

Inclusive leadership and innovative Behaviour: The mediating role of employee perceptions to inclusion in the Energy Sector in Uganda

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Abstract

Leadership plays a very central role in launching a culture where everyone can be heard and feel safe in sharing and airing innovative ideas. The purpose of this study was to establish the mediating effect of the perceptions of inclusion in the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative behaviours in the energy sector in Uganda. We used a quantitative approach and a cross-sectional research design. The study used primary data collected from a sample of employees from the energy sector, using convenient sampling. The data was analyzed using correlations and regression analysis. Results indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between inclusive leadership, perceptions of inclusion, and innovative behaviour among employees in the energy sector. The study established a mediation effect of perceptions of inclusion in the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative behaviour. The study was limited by the design which was cross-sectional focusing on a specific point in time; and the convenient method of sampling respondents. The findings indicate that inclusive leadership improves employee relations with the leaders if they perceive that they are included in decision making. The focus is on leadership recruitment and development of inclusive leaders who encourage recognition, respect, and provide fair treatment, and display failure tolerance. These leaders are open, available, and accessible by employees for enhancing their perceptions of inclusion and innovative behaviours. The study contributes to literature related to inclusive leadership, perceptions of inclusion and the dynamics between both inclusive leadership and perceptions of inclusion and employees' innovative behaviour in the energy sector in Uganda.

Keywords: Inclusive leadership, perceptions of inclusion, innovative behaviour, energy sector, Uganda.

Introduction

Inclusive leadership is necessary to get full support, involvement, participation, and engagement of employees in an organization (Quinetta et al. 2021; Ashikali, Groeneveld, & Kuipers, 2020). In this study, we focus on outcomes of inclusive leadership style. We contend that when a leader exhibits inclusive leadership behaviours, employees are happy because of their inclusion in the

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decisions making process. Several studies to date have already revealed that inclusive leadership can enable positive outcomes such as; innovation, inclusion climate, psychological capital and safety, creative efficacy, and team ethics at work (Wang, Chen, & Li, 2021, Ashikali, Groeneveld, & Kuipers, 2020). Wang et al. (2021) add that to get the best-intended outcomes from your employees, you must include them or make them feel included. Different styles of leadership have been studied (e.g., transformational leadership, Owusu – Agyeman, 2021, servant leadership Aboramadan et al., 2020a, ethical leadership, Zeng and Xu (2020), and inclusive leadership still seems to be the most effective style (Ashikali et al., 2020; Wang et al; 2021) to get the best out of people. The extant literature highlights different antecedents of innovative behaviour of employees in the energy sector. For example affective commitment and organizational citizenship behaviour (Matthew & Yvonne, 2013), transformational leadership and organizational culture (Rizki, et al., 2019), absorptive capacity and knowledge sharing (Kang & Lee, 2017), leader-member exchange and work engagement (Mao & Tian, 2022; Garg & Dhar, 2017), organizational tenure (Woods, Mustafa, Anderson, Sayer, 2018), psychological climate (Theurer, Tumasjan & Welp, 2018), thriving at work and organizational support (Riaz, et al., 2018).

According to Hollander (2009), inclusive leadership is based on the concept of fairness and justice, shared vision, tolerance and greatness. Employee innovative behaviour is a process in which individuals generate, promote, and apply new ideas at work (Scott & Bruce, 1994). Innovative behaviour is the intentional introduction of new or significantly improved ideas, products, processes, and procedures by employees to their work role or organization (Woodman, 2010). Such behaviours include looking out for new technologies, suggesting new strategies to achieve objectives, applying new work methods, exploring and mobilizing resources to implement new ideas (Rizki, Parashakti & Saragih, 2019). This translates into the development of new; products, technology and markets, customer retention, and profit maximization (Sendjaya, et al., 2019). Although several aspects that could drive innovative behaviour, inclusive leadership has been acknowledged as an exclusive enabler of employee innovative behaviour (Zhu & Zhang, 2019; Iqbal, Latif & Ahmad, 2020). Carmeli, et al. (2010) proposed that inclusive leadership means being good at building good relationships with workers and encouraging their participation. Inclusion is one area of interest included in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (Yuan, 2007).

Though several studies found perceptions of inclusion to be related to positive outcomes such as higher job performance, organizational commitment, lower absenteeism, and burnout (Cho & Mor Barak, 2008; Jansen et al., 2016; Chen & Tang, 2018; Yixuan et al., 2021), the processes explaining why perceived inclusion influences innovation behaviour remain unclear. For a long time, researchers contended that inclusion replicates employees' positive experience and psychological satisfaction with the modern-day organization thus suggesting effective processes to transmit the effects of inclusion on work outcomes (Chen & Tang, 2018). However, the role of inclusive leadership, perceptions of inclusion has been understudied in previous studies using evidence from the energy sector in Uganda.

Literature Review

Theoretical literature

According to Hanh Tran and Choi (2021), the Social exchange theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Blau, 1964) postulates that when receiving favourable treatment from an agent, the receiving party attempts to reciprocate with something equally valuable. Thus, social exchange theory offers an important theoretical background on the leaders' behaviour and their influence to the employees' desired outcomes, this theory provides support to the linkage between inclusive leadership and perceptions of inclusion and innovative behaviour. The leadership concept has also been supported by various theories. The leadership theories have developed through a number of stages of evolution, ranging from the transformation theory to the personality theory, situational theories, behavioural theories of leadership, and acceptance theory. For this study, the researchers focused on the modern management theories like the contingency approach which aims to achieve the purpose of making the people more effective (Koontz, & Wehrich 2004). We assume for this study that the leadership behaviours will influence the perceptions of employees (followers) enabling them to innovate.

Inclusive leadership

Inclusive leadership is an extension of the relational leadership style (Carmeli et al., 2010) that focuses on the collaboration between leaders and followers, in which “leaders focus to do things with people rather than do things to people” (Hollander, 2012). The concept of leadership inclusion was introduced by Nembhard and Edmondson (2006). The proposed ‘leader inclusion, defined as words and deeds by a leader or leaders that display an invitation and appreciation for others’ contributions (Hollander, 2009). Inclusive leaders are expected to demonstrate openness, inclusion, accessibility, and collaborative communications with employees (Carmeli et al., 2010).

Perceived Inclusion

Perceived inclusion denotes employees' collaboration between human resources and management in an organisation (Pearce & Randel, 2004; Tang et al., 2015). Mor Barak & Cherin (1998, p. 48) stated that inclusion as “a continuum of the degree to which individuals feel a part of critical organizational processes such as access to information and resources, involvement in workgroups, and ability to influence the decision-making process. The findings of Chen and Tang (2018) indicates that employees' perceived inclusion has direct positive impact on employee's innovative behaviour. Their study also explains that when inclusion is perceived to be positive employees tend to be committed to their day to day work, which in turn impacts their innovative behaviours. According Bortree and Waters (2014) employees who associate with members in the social group, tend to be more satisfied with their jobs. Perceived inclusion builds pro-social group behaviours and positive psychological outcomes for employees, organization-based self-esteem, and organizational citizenship behaviour (Jansen et al., 2016). Nonetheless, the manner by what means perceived inclusion triggers employees' task-related behaviours, such as innovation and creativity, is however not clear.

Innovation Behaviour

The innovation behaviour of employees in the workplace has been conceived as complex behaviour consisting of a three-stage process (Carmeli, et. al, 2006; Wang et al., 2015; Kang & Lee, 2017). Innovative behaviour, is where an individual identifies a problem and comes up with

new solutions or ideas, either original or adapted. This is followed by an individual seeking way to promote her or his elucidations and ideas, and build acceptability and support both inside and outside the organization (Carmeli et al., 2006). In the last stage of the innovation process, an individual, who exhibits innovative behaviour, grasps the idea or solution by producing a sample or model of the innovation that can be experienced, applied, and used within a work role, a group, or the entire organization (Messmann & Mulder, 2015; Veenendaal & Bondarouk, 2015). The pursuit of innovative behaviour has become the focus of organizations given the rapid globalizations, so that employees may be able to create and apply new ideas that can give competitive advantage (Scott & Bruce, 1994; Kim, & Shin, 2017). Therefore, achieving new ideas, developing, promoting and implementing the ideas, is the most important components of employee innovative behaviour (Cheng, & Lin, 2017).

The relationship between Inclusive leadership and Innovative behaviour

Innovative behaviour refers to the deliberate initiative in one's effort of coming up with new and ideas, processes, products, or procedures. This innovation is literally carried out the motivated and emotionally inspired employees who are supported by inclusive leadership to engage, and rethink new and appropriate ways of doing things (Scott & Bruce, 1994; Wang, Chen, & Li, 2021). Research argues that inclusive leaders' specific behaviours that make it probable for group members to feel part of that group (referred to as belongingness). In addition, scholars contend that the members possess a sense of individuality (uniqueness) despite the fact that they have a hand in group processes and outcomes (Maslyn, Schyns & Farmer, 2017). We adopt the theoretical model of inclusive leadership as suggested by Randel et al. (2018) is applied in the present research to explain the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative behaviour in the energy sector. Therefore, we hypothesise as follows;

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative behaviour of employees in the energy sector.

Inclusive leadership and perceptions of inclusion

There are several leadership styles that may have different impacts on employees and how they perceive leadership inclusion depending on the type of generations at the workplace (Al-Asfour et al., 2017). The judgment that an employee may give the whether the leadership style of an organization is inclusive or not depends on the employee generation type in an organization, because of the different values each generation holds (Hou et al., 2014). According to Gotsis & Grimani (2016) inclusion of diversity revealed followers' supportive opinions to the leadership style, which was graded as ethical, authentic, servant, and spiritual leadership. Perceptions of employees on the leadership styles have improved over time from the early masculine, assertive to now communal leadership style (Wolfram & Gratton, 2014). It is automatic that an organization that continually engages in the inclusion of subordinates, collaborates and provides open communication, also receives positive feedback from employees that impact positively on performance (Nishii, 2013). A study by Gotsis and Grimani (2016) interviewed participants on their perception on inclusive workplace practices, of which there were consistent responses that supported inclusive leadership as a positive initiative that can be promoted with some human resource practices like targeted recruitment policy and diversity training. All in all, the feeling of being included can be manifested through the perception of fairness and safety experienced by employees and hence positive impacts on organizational performance (Ferdman, Avigdor,

Braun, Konkin, & Kuzmycz, 2010). When employees feel that they are part of the group, they are likely to perceive that they can take part in the decision-making process and can be able to openly speak as well as execute new ideas (Li, 2017). Therefore, we hypothesise as follows;

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between inclusive leadership and employee perceptions of inclusion in the energy sector.

Perceptions to inclusion and Innovative behaviour

Innovative work behaviours focus on different ways of thing by individuals or organizations in development and search for new alternatives to accomplishing and performing a given task (Yuan & Woodman, 2017). These innovative work behaviours include idea generation, idea exploration, idea implementation, and knowledge champion, all focusing on actions for the introduction of substitute ways in the organization (Kleysen & Street, 2001; Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004; De Jong & DeHartog, 2010; Shahid, et al., 2022). Literature has revealed over time the crucial role leadership play in innovative behaviour (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Gross & Cabanda, 2016; Zhu, et al., 2019; Knezovic & Drkic, 2020). The creation of new and useful ideas is paramount in the key functions of the leader in the current work environment (Pundt, 2015; Hakimian et al., 2016; Rahmah et al., 2020). Innovative 2019behaviour of the employees in the organization according to different scholars is ignited by the leadership style at play (Pundt, 2015). Researchers such as (Javed, Khan, & Quratulain; 2018, Fang et al., Younas et al., (2020) have discovered that inclusive leadership contributes to organizational culminations such as innovative behaviours.

Extant literature posts that an inclusive leader creates a work environment that enhances employee ability to utilize both the knowledge and expertise towards innovation (Choi et al., 2015). Such a leader is open, accessible, and available for consultation and any other necessary support to his employees. Inclusive leadership enables the employees to have a feeling of support for creativity and innovation, an antecedent to the creation of new ideas. Inclusive leaders tend to encourage employees in the development, promotion, and implementation of new and relevant ideas (Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, & Ziv, 2010; Altunoğlu & Gürel, 2015; Javed, at al. 2017). They empower and motivate their followers to gain acceptance and the place of work (Nishii & Mayer, 2009; De Spiegelaere et al., 2014). Perceived inclusion builds the confidence of employees in generating new ideas and striving to excel while executing their tasks at all levels. They further give emotional support to employees, take responsibility for the final results, and increase trustworthiness, which are the attributes of innovation in any given environment (Hollander, 2012; Tu & Lu, 2013).

Inclusive leaders in their capacity provide resources such as materials, space, time, and political support towards the creation and application of new ideas (Liu et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2015; Piansoongnern, 2016; Rahmah et al., 2020). Leadership position enables employees to gain acceptance amidst the scarce resources and organizational politics usually at play in the work environment. The energy sector is not much different from other industries studied that have continuously indicated a positive predictor of inclusive leadership towards innovative behaviours. Given these studies we posit that:

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive relationship between perceptions of inclusion and innovative behaviour in the energy sector.

The mediating role of perceptions of inclusion in the relationship of inclusive leadership and innovative behaviour

Literature suggests that employees perceive that they are recognized, encouraged, and included in the leadership practices of the organization, their behaviours improved positively to the advantage of their organization (Fang, 2014). Supporting innovative behaviour should be encouraged by leadership in today’s organizations to enhance competitiveness (Pundt, 2015). Employees’ willingness to engage in innovativeness is greatly linked to how they feel included in the organization (Lee & Chang, 2006). For example, a contented leader can create a positive perception of inclusion which encourages the expression of creativity amongst the employees (Pundt, 2015). Transformational leaders are known for motivating employees to remain innovative because of the positive perception of engaging employees’ intelligence, creating that feeling of “being wanted by the organization” (Zhang & Zhou, 2013). Employees’ innovative behaviours are influenced positively by the feeling of leadership support system in place. The employees feel more adventurous and creative when they have feelings that leaders support them (George & Zhou, 2007). In addition, Fang (2014) brought forward how important it is for leaders to have tolerant behaviour because it is proven when employees have that perception, their level of self-efficacy improved highly. Liu et al. (2012) confirm how the feeling of being included in an organization can improve mental capacity which reflects on creativity in organization. This also relates to the study of Jing (2015), who found that inclusive leadership improved the mood of employees in China & hence more creativity within a short time.

All in all, when there is inclusive leadership, there is a feeling of belongingness and uniqueness within a team which impacts directly to positive behaviour like innovation (Randel et al., 2017). This is because leaders embracing an inclusive leadership style are more tolerant toward employees, which makes employees have the perception of receiving support from their leaders and hence coming up with new and creative ideas for the organizational development (Zhu & Wang, 2011). Therefore, we hypothesise as follows:

Hypothesis 4: The Perceptions of inclusion mediates the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative behaviour in the energy sector.

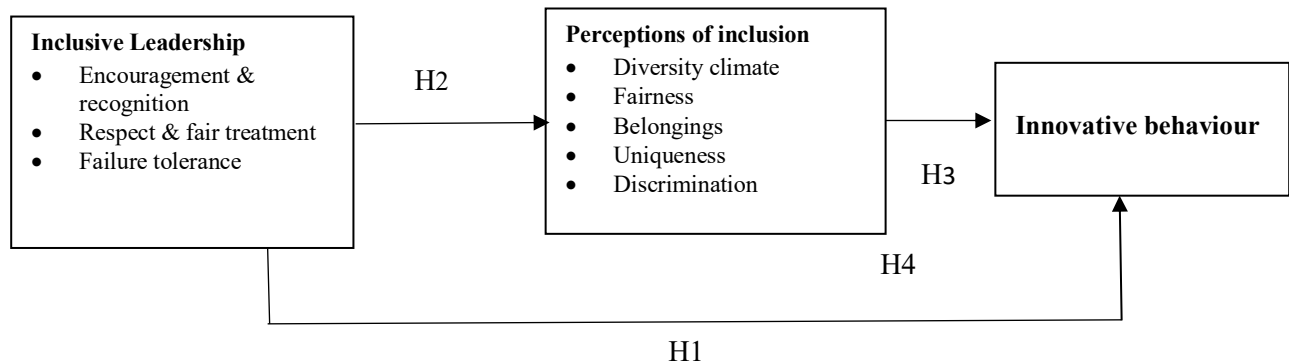


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

Participants and procedure

This study used cross sectional research design and quantitative approaches. The choice of the design and quantitative methods was based on structured realities of energy sector in Uganda. Between March and May 2020, we conducted an investigation on employees in Uganda across different energy agencies, through voluntary participation. Using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, a sample size of 250 employees was determined. A purposive and convenient sampling technique was employed to determine the sample size per organisation. The respondent's e-mails were accessed through the research and development (R&D) supervisors in the energy sector organisations. Consisting of R&D staff, technicians, managers, sales personnel, and other professionals (e.g. consultants, and professional employees lecturers). Eventually, a total of 195 respondents; 116 (59.5%) male; and 79 (40.5%) female respondents who voluntarily responded to the web-based questionnaire.

Measurement of Variables

Inclusive leadership was measured by using 11 items (Fang et al., 2019). The 11 items assessed the three dimensions of inclusive leaders who encourage recognition (ER), respect and fair treatment (RF), and failure tolerance (Fang et al., 2019). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient value for internal consistency reliability in said measures is 0.921 overall while a coefficient for each consists of ability (0.879), motivation (0.790), and opportunity (0.872). Inclusion was measured by the inclusion inventory adopted from Hedman (2016). It consists of 47 items designed to measure inclusion through the conceptual dimensions of diversity climate, fairness, belongingness, uniqueness, and discrimination. *Innovative Behaviour* (IB) was measured using the scales used by Choi et al. (2016) and later used by Lang et al. (2022). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient value of innovative behaviour was 0.85. All the items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Control variables included respondent's gender, education, generation, work experiences, qualification, marital status, managerial level, nationality, region of origin, religion, gender of supervisor and PWDs. The purpose of the control variables was to measure whether they have a confounding effect on the dependent variable.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 was used to perform the statistical analysis. We aimed for both descriptive and inferential measurements and relied on four stages of analysis. In agreement with Chinyamurindi et al. (2021) the descriptive analysis was conducted generally especially against demographic data provided by the respondents. The Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated to determine relationships amongst variables. Finally, following suggestions from Baron and Kenny (1986), hierarchical regression analysis was applied to analyse the mediating role of the perceptions of inclusion. To have a mediating effect, the independent variable, also called the predictor (inclusive leadership), has to be linked to the dependent variable (innovative behaviour). Furthermore, the independent variable has to be related to the mediating variable, perceptions to inclusion, and the mediating variable must also be related to the dependent variable. Full mediation is given if the impact of the independent variable is not significant when controlling for the mediating variable. A partial mediation is assumed if the impact of the independent variable is significant, but weaker after controlling for the mediator, than short of the mediator (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Measurement fit, validity and reliability analyses

Tests for reliability and validity were conducted. As a normally established rule to consider a measure as reliable, a Cronbach alpha of 0.70 and higher is generally accepted (Nunnally, 1978). All the measures indicated a very high reliability with inclusive leadership (IL) having a Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .88$). The subscales of inclusive leadership (IL); Encourage Recognition (ER) of ($\alpha = 0.58$) Respect and fair treatment (RF), ($\alpha = 0.67$) Failure Tolerance, ($\alpha = 0.75$). The reliability of perception to inclusion (PI) was ($\alpha = .78$). The subscales of perception to inclusion (PI) Cronbach's alpha of; diversity climate (DC) ($\alpha = 0.59$), fairness (F) ($\alpha = 0.41$), belongingness (B) ($\alpha = 0.71$), Uniqueness (U) ($\alpha = 0.52$), discrimination (D), of ($\alpha = .66$), were shown to be reliable. Cronbach's alpha of innovative behaviour subscale could be substantially increased by removing items 1. These scores are considered reliable and for this reason item 1 was removed and further analyses was conducted which increased Cronbach's alpha for the entire innovative behaviour scale to 0.85.

Findings

Descriptive Statistics of the Sample

The descriptive statistics are presented in form of the frequency distributions of the following sample characteristics of the respondents: (1) gender of the respondents (2) generations, (3) work experience, (4) the employees' qualifications, marital status, managerial level, nationality, region of origin, religion, gender of the supervisor from the primary data. The results revealed that there were more males (59.5%) than females (40.5%) respondents in the various energy agencies. There were more millennials 71.3% than baby boomers (24.1%) compared to generation X (2.5%) and generation Z (2.1%). The energy sector has employees with an experience of more than 5years (63.1%) with the largest number between 1-5year (36.9%), followed by 6-10 years (32%) and above 10 years (30.1%). Concerning the qualification of respondents, most of the respondents are highly qualified with a Bachelors's Degree (48.2%), a masters degree (20%); Ph.D. and others (1%). The majority of respondents were married (50.3%), those who were single were (41.5%), those who indicated anonymous status were (5.1%). Most of the respondents were in management (55.4); with employees not in management (44.6%). The majority of respondents were Ugandans (94.4%). Most regions in Uganda were fairly represented, with the majority from the Buganda region (27.2%) followed by the Ankole region (17.9%); Busoga region (9.7%), and Acholi region (9.7%), and Lango (5.6%) Elgon (5.6%). Most religions were represented in the energy sector; with the majority Catholics (43.1%) followed by Muslims (20.0%), Pentecostals and Protestants represented by (14.9%) each. The data indicates that there are more male supervisors (73.8%) compared to female supervisors (19.5%) with X supervisors (1.0%).

Relationships between study variables

To establish the relationships between the variables a Pearson (r) correlation analysis was carried out for the study constructs; inclusive leadership, perceptions of inclusion, and innovative behaviour and they are presented in Table 1.

Table 1- Pearson correlation results of the variables

Variable/Sub-variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1) Inclusive Leadership	1										
2) Encouragement & Recognition of Employees	.844*	1									
3) Respect and Fair Treatment of Employees	.848*	.604*	1								
4) Failure Tolerance	.823*	.532*	.525*	1							
5) Perceptions of Inclusion	.562*	.523*	.435*	.457*	1						
6) Diversity Climate	.435*	.440*	.292*	.365*	.752*	1					
7) Fairness	.430*	.377*	.372*	.335*	.685*	.495*	1				
8) Belongingness	.540*	.478*	.412*	.469*	.755*	.492*	.374*	1			
9) Uniqueness	.420*	.368*	.367*	.322*	.658*	.394*	.322*	.515*	1		
10) Discrimination	.131	.158*	.074	.100	.568*	.275*	.160*	.218*	.124	1	
11) Inclusive Innovative Behaviour	.225*	.246*	.195*	.128	.287*	.228*	.222*	.257*	.308*	.008	1
MEAN	3.843	3.906	3.940	3.683	3.845	4.021	3.627	3.761	3.781	4.035	3.943
SD	.644	.743	.777	.786	.525	.659	.803	.807	.680	.922	.593

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 indicates the descriptive data for each of the variables were presented as well and they showed that all the variables had moderate levels, (Means \leq 3.5, SD < 1.000). The results in Table 1 indicate that inclusive leadership (IL) aspects are positively associated with innovative behaviour ($r = .225^{**}$, $p < 0.05$). This means that changes in inclusive leadership may be related to changes that may happen in the innovative behaviour of employees. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was accepted. Concerning hypothesis 2: testing the relationship between inclusive leadership and perceptions of inclusion further indicates that IL is significantly and positively related to PL ($r = .562^{**}$, $p < 0.01$). This means that variations in inclusive leadership may related to variations that may result out of the perceptions of inclusion of employees. Thus, hypothesis 2 was accepted. Further, results show that perceptions of inclusion are significant and positively related to the innovative behaviour of employees in the energy sector in Uganda ($r = .287^{**}$, $p < 0.05$). The perceptions of inclusion variables are significant and positively correlated to innovative behaviour. This proposes that changes in the perceptions of inclusion can be related to changes that may take place in the innovative behaviour of employees. Therefore, hypothesis 3 was accepted.

To establish the mediation effect of the perceptions of inclusion in the relationship between, inclusive leadership and innovative behaviour of the employees a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted and the results are presented in Table 2

Table 2 Hierarchical Regression of Inclusive leadership, perceptions of inclusion on innovative behaviour

Model	1	2	3	Collinearity Statistics			
	Beta	Beta	Beta	T	Sig	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	3.147	.252		12.502	.000		
No of Employees	-.039	-.040	-.020	-.489	.625	.998	1.002
Inclusive leadership	.225	.562**	.094	3.209	.002	.685	1.461
Perceptions of Inclusion			.234*	9.431	.000	.685	1.461
R	.225	.562	.297 ^a				
R ²	.051	.315	.088				
Adj R	.046	.312	.079				
ΔR ² change	0.051	.315	.088				
ΔF change	10.296	88.940	9.275				
Sig F Change	.002	.000	.000				
Durbin Watson = 1.461							

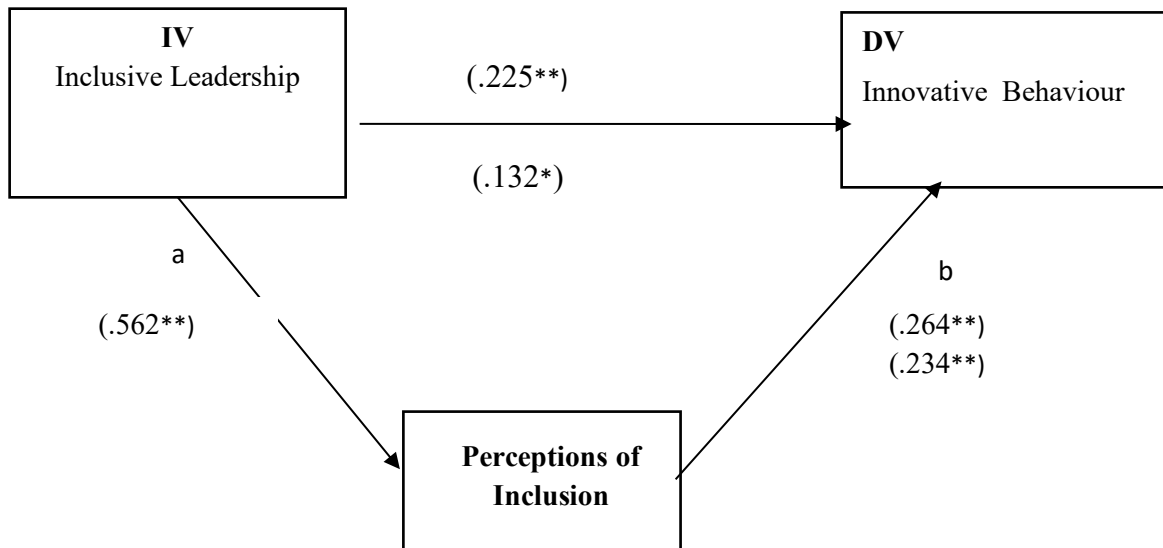
a. Predictors: (Constant), Perceptions of Inclusion, Inclusive Leadership; a. Dependent innovative behaviour.
 **Significant at the 0.01 level (p < .01); *Significant at the 0.05 level (p < .05)

We distinguish inclusive leadership as the independent variable, perceptions of inclusion was the mediating and innovative behaviour equally the dependent variable to run the three models. The regression coefficients were used as pointers of the reflection of whether or not the impact of each variable is significant. The next step is to test the validity of the hypotheses. The overall contribution of the variables is indicated by the variance explained (R²) which also confirms the extrapolative power of the variables. We carry out a hierarchical regression analysis to establish the extent to which inclusive leadership and the perceptions of inclusion, explain the variance in innovative behaviour of employees in the energy sector. In an attempt to achieve the drive of the study which was to find the mediating effect of perceptions of inclusion in the relationship amid inclusive leadership and innovative behaviours. The hierarchical regression results are presented in three models.

The Model shows that Inclusive leadership has an effect on the innovative behaviour ($\beta = .207, p < .001$). The results indicate that inclusive leadership explain significantly the variance in innovative behaviour ($\beta = .207, p < .001, R^2 = .046 (\Delta F = 10.29, Sig. < .001)$). In Model2 shows that inclusive leadership has an effect on perceptions of inclusion ($\beta = .458, p < .001$). The results indicate that inclusive leadership explains significantly perceptions of inclusion ($R^2 = .312 (\Delta F = 88.94, Sig. < .001)$). In Model 3; Overall the percentage of the variance explained by inclusive leadership and perceptions of inclusion is 10% ($R^2 = .079 (\Delta F \text{ change } 9.275 = p = 0.000)$) with inclusive leadership explaining $\beta = .094$. The significant p-value confirmed the hypothesis that there is a mediating role on perceptions of inclusion in the correlation between inclusive leadership and the innovative behaviour of employees. The perceptions of inclusion explaining $\beta = .234$ of innovative behaviour at $Sig. < .001$.

Mediation Results

However, the significance of the mediation effect is not yet tested because we cannot rely on Baron and Kenny’s (1986) regression equations to prove a mediation claim which may require other tests like the Sobel’ z test. Related to the above results, the significance of the mediation effect and the nature or type of mediation was also tested by calculating the Sobel z–value and ratio index using the Med Graph programme. The Sobel test is testing the magnitude of the mediation. The Sobel test as presented in Fig 2.



***p < 0.01, **p < .01, * p < 0.05

Figure 2: Mediation path Graph showing perceptions of inclusion mediating the relationship between inclusive leadership and Innovative behaviour.

Sobel test statistics using online calculator

Type of Mediation	Partial	
Test statistic (Z)	Std. Error:	p-value:
2.68971428	0.04495347	0.00715132

Summary of mediation effect

Effect	β	Beta	P-Values
Total effect	.207	.225	.002
Direct effect	.264	.234	.005
Indirect effect	.121	.132	0.00715132

The Sobel test was conducted to test the significance level of the indirect effect. Indeed, the indirect effect was found significant (Z=2.67, P=.0.01).

The results of the three regressions in Figure 2 show that the Baron criteria for establishing mediation effects have been met. First, inclusive leadership accounts for a significant proportion of variance in innovative behaviour of employees in the energy sector ($\beta .225, p < 0.01$). Second, inclusive leadership accounts for a significant proportion of variance in the perceptions of inclusion ($\beta 0.562, p < 0.01$) and thus providing support for H2. Third, perceptions to inclusion accounts for a significant proportion of variance in innovative behaviour of employees in the energy sector ($\beta 0.264, p < 0.01$). Last, the absolute effect of inclusive leadership on innovative behaviour of the energy sector reduced in the third model ($\beta 0.132$) from that in model 1 ($\beta 0.225$). Further still, since the correlation between inclusive leadership and innovative behaviour of employees in the energy sector has not been reduced to zero after introducing the perceptions of inclusion, it implies that a partial type of mediation exists. The results of the Sobel test confirm the regression results and hypothesis 4 is accepted. Therefore, perceptions of inclusion partially mediate the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative behaviour of employees in the energy sector.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings confirm a relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative behaviour in the energy sector. The findings are consistent with empirical evidence that revealed over time the pivotal role leadership plays in innovative behaviour (Cingöz & Akdoğan 2011; Gross & Cabanda, 2016; Knezovic & Drkic, 2020; Zhu et al., 2019). The creation of original and useful ideas is paramount in the key functions of the leader in the current work environment (Pundt, 2015; Hakimian et al., 2016; Al-Atwi & Al-Hassani, 2021). Researchers (Choi et al., 2016; Javed, Khan, & Quratulain, 2018; Javed et al., 2018; Fang et al., 2019) have discovered that inclusive leadership contributes to organizational outcomes such as innovative behaviours. Extant literature posts that an inclusive leader creates a work environment that enhances employee ability to utilize both the knowledge and expertise towards innovation (Choi et al., 2015). Such a leader is open, accessible, and available for consultation and encourages recognition of any other necessary support to his employees. According to Knezović, & Drkić, (2020), inclusive leadership enables the employees to have feeling of support for creativity and innovation, an antecedent to the creation of new ideas. The readiness and accessibility of the leader offer an environment for employee counselling and role clarity of work processes, which fuel the novelty of new ideas in the organization. (Carmeli et al. 2010). Other researchers on inclusive leadership and innovative behaviours in the different industries show consistency in the contribution of inclusive leadership towards innovative behaviours (Javed et al, 2017).

In addition, we established that the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative behavior is mediated by perceptions of inclusion. Inclusive leaders tend to encourage employees in the development, promotion, and the implementation of new and relevant notions (Carmeli, at al., 2010; Altunoğlu & Gürel, 2015). The leaders empower and motivate their employees to gain acceptance and the place of work (Nishii & Mayer, 2009; De Spiegelaere et al., 2017). This builds the confidence of employees in generating new ideas and striving to excel while executing their tasks at all levels. They further give emotional support to employees, take responsibility for the final results, and increase trustworthiness, which is the attribute of innovation in any given environment (Hollander, 2012; Tu & Lu, 2013). The study has established the importance of

perceptions of inclusion as a mediator between inclusive leadership and innovative behaviour, applied implications can be inferred grounded on these finding. In an attempt for the energy sector to manage the perceptions of inclusion within their organisations, there is a profound focus and need to position the leadership position as a significant competence towards improving employees' innovative behaviour. The study has implications to practice, organisational leaders should recruit or promote and develop inclusive leadership to enhance perceptions of inclusion in the workplace for positive outcomes such as innovative behaviour. In conclusion, we confirm a relationship between inclusive leadership; perceptions of inclusion, and innovative behaviour among employees in the energy sector. The study establishes a partial mediation effect of perceptions of inclusion on the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative behaviour of employees in the energy sector.

Study Implications, Limitations and future research

Managers should use participative leadership style to encourage employee inclusion in decision making. Managers should enhance employees' innovation through creating a sense of belonging and appreciation which motivates employees. The leaders need to take advantage of the research findings to enhance further employees' inclusion in the organisation to encourage innovative behaviour in their sector. The study advances knowledge through the establishment of the mediating role of the perceptions of inclusion in the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative behaviour. This study contributes to theoretical aspects by generating empirical evidence to backing the social exchange theory to predict innovative behaviour. In addition, integrating the two theories provides a better understanding of the mediating effect of the perceptions of inclusion in the association regarding inclusive leadership and innovative behaviour in the energy sector. In spite of the results gotten in this study, some reflections should be made regarding several disadvantages of the characteristic in the enquiry carried out. The self-report scales used may source common-method bias. The study used a cross-sectional design; therefore, there is need to extend the study using the longitudinal designs to provide more effective evidence of the underlying impact of inclusive leadership and observations of inclusion and innovative behaviours. We note that the convenient sample used in this study is not representative of all the energy sectors operating in Uganda. More studies are required to gain a better understanding of inclusive leadership and innovative behaviour. Despite the limitations the findings provide further understanding of the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative behaviour in the workplace. The study provides a further basis for further research in the energy and other sectors in developing countries.

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