclusive leadership in engaging and motiving the project members and attaining project success. Therefore, apart from direct effect of inclusive leadership on project success, this study has also investigated the mediational mechanism of psychological safety and job meaningfulness in the relationship between inclusive leadership and project success. Data was collected from 337 respondents from different construction organizations in Pakistan. Using structural equation modeling (SEM), the results revealed that while inclusive leadership has positive effect on project success, psychological safety and job meaningfulness play partially mediating role between these relationships. The results broaden our understanding of the different paths from inclusive leadership to project success. The study has implications for the project management literature and practice. Limitations of the study and avenues for future research are discussed.

1. Introduction

Project-based organization (PBO) is a paradigm that is gaining popularity across multiple industries since last few decades. The transformation from vertical integration to project-based approach is considered to be more ideal for handling complex, fast-changing business and economic environments characterized by intense competitiveness in terms of changing dynamics and technological advancements in product, supply and labor. PBO model is advantageous due to its structural flexibility which enables to reconfigure skilled teams for performing multi-tasking activities in response to such challenging situations. Being project dependent, project success is considered lifeline for PBOs as it is directly connected with organizational survival and sustainability. The importance of project

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success turned the attention of project management scholars in exploring the critical success factors (CSF) contributing in successful accomplishment of project.

Among others, leadership has been viewed substantially important factor that plays a vital role in project success and crucial for creating environments that lead to higher levels of performance (Asree, Cherikh & Baucum, 2019). Considering the importance of leadership role in project success, researchers have started examining effects of different leadership styles on project success, nonetheless, overriding interest remained on vertical relationship (top-down influence) model such as transformational and transactional leadership styles (Asree et al., 2019; Pretorius, Steyn & Bond-Barnard, 2018). Despite it being, the leadership style that produces the best results are still under debate (Müller & Turner, 2010; Randeree & Ninan, 2011; Stagnaro & Piotrowski, 2013; Lundy, 2013). Given the fact, apart from vertical relationship based models, more recently shared and balanced leadership styles have gained importance, especially in the project management literature. Thereby few recent studies have explored other leadership styles such as humble leadership (Ali et al., 2020) and servant leadership (Gwaya et al., 2014; Krog & Govender, 2015). Among such leadership styles, inclusive leadership turned out be a potential predictor of project success.

Although interpersonal skills and relationship building is acknowledged to be a fundamental characteristic for project leader (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2017; Uhl-Bien, 2006), the empirical relationship between inclusive leadership and project success is still in its early stages. Inclusive leadership, which is core of relational leadership, has been defined as leader who is open, available, and accessible to organizational/project team members coming up with innovative ideas, creating a context where people are encouraged to voice their ideas that may often not be in synchronize with norms (Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon & Ziv, 2010), which enables the effective functioning of diverse organizations often overlooked in other forms of leadership (Randel et al., 2018). So, for less attention has been paid to inclusive leadership in project management literature and only few studies have examined its effect on different individual and organizational outcomes. There is a call for investing the inclusive leadership with project success in different contexts and settings (Blaskovics, 2016; Khan et al., 2020; Zhao, Hwang & Lee, 2016). Thereby, this study aims to explore the relationship between inclusive leadership and project success.

Apart from examining the direct relationship between inclusive leadership and project success, it is also important to ascertain how inclusive leaders manage to engage and motivate team members towards the successful accomplishment of projects. We postulate psychological safely and job meaningfulness as two mediating mechanisms through which inclusive leadership could galvanize the project success. Although the former proposed mediational variable to certain extent examined with different job-related outcomes, whereas the latter is rarely being linked with the project success. Psychological safety is defined as "feeling able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career (Kahn, 1990, p. 708). Accordingly, it outlines a perception that "people are comfortable being themselves" (Edmondson, 1999, p. 354). Previous research has explicitly found the empirical relationship between inclusive leadership and psychological safety in different contexts (Carmeli et al., 2010; Javed et al., 2017; Khan et al., 2020; Zeng, Zhao & Zhao, 2020). Inclusive behavior of leadership characterized by oppressiveness, accessibility and availability give feeling to

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employees that they are psychologically safe to voice, speak up, come up with novel and useful solutions (Atwater & Carmeli, 2009; Carmeli et al., 2010; Fang, Chen, Wang, Chen; 2019; Javed et al., 2017; Zhu, Xu & Zhang, 2020) which intrinsically motivates them for collective goal achievement (Kuknor & Bhattacharya, 2020). This motivation for collective goal achievement ultimately improves project performance. Further, a psychologically safe feeling by project team members motivates them to involve in creative work and are encouraged to perform well (Zeng et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2020). These studies suggest that inclusive leadership is likely to motivate, support and cultivate a social context in which people feel that they are psychologically safe by acknowledging their suggestions to achieve the goals of project success. Therefore, we propose that psychological safety has a mediating role between inclusive leadership and project success.

Another potential intervening mechanism is job meaningfulness, which denotes the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individuals' specific standards (May, Gilson & Harter, 2004) and it also considered as "an inclusive state of being" (Chalofsky, 2010. P.19). The job meaningfulness has gained importance due to arguably discontentment with temporary organizational imperatives, job quality, and purpose (Bailey et al., 2019; Chalofsky, 2010; Lepisto & Pratt, 2017; Taylor & Roth, 2019), lack of these factors can lead to detachment or disengagement from work related activities. On the contrary, the experience of job meaningfulness by team members not only foster their personal growth but also nurture work motivation (May et al., 2004; Spreitzer, Kizilos & Nason, 1997). Inclusive leadership strongly reflects three key aspects i.e. motivation, support, and climate which can influence the motivation of their subordinates to engage in creative performance by setting expectations for high performance (Carmeli et al., 2010; Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2007). Leader support has been found to consistently relate to motivation to engage in creative work and display creative behaviors. Supportive behavior that has been linked to creative performance includes high quality leader–member exchange relationships, supporting employee actions or decisions, providing information, consulting employees, and trust in the leader (Carmeli et al., 2010) which likely foster job meaningfulness among employees. The relevant literature suggests that a challenging job is source of attention for employees as it provides growth opportunities. Employees find a job meaningful if it enables them to pursue activities that truly matter them, the work is considered important and valued by the firm, and the job enables them to reach their goals (Thakor & Joshi, 2005; Tyagi, 1985). Mutually respectful engagement and caring factor in leader–follower relationship helps individuals to develop at work. Job meaningfulness enable employees to thrive (experience both aliveness and learning), thereby enhancing their creativity (Stephens & Carmeli, 2017) that certainly help in solving the problems at work and objective attainment. These augments might enhance the linkages between inclusive leadership, meaningfulness and thriving for project success.

Based on the foregoing discussion, the current study presents a theoretical model that inclusive leadership is directly as well as indirectly via psychological safety and job meaningfulness relate to project success. By introducing the framework, this study aims to address a significant contribution to the existing literature by extending the previous work about the role of leadership in project success (Ali et al.,2020; Gwaya et al., 2014; Khan et al., 2020; Krog & Govender, 2015), specifically it will broaden our understanding

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of the leader's inclusiveness factor as an essential aspect of project success. The study will also amplify the limited literature about the role of employees' psychological factors in project success (Zeng et al., 2020). Moreover, the study will augment the current knowledge about leader-member exchange (LMX) theoretical perspective and hypothesized model in this study may provide insights into how inclusive leadership is associated with psychological factors of team members that may reflect in project success. More precisely, we expect our research will contribute for the relevant body of knowledge by explaining how an inclusive leader is directly and indirectly via psychological safety and job meaningfulness related to project success.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Development
2.1 Inclusive Leadership and Project Success

Inclusive leadership is an expansion of relational leadership which focuses on relationship building (Carmeli et al., 2010; Uhl-Bien, 2006). Uhl-Bien (2006) defined relational leadership as "a social influence process through which emergent coordination (i.e., evolving social order) and change (i.e., new values, attitudes, approaches, behaviors, ideologies, etc.) are constructed and produced" (p. 668). Nembhard and Edmondson (2006), who introduced the concept in management field, are in an opinion that it is more concerned about leaders' inclusive behaviors that invite and appreciate inputs from others and help shaping their team members' beliefs that "their voices are genuinely valued" (p. 948). Expending this notion Carmeli et al., (2010) defined inclusive leadership as the leadership ability to exhibit relational characteristics such as openness, accessibility, and availability in their interactions with followers. Therefore, inclusive leadership is at the core of relational leadership and centers on whether followers feel that leaders are available, listen and pay attention to their needs (Carmeli et al., 2010). It is worth mentioning that although inclusive leader commonly mixed with other presumably similar leadership styles such as servant leadership and humble leadership (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Kuknor & Bhattacharya, 2020; Prime & Salib, 2014), however, it is independent and unique from servant leadership or similar other leadership styles. Randel et al. (2018) compared inclusive leadership with other different existing leadership styles and concluded that the emphasis on subordinates' perceptions of belongingness and acknowledging their diverse contributions is most fundamental characteristic that distinguishes inclusive leader from other leadership styles.

Extant literature demonstrates that inclusive leadership has significant positive consequences on work-related outcomes such as team innovation (Frost, 2018; Fang et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2019; Ye, Wang & & Guo 2019), creativity and innovation (Carmeli et al., 2010; Choi et al., 2017; Javed et al., 2017). The inclusiveness of the leadership encourages and motivates new ideas, new opportunities to improve work process and new ways to achieve the designed goals (Carmeli et al., 2010). Fostering such shared understanding, communication and collaboration motivates the project team members to explore all possible options for solutions to complete the project. Moreover, valuing the ideas of every team member by inclusive leadership gives the since of encouragement and appreciation to team members which motivates them to efficiently strive for project success (Hollander, 2013; Khan et al, 2020; Rehman, 2020).

Furthermore, readily availability of inclusive leadership for consultation on problem, professional questions and requests, support the team member for collaborative problem-

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solving and action-oriented solutions to meet specific objectives (Kuknor & Bhattacharya, 2020; Sohmen, 2013). Correspondingly, the performance-related information obtained through feedback, which is a core characteristic of inclusive leadership (Carmeli et al., 2010), contributes to surmounting team members' weaknesses to address the work flaw or emerging problems that in turn helps them to work more efficiently and achieve the required task performance (Khan et al., 2020; Qian et al., 2018). Furthermore, inclusive leader keeps the followers engaged through communication and collaboration, which creates the sense of ownership among followers that they are part of the process and are not being disregarded or unheard (Jiang, Ding, Wang, Li, 2020; Shore et al., 2018). Additionally, inclusive leadership tolerate the errors and failures of team member which help them to learn and improve their performance (Tang et al., 2015; Zeng et al., 2020). Subsequently, inclusive leadership embarks social exchange process, put forward by LMX theory, in which they involve followers in the course of decision making about the future goals (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Kuknor & Bhattacharya, 2020), this leader-follower relationship and collaboration lead to project success. These arguments suggest that the inclusiveness exhibited by project leader likely reinforce project team members' performance that ultimately leads to the project success. Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

H1. Inclusive leadership is positively associate with project success.

2.2 Inclusive Leadership and Psychological Safety

Psychological safety, refers to the feeling of being "able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequence to self-image, status, or career" (Kahn, 1990, p.708). Feeling safe is individuals' perception that they will not suffer for pronouncing their real nature at the workplace. In other words, it is a perception of consequences of interpersonal risks that may arise in the work environment. Edmondson (2004) explained it as presumed beliefs about others response or reaction if he/she ask a question, report a mistake, seek feedback or share a new idea or suggestion. Safe organizational environment allows an individual to understand the boundaries surrounding the permissible behavior, contrary to unsafe environment where usually the conditions are ambiguous, uncertain and intimidating (May et al., 2004). According to Kahn (1990) safety is determined by foundations of the social system that create more or less non-threatening, anticipated, and persistent social situations in which team members can engage. An organizational environment that encourages open communication, based on interpersonal relationships that are supportive and trusting, and makes employees feel belongingness and more likely result into fostering psychological safety.

Leadership play a significant role in fostering psychological safety at workplace. Having the leading role, leadership engage in norm-setting in the workplace by defining what is acceptable and not acceptable behavior (Kahn, 1990). Psychological safety is largely influence by leadership support which is exhibited by inclusive leadership's openness, availability and accessibility and makes team members more "likely to feel safer to engage themselves more fully, try out novel ways of doing things, discuss mistakes and learn from these behaviors" (May et al., 2004, p.16). In other words, Inclusive leaders encourage followers to propose new ideas, listen to their opinions, be available to communicate, to discuss problems and solutions with their followers, and tolerate subordinates' mistakes and failures (Pardue et al., 2018; Carmeli et al., 2010). Such

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behavior by leadership make the followers to realize that innovative ideas are recognized and encouraged, and they are not penalized for weakness and failure in job related activities, thus subordinates will develop psychological safety (Zhu et al 2020).

Organizational/team member are in fact highly attuned to leader actions and behavior, as they provide clues for acceptable team behavior, expectations, and context. As inclusive leadership provide support for employees, a safe atmosphere for knowledge sharing is emphasized. Such behavior and efforts will involve and consider employees' perspectives through invitation, which should facilitate team psychological safety. Also, the supportive behavior exhibited by leadership tend to engender feelings among followers that they are able to take risks and be creative in the execution of tasks. As a matter of fact, inclusive leadership support has been found to positively affect creativity, which is a kind of free "self-expression" that potentially entails significant degree of psychological safety (Carmelai et al., 2010). Yet again, supportive behavior demonstrated by inclusive leadership helps in reinforcing team members' self-determination and interest at their work settings. Additionally, self-determined project team members develop a feeling that they have a right to choose, initiate and regulate their own actions and activities which consequently develop sense of psychological safety (Carmeli, Brueller, & Dutton, 2009; Carmeli & Gittell, 2009). Similarly, Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) argued that when follower/ project members feel that they are invited and appreciated for their input by their leaders, they developed a sense of psychological safety, as they feel comfortable in speaking up and expressing themselves and by believing that their voice is heard. In addition, Randel et al. (2018) argued that inclusive leadership being characterized as fostering followers' perception of belonging itself contributes in developing psychological safety. In nutshell, inclusive leaders are approachable, caring and follower-helping behavior helps to build high-quality leader-member relation, such high-quality interpersonal relationships have been shown to facilitate the development of psychological safety. Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

H2. Inclusive leadership is positively associated with psychological safety.

2.3 Psychological Safety and Project Success

Psychologically safe employees are characterized by engagement and dedication, creative and innovative, proactive behavior and intrinsically motivated in performing their job-related activities (Carmeli et al., 2010; May et al., 2004), which lead to work effectiveness. Being psychologically safe feelings promote a voice behavior of specking up, questioning, suggesting and communicating for change and implementation of new ideas to get the job done (Khan et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2020) leading to organizational success. Psychological safety reported to be critical factor for creativity (Carmeli et al., 2010; Zhu et al 2020), whereas psychotically unsafe organizational/team members are less likely to engage in creativity at work (West & Richter, 2008). Li and Yan, (2007) argued that psychological safety can improve employees' ability to focus and prompt new solutions (Carmeli et al., 2014) which can be effective for successful accomplishment of projects. Team members having high perceptions of psychological safety at work, more likely to take risks and express their true selves (Palanski & Vogelgesang, 2011) bcomes motivational tool for them to exert efforts toward project success (Aga et al., 2016; Khan et al., 2020). Furthermore, psychologically safe team members will feel comfortable to actively engage their interests in work and try novel ways of doing it (May et al., 2004).

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Conversely, perception of unpredictable and threatening workplace will be more apt to disengage from their role, be hesitant to take risks and try different solutions to perform their activities which may result into project failure.

Prior studies have reported that psychologically safe employees are effective in complying their assignments, higher in productivity (Carmeli et al, 2010) as well as organizational performance (Frazier et al., 2017; Miao et al., 2019; Iqbal et al., 2020). In contrast, the lack of psychological safety creates a substantial loss of both economic and social aspects to the employees and ultimately to the organizations (Haftador & Koohsari, 2015). Therefore, this study expects to find psychological safety to be positively related to project success. Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

H3. Psychological safety positively influences project success.

2.4 Inclusive Leadership and Project Success—Mediating Role of Psychological Safety

Based on the previous two hypotheses and consistent with previous research, we ground that psychological safety is fostered through inclusive leadership, which function as key social-psychological mechanism by which project team members are able to exhibit creativity, engagement, dedication, innovative and proactive behavior as well as intrinsic motivation without inclination to interpersonal threats and developing defensive stance. These tendencies and resources serve as tools in achievement of project team goals by performing well and so can contribute to the project success. Past empirical studies suggest that psychological safety is an important cognitive process which links leadership and subordinates' behavior (Hirak et al., 2012; Zhu & Zhang, 2019). Therefore, we put forward that the relationship between inclusive leadership and project success will be mediated through psychological safety. Inclusive leadership being open, accessible, and available to project team members who come up with innovative solutions, nurture an environment in which team members feel psychologically safe to share their experiences, and come up with novel and useful solutions that are often discouraged in norms. Psychological safety, in turn, is likely to result in high level of employee involvement in creative and innovative solutions, risk taking and achieving the desired project goals efficiently and effectively leading to project success. Thus, the following hypothesis is suggested.

H4. Psychological safety mediates the relationship between inclusive leadership and project success.

2.5 Leadership and Job Meaningfulness

Job meaningfulness has become area of concern in the recent past resulting due to, certain extent, disappointment with short-term organizational imperative, quality of job and growing focus on work are the factor that encourage individuals to find meaning and purpose of their jobs (Chalofsky, 2010; Lepisto & Pratt, 2017; Taylor, 2017). Kahn (1990) defined meaningfulness as "a feeling that one is receiving a return on investments of one's self in a currency of physical, cognitive, or emotional energy. People [experience] meaningfulness when they [feel] worthwhile, useful, and valuable—as though they [make] a difference and [are] not taken for granted" (p.704). It was also denoted as "the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual's own

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ideals or standards... it involves the individual's intrinsic caring about the given task"
(Thomas & Velthouse, 1990, p. 672). In essence, job meaningfulness entails the extent to
which one thinks that he/she can exert individual fulfillment through job (Farzaneh et al.,
2014; Spreitzer, 1995). A job is meaningful to the extent to which the needs that the
individual expects to be fulfilled by the job are actually fulfilled. Job meaningfulness is
important driver of work motivation because employees are committed, engaged, and
concentrated on their work when experiencing job meaningfulness (Lee, 2015),
otherwise, they become unenthusiastic and detached from their work (Bailey et al., 2019;
Han et al., 2020; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

Leadership is critical in shaping the job meaningfulness of team members. Employees
find their work meaningful when having deep morality and inclusive organizational
values and ownership (Arnold et al., 2007; Ghadi et al., 2013). It is considered
fundamental component of workplace spirituality (Dirkx, 2001, 2013), which triggers the
importance of acknowledging the inner self and soul at work (Pardasani, Sharma, &
Bindlish, 2014; Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009). Naturally, human beings are self-
expressive, creative and goal oriented, hence they like the environment where such
psychological tendencies are promoted and nurtured. Inclusive leaders through openness,
accessibility, and availability create an environment where innovative ideas and solutions
are encouraged which positively creates meaningfulness at work (Ghadi et al., 2013;
Lysova et al., 2019). When employees solve performance issues with a new approach,
they perceive their work to be more authentic and value-creating.

Kahn (1990) argued that team members are treated with dignity respect and their
contributions are valued which enable them to obtain a sense of job meaningfulness. On
the other hand, taking employees for granted create a feeling among team members that
they are unrecognized, unacknowledged and unappreciated results into sense of futility
and meaninglessness (Bailey & Madden, 2016; Rafferty & Restubog, 2011). Tummers
and Knies, (2013) noted that the relationship quality between leaders and team members
has paramount importance, under inclusive leadership team members are given greater
decisional flexibility and more participation opportunities which rise importance of their
role in the organization, hence, enhance their experienced job meaningfulness. It is
important to note that inclusive leadership exhibit support, fair treatment, and error
tolerant mechanism (Hirak et al., 2012; Zeng et al., 2020), which result into job
meaningfulness, as the feeling of isolation or marginalization at work was linked with
meaninglessness among team members (Bailey & Madden, 2016). Additionally,
supportive behavior by inclusive leadership is sort of confirmation to workers that they
are valuable assets to the organization and the role that they occupy. This feeling of being
useful and worthwhile is the definition of meaningfulness. Thus, the following hypothesis
is suggested:

H5. Inclusive leadership is positively related to project team members' job
meaningfulness.

2.6 Job Meaningfulness and Project Success

Organizational performance has reinforced the role of organizational members'
commitment and creativity, and prompted the focus on work arrangements that improve
the human experience, such as workplace spirituality, to comprehend employees' search
for job and life meaningfulness (Albuquerque, Cunha, Martins & Sa´, 2014; Izak, 2012)

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and its potential impact on organizational performance (Elm, 2003; Garcia-Zamor, 2003). Job meaningfulness entails inclusiveness which substantially contributes to individuals' sense of achievement of purpose in life, besides being important for organizational/team members' mental health, it is also indispensable for high performing organization (Bailey et al. 2019; Chalofsky, 2010). So far job meaningfulness has been linked with different work-related attitudinal outcomes, such as work or personal engagement (Chen, Zhang, & Vogel, 2011; Fletcher, Bailey, Gilman, 2018; Geldenhuys et al., 2014; Gloria & Steinhardt, 2016; Johnson & Jiang, 2017), job satisfaction (Lysova et al., 2019), organizational commitment (Leiter & Harvie, 1997), behavioral involvement (Montani et al., 2017), and intrinsic motivation (Johns, Xie & Fang,1992) and was reported to be positively associated with these outcomes. Similarly, inverse relationship of job meaningful with intention to quit (Fairlie, 2011) and absenteeism (Soane et al., 2013). All these outcomes definitely contribute in successful completion of individual as well as project level activities and tasks.

As team members who find job meaningfulness experience lead them to broaden the perception of the potential behavioral expressions of engagement which enable them to shape cognitive resources and energies needed for sustained engagement (Soane et al., 2013). Accordingly, meaningfulness triggers a reinforcing affective–cognitive process that helps engaging in situations that are likely to deepen and expand one's sense of self (Kahn & Heaphy, 2014). Amabile and Kramer's (2011) augured that situations where the team members feels that they have made progress in job meaningfulness related tasks leads them to happiness, additional motivation and build professional effectiveness to perform well (Fletcher et al., 2018; Leiter & Harvie, 1997; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Leiter and Harvie, (1997) argued when team members attain job meaningfulness they tend to value the organization and relatedly organization gain credibility with their staff members when they fulfill that expectation. Duchon and Plowman (2005) found that work units whose climates enable a job meaningfulness perform better than work units whose climates are less attentive to the needs of the spirit i.e. sense of job meaningfulness and community.

Albuquerque et al (2014) found that job meaningfulness lead to extra effect by team members to satisfy the clients or customers as well as just-in-time efforts. Meaningful work has also been linked with organizational reputation (Leiter & Harvie, 1997), knowledge sharing (Chen et al., 2011), individual-level performance perceptions (Pavlish & Hunt, 2012), organizational citizenship behavior (Lysova et al., 2019), and creativity (Cohen-Meitar et al., 2009) which are essential components to gear the project towards success. Thus, we suggest that job meaningfulness will positively contribute to project success. Thus, the following is hypothesized:

H6. Job meaningfulness is positively associated with project success.

2.7 Inclusive Leadership and Project Success—Mediating Role of Job Meaningfulness

The forgoing discussion revealed that inclusive leadership supports in nurturing job meaningfulness among team members (Bailey & Madden, 2016; Hirak et al., 2012; Zeng et al., 2020), which positively effects project success. In other words, inclusive leaders accomplish the project by fostering job meaningfulness among their followers or project team members. Moreover, the leader-member exchange theory presents a useful

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framework to comprehend the mediating role of job meaningfulness between inclusive leadership and project success. The relational resources of inclusiveness exhibited by inclusive leadership is expected to satisfy the psychological needs such as job meaningfulness experience which led them to broaden the perception of the potential behavioral expressions of engagement enabling them to shape cognitive resources and energies that ultimately help them to achieve project success. It is so that meaningfulness triggers a reinforcing affective–cognitive process that helps engaging in situations that are likely to deepen and expand one's sense of self leads them to happiness, additional motivation and build professional effectiveness to perform well for the attainment of project success. Thus, we suggest the following hypotheses:

H7. Job meaningfulness mediates the relationship between inclusive leadership and project success.
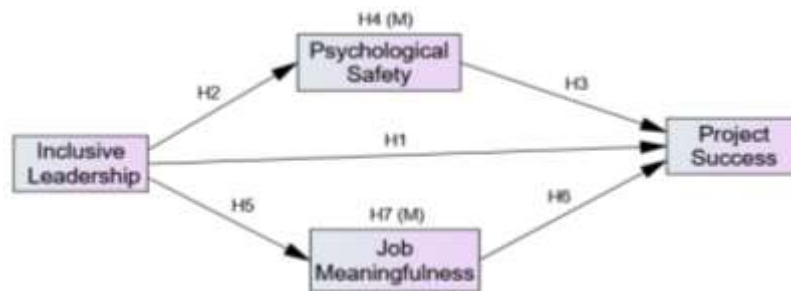

Figure 1. Hypothesized Model

3. Methods

3.1 Sample and procedure

We have considered the construction sector of Pakistan and target population. The choice of construction sector in Pakistan is due to the fact that it plays central role in economic stability by having multiple backward and forward linkages with other sectors. BMI Research has reported compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 12.3% between 2014 and 2018 (BMI, 2019). The government of Pakistan has made various budgetary and non-budgetary measures over the last several years to exploit the construction sector's potential in both local and international market for economic upsurge in the country (Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2018-2019). Moreover, the construction sector is classical representative of project-oriented industry in which organizations are heavily relay on fixed-termed projects. Further, being PBOs, construction organizations are more likely to formulate informal project culture as compared to manufacturing sector. These factors make it ideal target for the current study. Employees working in different construction organizations were respondents of this research.

A total of 400 questionnaires were randomly distributed among staff working in different construction organizations after obtaining approval from senior management. Respondents were ensured about anonymity and confidentiality. Out of 400 distributed questionnaires only 313 were returned, representing the response rate of around 78%. After adjusting for the missing data and outliers, a total of 302 responses were found to be valid and were included for final analysis.

The respondents consisted of 214 males (70.9%) and 88 females (29.1%). The majority of respondents held a bachelor's degree (50.3%). Around half of the participants were

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aged in 36-45 years (47.7 %) and work experience between 6-10 years (49.0%). The demographics profile of the respondents is exhibited in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the respondents

Variable	Item	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	214	70.9
	Female	88	29.1
Age (years)	25-35	93	30.8
	36-45	144	47.7
	46-55	55	18.2
	56 & Above	10	3.3
Education	Undergraduate	45	14.9
	Bachelors	152	50.3
	Masters	105	34.8
Experience (years)	1-5	119	39.4
	6-10	148	49.0
	11-15	22	7.3
	16-20	13	4.3

3.2 Measures

All constructs were measured with previously used and validated scales in extant literature. All items were assessed in the form of a statement on five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, unless otherwise noted.

3.2.1 Inclusive leadership

Inclusive leadership measurement was based on 9-items scale developed by Carmeli et al. (2010), respondents were asked to assess on a five-point scale (ranging from 1 = not at all to 5 = to a large extent) the extent to which their leader displays openness and is available and accessible for them at work. Example items include "The manager is open to hearing new ideas" (openness), "The manager encourages me to access him/her on emerging issues" (accessibility) and "The manager is ready to listen to my requests" (availability). Cronbach's alpha showed high reliability for the measure of inclusive leader (α=.94).

3.2.2 Psychological safety

Five items adapted from Carmeli et al. (2010) to measure subordinates' psychological safety. The measure assesses the extent to which a member in an organization feels psychologically safe to take risks, speak up, and discuss issues openly. An example of the items used was "It is safe to take risk in this organization". The Cronbach's alpha score showed satisfactory reliability (α = 0.89).

3.2.3 Job meaningfulness

Job meaningfulness was measured using the seven item-scale from the Work as Meaning Inventory (WAMI) scale developed by Steger et al., (2012). The scale measured the employees' perceptions of work as meaningful positive experience that is purpose oriented and contributes to personal growth. An example of the items used was "I

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understand how my work contributes to my life's meaning.". The Cronbach's alpha score showed high reliability ($\alpha = 0.92$).

3.2.4 Project success

Project success was measured with the fourteen-item scale developed by Aga et al. (2016). Sample items included "The project was completed according to the budget allocated" and "The outcomes of the project are used by its intended end users". Cronbach's α for the scale was 0.95 indicating the excellent reliability.

3.2.5 Control variable

Prior research has shown that demographic variables may influence project success (Aga et al., 2016; Ali et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2020), thus, certain variables such as age, educational background, gender and experience are considered control variables in this research.

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4. Data Analysis and Results

Data analysis was carried out in IBM- SPSS24 and AMOS 23. The Structure equation modeling was processed in two steps: confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural model testing. The assessment results are reported subsequent sections.

4.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

CFA was aimed to examine whether the hypothesized four-factor model fits the collected data appropriate. The CFA results indicated a good model fitness ($\chi2 = 973.802$, df = 506, $\chi2$ /df = 1.925, p < 0.001, NFI=0.901, IFI= 0.950, TLI= 0.940, CFI = 0.949, SRMR = 0.062, RMSEA = 0.055, PClose = 0.045). Reliability and validity was evaluated using Master Validity Tool", AMOS Plugin (Gaskin & Lim, 2016), taking into consideration the composite reliability (CR), convergent validity and discriminant validity. The CR values for three constructs i.e., inclusive leadership, job-meaningfulness and project success were greater than 0.9, whereas CR value for psychological safety was 0.87, reflecting that all latent constructs have excellent internal consistency (Hu & Bentler, 1999). For convergent validity, all values of the average variance extracted (AVE) were greater than the threshold of 0.5, verifying that there is no issue of convergent validity among these constructs (Sarstedtet al., 2016). Following the Fornell–Larcker (1981) the discriminant validity assessment was performed using square root of AVE. The value of all the constructs was greater than the correlation among all the constructs. Thereby, the discriminant validity between the four latent constructs is also established. The reliability and validity results are exhibited in Table 2.

Table 2. CFA Model - Reliability and Validity Measures

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR (H)	PSS	IL	JM	PS
PSS	0.949	0.571	0.148	0.954	0.756			
IL	0.928	0.591	0.143	0.942	0.378***	0.769		
JM	0.917	0.614	0.081	0.924	0.284***	0.192**	0.783	
PS	0.872	0.592	0.148	0.974	0.384***	0.332***	0.276***	0.769

Note(s): CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted; MSV = maximum shared variance; MaxR(H) = McDonald construct reliability; PSS= project success; IL = Inclusive leadership; JM = Job meaningfulness; PS = psychological safety. Variance extracted are on the diagonal; Correlations are off diagonal. ** p < 0.010; *** p < 0.001.

4.2 Assessment of Structural Model

Having established the reliability and validity of the measurement model, the next step was to assess the model fit of the structural model. The hypothesized model provided a good fit $\chi2 = 973.802$, df = 506, $\chi2$ /df = 1.925, p < 0.001, NFI=0.907, IFI= 0.912, CFI = 0.910, SRMR = 0 .066, RMSEA = 0.065, PClose = .001). In the next step we performed structural model testing in two steps: first, only four control variables name gender, age, educational qualification and experience were regressed on dependent variable (project success) but the outcomes exhibited that the demographics variables did not significantly affect project success. Thus, demographics were excluded from the model. In the second step, all hypothesized latent variables were entered in the model for analysis. The analysis of the main effects revealed a significant positive association between inclusive

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leadership and project success (β = 0.26, P < 0.001), supporting H1. Similarly, H2 and H5 were accepted, as inclusive leadership was found to be a significant predictor of psychological safety (β = 0.36, P < 0.001) and job meaningfulness (β = 0.19, P < 0.001). Regarding H3 and H6, the results indicate statistically significant effect of psychological safety (β = 0.27, P < 0.001) and job meaningfulness (β = 0.19, P < 0.001) on project success, hence, hypotheses H3 and H6 were accepted. The obtained R^2 values signify 25% of variance for project success. The structural equational model paths analysis results are depicted in Table 3 and Figure 2.

Table 3. Structural equation model path analysis results

Structural path	β	SE	t-value	P
IL → PSS	0.26	0.061	4.872	<0.001
IL → PS	0.36	0.059	6.725	<0.001
IL → JM	0.19	0.066	3.325	<0.001
PS→ PSS	0.26	0.057	4.705	<0.001
JM → PSS	0.19	0.051	3.671	<0.001
R2				0.25
ΔR2				0.14

Note(s): IL = Inclusive leadership; PS = psychological safety; JM = Job meaningfulness; PSS= project success
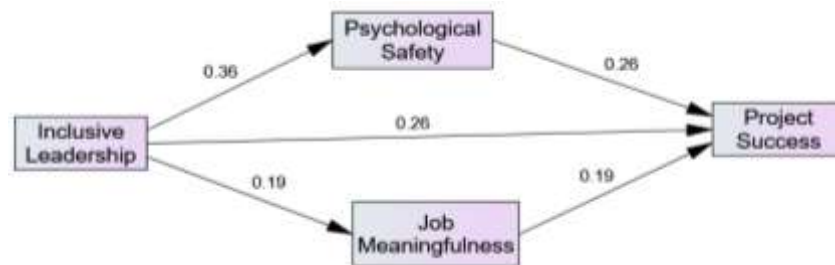

Figure 2. Path Coefficients

Concerning H4 and H7, to estimate the specific indirect effect of psychological safety and Job meaningfulness user-defined estimand (i.e., the syntax for AMOS) was employed. After defining the indirect effects, they were estimated through the bias-corrected bootstrap procedure (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Bootstrapping procedure was employed using 2000 data samples at 95% bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals (CIs) to assess whether the sampling distribution is skewed from 0 (Shrout & Bolger, 2002) for deciding the mediation effect. The results indicate that the top and lower bound results exclude 0 for psychological safety and job meaningfulness, upholding the significance. The bootstrap outcomes reveled a positive mediating effect of psychological safety between inclusive leadership and project success (β = 0. 106, SE = 0. 027, P < 0.01, 95% CI [0.062, 0.168]). Likewise, job meaningfulness also reflected positive significant mediating effect between inclusive leadership and project success (β = 0. .041, SE = 018, p < 0.01, 95% CI [0.013, 0.087]). As the direct effect of inclusive leadership on project success was also significant, it is concluded that the psychological safety and job meaningfulness have partial mediating effect on the relationship between inclusive leadership and project success (see Table 4).

Table 4. Bootstrapping estimates of mediating effects

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	Standardized estimate (β)	Standard error (SE)	Percentile 95% CI		
			Lower bound	Upper bound	P
IL → PS → PSS	.106	0.027	0.062	0.168	<0.01
IL → JM→ PSS	0.041	0.018	0. 013	0. 087	<0.01

Note: IL = Inclusive leadership; PS = psychological safety; JM = Job meaningfulness; PSS= project success

5. Discussion

This study aimed to examine the relationship between inclusive leadership and project success together with the mediating role of psychological safety and job meaningfulness. The data were collected from the staff employed in the construction organizations of Pakistan and the results revealed that inclusive leadership was directly and indirectly (via job meaningfulness and psychological safety) related to project success. The current study has addressed a significant gap in the literature by empirically exploring the relationship between inclusive leadership and project success, as the relationship of other top-down leadership styles (e.g., transformational, transactional leadership) and project success has extensively been explored (Aga et al., 2016; Raziq et al., 2018). The outcomes of the present study imply that inclusiveness should be an essential quality of the leadership in BPO which will help out in successful execution of the project, thereby supporting the previous research (Khan et al., 2020). Moreover, given the role of inclusive leadership in project success, this study supports previous research advocating a positive link between inclusive leadership and learning from errors (Ye, Wang, Li, 2017) innovative behavior (Javed et al., 2017) and taking charge behavior (Li, Guo & Wan, 2019; Zeng et al., 2020). Furthermore, the study responded a persistent call to research to different leadership styles in project success (Blaskovics, 2016; Zhao, Hwang & Lee, 2016)

Our research findings also draw attention that psychological safety partially mediates the relationship between inclusive leadership and project success, suggesting that parallel with the direct effect, inclusive leadership leads to project success through ensuring psychologically safety of team members. This finding supports the previous claim that inclusive leadership is unlikely to have an impact on team members' engagement (May et al., 2004) and quality improvement unless they are psychologically safe (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006) and successful accomplishment of project (Khan et al., 2020). This finding also points to the fact that under inclusive leadership, the team members feel psychologically safe and enjoy the leverage of giving opinions, communicating their problems, trying innovative solutions, and learning from errors (Carmeli et al., 2010; Pardue et al., 2018; Zhu et al 2020) which encourage them to be engaged and dedicated in complying their assignments for successful accomplishment of project. Altogether, the finding of this research suggest psychological safety of a project team members is very strong and effective tool in project success that could be utilized through leader's inclusiveness approach.

Pursuant to this, the finding also suggests the partial mediating effect of job meaningfulness between inclusive leadership and project success, suggesting that inclusive leadership could directly as well as indirectly via job meaningfulness lead to successful accomplishment of project. This finding substantiates previous research

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suggesting the importance of inclusive leadership in shaping the job meaningfulness (Bailey & Madden, 2016; Zeng et al., 2020) and job meaningfulness link with in-role performance (Han et al., 2020), however, this study has expended this notion and found that job meaningfulness is a handy mechanism that can be channelized by project leadership for successful accomplishment of project objectives. In a nutshell, taking in account the role of inclusive leadership in psychological safety and job meaningfulness, this study advanced the understanding by integrating the two-parallel mechanism in a signal model and outcomes suggest that inclusive leadership could galvanize psychological safety and job meaningfulness simultaneously to engage the project team members for successful project implementation.

6. Implications

The findings of the study have several practical implications. First, it underscores the importance of leaders' inclusiveness for successful accomplishment of project. Inclusiveness is relational quality that can be acquired through learning and capacity building (Khan et al., 2020), therefore, the project-based organizations should cultivate leaders' inclusiveness capabilities by various ways such as training and skill development programs as well as taking measures for promoting formal and informal social interactions among the project team members.

Moreover, the results further indicate that leadership inclusiveness is essential to enhance the psychological safety of team members which eventually leads to project success. A leadership inclusiveness characterized by openness, availability and accessibility juxtapose motivation, support, and conducive climate that are vital for utilization of project team members' capabilities of work engagement and dedication for attainment of project objectives. Psychological safety paly a substantial role in ability to focus on work related, creativity, prompting new solutions, risks taking and becoming the motivational tool to make extra efforts (Carmeli et al., 2014) for successful accomplishment of project success. As such the project team members become more dedicated and engaging in project activities when the feel acknowledgment and ownership by the leadership. Further, it signifies the elevated prospects of project success when psychological safety of team members is properly addressed and satisfied. The literature has suggested that inclusiveness exhibited by leadership fosters an environment where team members feel themselves to be psychologically safe, leading to higher team productivity (Carmeli et al, 2010).

As noted earlier, human beings are self-expressive, creative and goal oriented, hence they like the environment where such psychological tendencies are promoted and nurtured. The environment where innovative ideas and solutions are encouraged, given greater decisional flexibility and more participation opportunities likely rise importance of their role in the organization, hence, enhance their experienced job meaningfulness. When project team members perceive their work to be more authentic and value-creating, it not only helps in experiencing job meaningfulness but also provoke human potential. Therefore, project leadership should create an environment where project team members' psychological tendencies are promoted and nurtured. The literature suggests, job meaningfulness being important for organizational/team members' mental health, it is also effective in problem solving, personal engagement, behavioral involvement, intrinsic

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motivation, commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior (Bailey et al, 2018) that ultimately have synergetic effect on the project success.

7. Limitations and Future Directions

Despite few valuable contributions in extant literature and practice, our study has some limitations which are required to be addressed in future research. First, the study was designed to examine the association between the constructs rather the cause and effect. Future studies could use experimental design to establish the cause and effect between the relationships reflected in this study. Second, our survey relied on self-report measures, therefore, the potentiality of common method bias (CMB) could exist and may biased the finding. To assess the risk of such bias, we have carried out Harman's one-factor test through Principal Components Analysis (PCA) by incorporating all the observed variables (measurement items) by employing varimax rotation. The results exhibited non emergence of single factor and the largest factor accounted for 34.7% of total variance, indicating that CMB was not a concern in this study. However, future studies may collect data from multiple sources or time lag basis for elimination of potential biases explicitly related to cross-sectional design. Third, single country and sector focus may limit the generalizability of the study. The replication of this model in our countries and/or sectors will be advantageous for the generalizability of the results. Additionally, comparative research studies in different cultures and contexts will bring more clarity in the effectiveness of inclusive leadership in successful accomplishment of projects. Lastly, this study found the inclusive leadership can play an effective role in promoting psychological safety and job meaningfulness, future studies may examine other psychological factors such as empowerment, burnout and sense of coherence among employees. As well as how these psychological factors contribute to job meaningfulness and in turn project performance.

8. Concussion

Improved responsive knowledge about contributing factors in project success has paramount significance for project-based organizations (BPOs). In this context, this research has established that inclusive leader has significant effect on project success. BPOs need to facilitate project level leadership to develop their skills of inclusiveness. This study has pointed out that a successful project leader is the one who is high in adopting inclusive approach, as inclusiveness leads to project success by project team members. Moreover, inclusive leaders are effective leaders because their followers earn self-respect, learning and motivation to perform their tasks for successful accomplishment of project. This research study reinforces that the ultimate psychological thrust of team members i.e., job meaningfulness and psychological safety which also has strong positive effect on project success, nurture under inclusive leadership.

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