The Effect of Leader Inclusiveness on Innovative Work Behaviour: The mediator role of Leader-Member Exchange

Abstract. Referring to the relational approach and to leader-member exchange theory, the purpose of this study is to investigate how inclusive leadership influences innovative work behaviour by testing leader-member - exchange (LMX) as a mediator. A Quantitative study was carried out in 10 service-based organizations in Lebanon with 187 subordinates and their supervisors. The data were analysed using simple and multiple regression analysis. The findings suggest that inclusive leadership is positively related with IWB and that LMX mediates the effect of inclusive leadership on innovative work behaviour. The implications and the limitations of the study are discussed as well as the indications for future studies.

1 Introduction

In the current competitive environment characterized by turbulence, globalization and rapid technological change, it has become more challenging for organizations to survive and flourish [1, 2]. In order to be successful in such an environment, organizations need to focus more on innovation [3]. In order to become more innovative, they have to capitalize on their employees' ability to innovate [4].

Employees can create, promote, and implement novel ideas, which represent the key elements of Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB) [5]. The IWB can be considered as employees' extra role behaviours developed in a dynamic work environment [3]. Research has shown that IWB was of critical importance to the organizations [4]. It contributes to maintain and improve their competitiveness (6) and helps them to meet new challenges in a complex environment [7]. Previous works have indicated many determinants of employees' innovative behaviours [8, 9]. Leadership has been considered as one of the most important factors that affect innovation in organizations [4, 10]. In fact, leaders have, in general, a powerful source of influence on employees' work behaviours [11], and innovative work behaviour is no exception [12].

According to [13], many researches have been conducted on leadership and its impact on employee innovative behaviour. Previous studies have examined the impact of transformational leadership [14, 15], ethical leadership [16] and paternalistic leadership [17] on employee innovative behaviour. These studies focused mainly on a leader-centric approach which emphasizes the role of leader's traits such as character and charisma in promoting IWB [18]. Thus, previous researches neglected the role of exchanges between leaders and employees in fostering IWB [19], and few studies have examined the association between inclusive leadership IL and IWB. In order to address this gap in the literature, this

study aims to investigate how inclusive leadership may influence and stimulate innovative work behaviour among Lebanese employees.

Inclusive Leadership refers to leaders who manifest openness, accessibility, and availability in their relationship with their followers [20]. It emphasizes participative behaviours and sends clear signal that innovation is welcomed and appreciated [21]. In order to examine the relationship between IL and IWB, we used leader-member exchange (LMX) as a mediator. Thus, we refer to the relational approach [3, 21] which focuses on the characteristics of the leaders, employees' attitudes and behaviours and their relationship with the leader. Our paper aims to suggest some insights and provide answers to the following questions: What role the inclusive leadership plays in enabling and enhancing employee innovative work behaviour in the context of the Lebanese private sector? What is the direct relationship between IL and (IWB)? How does the LMX mediate the relationship between IL and IWB?

We will adopt the services sector in Lebanon as field of application for our research. In fact, services are considered as the most dominant sector of the Lebanese economy, representing 74.7% of the country's GDP and employing more than two-thirds of the workforce. The country faces many macroeconomic issues, social problems and many political challenges. Within this challenging environment, the established service organizations should focus more on innovation and should develop the innovation abilities of their key workforce. This has more and more proven to be crucial for the resolution of the crisis and the reinvigoration of the economy.

Therefore, to answer our research questions, we will first present the two key concepts of our research: the inclusive leadership and the IWB. Then, we will elucidate the relationship between the two concepts. Finally, we will discuss the mediating role of LMX by examining the impact of IL on LMX, and the impact of LMX on IWB. In the theoretical part, we will generate our hypotheses. In a second step, we will adopt a random questionnaire survey method to test our hypotheses, by collecting data from supervisors-subordinates' dyads working in the Lebanese private sector. Finally, we will discuss the theoretical and practical contributions of the study.

In summary, the study contributes to the IWB and inclusive leadership literatures. It aims to provide more insight into the role of leader in employees' innovative work behaviours, and to investigate the mediated mechanism of LMX in the relationship between inclusive leadership and IWB.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Inclusive Leadership (IL) and Employee Innovative Behaviour (IWB)

2.1.1 Inclusive Leadership (IL)

[20] who first introduced the concept of inclusive leadership in management, defined it as the "words and deeds by a leader or leaders that indicate an invitation and appreciation for others' contributions". [21] highlighted the followers' perceptions of the role of leadership and defined inclusive leadership as "a win-win situation with a common goal and vision of interdependent relationships". Compared with other forms of leadership that may be conceptually related, like transformational leadership and servant leadership [22], inclusive leadership held unique nature of acceptance, belongingness, uniqueness, and inclusiveness [23].

Inclusive leaders support and assist their employees and provide them with the necessary resources that allow them to perform their work with autonomy and discretion [24]. They invite their followers to share their views and input and include them in discussions and decisions in which "their voices are genuinely valued" [20]. As such, we can say that inclusive leadership represents an important aspect of relational leadership.

Furthermore, Inclusive leadership focuses on accepting employees for who they are, allowing them to contribute their unique abilities and views, and encouraging them to engage in organizational activities [13]. By ensuring that all members feel recognized and appreciated in their uniqueness and differences [21], inclusive leadership reduces the pressure of maintaining consensus and, therefore, increases the degree to which employees develop creative ideas and engage in innovative work behaviours [24, 25]. But what is Innovative Work Behaviour?

2.1.2 Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB)

According to [26], innovative work behaviour (IWB) refers to the process by which employees discover problems, generate innovative ideas, promote and implement them during the life of the organization. [5] defined IWB as an initiation, deliberate introduction and application of novel and valuable ideas, procedures and products that are useful to the organization. In general, previous studies distinguish between two main phases in the innovation process: the generation of a creative idea and its successful implementation [27, 28]. Idea generation is the creation of ideas that are relatively new in the context in which they will be implemented and offer an improvement or solution to problems an employee has encountered. Idea implementation refers to the adaptation and convergence of these ideas with daily work.

[7] believed that IWB includes three phases: recognizing problems and creating solution, promoting innovative ideas, and generating innovative standards or models that can be used in large quantities. IWB is performed for the benefit of the organization, and several employee innovative behaviours may help organizations to become more innovative [4, 29].

In this research, we will adopt [7, 5] innovation approaches. They considered IWB as one-dimensional construct that includes both idea generation and application behaviour. So, we will suppose that the difference between leaders during these phases is invisible.

2.2 Inclusive Leadership and Innovative Work Behaviour

Inclusive leadership creates a favourable work environment characterized by challenges, openness and diversities; this positive working atmosphere motivates employees to generate creative thoughts and to perform innovatively [24]. Moreover, when leaders are available to employees, they motivate them to develop new ideas and give them constructive feedback in order to further stimulate them to perform IWB [30]. Therefore, inclusive leaders encourage employees to perform IWB by showing them their support and their accessibility [31, 32].

Many researches have explored the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative work behaviour. [13] studied the impact of inclusive leadership on employee innovative behaviour under the mediation of perceived organizational support (POS); they pointed out the importance of IL in stimulating innovative work behaviour. Furthermore, [3] examined the impact of IL on IWB with the mediation of Psychological Safety; they found that IL has a significant positive effect on POS and IWB. Because inclusive leaders provide employees with support and encouragement to take initiative and explore innovative solutions, such leaders promote the employees' IWB [33, 34]. Thus, employees who

participate in discussions and decisions would be more able to propose and implement innovative ideas [4, 20].

Consequently, the attributes of inclusive leadership such as openness, availability and accessibility play a crucial role in promoting IWB [3]. Therefore, considering these studies, we hypothesize the following relationship:

Hypothesis 1: IL has a positive influence on IWB

2.3 Inclusive Leadership and Leader Member Exchange (LMX)

In their study, [3] define LMX as "following", which characterizes the relationship between employees and their immediate supervisor". The LMX theory supposes that leaders do not adopt the same style in their interactions with their followers and develop a different relationship with each one of them. [35] distinguish between four dimensions of LMX: loyalty, affect, perceived contribution, and professional respect. The quality of a leader-follower relationship is shaped by information, physical and mental effort, material resources, and social support which is considered as the most important determinant in this relationship [36].

Inclusive leadership develops a mature relationship with employees [18] based on trust, consideration, open communication and mutual understanding [24]. It shows consideration for the followers which encourages them to engage vigorously in different work activities; this could lead to surpass the leader-follower communication gaps [24].Furthermore, inclusive leadership fosters emotional attachment and interpersonal links with employees [21]. This relational facet of inclusive leadership may be another source for a high-quality exchange relationship between leaders and followers.

Consequently, we argued that leaders' inclusiveness increases the quality of LMX. Employees tend to reciprocate their leaders' consideration and trust by showing more identification and commitment [37] resulting in a higher quality of LMX [38].

2.4 LMX and IWB

Previous research has found that the quality of LMX is predictive of several job outcomes. [7] examined different interpreters of innovative work behaviour and found that LMX has a positive relationship with IWB. These results have been also confirmed by [39].

In fact, high-quality LMX motivates employees to spend more time on non-routine tasks, and consequently gives them more opportunities to implement new ideas [40]. Furthermore, when employees maintain a strong relationship with their leaders, they are more likely to experience high autonomy in the organization and therefore, develop discretionary behaviour such as IWB. Most recently, [41] studied the association between LMX and IWB with the moderation of trust in the leader and noted a positive relationship between LMX and IWB. [18] also found a positive relationship between LMX and IWB while investigating the mediating role of LMX. Based on these results, we propose that the quality of interpersonal exchanges between the leader and his followers intervene in the relationship between IL and IWB. The following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 2: LMX mediates the relationship between IL and IWB

3 Research Framework

3.1 Methodology Sample and procedure

Data were collected from employees and supervisors working in 10 service-based organizations in Lebanon such as banks, financial software companies, and commercial companies. These companies are highly exposed to change and to innovation challenges in the Lebanese market. They should continually update and develop their methods and their processes in order to face the increased competition and remain in the market.

Following the methodology adopted in previous studies [18, 13], data regarding predictors and outcomes were collected separately. The following procedure was adopted in order to control the social desirability bias. In time 1, one of the authors met the company's owner and presented the subject of the study. After understanding the purpose of the research, the owner gave approval for data collection in his organization. The owner received the questionnaire and gave it to the Head of Human Resources who sent to the authors a list of potential respondents belonging to different departments. Employees filled the questionnaire regarding their demographics characteristics (age, gender, education, tenure) and perceived inclusive leadership. The authors received 260 usable responses from 260 employees. Two month later, in time 2, 232 respondents who participated in the first survey as well as 65 supervisors were available. Employees were asked to rate the quality of their relationship with their leader (LMX), and supervisors were asked to rate their subordinates' innovative behaviour. As a result, the authors obtained completed questionnaires from 187 employees and 56 matched supervisors after excluding missing data.

3.2 Measures

Scale of Inclusive Leadership (IL)
Inclusive leadership was assessed using the nine-items scale that was developed by [24], with this sample items "My supervisor is attentive to new opportunities to improve work processes" (openness), "My supervisor is available for consulting on problems (availability), "My supervisor is accessible for discussing emerging problems' (accessibility). Many other researchers have used this scale and noted it as high reliability [42, 18].

Scale of Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB)
Innovation Work Behaviour was measured using the 6-items scale proposed by [7] which is the most widely used in the literature. Sample items are "He / She searches out new technologies, processes, techniques and/or products ideas.", "He/ she promotes and champions ideas to others", "He/she develops adequate plans and programs for the implementation of new ideas".

Scale of Leader Member Exchange (LMX)
LMX was measured using a seven-items scale developed by [43], adapted from [44]. Sample items are "I always know how satisfied my supervisor is with what I do", "My supervisor understands my problems and my needs well enough", "I have a good working relationship with my supervisor".

Demographic factors
Demographic characteristics of participants (such as age, gender, education, work experience in the organization) are presented in **Table 1**. We used the demographic variables in the study as control variables.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the respondents

Status	*Group*	*Frequency*	*Percentage (%)*
Gender	Male	74	40
	Female	113	60
Age group	25 and below	17	9.1
	26-35	69	36.9
	36-45	75	40.10%
	46-55	16	8.6
	56 and above	10	5.3
Work Experience	Less than one year	5	2.7
	1-3 years	20	10.7
	4-6 years	89	47.6
	7-10 years	73	39
	11 years and more	15	8
Education	High school	37	19.8
	College degree	38	20.3
	Bachelor's degree	45	24.1
	Graduate degree	52	27.8
	Total	187	100

Characteristics	**Percentage**
Gender Male Female	 40% 60%
Education	
High school	2.7%
College degree	10.7%
Bachelor's degree	47.6%
Graduate degree	39%
Experience	
Less than one year	8%
1-3 years	19.8%
4-6 years	20.3%
7-10 years	24.1 %
11 years and more	27.8 %

3.3 Data analysis

First, we used the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to extract the items that do not fit the conditions for each concept (IL, LMX and IWB). The PCA is a dimensionality-reduction method that is often used to reduce the dimensionality of large data sets, by transforming a large set of variables into a smaller one that still contains most of the information in the large set. Thus, the PCA aims to reduce the number of variables of a data set, while preserving as much information as possible. The items retained are those for which the sum of squared factor loading is more than 0.6 (h2 is greater than 0.6).
Table 2 shows the retained items of each variable, those which the sum of squared factor loading is greater than 0.6.

Table 2. Retained Items

Items	*Factor loading*
IL3 My supervisor is open to discuss the desired goals and new ways to achieve them.	0.638
IL4 My supervisor is available for consultation on problems	0.761
IL5 My supervisor is an ongoing "presence" in this team - someone who is readily available.	0.8
IL7 My supervisor is ready to listen to my requests.	0.775
IL9 My supervisor is accessible for discussing emerging problems.	0.653
IWB1. He / She searches out new technologies, processes, techniques and/or products ideas	0.782
IWB2 He/she generates creative ideas	0.718
IWB6 He /she is innovative	0.688
LMX2 My supervisor understands my problems and my needs well enough.	0.735
LMX3 My supervisor recognizes my potential.	0.749
LMX4 My supervisor would use his/ her power to help me solve my work problems.	0.633
LMX5 My supervisor would come to my defense if I were "attacked" by others.	0.66
LMX6 I have enough confidence in my supervisor that I would defend and justify his/ her decision if he/she were not present to do so.	0.673
LMX7 I have a good working relationship with my supervisor.	0.809

In the present study, the reliability of the study Cronbach alpha for IL is 0.904, for IWB is 0.81 and for LMX is 0.916. Therefore, we can conclude that the retained items have good internal consistency. In a second step, we have to prove the following hypotheses:
Hypothesis 1: Inclusive Leadership has a positive influence on Innovative Work Behaviour
Hypothesis 2: Leader Member Exchange mediates the relationship between Inclusive Leadership and Innovative Work Behaviour.
To verify these hypotheses, we adopted a four-step approach by conducting several regression analyses and by examining the significance of the coefficients at each step. **Table 3** shows the results of the four regressions analysis through the significance of each of the coefficients.

Table 3. Unstandardized coefficients for research models

	Analysis	*Beta*
Model1	Inclusive Leadership → Innovative Work Behaviour	0.226
Model 2	Inclusive Leadership → LMX	0.799
Model 3	LMX → Innovative Work Behaviour	0.347
Model 4	Inclusive Leadership →LMX →IWB	0.127

Model 1: Independent variable (IL) predicting the dependent variable (IWB)

Table 4 and **Table 5** show the results of the regression analysis between the two variables IL and IWB, with independent variable IL predicting the dependent variable IWB.
The significant value (**Table 4**) is almost 0 <0.01 and so the independent variable IL is shown to significantly influence the dependent variable IWB in the first regression equation:
IWB=2.919+0.226 IL

Table 4. Summary of Model 1

Model	*Unstandardized Coefficients*		*Standardized Coefficients*	*T*	*Sig.*
	B	*Std. Error*	*Beta*		
(Constant)	2.919	0.213		13.732	0
IL_mean	0.226	0.054	0.292	4.148	0

a. Dependent Variable: IWB_mean
b. Predictors: (Constant), IL_mean
The first hypothesis is verified and so is the first condition of Baron and Kenny for the mediation.

Table 5. Regression result of model 1

Model 1	*Sum of Squares*	*Df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
Regression	5.789	1	5.789	17.202	.000[b]
Residual	62.256	185	0.337		
Total	68.045	186			

a. Dependent Variable: IWB mean

Model 2: Independent variable (IL) predicting the mediator variable (LMX)

Table 6 and **Table 7** show the results of the regression analysis between the two variables IL and LMX, with independent variable IL predicting the mediator variable LMX
The significant value is almost 0 <0.01 (**Table 6**), thus the independent variable IL is shown to significantly influence the mediator variable LMX and the regression equation is:
LMX=0.715+0.799 IL

Table 6. Summary of Model 2

Model	*Sum of Squares*	*Df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
Regression	72.439	1	72.439	269.226	
Residual	49.777	185	0.269		
Total	122.217	186			

a.Dependent Variable: LMX_mean
b.Predictors: (Constant), IL_mean

Table 7. Regression results of Model 2

Model	*Unstandardized Coefficients*		*Standardized Coefficients*	*T*	*Sig.*
	B	*Std. Error*	*Beta*		
(Constant)	0.715	0.19		3.763	0
IL_mean	0.799	0.049	0.77	16.408	0

a. Dependent Variable: LMX_mean

Model 3: Mediator variable (LMX) predicting the dependent variable (IWB)

Table 8 and **Table 9** show the results of the regression analysis between the two variables LMX and IWB, with mediator variable LMX predicting the dependent variable IWB.
The significant value is almost 0 <0.01 (**Table 8**), thus the mediator variable LMX is shown to significantly influence the dependent variable IWB and the regression equation is: IWB=2.472+0.347 LMX

Table 8. Summary of Model 3

Model	*Sum of Squares*	*Df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
Regression	14.753	1	14.753	51.215	.000[b]
Residual	53.292	185	0.288		
Total	68.045	186			

a.Dependent Variable: IWB_mean
b.Predictors: (Constant), LMX

Table 9. Regression result of Model 3

Model	*Unstandardized Coefficients*		*Standardized Coefficients*	*T*	*Sig.*
	B	*Std. Error*	*Beta*		
(Constant)	2.472	0.187		13.205	0
LMX_mean	0.347	0.049	0.466	7.156	0

a. Dependent Variable: IWB mean

Model 4: Independent variable (IL) and mediator variable (LMX) predicting the dependent variable (IWB)

Table 10 and Table 11 show the results of the regression analysis between the independent variable IL and mediator variable LMX predicting the dependent variable IWB.
The significant value (Table 10) is almost 0 <0.01 and so the mediator variable LMX and the independent variable IL is shown to significantly influence the dependent variable IWB and the regression equation is: IWB=2.603 + 0.442 LMX- 0.127 IL

Table 10. Summary of Model 4

Model	*Sum of Squares*	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
Regression	15.499	2	7.749	27.136	.000[b]
Residual	52.546	184	0.286		
Total	68.045	186			

a. Dependent Variable: IWB mean
b. Predictors: (Constant), IL_mean, LMX_mean

Table 11. Mediator effect of LMX between IL and IWB

Model 1	*Unstandardized Coefficients*		*Standardized Coefficients*	*T*	*Sig.*
	B	*Std. Error*	*Beta*		
(Constant)	2.603	0.203		12.812	0
LMX_mean	0.442	0.076	0.592	5.831	0

a. Dependent Variable: IWB mean

Finally, we can conclude that total mediation is present when the independent variable no longer influences the dependent variable after the mediator has been controlled and all the above conditions are met. Sig=0.108>0.01 (**Table 11**), thus he independent variable (IL) has no longer influence on the dependent variable (IWB) and then the second hypothesis is verified.

4 Discussion

In this study, we aim to examine the relationship between IL and IWB with the mediating role of LMX. The results showed that IL is significantly associated with IWB. These findings are consistent with previous studies that reported the positive influence of IL on IWB [18, 13].

The findings also confirmed that LMX plays a mediating role between IL and IWB. In fact, when employees perceive leader's openness, availability and accessibility, positive exchange occurs, and they tend to reciprocate by developing innovative behaviour. Consequently, employees need to feel a high-quality relationship with the leader to challenge the existing work standards and to look for new work techniques and methods [39]. Inclusive leaders encourage employees to innovate by sending them a signal that "they can openly share their views [24]. The findings are in line with previous studies that have pointed out that "a leader-follower relationship based on social exchange instead of economic exchange" promotes IWB [18].

Furthermore, the study revealed that, in the Lebanese context, among the three dimensions of inclusive leadership, leaders' availability has a significant influence on employee innovative behaviour through LMX. This outcome might be attributed to the importance of the relational factors within the Lebanese culture. In fact, these factors meet the needs for social recognition, affiliation and sociability. These values are strongly appreciated and emphasized by the Lebanese people, and find their root in their culture, which promotes the exchanges, the communication with others and the conviviality [45, 46]. Although the Lebanese leader is not always open to hearing new ideas, he is however available to communicate with his followers and discuss with them all problems related to work. Thus, the interpersonal relationships play a key role in the organizations and contribute, in some cases, to the development of high-quality exchange between leaders and followers and consequently to the promotion of IWB.

Theoretical Implications

The current study presents several theoretical contributions to research and theory on both leadership and IWB. This study provides further support to the importance of relational leadership in influencing behaviours in the organizations [24]. It emphasizes on a specific aspect of relational leadership, namely the inclusive leadership.

Inclusive leadership, characterized by openness, accessibility and availability, has been suggested to have positive effect on leader-member exchange [47]. The findings provide further support to previous studies that have demonstrated that IL contributes to a higher quality of LMX [21, 38].

Furthermore, this study provides insight on the determinants of IWB. It helps to explain the role of LMX in enhancing employees innovative work behaviour. Thus, by examining the effect of IL on IWB, it supports the notion that situational factors enhance IWB [42, 3, 48]. Therefore, our investigation suggests that inclusive leadership is a situational factor, which enhances IWB.

Moreover, the findings investigate the mechanism by which inclusive leadership may affect innovative work behaviour. They reveal that IL, by stressing on building high-quality LMX, affects employees' IWB [31, 32]. Therefore, the indirect effect of inclusive leadership on the IWB through LMX is a further contribution to the literature on IWB. The study lends support to previous studies that have pointed out that IL promotes IWB by focusing on both the characteristics of a leader and leader-member exchange [21, 18].

By confirming the mediating role of LMX in the association between IL and IWB, the findings support the leaders' process view [18]. They also support the social exchange view of [49] which assumes that employees become more motivated to show extra role behaviours, such as IWB, when they perceive leadership in terms of quality relationship, [50, 30]. This research adds insights to a relatively understudied form of relational leadership, the inclusive leadership, and its (potential) contribution to innovation in the workplace.

Practical Implications

The study has several implications for managers of the Lebanese Private Sector. Human resources management needs to emphasize on leaders' attributes like being available and accessible for employees and should promote open communication. It should develop innovation application programs to help leaders apply and spread innovation within the organization. Their openness, accessibility and availability would create a favorable environment to emphasize and encourage IWB.

Moreover, the findings related to the mediating role of LMX highlight the mechanism through which inclusive leadership develop innovative behaviours. Thus, managers must build closer relationships with their subordinates, further based on trust and social exchange. If they want to motivate them to generate and implement innovative ideas at work, they have to rely on more than economic exchanges.

Limitations and Future Research

Future studies can investigate how the dimensions of LMX may influence innovative work behaviour and how these different dimensions of LMX are related to inclusive behaviours of leaders. Moreover, future studies may investigate other mechanisms that intervene between inclusive leadership and innovative work behaviour which will help enhance our understanding of the role of inclusive leadership in promoting IWB.

What is more, this study was conducted exclusively within the Lebanese services sector, which is very dynamic and innovative one in Lebanon. Future studies can adopt other sectors as field of investigation, and, thus, they will give more insights related to the underlying mechanisms that emphasize IWB in the Lebanese context.

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