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Inclusive Leadership, Psychological Empowerment, and Affective Organizational Commitment: A Mediated Model

Mariah Lyn Van Buskirk
San Jose State University

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INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP, PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT, AND
AFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT: A MEDIATED MODEL

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Psychology

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirement for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Mariah Van Buskirk

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The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

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AFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT: A MEDIATED MODEL

by

Mariah Van Buskirk

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2020

Dr. Megumi Hosoda Department of Psychology

Dr. Howard Tokunaga Department of Psychology

Perla Slutzky, M.S. NVIDIA

ABSTRACT

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP, PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT, AND AFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT: A MEDIATED MODEL

by Mariah Van Buskirk

Inclusive leadership has become an important contextual factor to study in organizations given its impact on positive workplace outcomes. However, little is known about the ability of inclusive leadership to affect a wider range of outcomes and the various mediating mechanisms between inclusive leadership and outcomes. Therefore, the present study explored the mediating role of psychological empowerment on the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment. It was hypothesized that inclusive leadership would be positively related to affective organizational commitment both directly and indirectly through psychological empowerment. Results of an online survey from 189 employed individuals showed that inclusive leadership was positively related to affective organizational commitment. Results also showed that psychological empowerment partially mediated the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment, particularly through the meaning and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment. The present study contributes to the existing literature by highlighting the positive relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment and the mediating role of psychological empowerment. These findings suggest that management development programs should focus on increasing managers' levels of openness, availability, and accessibility in their interactions with employees.

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Introduction

Diversity and inclusion have become CEO-level priorities in organizations around the world due to their importance in affecting workplace outcomes such as engagement and productivity (Bourke, Garr, van Berkel, & Wong, 2017). Diversity is defined as “a characteristic of social grouping that reflects the degree to which objective or subjective differences exist between group members” (van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007, p. 516) and can be divided into different typologies, including demographic attributes (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, age), personal attributes (e.g., personality, attitudes, values), and job-related attributes (e.g., educational, functional background).

Significant progress has been made over the past three decades to increase the levels of workforce diversity for historically marginalized groups, such as women, members of ethnic and racial minorities, members of sexual minority groups, older workers, and people with disabilities, through a combination of anti-discrimination laws and affirmative action programs (Mor Barak, 2015). Despite this progress, research has shown that increasing diversity in organizations does not guarantee positive outcomes for diverse members in terms of retention, promotion, or productivity (McKay et al., 2007). In fact, some studies have shown that greater diversity has led to increased conflict and turnover, and lower cohesion and performance (Kochan et al., 2003; Mannix & Neale, 2005). These negative consequences suggest that diversity alone is not enough to ensure an effective work environment for all employees. In response to this, the topic of inclusion has gained increased attention as a means to realize the benefits of diversity more fully.

Inclusion refers to an employee's perception that "he or she is an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness" (Shore et al., 2011, p. 1265). Inclusion practices seek to provide a greater level of insider status to individuals of different backgrounds, including sharing information, participation in decision making, having voice, and upward mobility opportunities (Shore et al., 2011; Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018).

It is clear that fostering inclusion is critical to ensuring a positive environment for diverse individuals. However, achieving an inclusive climate in practice is a complex challenge that requires an examination of all facets of the workplace and an authentic willingness to provide the conditions under which diverse individuals can succeed (Winters, 2014). Therefore, more research is needed to understand how organizations can create inclusive environments.

Leadership is one of the key contextual factors that promotes an inclusive climate. Over the past decade, a specific form of relational leadership, inclusive leadership, has garnered attention. Inclusive leadership refers to leaders' display of openness, accessibility, and availability in their interactions with followers (Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, & Ziv, 2010). Research on inclusive leadership has shown positive outcomes on employees such as increased work engagement, innovative work behaviors, and team performance (Hirak, Peng, Carmeli, & Schaubroeck, 2012; Javed, Abdullah, Zaffar, Haque, & Rubab, 2019; Mitchell et al., 2015). However, little is known regarding the ability of inclusive leadership to affect a wider range of outcomes, such as organizational commitment.

One component of organizational commitment is affective organizational commitment, defined as an employee's attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Affective organizational commitment has been found to be positively related to individual and organizational outcomes such as employee attendance, performance, health and well-being, and organizational citizenship behaviors (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). Because of its positive outcomes, affective organizational commitment has been widely studied to better understand how organizations can foster it among employees.

Leadership is considered a key determinant of affective organizational commitment (Joo, 2010; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982; Neubert, Carlson, Kacmar, Roberts, & Chonko, 2009; Wallace, de Chernatony, & Buil, 2013). In particular, positive relationships have been found between affective organizational commitment and transformational leadership (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004), ethical leadership (Benevene et al., 2018; Kim & Brymer, 2011), servant leadership (Zhou & Miao, 2014), and leader-member exchange (Eisenberger et al., 2010; Joo, 2010). However, little research has been dedicated to investigating the influence of inclusive leadership on affective organizational commitment (Choi, Tran, & Park, 2015). Given the importance of inclusive leadership on positive workplace outcomes, the present study investigates the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment.

Researchers have called for the need to examine various mediating mechanisms between inclusive leadership and work outcomes in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of how this specific leadership style is related to work

outcomes (Choi et al., 2015; Javed, Naqvi, Khan, Arjoon, & Tayyeb, 2017). One such mediator, psychological empowerment, has started to gain traction in the literature in its relationship with inclusive leadership (Javed et al., 2019).

Psychological empowerment is defined as intrinsic task motivation that reflects an active orientation to one's work role and is "manifested in four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact" (Spreitzer, 1995, p. 1444). Furthermore, psychological empowerment has been extensively studied as a mediating mechanism between antecedent conditions and work-related outcomes, including affective organizational commitment (Castro, Perrián, & Bueno, 2008; Liden, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2000).

For example, Avolio et al. (2004) investigated the mediating role of psychological empowerment on the relationship between transformational leadership and affective organizational commitment. They found that feelings of psychological empowerment mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and affective organizational commitment such that the presence of transformational leadership led to greater feelings of psychological empowerment among subordinates, which in turn, led to subordinates having higher levels of affective commitment to the organization.

To date, few studies have examined the role of psychological empowerment as a mechanism linking inclusive leadership and employee outcomes. Inclusive leaders create an accepting and welcoming climate for their employees to voice their ideas and opinions. This signals to employees that they have impact and control over their work, which ultimately may increase feelings of psychological empowerment (Randel et al.,

2018). Therefore, the present study investigates psychological empowerment as a mediator of the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment.

The following sections present the definition of inclusive leadership, review the existing literature on the relationship between inclusive leadership and work outcomes, introduce psychological empowerment as a mediator, and present hypotheses on the relationships among inclusive leadership, affective organizational commitment, and psychological empowerment.

Inclusive Leadership

The term leader inclusiveness was first introduced by Nembhard and Edmondson (2006), who defined it as “words and deeds by a leader or leaders that indicate an invitation and appreciation for others’ contributions [and captures] attempts by leaders to include others in discussions and decisions in which their voices and perspectives might otherwise be absent” (p. 947). According to this definition, inclusive leaders create a psychologically safe environment in which employees of all levels feel comfortable speaking up and help them believe that their opinions and ideas are valued.

Carmeli et al. (2010) expanded upon Nembhard and Edmondson’s (2006) definition to develop their own conceptualization and measure of inclusive leadership. These researchers were interested in exploring the concept of relational leadership, which refers to “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” (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 668). Carmeli et al. proposed that

inclusive leadership, which they define as leaders' display of "openness, accessibility, and availability in their interactions with followers" (p. 250), is a core aspect of relational leadership. In other words, unlike many views of leadership that present leader-follower exchanges in a top down, hierarchical fashion, inclusive leadership functions as a two-way relationship between leader and employee (Carmeli et al., 2010; Choi, Tran, & Kang, 2017; Javed et al., 2019).

Carmeli et al. (2010) argued that through the dimensions of openness, accessibility, and availability, inclusive leaders encourage employees to contribute new ideas and take risks by communicating the importance of these behaviors and ensuring employees that there are not negative consequences for doing so. Specifically, the dimension of openness implies that the leader is actively listening and open to hearing new ideas, attentive to new opportunities to improve work processes, and willing to discuss new ways for achieving desired work goals. The dimension of availability explains that the leader is an ongoing presence in the team and is readily available for consultation on problems, professional questions, and various requests. Finally, the dimension of accessibility is the degree to which the leader encourages employees to access him or her on emerging issues and is readily accessible for discussing problems as they arise.

The present study draws upon Carmeli et al.'s (2010) conceptualization because of its focus on individual-level perceptions of inclusive leadership, which is important to study in its relationship with individual perceptions of psychological empowerment and affective organizational commitment. Furthermore, this conceptualization has received

strong support from the existing literature as a reliable measure of inclusive leadership (Carmeli et al., 2010; Choi et al., 2017; Javed et al., 2017).

Although elements of inclusive leadership share similarities with other leadership styles, it is differentiated in several ways. For example, inclusive leadership is related to participative leadership, which describes leaders who consult with employees on issues and share or delegate decision-making responsibility to them. However, inclusive leadership is unique in that it pertains to situations in which status or power differences are present and helps people believe that their voices are genuinely valued through inviting and appreciating their inputs (Mitchell et al., 2015; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006).

Inclusive leadership is also related to transformational leadership. One dimension of transformational leadership, individual consideration, or the degree to which the leader listens and attends to each employee's needs and concerns and acts as a mentor or coach, is most closely related to inclusive leadership (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Yet, transformational leadership is not necessarily inclusive in nature. Transformational leadership focuses on changing and transforming employees by increasing motivation based on shared goals and organizational needs (Kanungo, 2001), whereas inclusive leadership focuses on accepting employees for who they are and their own unique perspectives and ideas (Carmeli et al., 2010).

Inclusive leadership also shares similarities with servant leadership. The defining characteristic of servant leadership is its focus on benevolent service to others (Neubert, Hunter, & Tolentino, 2016). Servant leaders put their employees first and promote their

well-being and career growth, but also look beyond those employed by the organization and aim to create success for other stakeholders such as customers and the community (Ehrhart, 2004). Inclusive leadership differs from this style of leadership in that it focuses more narrowly on creating an open and comfortable environment for employees to speak up, specifically in relation to the work group. Inclusive leadership also does not focus on external stakeholders as servant leadership does.

Outcomes of Inclusive Leadership

Past research demonstrates that inclusive leadership is associated with positive outcomes at both the team and individual levels. At the team level, inclusive leadership has been shown to be positively associated with team performance (Hirak et al., 2012; Mitchell et al., 2015; Qi & Liu, 2017) and team innovation (Ye, Wang, & Guo, 2019). Inclusive leadership has also been found to enhance leader-directed and work group-directed helping behavior, which are forms of extra role behavior, by signaling to employees that they belong and are valued for their unique talents (Randel, Dean, Ehrhart, Chung, & Shore, 2016).

At the individual level, inclusive leadership has often been studied in its relationship with psychological safety – the belief that the workplace is safe for interpersonal risk taking, which enables employees to feel comfortable contributing their ideas and information (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Specifically, the literature provides support that inclusive leaders promote greater levels of psychological safety among employees by signaling that their work is important and their comments and ideas are appreciated (Carmeli et al., 2010; Hirak et al., 2012; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006).

Inclusive leadership has also been found to positively impact employee engagement (Choi et al., 2015), innovative work behaviors (Javed et al., 2017; Javed et al., 2019), employee creativity (Carmeli et al., 2010), and employee well-being (Choi et al., 2017). For example, Javed et al. (2019) found a positive relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative work behaviors. Inclusive leaders showed strong support for their employees by directly inviting them to participate in decision-making and work processes. Based on these positive leader behaviors, the employees in this study risked disagreement with their leadership and challenged the status quo by generating and promoting novel ideas and turning these ideas into useful applications.

Inclusive Leadership and Affective Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment has been studied extensively in the literature and is predominantly conceptualized using the three-component model originally introduced by Meyer and Allen (1991). In the three-component model, organizational commitment is composed of affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Affective organizational commitment refers to employees' emotional attachment to, and identification with, the organization; employees stay because they *want* to. Continuance organizational commitment refers to employees' awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization; employees stay because they *need* to. Normative organizational commitment refers to employees' feelings of obligation to continue employment; employees stay because they *ought* to (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Although the three-component model of organizational commitment has been widely accepted by scholars, recent studies have started to use affective organizational

commitment as the sole indicator of organizational commitment (Benevene et al., 2018; Brown, Paz-Aparicio, & Revilla, 2019). Solinger, van Olffen, and Roe (2008) argued that there are conceptual issues with the three-component model. One issue is that continuance organizational commitment correlates negatively or not at all with affective organizational commitment, affective or attitudinal correlates, and work-related outcomes. In effect, this creates concerns regarding the convergent validity of continuance organizational commitment. A second issue is that normative organizational commitment has been found to correlate strongly with affective organizational commitment, which makes it hard to separate the two components empirically (Ko, Price, & Mueller, 1997; Meyer et al., 2002). Thus, there is a low level of discriminant validity and this signals that normative organizational commitment may be redundant with affective organizational commitment.

Of the three components of organizational commitment, affective organizational commitment, therefore, is the most reliable and strongly validated (Meyer et al., 2002). Affective organizational commitment has the strongest relationships with work-related outcomes, such as absenteeism, job performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors. Previous research has also been more theoretically and empirically conclusive regarding the relationship between leadership and affective organizational commitment, compared to continuance or normative organizational commitment (Meyer et al., 2002). For all of these reasons, the present study focuses solely on affective organizational commitment.

Leadership has been identified as an important predictor of affective organizational commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 2002). In general, positive relationships have been found between various leader behaviors and affective organizational commitment. For example, Yiing and Ahmad (2009) studied the relationships between leaders' directive (initiating structure; task-oriented), supportive (consideration; people-oriented), and participative behaviors and affective organizational commitment, and found positive and significant relationships for each of these leader behaviors. Specifically, employees felt stronger emotional bonds to their organizations when they had leaders who provided clear directions, showed concern for their well-being and personal needs, and consulted with them about decisions.

Positive relationships have also been found between leadership styles and affective organizational commitment. Transformational leadership has consistently been found to be positively related to affective organizational commitment (Meyer et al., 2002; Simosi & Xenikou, 2010; Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). Transformational leaders motivate their employees to think creatively about their jobs, seek new ways of approaching problems, engender respect and inspiration, and build a sense of confidence (Simosi & Xenikou, 2010). Walumbwa and Lawler (2003) suggest that through this encouragement, employees become emotionally attached to their organizations.

Although there has been considerable research studying the link between leadership and affective organizational commitment, there is a dearth of research dedicated to studying inclusive leadership. One exception is research by Choi et al. (2015). They found that inclusive leadership was positively related to employees' affective

organizational commitment. Specifically, the researchers argued that inclusive leaders attended to employees' needs by exhibiting openness, accessibility, and availability in their work, and these positive behaviors facilitated employees' affective organizational commitment.

Inclusive leadership may influence affective organizational commitment via a social exchange process (Blau, 1964; Eisenberger, Shanock, & Wen, 2020). The social exchange theory posits that social relationships are based on the exchange of benefits between individuals (Blau, 1964). One of the basic tenets of this theory is the norm of reciprocity, a social norm that maintains that people should return favors and other acts of kindness (Gouldner, 1960). Following the norm of reciprocity, if an employee feels that he or she has a supportive and caring manager, this individual is likely to reciprocate in the form of positive behaviors and attitudes back to the manager and organization. Based on the norm of reciprocity, a supportive manager is also likely to elicit an employee's felt obligation, or the duty perceived by an employee to add value to and care about the organization, through greater affective organizational commitment (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001).

Inclusive leaders are open, accessible, and available to employees to share their ideas and participate in the decision-making process by communicating the importance of such behaviors and assuring employees that there will not be negative consequences for speaking up (Carmeli et al., 2010). Additionally, inclusive leaders create an environment in which employees feel valued for their unique thoughts and ideas. These positive leader behaviors signal to employees that the organization is friendly and supportive of

them (Liden et al., 2000; Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Shore et al., 2018). Furthermore, value sharing encourages employees to form an attachment and emotional bond with the organization (Kim, Eisenberger, & Baik, 2016; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

From a social exchange perspective, the positive environment that inclusive leaders create invokes in employees the norm of reciprocity and produces a felt obligation to stay committed to the organization in order to continue the positive exchange relationship (Chen & Tang, 2018; Eisenberger et al., 2001). In an effort to advance research on the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment, I propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Inclusive leadership will be positively related to affective organizational commitment.

The Mediating Role of Psychological Empowerment on the Relationship Between Inclusive Leadership and Affective Organizational Commitment

In addition to proposing that inclusive leadership is positively related to affective organizational commitment, it is also important to examine processes that may underlie this relationship. The present study explores the potential role of psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment is defined as intrinsic task motivation that reflects an active orientation to one's work role and thus a sense of control over one's work, "manifested in four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact" (Spreitzer, 1995, p. 1444). Meaning refers to the fit between one's work goals and beliefs or values (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Competence, or self-efficacy, refers to a belief in one's capability to successfully perform work activities (Bandura, 1989). Self-determination is a sense of choice or autonomy over the initiation and regulation of

one's actions (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989). Lastly, impact is the degree to which an individual can influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work (Ashforth, 1989). Spreitzer (1995) noted that the four dimensions are additive to create an overall construct of psychological empowerment, and that psychological empowerment is highest when all four dimensions are high.

Inclusive leadership is believed to enhance psychological empowerment by providing a welcoming and autonomous environment for employees that allows them to take initiative, speak up, and express ideas, suggestions, and problems. In addition, several studies have identified a positive link between psychological empowerment and affective organizational commitment (Brunetto et al., 2012; Castro et al., 2008; Maynard, Gilson, & Mathieu, 2012; Seibert, Wang, & Courtright, 2011). Therefore, psychological empowerment is explored in this study as a mediator of the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment.

Although a variety of leadership styles have been explored in relation to psychological empowerment, there is little research to date studying the effects of inclusive leadership on psychological empowerment. Recently, Javed et al. (2019) provided initial support for the relationship between these two constructs. Results from their study revealed that inclusive leadership was positively related to psychological empowerment. According to Javed et al., inclusive leaders invited their employees to speak up and engage in constructive dialogue, which positively affected their sense of meaning. They were open and served as a social model for employees to learn from, leading to greater feelings of competence. Inclusive leaders shared decision-making

power with their employees, which created a sense of self-determination. Lastly, inclusive leaders provided timely feedback on their employees' work contributions, leading to feelings of impact.

In evaluating their findings, Javed et al. (2019) suggested that inclusive leadership positively affects employee psychological empowerment through the relationships inclusive leaders create with their employees. Employees who feel validated, accepted, and supported via the relationships they have with their leaders are more likely to feel empowered and motivated to engage in interpersonal risk taking and sharing (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Furthermore, better and more trusting relationships have been shown to positively affect psychological empowerment (Maynard et al., 2012). For example, communication with one's supervisor is positively associated with meaning, self-determination, and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment (Siegall & Gardner, 2000). Based on the above arguments, I propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Inclusive leadership will be positively related to employee psychological empowerment.

In terms of the relationship between psychological empowerment and employees' affective organizational commitment, results from a meta-analysis conducted by Seibert et al. (2011) showed a significant and positive relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment across 31 different studies. These researchers proposed that psychological empowerment, as exemplified through the dimensions of meaning, self-determination, competence, and impact, increased employees' affective commitment to the organization. Specifically, the meaning

dimension was argued to increase affective organizational commitment because it assessed the fit between the work role and the employees' needs and values. Self-determination, competence, and impact were argued to increase affective organizational commitment because they enhanced the abilities of employees to express their values and interests through their work.

In a more recent study, Macsinga, Sulea, Sârbescu, Fischmann, and Dumitru (2015) explored the incremental effect of psychological empowerment on affective organizational commitment after accounting for personality factors. They concluded that psychological empowerment was a significant predictor of affective organizational commitment even after accounting for personality factors, such that employees who felt their work was meaningful and their actions made a difference were more likely to develop an emotional attachment to and involvement in the organization.

Providing employees with opportunities to increase their levels of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact – in other words, increasing their feelings of psychological empowerment – is expected to result in employees who are more likely to reciprocate with higher levels of affective commitment to their organizations. In view of this, I propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Employee psychological empowerment will be positively related to affective organizational commitment.

The literature reviewed above suggests positive relationships between inclusive leadership and psychological empowerment, and between psychological empowerment

and affective organizational commitment. Hence, I propose the following hypothesized relationship:

Hypothesis 4: Employee psychological empowerment will mediate the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment.

On a final note, Seibert et al. (2011) found that the four dimensions of psychological empowerment significantly differed among themselves as predictors of organizational commitment. Specifically, meaning and impact were stronger predictors of organizational commitment than competence or self-determination. In order to study whether dimensions of psychological empowerment differ in their mediating effect on the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment, I propose the following research question:

Research Question: Which dimension of psychological empowerment is the strongest mediator in the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment?

Present Study

The goal of the present study was to examine the underlying process through which inclusive leadership is related to employees' affective organizational commitment by focusing on psychological empowerment as a mediator. I also explored which of the four dimensions of psychological empowerment most strongly mediated the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment.

This study is one of the first to explore the influence that inclusive leaders have on both employee psychological empowerment and affective organizational commitment.

Additionally, this study extends the literature on inclusive leadership by examining a mediated model in order to get a more comprehensive understanding of the role inclusive leadership plays in affecting positive outcomes in the workplace. Given the diverse breakdown of individuals in the workplace today, it is critical to explore inclusive leadership as a means to fully utilize the unique talents of these individuals and provide an open environment where everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed.

Method

Participants

A total of 269 participants responded to an online survey. Participants were drawn from a convenience sample of my personal and professional networks (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram) as well as the extended networks of the participants. The criteria for inclusion in the study were that participants (a) were currently employed either part-time or full-time for at least three months at their current company, (b) reported to their current manager or supervisor for at least three months, (c) were at least 18 years of age, and (d) did not have a substantial amount of incomplete data. Thus, the final sample consisted of 189 participants.

The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1. The sample consisted of 63.0% women, 36.0% men, and 1.1% non-binary. Ages ranged from 18 years to 65 years or older, with the majority of respondents between the ages of 25 and 34 years old (70.9%). Most respondents identified as White (57.7%), followed by Multiracial (15.9%), Asian (13.2%), and Hispanic/Latinx (8.5%).

The majority of participants (88.9%) reported working 40 or more hours per week at their current jobs. Organizational tenure ranged from three months to more than 15 years, with 54.5% of participants reporting they had been employed at their current company between three months and two years, followed by 30.2% of participants with a tenure of between three and five years. Additionally, 72.5% of participants reported having worked with their current manager or supervisor between three months and two years, and 18.5% worked with their current manager or supervisor between three and five

years. Participants reported working in a wide range of industries, including 16.9% “Other” (e.g., Aerospace, Government, Law Enforcement), 15.9% in computer software/electronics, 15.3% in healthcare/pharmaceutical, 9.5% in sales/retail, 7.9% in education, and 7.4% in finance/insurance.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	N	%
Gender		
Female	119	63.0
Male	68	36.0
Non-binary	2	1.1
Age		
18-24	14	7.4
25-34	134	70.9
35-44	13	6.9
45-54	15	7.9
55-64	12	6.3
65 years or older	1	.5
Ethnicity/Race		
Asian	25	13.2
Black/African American	1	.5
Hispanic/Latinx	16	8.5
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	3	1.6
White	109	57.7
Multiracial	30	15.9
Other	1	.5
Prefer not to respond	4	2.1
Employment Status		
Working 40+ hours a week	168	88.9
Working 1-39 hours a week	21	11.1
Tenure		
3 months to 2 years	103	54.5
3 to 5 years	57	30.2
6 to 8 years	13	6.9
9 to 11 years	2	1.1
12 to 14 years	2	1.1
15+ years	12	6.3

Table 1 (*Continued*)

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Length of Time Under Supervisor		
3 months to 2 years	137	72.5
3 to 5 years	35	18.5
6 to 8 years	6	3.2
9 to 11 years	3	1.6
15+ years	8	4.2
Industry		
Computer Software/Electronics	30	15.9
Education	15	7.9
Engineering/Architecture	6	3.2
Entertainment, Media, Recreation	13	6.9
Finance/Insurance	14	7.4
Food Services	3	1.6
Healthcare/Pharmaceutical	29	15.3
Human Resources	12	6.3
Legal	3	1.6
Manufacturing	7	3.7
Real Estate	6	3.2
Sales/Retail	18	9.5
Other	32	16.9

Note. *N* = 189.

Measures

All study variables were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*).

Inclusive leadership. Inclusive leadership, defined as leaders' display of openness, accessibility, and availability in their interactions with followers (Carmeli et al., 2010), was measured using Carmeli et al.'s (2010) nine-item measure of inclusive leadership. This measure assesses three dimensions of inclusive leaders: openness (three items), availability (four items), and accessibility (two items). Because the respondents were asked to rate items for their direct managers, the wording of the items was changed slightly to fit this study. Example items include, "My manager is open to hearing new ideas" (openness); "My manager is an ongoing 'presence' in this team – someone who is readily available" (availability); and "My manager encourages me to access him/her on emerging issues" (accessibility). Responses were averaged to create a composite score. Cronbach's alpha for the nine-item scale was .93, indicating high reliability.

Psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment is defined as intrinsic task motivation that reflects an active orientation to one's work role and thus a sense of control over one's work, "manifested in four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact" (Spreitzer, 1995, p. 1444). Spreitzer's (1995) 12-item scale was utilized to measure psychological empowerment. This scale measures four dimensions of psychological empowerment: meaning (three items), competence (three items), self-determination (three items), and impact (three items). The respondents were asked to rate their own levels of psychological empowerment. Example items include,

“The work I do is very important to me” (meaning); “I am confident about my ability to do my job” (competence); “I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work” (self-determination); and “My impact on what happens in my department is large” (impact). Responses were averaged to create an overall score of psychological empowerment, as well as composite scores of each of the four dimensions. Cronbach’s alpha for the 12-item scale was .86, indicating high reliability.

Affective organizational commitment. Affective organizational commitment refers to employees’ emotional attachment to, and identification with, the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991), and was measured using six items from Meyer, Allen, and Smith’s (1993) scale of organizational commitment. A sample item was “I really feel as if this organization’s problems are my own.” Responses were averaged to create a composite score. Cronbach’s alpha was .85, indicating high reliability.

Demographic information. Participants responded to seven demographic items. The items included employment status, organizational tenure, time working with current manager or supervisor, employment industry, age, gender, and ethnicity/race.

Procedure

The present study was administered in a survey format online through Qualtrics. Participants were recruited via email, word of mouth, and social networking platforms (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram). The invitation to participate included a short description of the study, an anonymous link to the survey, and a request to share the survey link with their extended networks. Upon clicking the link, participants were directed to a consent notice, which provided information on the purpose of the study,

procedures to be followed, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality parameters, their rights to participate or withdraw at any time, and appropriate points of contact if they had questions, concerns, or complaints regarding the research study.

Those who agreed to participate were then directed to the survey, which contained a total of 34 items regarding their demographic characteristics, inclusive leadership, psychological empowerment, and affective organizational commitment. The survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete. Instructions were displayed at the top of each section to inform participants of the types of questions that would be asked. At the end of the survey, participants were thanked for their time. Participants who did not consent to the survey, reported themselves as unemployed or retired, or indicated having been employed at their current company or worked with their current manager or supervisor for less than three months, were directed to the end of the survey and thanked for their time. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software program Version 26.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The means and standard deviations of the measured variables are presented in Table 2. Overall, participants reported high levels of inclusive leadership, indicating they perceived their managers to be open, available, and accessible ($M = 4.28, SD = .69$). The participants reported moderately high levels of psychological empowerment, suggesting that they felt a moderately high intrinsic task motivation ($M = 3.92, SD = .56$). Participants also reported moderate levels of affective organizational commitment, suggesting that they felt an attachment to, identification with, and involvement in their organizations ($M = 3.39, SD = .85$). Table 2 also lists the means and standard deviations of each dimension of psychological empowerment. Participants reported the highest levels of competence ($M = 4.27, SD = .61$) and the lowest levels of impact ($M = 3.38, SD = .90$).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlations Among the Measured Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Inclusive Leadership	4.28	.69	(.93)						
2. Psychological Empowerment	3.92	.56	.49**	(.86)					
3. Affective Organizational Commitment	3.39	.85	.49**	.59**	(.85)				
4. Psychological Empowerment: Meaning	3.97	.94	.32**	.75**	.60**				
5. Psychological Empowerment: Competence	4.27	.61	.17*	.58**	.20**	.28**			
6. Psychological Empowerment: Self-Determination	4.06	.72	.46**	.68**	.31**	.25**	.34**		
7. Psychological Empowerment: Impact	3.38	.90	.40**	.76**	.46**	.42**	.20**	.39**	

Note: $N = 189$. Reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) are in parentheses along the diagonal.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Pearson Correlations

Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to assess the strength of the relationships among the variables in the present study, as shown in Table 2. Results showed that inclusive leadership had a significant, strong positive relationship with psychological empowerment, $r(187) = .49, p < .01$, suggesting that participants whose managers displayed greater levels of inclusive leadership through behaviors of openness, availability, and accessibility were more likely to feel a sense of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact at work. Inclusive leadership also had a significant, strong positive relationship with affective organizational commitment, $r(187) = .49, p < .01$, suggesting that participants whose managers displayed greater levels of inclusive leadership were more likely to feel an attachment to, identification with, and involvement in their organizations. Furthermore, a significant, strong positive relationship between psychological empowerment and affective organizational commitment, $r(187) = .59, p < .01$, showed that participants who felt a greater sense of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact in their jobs were more likely to feel attached to and involved in their organizations. In sum, these variables were related to each other moderately strongly.

Inclusive leadership was significantly and positively related to each dimension of psychological empowerment. Inclusive leadership was more strongly related to self-determination, $r(187) = .46, p < .01$, and impact, $r(187) = .40, p < .01$, than meaning, $r(187) = .32, p < .01$, and competence, $r(187) = .17, p < .05$. Each dimension of psychological empowerment was significantly and positively related to affective

organizational commitment. Meaning had the strongest relationship with affective organizational commitment, $r(187) = .46, p < .01$, and competence had the weakest relationship with affective organizational commitment, $r(187) = .46, p < .01$.

Tests of Hypotheses

Pearson correlations were computed to test Hypotheses 1-3. Hypothesis 1 stated that inclusive leadership would be positively related to affective organizational commitment. As mentioned earlier, results showed that inclusive leadership was significantly related to affective organizational commitment, $r(187) = .49, p < .01$, suggesting that participants whose managers displayed greater levels of inclusive leadership were more likely to feel an attachment to, identification with, and involvement in their organizations. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Hypothesis 2 stated that inclusive leadership would be positively related to employee psychological empowerment. Results showed that inclusive leadership was positively related to psychological empowerment, $r(187) = .49, p < .01$, suggesting that participants whose managers displayed greater levels of inclusive leadership were more likely to feel a sense of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact at work. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Hypothesis 3 stated that employee psychological empowerment would be positively related to affective organizational commitment. Results showed that psychological empowerment was positively related to affective organizational commitment, $r(187) = .59, p < .01$, such that participants who felt a greater sense of meaning, competence, self-

determination, and impact in their jobs were more likely to feel attached to and involved in their organizations. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

To test for Hypothesis 4, a simple mediation analysis was conducted using the SPSS macro PROCESS (Hayes & Preacher, 2014). This mediation model uses an ordinary least squares regression path analysis to determine the direct and indirect effects of a variable on the outcome (Hayes & Preacher, 2014). Bootstrapping was used to calculate 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (CI) to assess the significance of the indirect effect, as this method has been argued to have higher statistical power and better inferential testing than other types of mediation approaches (e.g., the Baron and Kenny method and the Sobel test; Hayes & Preacher, 2014). An indirect effect is considered to be statistically significant if zero (0) is not contained in the confidence interval (Hayes & Preacher, 2014). Following Hayes and Preacher's (2014) recommendation, the bootstrap estimates were based on 10,000 bootstrap samples.

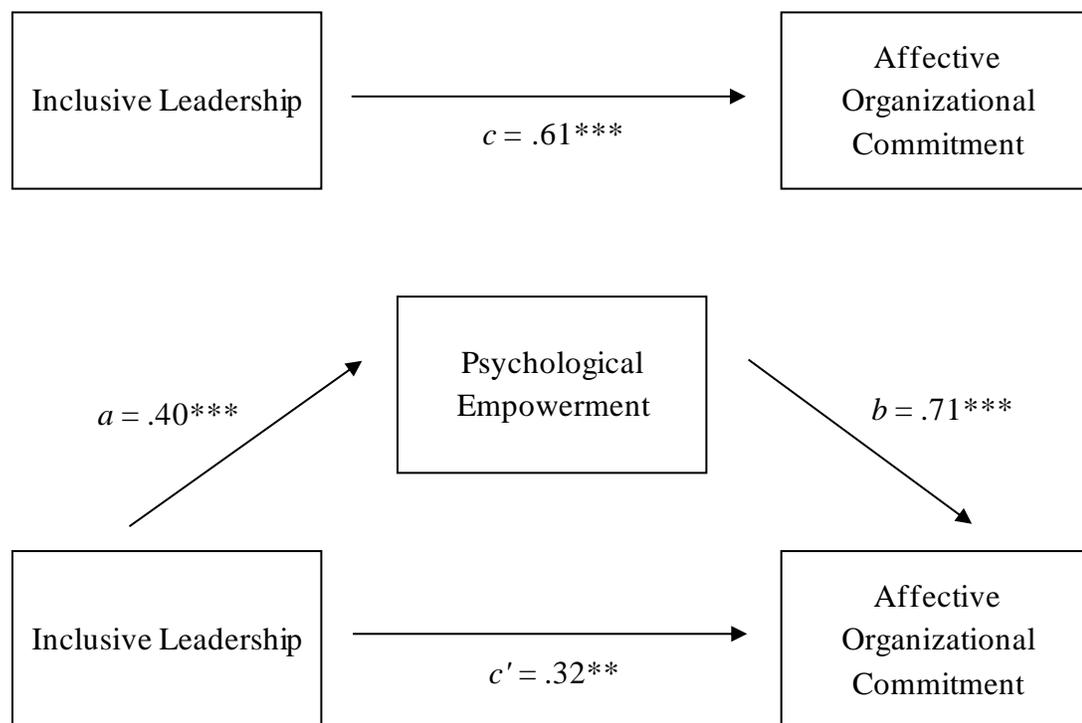
Hypothesis 4 stated that employee psychological empowerment would mediate the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment. Results of the analysis are shown in Figure 1 and the unstandardized coefficients (b), standard errors (SE), t values, and 95% confidence intervals (CI) are listed in Table 3. Inclusive leadership was significantly and positively related to affective organizational commitment (path c : $b = .61$, $t = 7.70$, $p < .001$), such that participants whose managers displayed high levels of openness, availability, and accessibility were more likely to feel a sense of emotional attachment to their organizations. Inclusive leadership was significantly related to psychological empowerment (path a : $b = .40$, $t = 7.70$, $p < .001$),

such that participants whose managers displayed high levels of inclusive leadership were more likely to feel a sense of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact at work. Psychological empowerment was uniquely related to affective organizational commitment after controlling for inclusive leadership (path b : $b = .71$, $t = 7.18$, $p < .001$), suggesting that participants who felt a greater sense of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact in their jobs were more likely to feel attached to and involved in their organizations.

Regarding the indirect effect of psychological empowerment on the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment, results showed that the bias-corrected confidence interval did not include zero (path ab : $b = .28$, 95% CI = .19 to .39), indicating a significant indirect effect. The direct effect of inclusive leadership on affective organizational commitment, removing the effects of psychological empowerment, was still significant (path c' : $b = .32$, $t = 4.04$, $p < .01$), indicating partial mediation. Inclusive leadership and psychological empowerment explained 40.54% of the variance in affective organizational commitment.

These results indicate that inclusive leadership was positively related to affective organizational commitment and psychological empowerment, psychological empowerment was uniquely related to affective organizational commitment, and inclusive leadership was significantly related to affective organizational commitment after controlling for psychological empowerment. Therefore, employees whose supervisors were open, available, and accessible to hearing new ideas, discussing new opportunities to improve work processes, and consulting on problems, professional

questions, and various requests, were more likely to feel intrinsic task motivation, and subsequently perceive a greater sense of belonging and emotional attachment to their organizations. These overall findings indicate that psychological empowerment was a partial mediator of the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment. Thus, Hypothesis 4 was partially supported.



p < .01, *p < .001

Figure 1. Psychological empowerment as the mediator of the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment.

Table 3

Relationship Between Inclusive Leadership and Affective Organizational Commitment as Mediated by Psychological Empowerment

Variable	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>t</i>	95% CI	
			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Inclusive Leadership—Affective Organizational Commitment (<i>c</i>)	.61 (.08)	7.70***	.45	.76
Inclusive Leadership—Psychological Empowerment (<i>a</i>)	.40 (.05)	7.70***	.30	.50
Psychological Empowerment—Affective Organizational Commitment (<i>b</i>)	.71 (.10)	7.18***	.52	.91
Inclusive Leadership—Affective Organizational Commitment (<i>c'</i>)	.32 (.08)	4.04**	.17	.48
Indirect Effect				
Inclusive Leadership—Psychological Empowerment—Affective Organizational Commitment (<i>ab</i>)	.28 (.05)		.19	.39

Note: $N = 189$. This table shows the path coefficients and indirect effect for the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment as mediated by psychological empowerment. *CI* = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit.

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

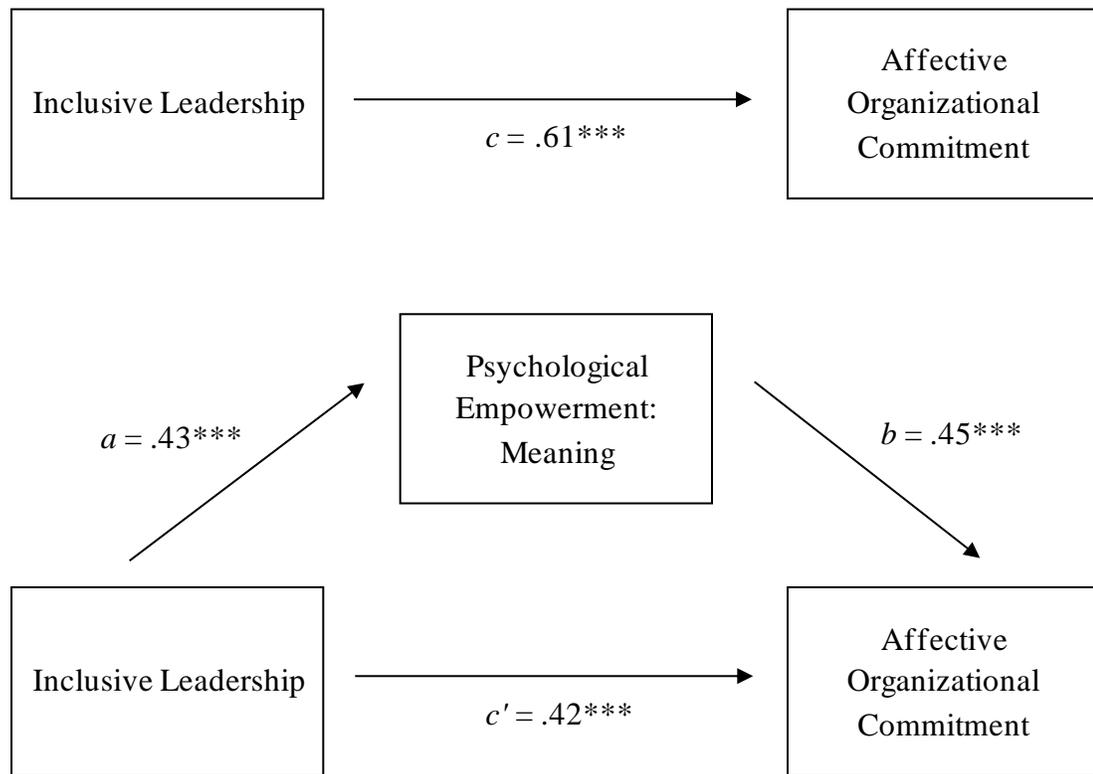
Additional Analyses

As previously noted, Seibert et al. (2011) found that the four dimensions of psychological empowerment (meaning, competence, self-determination, impact) differed among themselves as predictors of organizational commitment. In order to answer the research question of whether the dimensions of psychological empowerment differed in their mediating effects on the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment, I examined each of these dimensions individually and conducted a mediation analysis for each dimension of psychological empowerment.

The first analysis examined the meaning dimension of psychological empowerment as a mediator. Results of the analysis are shown in Figure 2 and the unstandardized coefficients (b), standard errors (SE), t values, and 95% confidence intervals (CI) are listed in Table 4. Inclusive leadership was significantly and positively related to affective organizational commitment (path c : $b = .61, t = 7.70, p < .001$), such that participants whose managers displayed high levels of openness, availability, and accessibility were more likely to feel a sense of emotional attachment to their organizations. Inclusive leadership was significantly related to the meaning dimension of psychological empowerment (path a : $b = .43, t = 4.56, p < .001$), such that participants whose managers were open and attentive to hearing new ideas were more likely to feel a sense of importance and personal meaning in their work. The meaning dimension of psychological empowerment was uniquely related to affective organizational commitment after controlling for inclusive leadership (path b : $b = .45, t = 8.63, p < .001$), suggesting that participants who felt a greater sense of meaning in their work were more

likely to feel emotionally attached to their organizations. Regarding the indirect effect of the meaning dimension of psychological empowerment on the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment, results showed that the bias-corrected confidence interval did not include zero (path ab : $b = .19$, 95% CI = .10 to .30), indicating a significant indirect effect. The direct effect of inclusive leadership on affective organizational commitment, removing the effects of the meaning dimension of psychological empowerment, was still significant (path c' : $b = .42$, $t = 5.89$, $p < .001$), suggesting partial mediation. Inclusive leadership and the meaning dimension of psychological empowerment explained 45.78% of the variance in affective organizational commitment.

These results show that inclusive leadership was positively related to affective organizational commitment and the meaning dimension of psychological empowerment, meaning was uniquely related to affective organizational commitment, and inclusive leadership was significantly related to affective organizational commitment after controlling for meaning. Therefore, employees whose supervisors were open, available, and accessible to hearing new ideas, discussing new opportunities to improve work processes, and consulting on problems, professional questions, and various requests, were more likely to feel a sense of importance and meaning in their work, and subsequently perceive a greater sense of emotional attachment to their organizations. These overall findings indicate that the meaning dimension of psychological empowerment was a partial mediator of the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment.



***p < .001

Figure 2. Meaning as the mediator of the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment.

Table 4

Relationship Between Inclusive Leadership and Affective Organizational Commitment as Mediated by Meaning

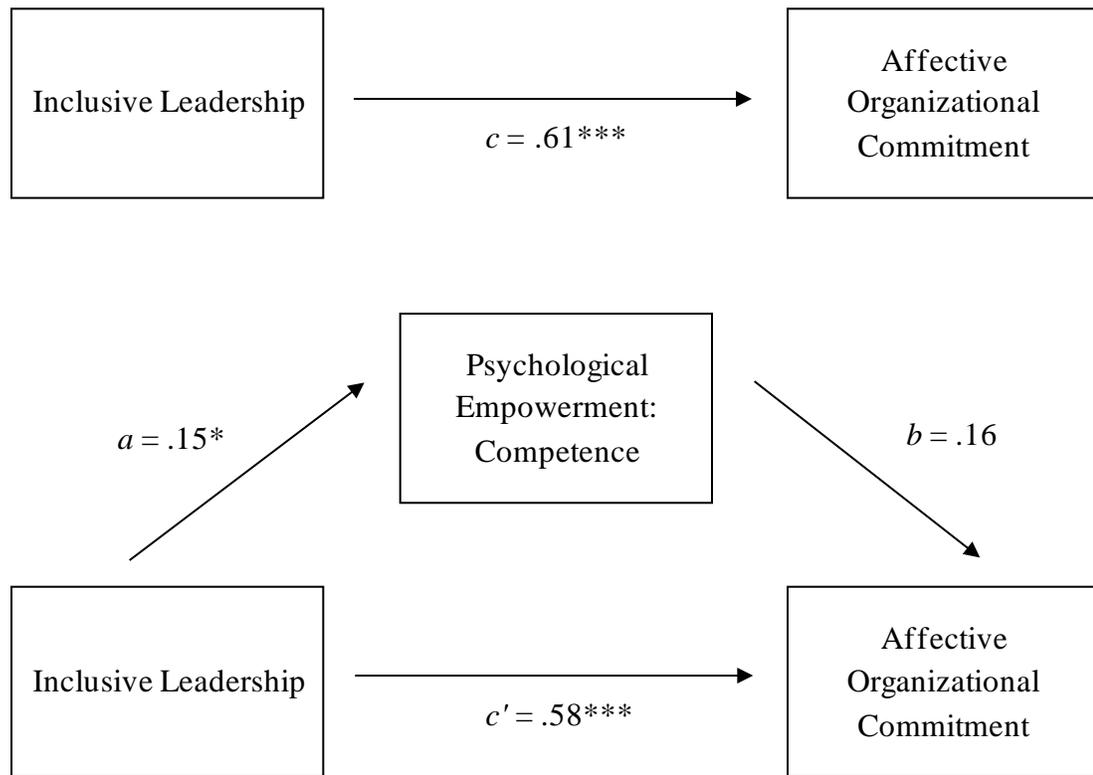
Variable	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>t</i>	95% CI	
			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Inclusive Leadership—Affective Organizational Commitment (<i>c</i>)	.61 (.08)	7.70***	.45	.76
Inclusive Leadership—Psychological Empowerment: Meaning (<i>a</i>)	.43 (.09)	4.56***	.25	.62
Psychological Empowerment: Meaning—Affective Organizational Commitment (<i>b</i>)	.45 (.05)	8.63***	.34	.55
Inclusive Leadership—Affective Organizational Commitment (<i>c'</i>)	.42 (.07)	5.89***	.28	.55
Indirect Effect				
Inclusive Leadership—Psychological Empowerment: Meaning—Affective Organizational Commitment (<i>ab</i>)	.19 (.05)		.10	.30

Note: $N = 189$. This table shows the path coefficients and indirect effect for the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment as mediated by the meaning dimension of psychological empowerment. *CI* = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit.

*** $p < .001$

The second analysis examined the competence dimension of psychological empowerment as a mediator. Results of the analysis are shown in Figure 3 and the unstandardized coefficients (b), standard errors (SE), t values, and 95% confidence intervals (CI) are listed in Table 5. Inclusive leadership was significantly and positively related to affective organizational commitment (path c : $b = .61$, $t = 7.70$, $p < .001$), such that participants whose managers displayed high levels of openness, availability, and accessibility were more likely to feel a sense of emotional attachment to their organizations. Inclusive leadership was significantly related to the competence dimension of psychological empowerment (path a : $b = .15$, $t = 2.35$, $p < .05$), such that participants whose managers were accessible for discussing problems, questions, and requests were more likely to feel confident and self-assured about their abilities to do their jobs. The competence dimension of psychological empowerment was not uniquely related to affective organizational commitment after controlling for inclusive leadership (path b : $b = .16$, $t = 1.82$, $p > .05$). Regarding the indirect effect of the competence dimension of psychological empowerment on the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment, results showed that the bias-corrected confidence interval included zero (path ab : $b = .02$, 95% CI = $-.001$ to $.07$), indicating a nonsignificant indirect effect. The direct effect of inclusive leadership on affective organizational commitment, removing the effects of the competence dimension of psychological empowerment, was still significant (path c' : $b = .58$, $t = 7.33$, $p < .001$). Inclusive leadership and the competence dimension of psychological empowerment explained 25.40% of the variance in affective organizational commitment. These results

indicate that the competence dimension of psychological empowerment did not mediate the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment.



* $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$

Figure 3. Competence as the mediator of the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment.

Table 5

Relationship Between Inclusive Leadership and Affective Organizational Commitment as Mediated by Competence

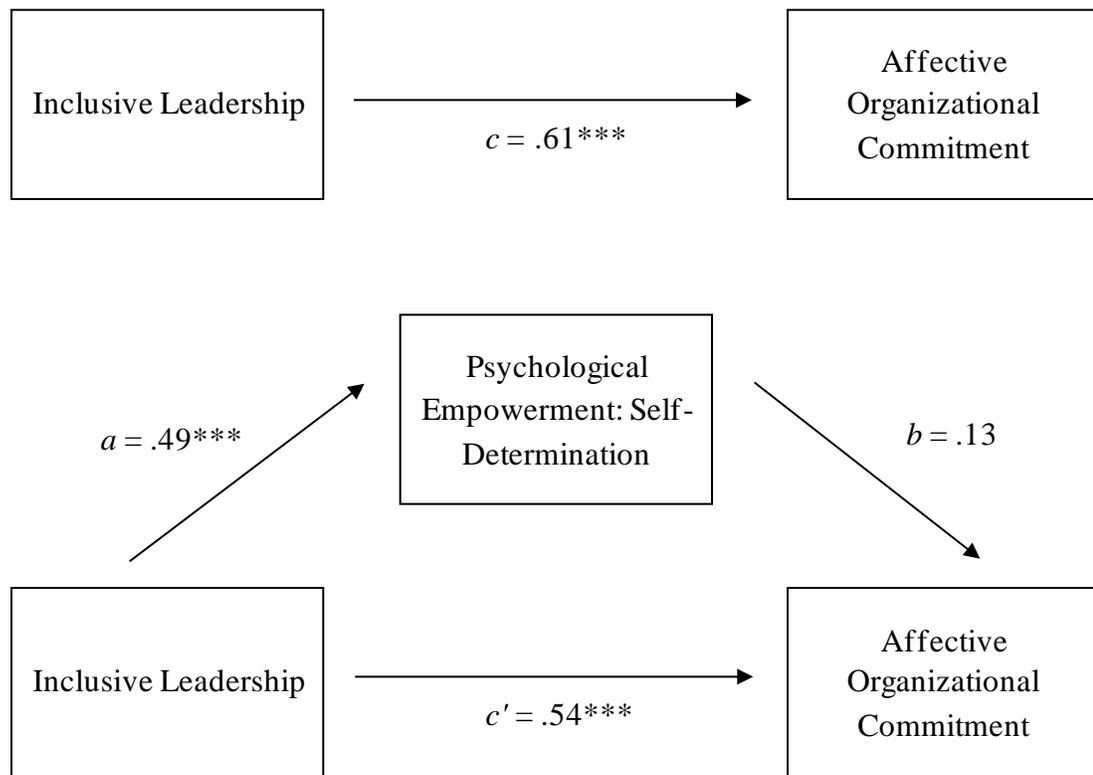
Variable	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>t</i>	95% CI	
			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Inclusive Leadership—Affective Organizational Commitment (<i>c</i>)	.61 (.08)	7.70***	.45	.76
Inclusive Leadership—Psychological Empowerment: Competence (<i>a</i>)	.15 (.06)	2.35*	.02	.28
Psychological Empowerment: Competence—Affective Organizational Commitment (<i>b</i>)	.16 (.09)	1.82	-.01	.34
Inclusive Leadership—Affective Organizational Commitment (<i>c'</i>)	.58 (.08)	7.33***	.43	.74
Indirect Effect				
Inclusive Leadership—Psychological Empowerment: Competence—Affective Organizational Commitment (<i>ab</i>)	.02 (.02)		-.001	.07

Note: $N = 189$. This table shows the path coefficients and indirect effect for the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment as mediated by the competence dimension of psychological empowerment. *CI* = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit.

* $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$

The third analysis examined the self-determination dimension of psychological empowerment as a mediator. Results of the analysis are shown in Figure 4 and the unstandardized coefficients (b), standard errors (SE), t values, and 95% confidence intervals (CI) are listed in Table 6. Inclusive leadership was significantly and positively related to affective organizational commitment (path c : $b = .61$, $t = 7.70$, $p < .001$), such that participants whose managers displayed high levels of openness, availability, and accessibility were more likely to feel a sense of emotional attachment to their organizations. Inclusive leadership was significantly related to the self-determination dimension of psychological empowerment (path a : $b = .49$, $t = 7.14$, $p < .001$), such that participants whose managers were open, available, and accessible to listen to requests and ideas were more likely to perceive a sense of autonomy and independence in their jobs. The self-determination dimension of psychological empowerment was not uniquely related to affective organizational commitment after controlling for inclusive leadership (path b : $b = .13$, $t = 1.55$, $p > .05$). Regarding the indirect effect of the self-determination dimension of psychological empowerment on the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment, results showed that the bias-corrected confidence interval included zero (path ab : $b = .06$, 95% CI = $-.01$ to $.14$), indicating a nonsignificant indirect effect. The direct effect of inclusive leadership on affective organizational commitment, removing the effects of the self-determination dimension of psychological empowerment, was still significant (path c' : $b = .54$, $t = 6.14$, $p < .001$). Inclusive leadership and the self-determination dimension of psychological empowerment explained 25.04% of the variance in affective organizational commitment.

These results show that the self-determination dimension of psychological empowerment did not mediate the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment.



*** $p < .001$

Figure 4. Self-determination as the mediator of the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment.

Table 6

Relationship Between Inclusive Leadership and Affective Organizational Commitment as Mediated by Self-Determination

Variable	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>t</i>	95% CI	
			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Inclusive Leadership—Affective Organizational Commitment (<i>c</i>)	.61 (.08)	7.70***	.45	.76
Inclusive Leadership—Psychological Empowerment: Self-Determination (<i>a</i>)	.49 (.07)	7.14***	.35	.62
Psychological Empowerment: Self-Determination—Affective Organizational Commitment (<i>b</i>)	.13 (.08)	1.55	-.04	.30
Inclusive Leadership—Affective Organizational Commitment (<i>c'</i>)	.54 (.09)	6.14***	.37	.72
Indirect Effect				
Inclusive Leadership—Psychological Empowerment: Self-Determination—Affective Organizational Commitment (<i>ab</i>)	.06 (.04)		-.01	.14

Note: $N = 189$. This table shows the path coefficients and indirect effect for the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment as mediated by the self-determination dimension of psychological empowerment. *CI* = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit.

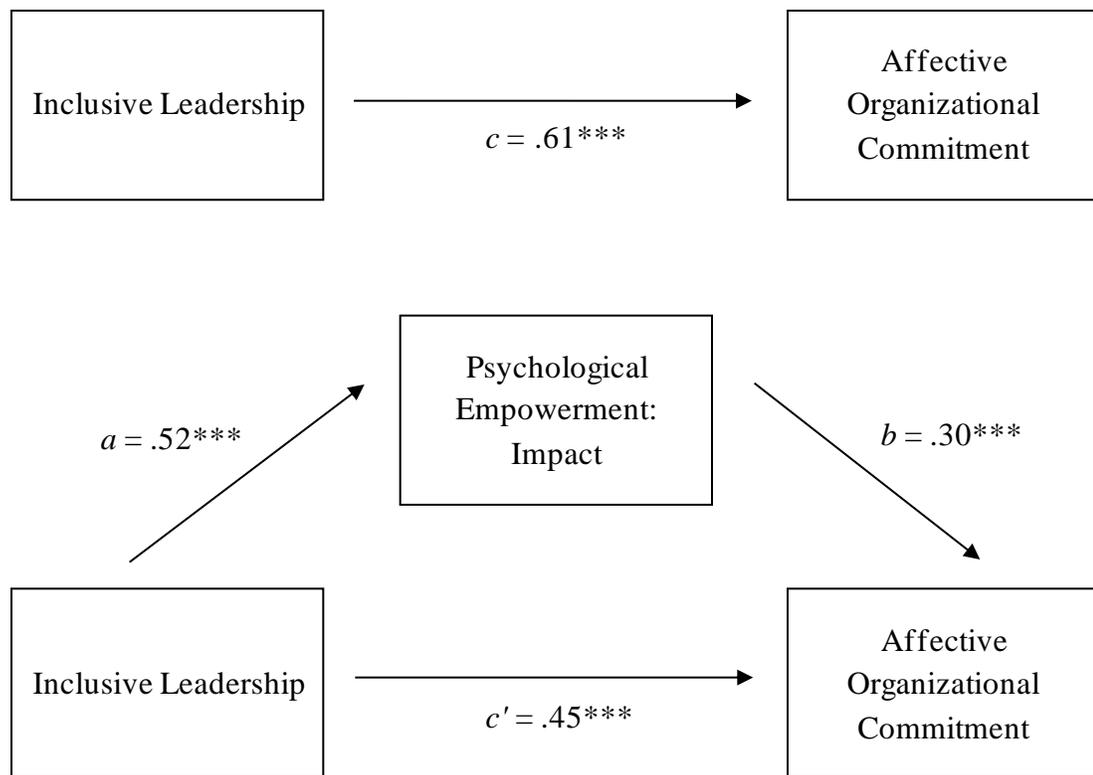
*** $p < .001$

The fourth analysis examined the impact dimension of psychological empowerment as a mediator. Results of the analysis are shown in Figure 5 and the unstandardized coefficients (b), standard errors (SE), t values, and 95% confidence intervals (CI) are listed in Table 7. Inclusive leadership was significantly and positively related to affective organizational commitment (path c : $b = .61, t = 7.70, p < .001$), such that participants whose managers displayed high levels of openness, availability, and accessibility were more likely to feel a sense of emotional attachment to the organization. Inclusive leadership was significantly related to the impact dimension of psychological empowerment (path a : $b = .52, t = 5.93, p < .001$), such that participants whose managers were open, available, and accessible to hearing new ideas and requests were more likely to feel a great deal of control and influence in their departments. The impact dimension of psychological empowerment was uniquely related to affective organizational commitment after controlling for inclusive leadership (path b : $b = .30, t = 4.85, p < .001$), suggesting that participants who believed that they had a large impact in their departments were more likely to feel a sense of emotional attachment to their organizations. Regarding the indirect effect of the impact dimension of psychological empowerment on the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment, results showed that the bias-corrected confidence interval did not include zero (path ab : $b = .16, 95\% \text{ CI} = .08 \text{ to } .25$), indicating a significant indirect effect. The direct effect of inclusive leadership on affective organizational commitment, removing the effects of the impact dimension of psychological empowerment, was still significant (path c' : $b = .45, t = 5.55, p < .001$), suggesting partial

mediation. Inclusive leadership and the impact dimension of psychological empowerment explained 32.60% of the variance in affective organizational commitment.

These results indicate that inclusive leadership was positively related to affective organizational commitment and the impact dimension of psychological empowerment, impact was uniquely related to affective organizational commitment, and inclusive leadership was significantly related to affective organizational commitment after controlling for impact. Therefore, employees whose supervisors were open, available, and accessible to hearing new ideas, discussing new opportunities to improve work processes, and consulting on problems, professional questions, and various requests, were more likely to feel a sense of impact, control, and influence in their departments, and subsequently perceive a greater sense of emotional attachment to their organizations. These findings show that the impact dimension of psychological empowerment was a partial mediator of the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment.

Overall, results of the additional mediation analyses indicate that the meaning and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment were responsible for the partial mediation of the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment.



*** $p < .001$

Figure 5. Impact as the mediator of the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment.

Table 7

Relationship Between Inclusive Leadership and Affective Organizational Commitment as Mediated by Impact

Variable	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>t</i>	95% CI	
			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Inclusive Leadership—Affective Organizational Commitment (<i>c</i>)	.61 (.08)	7.70***	.45	.76
Inclusive Leadership—Psychological Empowerment: Impact (<i>a</i>)	.52 (.09)	5.93***	.35	.69
Psychological Empowerment: Impact—Affective Organizational Commitment (<i>b</i>)	.30 (.06)	4.85***	.18	.42
Inclusive Leadership—Affective Organizational Commitment (<i>c'</i>)	.45 (.08)	5.55***	.29	.61
Indirect Effect				
Inclusive Leadership—Psychological Empowerment: Impact—Affective Organizational Commitment (<i>ab</i>)	.16 (.04)		.08	.25

Note: $N = 189$. This table shows the path coefficients and indirect effect for the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment as mediated by the impact dimension of psychological empowerment. *CI* = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit.

*** $p < .001$

Discussion

Fostering inclusion in the workplace is critical to ensuring a positive environment for diverse individuals. Leadership is one of the key contextual factors that promotes an inclusive climate. Over the past decade, inclusive leadership has garnered attention as a means to include others in discussions and decisions in which their voices and perspectives might otherwise be absent (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). Research on inclusive leadership has shown its positive outcomes on employees, such as increased work engagement, innovative work behaviors, and team performance (Hirak et al., 2012; Javed et al., 2019; Mitchell et al., 2015). However, little is known regarding the ability of inclusive leadership to affect a wider range of outcomes, such as organizational commitment. Furthermore, researchers have called for the need to examine various mediating mechanisms between inclusive leadership and work outcomes in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of how this specific leadership style is related to work outcomes (Choi et al., 2015; Javed et al., 2017).

Given the call to explore potential mediators and outcomes of inclusive leadership, the purpose of this study was to examine the underlying process through which inclusive leadership is related to employees' affective organizational commitment by focusing on psychological empowerment as a mediator. I also explored which of the four dimensions of psychological empowerment (meaning, competence, self-determination, impact) most strongly mediate the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment.

Summary of Findings

Hypothesis 1 stated that inclusive leadership would be positively related to affective organizational commitment. The results supported this hypothesis because inclusive leadership was significantly related to affective organizational commitment. This indicates that those whose managers displayed greater levels of inclusive leadership through being open, available, and accessible to them were more likely to feel an attachment to, identification with, and involvement in their organizations. These results are consistent with the one other study to date that has explored and found a positive relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment (Choi et al., 2015).

One reason for the finding that inclusive leadership was positively related to affective organizational commitment may be due to a social exchange perspective where the positive environment inclusive leaders create invokes the norm of reciprocity in employees and produces a felt obligation to stay committed to the organization in order to continue the positive exchange relationship (Chen & Tang, 2018; Eisenberger et al., 2001). That is, if an employee feels that he or she has a supportive and inclusive manager, this individual is likely to reciprocate in the form of a positive attitude (i.e., affective organizational commitment) back to the manager and organization.

Hypothesis 2 stated that inclusive leadership would be positively related to employee psychological empowerment. The results supported this hypothesis, indicating that employees whose managers displayed greater levels of inclusive leadership were more likely to feel a sense of intrinsic task motivation at work. This finding is consistent with

Javed et al. (2019) who also found a positive relationship between inclusive leadership and psychological empowerment.

There are several explanations for the positive relationship between inclusive leadership and psychological empowerment. First, through being open to discussing work goals and new ways to achieve these goals, and an ongoing encouragement to access them on emerging issues, inclusive leaders can help employees feel a sense of importance and meaning in their work. Second, inclusive leaders who readily listen to employee requests and are available for consultation on problems signal to employees that they trust and care about what employees have to say, thus positively influencing their feelings of competence. Third, inclusive leaders create positive relationships with their employees that signal an open two-way communication channel and opportunities for shared decision-making. In effect, employees feel a sense of autonomy and opportunity for independence in how they do their jobs, thus increasing their levels of self-determination. Finally, inclusive leaders are attentive to hearing ideas and opportunities to improve work processes and are readily available to answer questions and provide feedback. Because of this openness and transparency, employees are more easily able to see the impact that their work has in their departments.

Hypothesis 3 stated that employee psychological empowerment would be positively related to affective organizational commitment. Results showed that psychological empowerment was positively related to affective organizational commitment, such that employees who felt their work was meaningful and their actions made a difference were more likely to feel an emotional attachment to their organizations. Therefore, Hypothesis

3 was supported. This finding is consistent with the large body of research that has examined the positive relationship between psychological empowerment and affective organizational commitment (Maynard et al., 2012; Seibert et al., 2011).

As previous research has demonstrated, one reason for the positive relationship between psychological empowerment and affective organizational commitment is that employees who feel a sense of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact are better able to express their values and interests through their work and thus identify these shared values and goals with their organizations (Seibert et al., 2011). Furthermore, if employees intuitively sense that their organizations provide them with meaningful work that aligns with their personal values, allow them the opportunity to build their levels of competence and self-determination, and enable them to make a positive impact, they will be more likely to reciprocate with greater loyalty and emotional attachment to their organizations (Liden et al., 2000).

Hypothesis 4 stated that employee psychological empowerment would mediate the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment. The results partially supported the hypothesis because the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment was only partially mediated by psychological empowerment. These results indicate that employees whose managers displayed high levels of inclusive leadership through being open, available, and accessible to them showed greater levels of intrinsic task motivation, which in turn, increased their levels of affective organizational commitment. Furthermore, a direct relationship was found between inclusive leadership and affective organizational

commitment after controlling for psychological empowerment, such that employees whose managers were open, available, and accessible were more likely to feel a sense of emotional attachment to their organizations, irrespective of their levels of psychological empowerment.

One reason that psychological empowerment acted as a mediator between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment may be that employees who have positive relationships with their managers, and whose managers provide them with meaningful opportunities to speak up and voice their thoughts, ideas, and opinions, are more likely to experience greater levels of meaning and impact in their work. Because of these positive cognitions brought on by the relationships they have with their managers, employees will reciprocate with increased affective commitment toward their organizations.

In order to answer the research question of whether the dimensions of psychological empowerment differed in their mediating effects on the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment, I examined each of these dimensions individually and conducted a mediation analysis for each dimension of psychological empowerment. Results of these additional analyses showed that only the meaning and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment partially mediated the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment; neither the competence nor self-determination dimensions mediated the relationship.

A possible explanation for the finding of partial mediation in the cases of meaning and impact is that the presence of inclusive leadership, through the positive relationships

managers create with their employees via open and encouraging communication and support, signals to employees that the organization's values align with their own values. Furthermore, managers who are attentive and open to discussing opportunities to improve work processes, desired goals, and new ways to achieve them, may help employees internalize the importance of their contributions to and impact on the organization. This sense of meaning and impact may then be reciprocated by employees through increasing their levels of attachment to, identification with, and involvement in their organizations.

Competence, or a person's confidence in his or her ability to do the job, self-assurance about personal capabilities to perform work activities, and a sense of mastery regarding the skills required for the job, was not found to mediate the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment. This may be due to the fact that competence is more personal in nature and thus may be present, regardless of whether the manager is inclusive or not. Therefore, employees may not translate a sense of competence to their desire to stay affectively committed to their organization as they perceive the sense of competence to be of their own volition, not influenced by their immediate manager.

The finding that self-determination – a person's sense of autonomy, ability to unilaterally decide how to do his or her work, and opportunity for independence and freedom in getting the job done – did not mediate the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment was surprising, as the ability to have independence and autonomy is naturally affected by supervisory relations (Siegall & Gardner, 2000). Although the current study found significant and positive relationships

between inclusive leadership and self-determination, and self-determination and affective organizational commitment, it may be the case that respondents did not consciously perceive their managers to be the reason for a sense of autonomy in how to do their jobs, and thus did not see a need to reciprocate back to the organizations in the form of affective organizational commitment. Another possibility for the lack of mediation in the case of self-determination is that this study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time in which many employees were forced to work remotely. Due to these altered work arrangements, employees may have had no other choice than to independently decide how to go about doing their work, which could explain why self-determination did not mediate the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment. In other words, self-determination might have been present in this study due to necessity of the remote work environment rather than due to viewing the organization positively through having an inclusive leader, thus participants did not perceive an emotional attachment to the organization through feelings of self-determination.

Theoretical Implications

Inclusive leadership has gained increased research attention over the past decade given its importance in affecting positive work outcomes (Hirak et al., 2012; Javed et al., 2019; Mitchell et al., 2015). Given the positive findings to date, as well as the focus on enabling diversity and inclusion in the workplace, researchers have suggested that additional research is needed to examine the relationship inclusive leadership has with other important mediators and work outcomes (Randel et al., 2018).

This study extends the literature on inclusive leadership in several ways. The direct relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment has received minimal attention to date, with the exception of research by Choi et al. (2015) who found initial support among employees of Vietnamese companies. Consistent with their findings, the results of the present study provide further support for the direct relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment in the context of employees based in the United States. These results indicate that employees whose managers are open, available, and accessible for discussion on ideas, problems, and questions are more likely to show emotional attachment to their organizations.

The current study also extends the nascent literature on the relationship between inclusive leadership and psychological empowerment (Javed et al., 2019). The results of the current study show that inclusive leadership was positively related to psychological empowerment such that employees who felt their managers were open and available to hearing new ideas and who actively listened to what they had to say were more likely to feel a sense of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact in their work.

This is the first study to date that assessed the indirect relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment through the mediating mechanism of psychological empowerment. The results indicated partial mediation, such that employees whose managers exhibited inclusive leadership traits of openness, availability, and accessibility were more likely to perceive a sense of intrinsic task motivation, which prompted them to feel a greater sense of emotional attachment to and identification with their organizations.

On a final note, I found that the meaning and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment most strongly mediated the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment. Seibert et al. (2011) also found that meaning and impact were stronger predictors of organizational commitment than competence and self-determination. These results provide a more nuanced understanding of the psychological empowerment construct and its relationship with inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment. Spreitzer (1995) originally modeled psychological empowerment as a unitary second-order construct rather than as four distinct constructs. However, the results of the present study and of Seibert et al. (2011) demonstrate the value in exploring each of the empowerment dimensions individually, as each dimension may interact differentially in terms of their relationships with various antecedent and outcome variables.

Practical Implications

The results of the present study offer several practical implications for organizations looking to increase their levels of inclusion through a deeper understanding of the benefits of inclusive leadership. First, the findings demonstrate that managers who display inclusive leadership can directly promote a more affectively committed workforce. This is important for organizations given the impact affective organizational commitment has on positive outcomes such as employee retention (Khatri, Fern, & Budhwar, 2001; Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian, 1974). As the present study demonstrates, managers can increase employees' affective organizational commitment indirectly through increasing their levels of psychological empowerment.

Findings from the present study suggest that it is critical for organizations to conceptualize psychological empowerment as a cognitive state made up of four distinct dimensions (Siegall & Gardner, 2000). As the present study shows, it may be particularly important for organizations to create the conditions in which employees feel a sense of meaning and impact in their work, such as ensuring managers from all levels openly communicate the organization's mission and direction, and highlight to employees how their work fits into this direction.

Another practical implication of this study is a better understanding of how managers can increase their levels of inclusive leadership. As this study demonstrated, management development programs can benefit from increasing managers' levels of openness, availability, and accessibility among their employees. Specifically, managers can be trained on the importance of encouraging and attentively listening to new ideas and opportunities to improve work processes from each of their employees, particularly in decision-making conversations. Managers should also cultivate an open-door policy among the team, in which they signal their ongoing presence through being easily accessible and available for discussion on problems, ideas, questions, and feedback. Thus, the benefits of greater diversity in organizations may be more fully realized through inclusive leaders who encourage active participation from all members of the team.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research

This study has several strengths. First, this is one of the first studies to look at the relationships between inclusive leadership and both psychological empowerment and

affective organizational commitment. Additionally, this is the first study to examine the mediating role of psychological empowerment in the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment. The present study showed that psychological empowerment, and specifically the meaning and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment, partially mediated the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment. Because the competence and self-determination dimensions of psychological empowerment were not found to mediate the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment, future research may explore other outcome variables such as employee engagement or satisfaction. Additionally, future research could explore the contextual factors that may affect the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee outcomes. For example, Zhu and Bao (2017) noted that the role of organizational structure has been largely ignored in leadership research. A deeper understanding of how inclusive leadership functions within different organizational structures can provide more insight into the boundary conditions of inclusive leadership.

Another strength of this study is that participants were drawn from a wide range of industries and composed of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds. Therefore, the results of the present study may be generalizable across various industries, as well as demographically diverse individuals.

Despite the strengths of this study, there are a number of limitations. First, I used self-reported measures to test the hypotheses, therefore, the relationships among the studied variables may have been affected by common method bias. Specifically,

participants may have responded to items in more socially desirable ways, such as their levels of competence. Additionally, this study was based on a cross-sectional design and thus correlational in nature, which means causality among the studied variables cannot be determined. Future research that examines the longitudinal effects of inclusive leadership across different points in time will allow for greater confidence in causal relationships among the studied variables and may also reduce common method bias.

Another weakness of the present study is that the sample was mainly composed of individuals between the ages of 25 and 34 years old, and those with relatively short tenure. This was likely due to the use of my personal networks as a means of gathering data. Therefore, I cannot make confident claims about the generalizability of findings as it relates to age and tenure. Future research might examine the impact of inclusive leadership on psychological empowerment and affective organizational commitment using a sample that includes participants from a wider range of age and tenure groups.

A final weakness of this study is that data were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time when standard work arrangements have been significantly impacted and the fear of furloughs and layoffs run high. Given one of the core aspects of inclusive leadership is being readily accessible and available to employees, the results of this study may have been negatively impacted by the telework setup many employers were forced to implement, in which managers and employees were working remotely and unable to interact in person. Additionally, with many employees working remotely, they may have had no other choice than to independently decide how to go about doing their work, which could explain why self-determination did not mediate the relationship between

inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment. Future research should re-examine the effects of inclusive leadership on psychological empowerment and affective organizational commitment once the pandemic is over and individuals are able to return to their standard work arrangements.

Conclusion

The current study examined the mediating role of psychological empowerment on the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment. The results of this research demonstrated that inclusive leadership was positively related to psychological empowerment and affective organizational commitment. Additionally, psychological empowerment was found to partially mediate the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment, particularly through the dimensions of meaning and impact; the dimensions of competence and self-determination did not mediate the relationship between inclusive leadership and affective organizational commitment. Given the positive relationships found in this study, it is important to continue to explore the benefits of inclusive leadership in organizations as a way to create a truly inclusive, positive environment for all.

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Appendix

Demographic Questions

What is your current employment status?

- Employed full-time (40 or more hours per week)
- Employed part-time (up to 39 hours per week)
- Unemployed
- Retired

How long have you been employed at your current company?

- Less than 3 months
- 3 months - 2 years
- 3 years - 5 years
- 6 years - 8 years
- 9 years - 11 years
- 12 years - 14 years
- 15+ years

How long have you worked with your current manager or supervisor?

- Less than 3 months
- 3 months - 2 years
- 3 years - 5 years
- 6 years - 8 years
- 9 years - 11 years
- 12 years - 14 years
- 15+ years

Which of the following best describes the industry in which you work?

- Computer Software / Electronics
- Education
- Engineering / Architecture
- Entertainment, Media, Recreation
- Finance / Insurance
- Food Services
- Healthcare / Pharmaceutical
- Human Resources
- Legal
- Manufacturing
- Real Estate
- Sales / Retail

- Other (please specify): _____

What is your age?

- 18 - 24 years old
- 25 - 34 years old
- 35 - 44 years old
- 45 - 54 years old
- 55 - 64 years old
- 65 years or older

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer to self-describe: _____
- Prefer not to respond

Which racial/ethnic categories best describe you? Select all that apply.

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic/Latinx
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Other (please specify): _____
- Prefer not to respond

Scale Items

Inclusive Leadership

My manager is open to hearing new ideas.

My manager is attentive to new opportunities to improve work processes.

My manager is open to discuss the desired goals and new ways to achieve them.

My manager is available for consultation on problems.

My manager is an ongoing ‘presence’ in this team—someone who is readily available.

My manager is available for professional questions I would like to consult with him/her.

My manager is ready to listen to my requests.

My manager encourages me to access him/her on emerging issues.

My manager is accessible for discussing emerging problems.

Psychological Empowerment

The work I do is very important to me.

My job activities are personally meaningful to me.

The work I do is meaningful to me.

I am confident about my ability to do my job.

I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities.

I have mastered the skills necessary for my job.

I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job.

I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work.

I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my job.

My impact on what happens in my department is large.

I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department.

I have significant influence over what happens in my department.

Affective Organizational Commitment

I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.

I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.

I do not feel a strong sense of "belonging" to my organization. (R)

I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization. (R)

I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization. (R)

This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.