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The Determinantivity of Inclusive Leadership Behaviors on Work Engagement: A Research in The Field of Special Education

Kapsayıcı Liderlik Davranışlarının İşe Adanmışlık Üzerindeki Belirleyiciliği:
Özel Eğitim Alanında Bir Araştırma

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Abstract

The aim of the research is to reveal the effect of inclusive leadership behaviors on the engagement of employees to work. The research was conducted with the participation of 348 teachers working in the field of special education. Leadership has an effect on different dynamics at both organizational and individual levels. Especially when the positive or negative multi-level effects created by the leadership approach are considered, the importance of this situation in the field of special education increases considerably. In organizations where an inclusive management approach is adopted, the high job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and tendency to exhibit organizational citizenship behaviors of employees are some of the positive effects. In addition, when an inclusive management approach is not adopted, the stress, burnout, and absenteeism experienced by employees are among the negative factors. In this context, in order to increase the observability of positive effects, the field of special education points out the need for diversity management and an inclusive management approach. An inclusive management approach is important in terms of retaining qualified employees in the field, encouraging them to exhibit sincere, courteous, genuine and selfless behaviors, and keeping their morale and motivation high. Within the scope of the determined purpose, it was decided that the appropriate management for the research was quantitative and data were obtained through scale forms. A model was designed to reveal the effect of employees' perception of inclusive leadership behaviors on work engagement, and structural equation modeling was used to test the hypotheses developed based on this model. The findings of the research show that employees' perception of inclusive leadership behaviors has a significant and positive effect on work engagement, in other words, the perception of teachers working in the field of special education that the administrator exhibits inclusive behaviors is a significant determinant of their work engagement.

Keywords: Inclusive Leadership, Work Engagement, Special Education, AMOS Structural Equation Model

Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı, kapsayıcı liderlik davranışlarının çalışanların işe adanmışlığı üzerindeki etkisini ortaya koymaktadır. Araştırma, özel eğitim alanında çalışan 348 öğretmenin katılımıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Liderlik hem örgütsel hem de bireysel düzeyde farklı dinamikler üzerinde etkili olmaktadır. Bilhassa, liderlik yaklaşımının yarattığı olumlu ya da olumsuz çok düzeyli etkiler düşünüldüğünde özel eğitim alanında bu durumun önemi bir hayli artmaktadır. Kapsayıcı bir yönetim yaklaşımı benimsenen örgütlerde çalışanların iş tatmininin, örgütsel bağlılığının, örgütsel vatandaşlık davranışları sergileme eğiliminin yüksek olması olumlu etkilerden bazılarıdır. Yanı sıra kapsayıcı bir yönetim yaklaşımı benimsenmediğinde çalışanların yaşadığı stres, tükenmişlik, işe devamsızlık gibi istenmeyen durumlar olumsuz unsurlar arasında yer almaktadır. Bu bağlamda, olumlu etkilerin gözlemlenebilirliğini arttırabilmek adına özel eğitim alanı çeşitliliğin yönetimini ve kapsayıcı bir yönetim yaklaşımının gerekliliğini işaret etmektedir. Kapsayıcı bir yönetim anlayışı alandaki nitelikli çalışanları elde tutabilmek, onların içtenlikle, nezaketle, samimiyetle, özverili davranışlar sergilemelerini teşvik edebilmek, moral ve motivasyonunu yüksek tutabilmek açısından önem arz etmektedir. Belirlenen amaç dahilinde, araştırma açısından uygun yönetimin nicel olduğuna karar verilmiş ve ölçek formları aracılığıyla veriler elde edilmiştir. Çalışanların kapsayıcı liderlik davranışlarına yönelik algısının işe adanmışlık üzerindeki etkisini ortaya koyan bir model tasarlanmış ve bu modele bağlı olarak geliştirilen hipotezlerin test edilmesi adına yapısal eşitlik modellemesi yönteminden yararlanılmıştır. Araştırma sonucu elde edilen bulgular; çalışanların kapsayıcı liderlik davranışlarına ilişkin algısının işe adanmışlık üzerinde anlamlı ve pozitif bir etkiye sahip olduğunu yani özel eğitim alanında çalışan öğretmenlerin yöneticinin kapsayıcı davranışlar sergilediğine yönelik algısının onların işe adanmışlıkları üzerinde önemli ölçüde belirleyici olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kapsayıcı Liderlik, İşe Adanmışlık, Özel Eğitim, AMOS Yapısal Eşitlik Modeli

Declaration of Ethics	The Ethics Committee Approval of this study was taken from the Ethics Committee of the University of Ardahan on October 20, 2024, with protocol number 2024-2ÖNP-0136.
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1. Introduction

As a result of globalization, organizational structures are increasingly diverse and enriched day by day. Structural diversity can only lead organizational development when each employee can fully use their competence and manage their attitudes or behaviors that basically support organizational goals (Gbobaniyi et al., 2023). For this reason, it is necessary to motivate all employees to contribute more to their work and to create conditions in which they can reach their full potential. This situation clearly points to the existence of an inclusive leader (Kuknor - Bhattacharya, 2022).

Inclusive leadership is a concept first introduced by Nembhard - Edmondson (2006) within the framework of the inclusive behaviors of the leader. Performance is defined by these researchers as inclusive leadership, which consists of motivating or appreciative discourses and behaviors aimed at increasing the organizational contributions of employees. Accordingly, inclusive leaders are those who energize their employees, develop a sense of engagement, inspire and motivate them, and instill a sense of accomplishment or superiority.

The presence of inclusive leaders in organizations makes individuals think that their ideas are important and makes them feel that they are the most important part of the current structure or system. Thus, the presence of inclusive leadership can lead to both high motivation and willingness to work and engagement in the working environment in organizations (Nishii - Leroy, 2022). It is thought that a manager who helps all employees in the organization to make sense of their work, enables them to assimilate their work, and also plays an important role in increasing their energy, motivation and performance successfully exhibits inclusive leadership behaviors (Gong et al., 2021).

However, one of the areas that makes the presence of inclusive leaders necessary and important is specialized training. In particular, it is of great importance that special education teachers, who are trained to provide education to individuals with special education needs, have a self-sacrificing and positive

attitude towards those with special education needs (Zubiri-Esnaola et al., 2020). Because the self-sacrificing and positive attitudes of special education teachers both increase the quality of educational activities and contribute greatly to the life of individuals with special education needs as productive individuals who are independent of society and without burdening society (Gyasi et al., 2020).

The situation defined by individuals regarding their positive or satisfying work, which is integrated with their engagement to their work, assimilation and engagement to work, is explained as engagement to work. In other words, work engagement refers to the sense of meaning that the individual attributes to his work, assimilating his work and performing successfully by fully concentrating on his work with his high energy (Naqshbandi et al., 2024). Employee engagement is seen as one of the critical drivers that play a key role in the success of the organization. On the other hand, research conducted in this context shows that leadership is actually one of the pioneers of engagement to work (Wang et al., 2023).

When the literature is examined, although there have been many studies on the effect of many leadership styles such as transformational (Monje-Amor et al., 2020), functional (Schaufeli et al., 2019), ethical (Islam et al., 2024), authentic (Baquero, 2023) etc. on work engagement, there are few studies on the effect of inclusive leadership style on work engagement (Ly, 2024). This is clear evidence that much more research is needed to explain the impact of inclusive leadership on work engagement. The problematic of this research is to understand whether inclusive leadership behaviors are decisive on employees' engagement to work. This situation clearly reveals the original value of the research.

Accordingly, firstly, inclusive leadership behaviors, the importance of such leadership behaviors in the field of special education and work engagement will be discussed, and then the effect of inclusive leadership behaviors on the work engagement of employees (teachers) in the field of special education will be explained. In this study, it is aimed to understand the importance of inclusive leadership style and behaviors in the globalizing world in general, as well as to develop an understanding of how teachers working in the field of

special education can be managed with such a leadership approach and the determinant of inclusive leadership behaviors on the engagement of employees. Ultimately, it is believed that this study is important for both managers and employees, depending on both the developments in the business world and the idea that the field of special education should be evaluated and managed with a more specific approach.

2. Theoretical Literature

In this section, explanations and hypotheses about the variables that are the subject of the conceptual framework are included.

2. 1. Inclusive Leadership

Inclusivity is basically the state of voluntarily holding together individuals, objects and thoughts from different walks of life, societies and cultures with various perspectives. From an organizational point of view, inclusion is explained as allowing individuals with different backgrounds, experiences and mindsets to work together effectively and to fully reveal their potential in order to achieve the goals of the organization (Freeman - Koçak, 2023). Leaders, which is another concept of ours; they are visionary people who are successful in human relations, support the development of their employees, share their experiences, have positive personality traits, are full of love and respect, self-confident, integrated with their democratic attitude-style and can convey all these to their employees (Schott et al., 2020).

The relationship between the leader and the employee is of great importance for the healthy functioning and success of organizational processes. Accordingly, the behavior of the leader may differ according to both the organizational structure and the qualifications of the employees. In other words, the leader takes into account the characteristics of the interlocutor at the point of exhibiting certain behaviors or using their powers. Ultimately, self-confident people with strong communication skills, honest, assertive, hardworking, transparent, business-oriented, harmonious, responsible, able to influence people, and psychological resilience are thought to have leadership qualities (Mumtaz - Rowley, 2020).

Nembhard - Edmondson (2006), one of the pioneers of the concept of inclusive leadership, explain the issue within the framework of the inclusive behaviors of the leader. According to the researchers, the concept encompasses ideas, actions, or words, such as the leader's involvement of his employees in the organizational process or activities and his appreciation of their contributions. Moreover, inclusive leadership is thought to be related to the participatory leadership approach due to its features of facilitating teamwork, explaining, providing feedback and ensuring the participation of employees in decisions or joint decision-making. In this context, inclusive leaders draw attention to the fact that each of them has important ideas separately by managing the diversity of human resources in organizations correctly and make the other party feel this (Shore - Chung, 2022).

As a result, in the focus of definitions of inclusivity; the diversity of human resources and the necessity of managing them are included, and it is emphasized that inclusive leaders are people who exhibit organizational behaviors to increase their potential and performance with different managerial approaches to their employees despite all their differences. On the other hand, it is seen that inclusive leadership is handled in three different dimensions as openness, availability and accessibility on a behavioral basis (Li - Zhou, 2023).

Openness can be explained as being open to new opportunities, new experiences that increase success, and new ideas from employees in order to achieve organizational goals and improve business processes. Another is that availability is a state of readiness both in resolving existing problems and in listening to requests, requests and suggestions from employees. Finally, the accessibility feature reveals the situation of consulting the opinions of the employees in solving existing problems and being easily accessible by the employees in all possible or experienced problems (Shabeer et al., 2023).

2.2. Work Engagement

Maintaining the existence and continuity of qualified human resources in the organization is important in terms of its effective use or superior performance. For this reason, the human resources of the respective organization are largely the focus of attention both in practice managers and, in theory, researchers (Suherni et al., 2023). On the other hand, the development of elements that

contribute to the competence of employees such as knowledge, skills, talents and experience, etc., plays an important role in their presence and continuity in the organization. Because, depending on these factors, it is argued that employees have a high degree of participation, engagement, passion, enthusiasm, focus, effort and energy. In fact, all of this clearly demonstrates the engagement of the employees (Surono et al., 2024).

Work engagement is defined as the engagement of the employees of the organization to their work roles and to express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally while performing their work roles (Naqshbandi et al., 2024). According to Kahn (1990), there are three dimensions of engagement: physical, emotional and cognitive. In its simplest form, these are explained by physical vigor, emotional engagement and cognitive concentration behaviors.

Physical size; it is defined as having high energy and mental flexibility while working, the desire of individuals to strive more in their work and resistance in the face of difficulties in their work, their willingness to be successful and their ability to find the strength to be combative in their work by directing their physical energy to their work. The employee's expenditure of a lot of energy, vigor and physical competence while doing his work is an example of this (Kahn, 1990).

Emotional dimension; it is characterized as individuals being strongly involved in their work, being interested in their work, experiencing feelings of meaning, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride in their work, and directing their emotional energy to their work. An example of this situation can be when the employee puts his heart and soul into it while doing his work (Kahn, 1990).

The cognitive dimension is; it is expressed as the ability of individuals to fully concentrate on their work, to focus happily on their work, not to notice the time spent while at work, to have difficulty in breaking away from their work, and to concentrate on their work by transferring their cognitive energy to their work. For example; This can be explained by the fact that the employee forgets everything else while doing his work or that his only focus is on his work (Kahn, 1990).

Work engagement plays a key role in meeting basic psychological needs in ideal conditions where a balance is achieved between the requirements of the

work and the qualities of the individual. At the same time, when the employees of the organization are fully committed to their work, they are actually cognitively alert, emotionally connected, and physically engaged. Therefore, engagement helps to achieve positive outcomes at both the individual and organizational levels (Stone et al., 2024).

In the light of this information, work engagement is a concept that focuses on the strengths of employees and the opportunities to use their existing potentials more effectively, and is basically shaped as a reflection of the positive psychology movement on organizational behavior, and is handled within the scope of positive organizational behavior studies (Jeung, 2011). It is clear that the common point of the definitions in the literature on the concept is that work engagement is related to the physical, cognitive and emotional concentration of employees to use their energy in their work and to have a positive approach to their work.

When the literature is examined, it is seen that employees with high work engagement are happy in their works and have high levels of energy and mental toughness at work. In other words, compared to employees with low work engagement, those with high work engagement generally have more psychological and physical effort towards their work. High engagement means that employees devote more time, resources and energy to their work, and this requires a leadership style that can sustain employee enthusiasm for work in a continuous and positive way (Schaufeli, 2012).

2.3. The Relationship Between Special Education, Inclusive Leadership and Work Engagement

Today, due to the emergence of post-modern management theories, the views that the inclusion of those affected by the decision in management activities will increase organizational effectiveness and efficiency are becoming more and more widespread. On the other hand, increasing diversity in organizations necessitates some changes in managerial approaches (Chinenye Gbemisola Okatta et al., 2024). However, the need for a more inclusive, transparent, and accountable leadership style is clear from individuals with different life, personality, culture, work environment, co-workers, etc. (Ramírez-Herrero et al., 2024).

Inclusive leadership is a leadership approach that cares about the needs of the employees under its influence and draws attention to human relations that they can reach at any time. These leaders focus on creating an organizational culture that is open to new ideas developed by employees in accordance with the goals of the organization, encourages their participation in decisions and management processes, and moreover, they can develop opinions and suggestions without hesitation (Egitim, 2022).

One of the areas that makes the existence of leaders who have a necessary and inclusive approach to developing such an organizational culture important is special education, and such a culture and approach has positive effects on employees in schools operating in this context. Schools, which are a social system, are located within the important organizations or structures of the society. In this context, the presence of inclusive leaders in schools operating within the scope of special education will make a significant contribution to the effectiveness and efficiency criteria (Temitayo Oluwaseun Jejenewa et al., 2024).

Accepting all differences in special education schools, applying different practices in their managerial approaches, exhibiting fair behaviors, being accessible to the leader, and having an appreciation and reward system increase the motivation of teachers, make more efforts and make the existence of these structures, that is, schools, sustainable in the long run. In addition, teachers working in schools with inclusive leaders can improve their self-esteem to a greater extent, and their work engagement and work satisfaction increase significantly (DeMatthews et al., 2020).

It is thought that inclusive leaders should be people who make learning a lifelong habit. As a matter of fact, schools are the structures where the need for learning is met, and teachers are the people who respond to this need (DeMatthews et al., 2021). If we look at the characteristics of the segment whose learning needs are met, especially in schools serving in the field of special education, it can be understood that an inclusive approach is needed to a greater extent. In this context, the behaviors of both teachers and administrators working in the field of special education within the framework of inclusivity are important (DeMatthews, 2020).

Teachers working in the field of special education are greatly affected by the approach of their administrators, and when considered with the leader-follower approach, the situation indicates the existence of inclusive leadership and inclusive employees (Gürbüz et al., 2024). Employees are expected to develop and exhibit positive behaviors towards both their work and other individuals in the work environment, with the fact that not only a leadership style is adopted with the presence of inclusive leaders under an inclusive roof, as in the field of special education, but also a leadership approach that focuses on group dynamics and prioritizes social relations (Chen et al., 2023).

On the other hand, the phenomenon of engagement to work, which is among the positive organizational behaviors, reveals a satisfactory situation integrated with the engagement of the employees or teachers in the field of special education and with the inclusive leadership approach (Soelton, 2023). In particular, the engagement of teachers working in the field of special education is directly related to the inclusive behaviors of the administrator or leadership (Yasin et al., 2023). Research shows that the leadership approach is a premise of engagement to work . Since it is of great importance that special education teachers, who are trained to provide education to individuals with special education needs, have a self-sacrificing and positive attitude towards those with special education needs, this situation makes the existence of inclusive leaders and the prevalence of inclusive behaviors inevitable (Ke et al., 2022).

2. 4. Empirical Literature

With the understanding of the positive contributions of positive psychology in the individual sense to performance in the organizational sense, the interest in positive psychology research is increasing day by day, and phenomena such as inclusive leadership and work engagement are among the prominent ones in the field of organizational behavior and organizational psychology (Chen et al., 2020). When the relationship between the two phenomena is examined, the predecessor of one is the successor of the other. In other words, recent research on the pioneers of work engagement emphasizes that inclusive leadership is an important component of the work environment that has a significant impact on employee engagement (Bannay et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2023).

Inclusive leaders are those who are open-minded, willing to listen to employees' ideas, and exhibit constructive behavior or avoid criticism in case of failure (Shabeer et al., 2023). Some researchers argue that such constructive behaviors of the leader lead to the strengthening of the psychological relationship between employees and leaders, high organizational commitment and increased enthusiasm for work in employees (Yasin et al., 2023). On the other hand, it is stated that the inclusivity-based approach of the leaders is sometimes aimed at encouraging the employees and sometimes serves to achieve the organizational goals in a compelling way (Chen et al., 2020; Soelton, 2023). In another study, it is suggested that in organizations where the leader is open, accessible and accessible within the framework of inclusivity, the work satisfaction of the employees increases and therefore a significant increase is observed in their organizational commitment (Li - Zhou, 2023).

However, some researchers focus on the features that distinguish inclusive leadership style from other leadership styles. Accordingly; It draws attention to the fact that inclusive leaders are more tolerant of employees and devote more time to their individual development. As a matter of fact, inclusive leaders are considered to be people who take care to establish good relations with employees, are helpful, understanding, and respect employee differences and values. In addition, employees who are more aware of the physical or psychological resources offered by a leader with these qualities are more willing to fulfill their work roles, so they can distinguish inclusive leadership from other types of leadership (Ly, 2024).

According to Bannay and colleagues (2020) high work engagement means that employees spend more time or energy on work and need more resources. When employees face any business challenge, they need the support and guidance of inclusive leaders and various resources at the cognitive or organizational level to improve their work relationships. Cognitive resources aside, it is of great importance that employees have easy access to organizational resources such as information, time and physical support in the management of the inclusive leader. It is thought that employees who have sufficient access to resources feel psychologically better at meeting work demands. Good feelings, positive emotions and adequate resources are components of work engagement

and trigger employees' work motivation, leading to a high level of work engagement (Shabeer et al., 2023).

Along with current empirical research, the theory of social change, which draws attention to the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee creativity, also helps to explain the relationships with different variables. In the light of the theory of social change (Stranzl, 2024). Inclusive leaders, who have the characteristics of openness, accessibility and usability and exhibit these behaviors, easily provide their employees with the useful resources they need. The ability to obtain these resources has a great impact on the perception of the employees, their full adaptation to their work roles, and the motivation to respond by allocating more cognitive, emotional and physical resources to the organization. At the same time, as an extension of acquiring the useful resources needed, employees are more adaptable to their work and have a desire to be involved in their organizations at a high level (Strom et al., 2014).

As stated by Choi et al. (2015) an employee feels indebted or responsible to the organization and the manager/leader, despite the socio-emotional-based resources he receives from the organization manager or leader. In this context, considering that someone who adopts an inclusive leadership style and exhibits such behaviors easily offers the resources and opportunities they need to their employees, it is understood that the motivation and engagement of these employees to respond to what they do will be high. In the light of this information, it becomes more interesting for researchers to examine the effect of inclusive leadership behaviors on employees' engagement to work. Research shows that inclusive leadership or leadership behaviors generally have a positive effect on employees' engagement to work (Randel et al., 2018; Umrani et al., 2024).

The determinant of inclusive leadership behaviors on work engagement is actually becoming more complex and interesting day by day. Ultimately, this is why there is a need for more research to reveal how, how, and to what extent inclusive leadership behaviors affect engagement at work. In this context, taking into account the literature review, the hypotheses created within the framework of the theoretical and empirical researches examined;

H1: Inclusive leadership behaviors have a positive and meaningful effect on work engagement.

H1a: The openness of an inclusive leader has a positive and meaningful effect on work engagement.

H1b: The availability of an inclusive leader has a positive and meaningful effect on work engagement.

H1c: The accessibility of an inclusive leader has a positive and meaningful impact on work engagement.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data and Research Model

The aim of the research is to reveal the effect of inclusive leadership behaviors on employees' engagement to work. The research was carried out with the participation of 348 teachers working in the field of special education in Antalya. The main reason for this is that special education teachers who are trained to teach individuals with special education needs have a selfless and positive attitude towards those with special education needs. Ethical permission was obtained for this research from the Ardahan University Rectorate, Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee with the meeting decision protocol numbered 2024-2ÖNP-0136 dated 20/10/2024. The data of the study were collected between October - November 2024.

Participants voluntarily participated in the study. Beforehand, the participants were assured of both the purpose of the research and the voluntary basis of participation, as well as the anonymity and confidentiality of the data. Additionally, participants were told that they could terminate their participation at any time. In this context, all processes related to participants were carried out in accordance with the ethical standards of national or institutional research committees, as in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki. In order to protect the integrity of the research, adherence to ethical principles and compliance have been strictly observed.

Since it was possible to reach the entire universe within the scope of the research, a full census was made (N: 357) and the questionnaires were given to all of these employees in closed envelopes and received in a closed envelope in the same way while collecting. However, 6 of them did not participate at all, and the answers of 3 of them were not found to be safe. Therefore, although the

proportion of respondents who answered the survey was 98%, the number of valid respondents representing the universe was 348, and 97% of these respondents were.

Within the framework of the current research, the question "Do inclusive leadership behaviors have a positive effect on work engagement?" will be answered. Inclusive leadership behaviors are considered as an independent variable here, and work engagement is defined as a dependent (outcome) variable. The research model created in the light of this information is given in Figure 1.

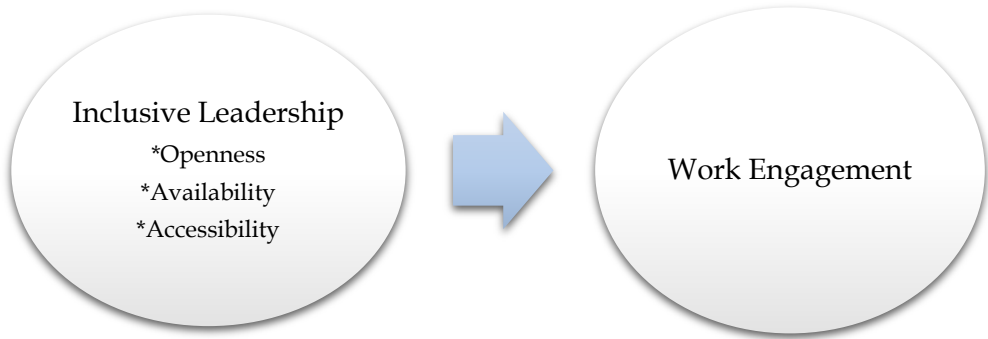


Figure 1. Research Conceptual Model

3.2. Data Collection Method and Analysis

In this study, which was conducted to determine whether inclusive leadership behaviors have an effect on work engagement, survey method was used as a data collection tool. In the causal comparison design, two basic data collection tools, the Inclusive Leadership Scale and the Work Engagement Scale, are used in the process of collecting the data to be obtained by quantitative method. In addition, the questionnaire consists of two parts: in the first part, there are questions about the demographic information of the participants,

and in the second part, there are scale questions about the variables of inclusive leadership and engagement to work.

In order to measure the inclusive leadership behaviors of the participants, the use of the scale developed by Carmeli et al. (2010) and the Turkish adaptation of (Sürücü - Maslakçı, 2021) was preferred. This model has three sub-dimensions (such as openness, availability and accessibility) and the model consists of 9 statements. A one-dimensional and 3-item scale developed by (Schaufeli et al., 2019) was used to measure the participants' engagement to work. The scales for the variables used in the study are 5-point Likert (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree).

The research data were evaluated through the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 22.0 statistical package program. Factor analysis and internal consistency analysis of the validity and reliability tests of the scales used in the data collection process were performed. In the research hypothesis tests, the data obtained from 348 participants were analyzed by the IBM SPSS AMOS program and structural equation model method.

4. Findings

4.1. Empirical Findings

The data obtained within the scope of the research were analyzed with IBM SPSS 22.0 statistical package program and IBM SPSS AMOS programs. In this context, the findings obtained regarding the demographic and occupational characteristics of the participants, hypothesis tests and validity-reliability analyzes are given below.

Table 1. Findings on the Demographic and Occupational Characteristics of the Participants

	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Age	18-30	189	54
	31-44	128	37
	45 and above	31	9
Gender	Female	204	59
	Male	214	41
Education Status	Secondary	7	2

Job Seniority	Associate	132	38
	Bachelor's	198	57
	Postgraduate	11	3
	1-5 years	157	45
	5-15 years	178	51
	15 years and above	13	4
Total		348	100

Table 1 presents the findings on the occupational and demographic characteristics of the people participating in the study in order to reveal the determinant of inclusive leadership behaviors on employee engagement. Within the scope of the study, approximately 41% of these participants were men and 59% were women. It is seen that 57% of the participants have a bachelor's degree, 38% have an associate degree, 7% have a secondary education, 3% have a graduate education, and the majority of them (54%) are in the young-middle age group. Again, the vast majority of the participants (51%) have a work seniority of 5-15 years.

A measurement model was developed with the help of the IBM SPSS AMOS program in order to verify the existing structure by taking into account the explanatory factor analysis regarding the testing of the research model. Then, confirmatory factor analysis was performed to test the model. The findings including goodness of fit, standardized regression coefficient (S.R.K), standard deviation (S.S.) p and t values as a result of the analysis are given in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Measurement Model Confirmatory Factor Analysis Values

Items	Factors	S. R. K. (β)	S.S.	t	p
OP1 ←	OPEN	0,85			
OP2 ←	OPEN	0,87	,028	25,78	***
OP3 ←	OPEN	0,86	,032	23,19	***
AV1 ←	AVA	0,92			
AV2 ←	AVA	0,94	,027	34,69	***
AV3 ←	AVA	0,93	,031	31,54	***

AV4	←	AVA	0,91	,035	29,12	***
AC1	←	ACC	0,89			
AC2	←	ACC	0,88	,033	28,56	***
WE1	←	WE	0,95			
WE2	←	WE	0,94	,023	36,65	***
WE3	←	WE	0,90	,026	38,21	***

p<0.001, OPEN: Openness, AVA: Availabilty, ACC: Accessibility, WE: Work Engagement, S.R.K.: Standardized Regression Coefficient (β), S.S.: Standard Deviation

In determining the fit values of the model; RMSEA (mean square root of approximate errors), CFI (comparative fit index), SRMR (Standardized fit index), NNFI (Unstandardized fit index), IFI (Increased fit index) and chi-square fit test/ degrees of freedom were based on (Hu - Bentler, 1999).

The findings obtained as a result of the analysis are presented in Table 2. The standardized regression values of both variables and their sub-dimensions within the scope of the study were examined separately. In addition, goodness of fit values were examined along with the results of confirmatory factor analysis to test the structural validity of the model. The findings show that acceptable goodness of fit indices are provided with reference to the threshold values and this is given in Table 3.

Finally, it is seen that the value in question is greater than 0.50 (Bagozzi, 2010) and the t values are between 23.19-38.21 ($t > 1.96$) (Phakiti, 2008). The current model is a four-factor (Work Engagament, Openness, Availability, Accessibility) model. Considering all the findings, the acceptability and data compatibility of the developed research model are clearly demonstrated.

Table 3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for Testing the Structural Validity of the Measurement Model and Goodness of Fit Values

χ^2/df	IFI	NNFI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
3,22	0,96	0,95	0,96	0,07	0,05

Depending on the confirmatory factor analysis, the findings obtained regarding mean variance (AVE), Cronbach's Alpha ($\hat{\alpha}$), skewness, kurtosis (Cor-tosis) and composite reliability (CR) values are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Findings on Mean Variance, Cronbach's Alpha, Curvature, kurtosis and Composite Reliability Values

Variables	Number of Items	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha ($\hat{\alpha}$)	CR	Skewness	Kurtosis
OPEN	3	0,76	0,82	0,82	0,98	0,16
AVA	4	0,89	0,87	0,88	0,58	0,63
ACC	2	0,85	0,83	0,83	0,58	0,63
WE	3	0,78	0,78	0,80	0,81	0,72

* OPEN: Openness, AVA: Availability, ACC: Accessibility, WE: Work Engagement, AVE: Mean Variance, CR: Composite Reliability, Cronbach's Alpha: Reliability Coefficient, Skewness: Skewness, Kurtosis: kurtosis

In the researches, it is generally stated that the reliability coefficient limit value is 0.70 and accordingly, Cronbach's Alpha ($\hat{\alpha}$) values are determined first in order to measure internal consistency. As can be seen in Table 4, Cronbach's Alpha ($\hat{\alpha}$) values of the variables are in the range of 0.78-0.87 and are greater than 0.70 (0.78-0.87>0.70). However, studies have largely expected the CR (composite reliability) value to be greater than 0.70 (Hox, 2021). The results of the research show that the CR value of the variables is 0.80-0.83 >0.70 and has a closeness with Cronbach's Alpha ($\hat{\alpha}$) values.

For mean variance (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) values that reveal convergence validity; while it is emphasized that the composite reliability value should be greater than the mean variance and the mean variance should be above 0.05, on the other hand, it is important that the square root of the mean variance value takes a greater value than the correlations between other variables in discriminant validity (Hox, 2021). Looking at Table 4, it is seen that the mean variance values of the variables are between 0.76 and 0.89, as a matter of fact, the mean variance value (AVE) is generally required to be higher than 0.50 in studies (Liu et al., 2020). Correlation values reveal that the mean variance value of each variable is higher than the correlation of the others.

All these findings explain that the validity and reliability of the scales related to the variables are ensured. In addition, skewness and kurtosis values were

also examined in order to reveal whether the variables show normal distribution. Habibzadeh (2024) state that these values should be between -2 and +2 in a normally distributed study. The findings obtained as a result of this research reveal that the variables show a normal distribution since the specified value range is not exceeded (see Table 4).

4.2. Hypothesis Testing

Structural equation model (SEM) was used to test the research model and the hypotheses developed based on the model. IBM SPSS AMOS program was used to measure the effect of inclusive leadership and its sub-dimensions of openness, availability and accessibility on work engagement (Owolabi et al., 2020).

Table 5. Findings on the Structural Equation Model (SEM)

Relationships Between Variables	S.R.K. (β)	S.S.	R ²	t	p	Hypothesis	Hypothesis Result
WE ← IL	0,86	0,05	0,872	28,23	***	H1	Acceptance
WE ← OPEN	0,58	0,05	0,738	11,36	***	H1a	Acceptance
WE ← AVA	0,53	0,05	0,611	13,89	***	H1b	Acceptance
WE ← ACC	0,67	0,05	0,584	11,09	***	H1c	Acceptance

p<0.001, IL: Inclusive Leadership, OPEN: Openness, AVA: Availability, ACC: Accessibility, WE: Work Engagement, S.R.K.: Standardized Regression Coefficient (β), S.S.: Standard Deviation, R²: Regression Coefficient

This research aims to determine the effect of inclusive leadership behaviors on work engagement. In general, after determining that the fit indices of the research model are acceptable, the Structural Equation Model (SEM), which explains the relationships between variables and enables the hypotheses to be tested, should also be examined.

As can be seen from Table 5, the findings reveal that the hypothesized pathway is significant primarily since $t > 1.96$. According to the findings of SEM analysis; It is clear that inclusive leadership behaviors have a positive and significant effect on work engagement (S.R.K. (β) = 0.86, $p < 0.001$, S.S. = 0.05). In addition, when the Regression Coefficient (R²) is examined, the effect of inclu-

sive leadership behaviors, which is the independent variable, on work engagement, which is the dependent variable, is explained by 87% at the 0.001 significance level. Therefore, H1 hypothesis is accepted.

Another sub-dimension of inclusive leadership, openness (OPEN), has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement (S.R.K. (β) = 0.58, $p < 0.001$, S.S. = 0.05). Again, the Regression Coefficient (R^2) for these variables shows that the independent variable of openness (OPEN) explains 73% of the effect on our dependent variable, work engagement, and the H1a hypothesis is also accepted.

When the effect of availability (AVA), which is another dimension of inclusive leadership, on work engagement is examined; The findings of the SEM analysis reveal that compliance has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement to work (S.R.K. (β) = 0.53, $p < 0.001$, S.S. = 0.05). At the same time, our Regression Coefficient (R^2) independent variable explains 61% of the effect of fitness on the dependent variable, work engagement, and the H1b hypothesis is also accepted.

When the effect of accessibility (ACC), which is the last dimension of inclusive leadership, on Work engagement is examined; The findings of the SEM analysis reveal that accessibility has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement (S.R.K. (β) = 0.67, $p < 0.001$, S.S. = 0.05). At the same time, our Regression Coefficient (R^2) independent variable explains 58% of the effect of fitness on the dependent variable, work engagement, and the H1c hypothesis is also accepted.

5. Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendation

In today's rapidly changing economic conditions, organizations are transforming into more flexible structures in order to gain sustainable competitive advantage. However, relying solely on managers' intuition or creating a harmonious organizational atmosphere is not enough to significantly improve organizational performance (Yasin et al., 2023). Today, organizations need employees who take more responsibility and show a high level of engagement to their work in order to contribute to organizational success. For this reason, research on leadership is of interest to practitioners in practice and researchers or

academics in theory. In this context, the current study examines the impact of inclusive leadership on work engagement.

The findings obtained as a result of the research reveal that inclusive leadership (openness, availability and accessibility) has a positive and meaningful effect on work engagement. This finding is consistent with the theory of social change. The basic principle of social change theory (Stranzl, 2024) is that when one party does good to another, the other side feels the need to reciprocate it with something of value. When considered with this approach, the positive behaviors of the inclusive leader towards their employees lead to the obligation of employees to reciprocate this goodwill.

According to Choi et al. (2015) when an employee feels compelled to repay the organization in some way, engagement with work emerges as a method of this repayment. However, inclusive leaders take care to build strong relationships with their employees, exhibiting a tolerant attitude and supportive behaviors towards them. These and similar features reinforce employees' positive feelings towards their leaders and can contribute to their high level of respect.

According to social change theory, employees who have positive perceptions of their leaders show a higher level of organizational engagement, especially on an emotional basis. Support from the leader increases the employee's sense of moral responsibility to achieve organizational goals and leads them to demonstrate a higher level of work engagement in order to achieve organizational success. In addition, the care and understanding shown by inclusive leaders can increase employees' positive emotional experiences, provide them with emotional resources, improve their psychological well-being, and increase their motivation to work (Strom et al., 2014; Chen et al., 2020).

Monje-Amor et al. (2020) examined the effect of transformational leadership on work engagement with the participation of 240 employees working in the tourism sector in Galicia (northwestern Spain). The findings show that transformational leadership encourages work engagement by providing access to information, opportunities, support and sufficient resources. In explaining this situation, the mediating effect of structural empowerment was examined and it was understood that it played a partial role. Therefore, it is stated that it would be useful to address the issue with different variables. On the other

hand, a study conducted on 476 hotel employees in Dubai shows that authentic leadership positively affects work engagement. However, this study states that the mediating effect of trust in the leader is needed to explain the effect of authentic leadership on work engagement (Baquero, 2023).

Another study conducted by Islam et al. (2024) with the participation of 491 employees working in various organizations in Pakistan shows that ethical leadership positively affects work engagement. In this study, it is stated that the mediating effect of trust in the leader helps to explain this in the effect of ethical leadership on work engagement with a similar approach. In addition, ensuring that employees participate in decisions, listening to their demands and expectations and being able to express them openly to the manager at every opportunity are largely determinants of their work engagement.

It is thought that this situation indicates inclusive leadership due to its characteristics of openness, suitability and accessibility, and that the determinant effect of inclusive leadership on work engagement, which is discussed in the current study, is an accurate decision. In the light of both social change theory and current theoretical background, inclusive leadership is expected to have a meaningful and positive impact on work engagement. Ultimately, the result obtained is similar to the outputs of the social change theory. On the other hand, according to the findings obtained as a result of the research; In general, inclusive leadership behaviors positively affect work engagement.

Openness, availability and accessibility, which are the sub-dimensions of inclusive leadership, have a statistically significant and positive effect on work engagement. As a matter of fact, the findings obtained in the present study are in line with the findings of various studies carried out in this context (Strom et al., 2014; Choi et al., 2015; Randel et al., 2018; Bannay et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2023; Shabeer et al., 2023; Yasin et al., 2023; Soelton, 2023; Li - Zhou, 2023; Ly, 2024; Stranzl, 2024; Umrani et al., 2024).

The findings show that inclusive leadership behaviors (openness, availability and accessibility) have a positive effect on the dedication of teachers working in special education schools. In fact, it is of great importance for teachers who deal with students with special education needs in special education schools to have a selfless and positive attitude. This situation inevitably necessitates

an inclusive leadership approach. It is expected that people who are understanding towards differences, who accept and manage diversity, who are tolerant, fair and courteous will set an example for others. In this case, it is believed that employees will be influenced by their managers and will be more inclined to exhibit similar behaviors under the same roof. As a result, the selfless and positive attitudes of teachers increase the quality of education and training activities on the one hand, and play a major role in the integration of individuals with special education needs into society on the other.

It is believed that the present research is important both because it is one of the few researches carried out in this context and because it will contribute to the literature and practitioners in practice, both in the education sector, where the work engagement working on behalf of the country's economy and social welfare and special education, which is a specific field, is of great importance. In addition, this research, like many studies, has some limitations.

Since the participants of this research consist of employees of institutions and organizations in the field of special education operating only in the Antalya region, it is clear that the findings obtained can only be generalized on behalf of the main audience represented. Therefore, this situation reveals the need for much more studies in different sectors, fields, businesses and sample groups. Another situation is that there is a difference in the methods and scales used within the scope of the research. In this way, many other opportunities such as making comparisons, eliminating deficiencies, revealing new findings, choosing the most appropriate method, and determining scales with high validity and reliability can be offered for future research.

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