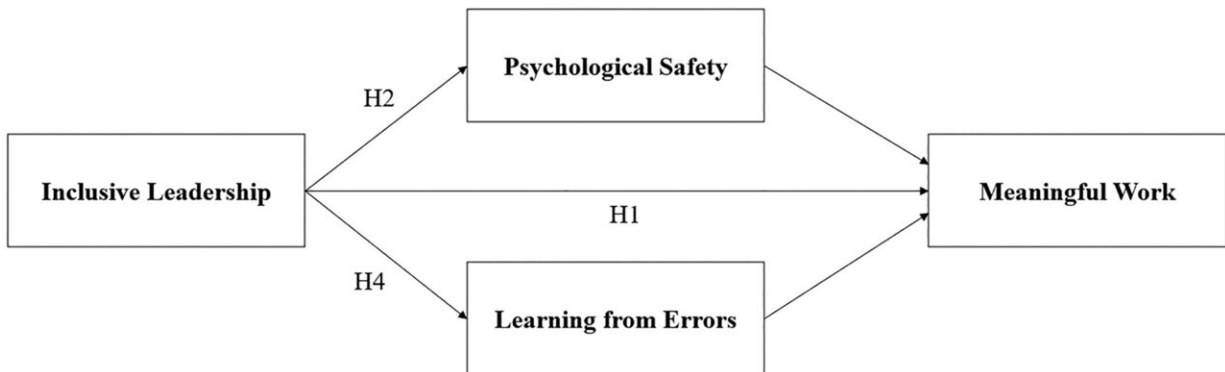


# Inclusive leadership could be a game-changer for business

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H3: The positive relationship between inclusive leadership and meaningful work is mediated by psychological safety.

H5: The positive relationship between inclusive leadership and meaningful work is mediated by employees' learning from errors.

Hypothesized model. Credit: *Human Resource Development Quarterly* (2023). DOI: 10.1002/hrdq.21512

Employee retention is a key focus for corporations globally, and new research from Edith Cowan University (ECU) has found that leadership style could have a noticeable impact on an employee's working experience.

The study by ECU researchers Dr. Azadeh Shafaei and Dr. Mehran Nejati found that inclusive leaders are crucial in organizations to create

conditions for employees to experience meaningful work.

"Inclusive leadership is not just about embracing diversity. It is the art of weaving an extraordinarily rich tapestry of talents, ideals, and perspectives into the very fabric of organizational success. Inclusive leaders focus on employees' need for belongingness and uniqueness and provide a psychologically safe environment that fosters creativity," Dr. Shafaei said.

"This is unique because, as humans, we have the need for feeling that we belong to our work group, our organization and, at the same time, we really want to be recognized and valued for what we can bring to the table.

"Inclusive leaders shape [organizational culture](#) and help employees to learn the expected behaviors relevant to the culture and its underlying values. Inclusive leaders also cultivate high-quality relationships in the workplace based on trust that can foster collaboration and cooperation among employees," Dr. Shafaei explained.

"This leadership style enhances employees' autonomy, signals that they are valued individuals who can make unbiased decisions, provides them with [emotional support](#) and increased trustworthiness, and gives them the opportunity to voice their opinions, which are essential in creating meaning-making capabilities, and can lead to experiencing meaningfulness at work by employees."

Research revealed that work meaningfulness is positively related to a wide range of employee and organizational outcomes, such as work and [life satisfaction](#), engagement, psychological well-being, work motivation, [career development](#), creativity, positive work behavior, in-role and extra-role performance, and organizational commitment.

Work meaningfulness can bring about several positive outcomes, including [job satisfaction](#), better performance, and greater motivation.

"Inclusive leadership refers to a [leadership style](#) that invites and appreciates contributions from followers by demonstrating openness, flexibility, and availability, which can create a psychologically safe environment."

"Such a psychologically safe environment helps employees share their unique perspectives, discuss differences, and practice problem-solving. Also, inclusive leaders promote employees' uniqueness and sense of belongingness to the organization, the two crucial factors in creating a psychologically safe environment where employees can be themselves."

"Moreover, inclusive leaders welcome contributions from diverse team members and ensure that employees have access to organizational resources. Through demonstrating availability, flexibility, and openness, inclusive leaders provide help and support to employees to solve problems and make them believe that mistakes are not criticized but rather are opportunities to learn from," said Dr. Shafaei.

She noted that when leaders treat staff with respect and dignity and value their contributions, they can create positive job attributes that make employees perceive that their workplace promotes experimentation, open discussion, and learning from errors. Working in such a supportive environment created by inclusive leaders could foster greater meaningful work for employees.

Dr. Shafaei noted that inclusive leadership from upper management was crucial to create a trickle-down effect for line managers.

"By demonstrating all the inclusive behaviors or creating that trusting relationship at the top end of leadership, and communicating that to

other levels of employees, leaders will set an example for others on how to behave."

"If a leader can help an employee to shape a meaningful work experience for us, employees will be more committed to coming to work, and it will have a more positive effect in enhancing the intrinsic motivation within employees. This will definitely have an impact on keeping employees happy and reducing the number of turnovers in an organization."

The findings are [published](#) in the journal *Human Resource Development Quarterly*.

**More information:** Azadeh Shafaei et al, Creating meaningful work for employees: The role of inclusive leadership, *Human Resource Development Quarterly* (2023). [DOI: 10.1002/hrdq.21512](https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.21512)

Provided by Edith Cowan University

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