

## The Mediating Role of Inclusive Leadership in The Effect of Work Engagement on Innovative Work Behavior

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### Abstract

*One of the important elements in present business life is the qualified human resources of the enterprises. Employees who make positive contribute to organizational activities, adopt organizational culture, dedicate themselves to their organization, engage their work and organization, and have a high level of work engagement, provide important advantages to enterprises. In a global competitive environment, in terms of achieving the competitive advantage provided by innovation activities to the enterprises, the contribution of employees to innovation processes is regarded as an important element. Interactions of employees with inclusive leaders provide convenience in creating the resources needed by the employees and in innovative activities as being role models to the employees. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to examine the mediating effect of inclusive leadership in the relationship between work engagement and innovative work behaviour. For this purpose, data were collected from 206 participants working in food production companies in Gaziantep province. In the analysis of data, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyzes were conducted, correlations between variables were determined and goodness of fit tests and regression analysis of the model were performed with structural equation modelling. As a result of the analysis, it has been found that work engagement positively and significantly affects the inclusive leadership and innovative work behaviour. It was also found that inclusive leadership positively and significantly affects the innovative work behavior. As a result of mediating analysis, it was found that inclusive leadership has a mediating role in the relationship between the work engagement and innovative work behavior.*

**Keywords:** Work engagement, inclusive leadership, innovative work behaviour

## İşe Adanmışlığın Yenilikçi İş Davranışı Üzerindeki Etkisinde Kapsayıcı Liderliğin Aracılık Rolü

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### Öz

Günümüz çalışma hayatında önemli unsurlardan birisi de işletmelerin sahip oldukları kalifiye insan kaynağıdır. Örgütsel faaliyetlere olumlu katkıda bulunan, örgütsel kültürü benimseyen, kendisini örgütüne adayan, işine ve örgütüne bağlılık gösteren işe adanmışlık düzeyi yüksek olan çalışanlar işletmelere önemli avantajlar sağlamaktadırlar. Küresel rekabet ortamında yenilikçilik faaliyetlerin işletmelere sağlamış olduğu rekabet avantajını elde etmede de çalışanların yenilik süreçlerine katkıda bulunmaları önemli bir unsur olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Çalışanların kapsayıcı liderler ile olan etkileşimleri ise çalışanların ihtiyaç duydukları kaynakların yaratılmasında ve çalışanlara rol model olarak onların yenilik faaliyetlerinde bulunmalarını kolaylaştırmaktadır. Bu nedenle bu çalışmanın temel amacı işe adanmışlık ile yenilikçi iş davranışı arasındaki ilişkide kapsayıcı liderliğin aracılık etkisini incelemektir. Bu amaçla Gaziantep ilindeki gıda üretim firmalarında çalışan 206 katılımcıdan anket aracılığı ile veri toplanmıştır. Verilerin analizinde keşfedici ve doğrulayıcı faktör analizleri yapılmış, değişkenler arası korelasyonlar tespit edilmiş ve yapısal eşitlik modeli ile modelin uyum iyiliği testleri ve regresyon analizi yapılmıştır. Yapılan analizler neticesinde işe adanmışlığın kapsayıcı liderliği ve yenilikçi iş davranışını pozitif yönde anlamlı olarak etkilediği tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca kapsayıcı liderliğinde yenilikçi iş davranışını pozitif yönde anlamlı olarak etkilediği tespit edilmiştir. Aracılık analizi neticesinde ise kapsayıcı liderliğin işe adanmışlık ile yenilikçi iş davranışı arasındaki ilişkide aracılık rolü olduğu tespit edilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İşe adanmışlık, kapsayıcı liderlik, yenilikçi iş davranışı

## Introduction

Considering the contributions of employees, who are the most important capital of enterprises, to the survival of enterprises in a global competitive environment, the competitive advantage provided by the employees to the enterprises is an undeniable fact (Mert vd., 2019; Kara, 2019) From this fact, in order to benefit from such an important resource, enterprises need to invest in their employees and employees need to dedicate themselves to their work.

How much the employees pay attention to their work and how much they devote themselves to their work, the nature of their relationship with their work and colleagues is explained by work engagement (Kahn, 1990). Work engagement has positive results in terms of both the individual and the organization. In the literature, there are positive results of work engagement for both the individual and the organization. When the literature is examined, it is seen that employees with high level of work engagement are the ones who create their own resources and happy ones. In addition, employees with high level of work engagement show a higher level of performance than the employees without work engagement by means of their experienced positive emotions with their strong belief in their knowledge and abilities, and they experience higher levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Özkalp and Meydan, 2015; Özyılmaz and Süner, 2015).

Inclusive leadership is an important concept in creating positive resources that employees have. Inclusive leaders are like driving forces behind their employees to encourage them to contribute to their work. Positive perception of the inclusive leaders' contribution to resources of employees is an important factor in further engaging employees in their roles and in their responses to their organizations (Choi et al., 2015).

This positive effect of attitudes and behaviors of employees with work engagement on organizational outcomes constitutes the starting point of this research. In this study, the relationship between work engagement, inclusive leadership and innovative work behavior is examined. In this respect, relations between the concepts were explained and the study hypotheses were tested by field research.

## Relationships Between Variables and Developing of Hypothesis

The concept of engagement is often defined as being decisive in a task or purpose in the human-oriented and positive organizational behavior area that contributes to the improvement of workplace performance, focusing on that goal (Soares and Mosquera, 2019; Büyükbeşe and Gökaslan, 2018). Work engagement (WE), which is also expressed in terms in the literature such as sticking to work, involvement in work, attachment to work and dedication to work, according to Kahn (1990, p.694), it is defined as sticking of organization members themselves to their work physically, cognitively and emotionally while performing their roles during their tasks.

Work engagement, which is generally considered to be the employee's interest and involvement in his/her work, refers to the identification of employees with their jobs and the self-expression of employees through their works. Dedicating themselves to their works, employee's expressing themselves through their works leads to a significant increase in their work performance, too (Barkhuizen and Rothmann, 2006).

Inclusive leadership is defined as "leaders who show openness, availability and accessibility in their interactions with followers" (Carmeli et al. 2010, p.250). On the basis of the relationship between work engagement and inclusive leadership, which is explained through social change theory, there is high level of work engagement of employees in case of meeting their needs through their leaders (Garg and Dhar, 2017; Choi et al., 2015). Employees who experience a high-quality interaction with their leaders feel themselves psychologically safe. According to Garg and Dhar (2017), experiencing psychological feeling of trust increases the level of vigor that constitutes work engagement. Therefore, employees who have a high level of quality interaction with their leaders, are more willing to recompense the contributions of leaders to them by reciprocity norm. For this reason, the quality of the interaction between employees and leaders increases the work engagement. In addition, in their study, Wang et al. (2019) stated that there is a positive relationship between work engagement and innovative work behavior. When employees engage in innovative activities in their workplaces, they receive positive responses from their managers and colleagues. The positive mood of the employees for

their work enables them to adapt more to their work. In this way, employees who are more willing in their works will be more willing to involve in innovative work processes (Choi et al., 2015).

According to Choi et al. (2015), inclusive leaders are successful in creating useful resources for employees. In addition, inclusive leaders encourage the employees more to contribute to the organization. Therefore, the positive perception of the created resources for the employees enables them to engage more in their roles, and in this way, employees become more willing to recompense by dedication their cognitive, emotional and physical resources to the institution. In studies in the literature on the relationship between work engagement and inclusive leadership, it is seen that there is positive and significant relationship between work engagement and inclusive leadership (Wang et al., 2019; Choi et al., 2015).

When the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative work behavior is examined, inclusive leaders seem to be able to promote innovative work behaviors of employees in various ways. Inclusive leaders can increase motivation of their employees in involvement of them in innovation processes, can boost their energy and can become role models for them (Qi et al., 2019). In the literature, in the studies carried out between the inclusive leadership and innovative work behavior, it is seen that inclusive leadership positively affects innovative behavior (Wang et al., 2019; Choi et al., 2015)

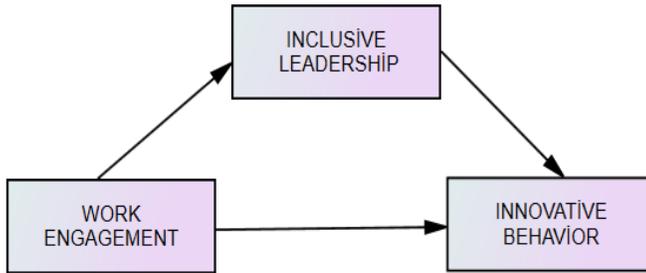
In the light of the studies and results in the literature on the relationship between work engagement, inclusive leadership and innovative work behavior, the following hypotheses were developed:

- H1. Work engagement positively and significantly affects the inclusive leadership.
- H2. Work engagement positively and significantly affects the innovative work behavior.
- H3. Inclusive leadership positively and significantly affects the innovative work behavior.
- H4. Inclusive leadership has a mediating role in the relationship between work engagement and innovative work behavior.

## Method

In this study, which aims to determine the mediating role of inclusive leadership in the effect of work engagement on innovative work behavior, firstly, information about samples and scales is given. After that, analyses of the model which formed in the light of the data obtained from the sample were performed. In this context, factor analyzes were performed, then correlations between variables were determined, and structural equation modelling related to the current model and the goodness of fit of the model were tested. While the goodness of fit tests was conducted, regression analysis results and hypothesis test results were also presented.

Within the scope of the research, in order to reveal the relationships between the variables, the model shown in Figure 1 was created:



*Figure 1. Research Model*

## *Population and Sample*

The population of this research consists of food production firms in Gaziantep. Simple random sampling method was used to determine the sample. Due to time and cost constraints, it was planned to conduct surveys with 250 people among six randomly selected food factory employees with R&D centers. 32 of the questionnaires were not answered and 12 of

them were incomplete. For this reason, the sample of the study was determined as 206. Of the participants, 32 were female and 174 were male. 73 of the participants were in the age range of 18-25 years old, 101 of them between 26-40 years and 32 of them in the age range of 41 and over. When the educational status of the participants is examined, 29 of them elementary school graduate, 80 of them high-school graduate, 49 of them associate's degree graduate, 33 of them graduate and 15 of them postgraduate. 140 of the participants are workers, 42 are chief-foreman, 10 are engineers and 14 are experts. 44 of the participants have 0-5 years' experience, 107 have 6-10 years' experience and 55 have 11 years and more experience working in the company.

### *Scales of Research*

**Work Engagement Scale:** In the study, in order to measure work engagement of employees, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES 17) which was developed by Schaufeli et al (2006) and validated by Eryılmaz and Doğa (2012) for Turkish version was used. The scale consists of three sub-dimensions as vigor (6 items), dedication (5 items) and absorption (6 items) and a total of 17 articles, Eryılmaz and Doğa (2012) reported The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the scale as 0.94. In the confirmatory factor analysis conducted for the scale, it was seen that the scale consisted of three dimensions. The factor loadings of the following dimensions were found as follow: vigor, between 0.86 and 0.96; dedication, between 0.71 and 0.90; absorption, between 0.82 and 0.96. In this study, the dedication scale was considered as a latent variable and a second level confirmatory factor analysis was applied to the scale. The goodness of fit values of the scale are given in Table 1 together with the other scales. As a result of reliability analysis, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be as 0.95.

**Inclusive Leadership Scale:** The scale, which was developed by Carmeli et al. (2010) and consisted of three dimensions as openness (3 items), availability (3 items) and accessibility (3 items) and 9 statements, was used. The Turkish validity of the scale was conducted by qualified researchers in the field of English-Turkish and Turkish-English translations in accordance

with validation procedures, and exploratory factor analysis (with SPSS package program) and confirmatory factor analysis (using AMOS package program) were performed by applying the scale on the pilot and original sample. In the study conducted by Carmeli et al. (2010), Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was found as 0.94. As a result of exploratory factor analysis, it was found that the scale fit the three-factor structure and the factor loadings of the nine-item scale were found to be between 0.73 and 0.90. Factor loadings of following dimensions were found as follow: openness, between 0.73 and 0.84; availability, between 0.74 and 0.90 and accessibility, between 0.70 and 0.89. KMO analysis of the scale was found to be 0.899 and Barlett test were found to be significant ( $p=.000$ ). As a result of confirmatory factor analysis, it was found that the data complied with the three-factor structure of the scale, and factor loadings of openness dimension was found between 0.71 and 0.84; availability, between 0.72 and 0.88 and accessibility, between 0.70 and 0.89. In this study, inclusive leadership is considered as a latent variable and a second level confirmatory factor analysis was applied to the scale. The goodness of fit values of the scale are given in Table 1 together with the other scales. As a result of reliability analysis, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was  $\alpha = 0.91$  for openness dimension,  $\alpha = 0.90$  for availability dimension and  $\alpha = 0.91$  for accessibility dimension. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was found as 0.93 for overall scale.

***Innovative Work Behavior Scale:*** The scale, which was developed by Jannes (2003) and consists of three dimensions as idea generation (3 items), idea promotion (3 items) and idea realization (3 items) and 9 statements, was used. Eroğlu et al (2018) used this scale in their study and found the reliability of the scale as 0.97. In the confirmatory factor analysis conducted for the scale, it was found that the scale consists of three dimensions. Factor loadings of following dimensions were found as follow: idea generation, between 0.89 and 0.94; idea promotion, between 0.88 and 0.90 and idea realization, between 0.82 and 0.89. In this study, innovative work behavior scale was considered as a latent variable and a second level confirmatory factor analysis was applied to the scale. The goodness of fit values of the scale are given in Table 1 together with the other scales. As a

result of reliability analysis, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be 0.94.

**Table 1: Goodness of Fit of Scales as a Result of Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

Goodness of Fit Values	$\chi^2$	df	CMIN/DF $\leq 5$	GFI $\geq 0,85$	AGFI $\geq 0,85$	CFI $\geq 0,90$	TLI $\geq 0,90$	RMSEA $\leq 0,08$
Work engagement	125,234	64	1.956	0.945	0.908	0.979	0.974	0.075
Inclusive Leadership	96.716	52	1.859	0.974	0.932	0.990	0.975	0.072
Innovative work behavior	64.872	38	1.707	0.967	0.928	0.992	0.989	0.069

As a result of the CFA, it is seen that the scales provide goodness of fit values and show good fit.

## Results

Analyses were carried out on the data obtained as a result of the research via SPSS 21 and Amos packages. In this context, in the first stage, the means, standard deviations and correlations of the obtained data related to work engagement, inclusive leadership and innovative work behavior levels of participants were investigated.

The means, standard deviations and correlation values obtained as a result of the analysis are given in Table 2.

**Table 2. Analysis Results of Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation of Variables**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Work Engagement	Inclusive Leadership	Innovative Work Behavior
<b>Work engagement</b>	3.2353	1.14382	(1)		
<b>Inclusive leadership</b>	3,49353	,96854	.545**	(1)	
<b>Innovative work behavior</b>	3,3754	,88605	.582**	.639**	(1)

When the descriptive statistics of research variables are evaluated, participants' levels of work engagement, inclusive leadership and innovative



the goodness of fit values of the model are satisfactory (Meydan and Şeşen, 2015, p.37; Gürbüz and Şahin, 2016, p.337).

**Table 4. Regression Weights of Structural Model**

Tested Path		Prediction	Std.Error	CriticalRatio	P
IWB	<--- WE	0,356	0,108	3,496	***
IL	<--- WE	0,642	0,12	6,984	***
IWB	<--- IL	0,579	0,084	5,605	***

As shown in Table 4, as a result of the analysis of the structural equation model, it has been determined that work engagement positively affects the innovative work behavior and inclusive leadership, it was also found that inclusive leadership positively and significantly affects innovative work behavior. As a result of the analysis, H1, H2 and H3 hypotheses were supported.

After this stage, Sobel test was performed to determine the mediating role of inclusive leadership in the relationship between work engagement and innovative work behavior.

**Table 5. Sobel Test Results**

Steps	B	Std. Error	$\beta$	P
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Step:</b> Independent Variable: Work Engagement Dependent Variable: Innovative Work Behavior	0,797	0,112	0,759	***
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Step:</b> Independent Variable: Work Engagement Dependent Variable: Inclusive Leadership	0,788	0,113	0,646	***
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Step:</b> Independent Variable: Inclusive Leadership Dependent Variable: Innovative Work Behavior	0,664	0,74	0,77	***
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Step:</b> Independent Variable 1: Work Engagement Independent Variable 2: Inclusive Leadership Dependent Variable: Innovative Work Behavior	0,56	0,1	0,558	***
	0,451	0,069	0,621	***

In the 1<sup>st</sup> step of Sobel test, it was seen that work engagement significantly affects the innovative work behavior. It also significantly affects in the last step. Therefore, in the 1<sup>st</sup> Step and in the last step, the comparison of standardized coefficient estimation values was made in the effect of work engagement on innovative work behavior. While it was 0,759 in the

1<sup>st</sup> step, it decreased to 0,558 in the last step. For this reason, it can be said that there is a partial mediating role of inclusive leadership in the effect of work engagement on the innovative work behavior. In order to make a clear decision, the significance of the Sobel test was investigated. Results are given in Table 6.

*Table 6. Sobel Test Significance*

Standardized Indirect Effects	0,523
Sobel Std. Error	0,095
Z Value	5,506
p	0,000

As a result of the analysis, the standardized indirect effects were found to be 0.523, and Z value was determined to be  $5,506 > 1,96$  and significant ( $p = 0,000$ ). As a result of the analysis, H4 hypothesis was supported.

## Conclusion

The main purpose of this study is to determine the mediating role of inclusive leadership in the relationship between work engagement and innovative work behavior. For this purpose, the data collected from 206 people working in food production companies in Gaziantep were analyzed by questionnaire method.

As a result of the analyses, it was found that work engagement had a significant positive effect on innovative work behavior. This result complies with the results of the studies conducted in the literature (Wang et al., 2019; Choi et al., 2015) to determine the relationship between work engagement and innovative work behavior. This finding shows that the levels of involvement in innovation process of employees who are willing in his work and dedicates himself/herself to his/her work are high.

As Choi et al (2015) state, having a positive mood about their work enable employees to adapt more to their works and thus, employees become more willing to participate in innovative work processes.

In the analysis conducted to determine the relationship between dedication and inclusive leadership within the scope of the research, it was

determined that work engagement had a significant positive effect on inclusive leadership. This result is consistent with the results of the study in the literature (Wang et al., 2019) to determine the relationship between work engagement and inclusive leadership. This result shows that employees with a high level of work engagement have a higher level of inclusive leadership perception.

In the analysis conducted to determine the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative work behavior within the scope of the research, it was found that inclusive leadership positively affects innovative work behavior. This result is consistent with the results of the studies in the literature (Wang et al., 2019; Choi et al., 2015) to determine the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative work behavior. As Qi et al (2019) point out, inclusive leaders can become role models for employees to encourage them participating in innovation processes.

In the mediation test conducted for the main purpose of the study, it was determined that inclusive leadership has a partial mediating role in the relationship between work engagement and innovative work behavior. This result shows that some of the relationship between work engagement and innovative work behavior is explained by inclusive leadership.

Based on the results obtained within the scope of the research, high levels of interactions between employees and their leaders and high levels of work engagement of employees enable employees to display innovative work behavior.

For executors, in order to increase the quality of interaction with leaders of employees who do not contribute in the innovative process and to ensure high levels of work engagements of employees, organizations need to support their employees more by reciprocity norm.

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