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Thrive in trying times: Does inclusive leadership foster thriving at work among hotel industry employees?

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Abstract--The rampant age of uncertainty has confronted hotel industry with unprecedented difficulties. In challenging times, leadership acts as a critical determinant in navigating uncertainty and developing atmosphere where staffs understanding a feeling of belongingness leading to constructive learning and vitality by individuals resulting in accomplishment of organizational goals. It therefore necessitates the purpose and effectiveness of Inclusive leadership whereby leaders actively exhibits accessibility, availability and openness and motivates employees to share their opinions at workplace. Such an atmosphere helps in establishing a supportive relationship with staff members to encourage in bringing out beneficial outcomes for the organizations amid crisis. A great deal of research has seen a deep association between inclusive leadership and the way it paves the way for thriving at work; however, these studies have been confined to a limited extent. Due to dearth of study from organizational level which is in nascent phase, the researcher aims to expand the field of study. Data were collected from 308 hotel employees from Guwahati (Assam). The structural equation modelling and mediation examination were used to evaluate the hypothesized model. The research revealed a encouraging linkage between inclusive leadership and thriving at work. Psychological safety was found to act as a significant mediator involving Inclusive leadership and thriving at work relationship. Thus, the study will deepen our understanding in promoting leaders to form positive and psychologically safe surrounding in which individuals at workplace is freely voice their

views which will enable in building a cordial relationships among members within the organization leading to positive outcomes.

Keywords---Inclusive leadership, Thriving at work, Psychological safety, hotel industry, Assam.

Introduction

In recent dynamic workplace, adaptability and resilience have become critical traits for success. This ever-evolving, changing, volatile landscape demands that individuals not only adapt to changes but thrive in it. Thriving at work (TAW) characterised as psychological situation whereby people “experience a sense of Learning and Vitality (Spreitzer *et al.*, 2005). Vitality” relates with an encouraging emotion characterized by a subjective perception of having energy (Kark and Carmeli, 2009) whereas Learning relates to acquiring new abilities and increasing one's knowledge (Abid *et al.*, 2015). Together, this dimensions work in tandem and fosters the experience of growth and development to create a sustainable and supporting “workspace (Spreitzer *et al.*, 2005; Porath *et al.*, 2012). In last few years, empirical studies have linked TAW to numerous positive outcomes such as Career adaptability (Jiang, 2017), Work happiness (Qaiser *et al.*, 2020), Work engagement (Abid *et al.*, 2018), creative performance (Christensen-Salem *et al.*, 2021), job satisfaction (Jiang *et al.*, 2020), innovation” (Wang, 2025) and so on. Based on the notion that TAW soar not only from person's personality but also by employee attitude, workplace culture, and other elements, in this regard leadership plays an imperative role in strengthening thriving workplace. It thus demands the role of Inclusive leadership (IL) when leaders actively demonstrates accessibility, availability and openness for their subordinates (Vakira *et al.*, 2023). These three traits of IL create an atmosphere where workers are psychologically at ease enough to take risks, which is essential for encouraging success at work (Zeng *et al.*, 2020).

The Ministry of Finance estimates that the service sector in India accounts for about 55 percent of the country's GDP and hotel industry plays a propellant part in contributing fulfilling experience to customers. This industry is significantly boosting tourism, promoting growth and creating job opportunities. However in such a pursuit, companies often overlook that employees in service oriented business, employees are key determiners in determining the quality of services, as are customers since they can offer pivotal information into the whole customer experience (Davras and Manap, 2024). In recent times, the Gallup's state of the Global Workforce study (2024), only 14% of Indians believe that their jobs are fulfilling while 86% are struggling or suffering. This change has produced a comprehensive understanding of the function of inclusive leaders who creates a positive work surroundings which positively impacts employee thriving. They encourage and value the efforts of their employees which enhances their psychological safety (PS) thereby fostering thriving work environment (Shafaei *et al.*, 2024).

Objectives of the Study

1. To “investigate the association between inclusive leadership and thriving at work among hotel industry employees.
2. To investigate whether psychological safety mediates the connection between inclusive leadership and Thriving at work” among hotel industry employees from Guwahati (Assam).

Literature Review

By adopting comprehensive and thematic review method, the subsequent sections were written. The reason for selection of this method is because it delves in identifying specific and relevant facet of the subject matter thereby identifying specific themes under study.

Inclusive leadership

Nemhard and Edmondson created foundations of IL in the realm of organizational behavior (2006), who elucidated it as leaders who value and promote the contributions of others and make an effort to include individuals in decision-making processes where their voices and opinions might not otherwise be heard. Subsequently, it was stated into leaders who interact with followers and show availability, visibility, and accessibility (Carmeli *et al.*, 2010). As per Randel *et al.* (2018), IL is defined as leadership that places a high priority on assisting employees as members of a team by providing opportunities for coordinated decision-making, maintaining equity and justice, and encouraging a range of contributions. More precisely, followers of inclusive leaders are embraced for who they are, given an to express their individual talents, and incorporated into the process of determining decisions (Dvir *et al.*, 2002). Empirically, research shown that IL promotes Employees that have sense of identification and belonging are more likely to have their abilities acknowledged and are also able to express their ideas (Jiang, 2020; Wang *et al.*, 2020; Ashikali *et al.*, 2021; Canlas and Williams, 2022; Jiang *et al.*, 2023; Shafaei *et al.*, 2024), all of that have a positive impression on an organization.

Psychological Safety

PS is characterised as personal safety sense and comfort where individuals feel comfortable for social risk taking at work (Kahn, 1990; Edmondson, 1999). Schein and Bennis (1965) in his original work on PS defined it as a mental condition that facilitates organization learning, behaviour and transition. In a psychologically secure environment, employees experience confidence for they will not be rejected or criticized by their peers for voicing their opinions and participating in constructive dialogue exchange (Hasan and Kashif, 2021; Saleem *et al.*, 2024). Edmondson and Lei (2014) affirmed that staff who experience PS are more inclined to share thoughts and suggestions thereby performing effectively at work. Over the time, a robust set of studies has identified precursors of PS namely “Transformational leadership (Yin *et al.*, 2020; Zaman and Abbasi, 2020; Wang *et al.*, 2021; Carmeli *et al.*, 2014; Xu *et al.*, 2022), Entrepreneurial leadership (Mehmood *et al.*, 2022; Iqbal *et al.*, 2022; Majooni and Nasiri, 2024), Proactive”

personality (Elsaied, 2019; Du and Lin, 2021) and so forth. This influences a gamut of productive workplace outcomes like employee innovative behaviour (Sun and Huang, 2019; Iqbal *et al.*, 2020; Cao and Huang, 2020), learning behaviour (Alam and Singh, 2021), work engagement (Lyu, 2016; Mao and Tian, 2022), creative performance (Ahmad *et al.*, 2019; Wadei *et al.*, 2021), and job satisfaction (Workman-Stark, 2021).

Thriving at work

The notion of TAW centers on Socially embedded model is characterised as a positive psychological experience of having improved knowledge as well as vitality to succeed in workplace (Spreitzer *et al.*, 2005). This version encourages productive creation with committed employees which supports an optimistic strategy for maintaining organizational effectiveness. Researchers suggest that happy workers have a sense of life, vigor along with a constant learning sense and applying new “knowledge (Liu *et al.*, 2021; Goh *et al.*, 2022; Liang *et al.*, 2024). Notably, TAW supports organizational performance which surfaces as a outcome of IL (Fang *et al.*, 2021), Active personality (Alikaj *et al.*, 2021), paradoxical leader behaviour (Yang *et al.*, 2021). When” staff prosper at work, they generally feel secured and cherished which engenders to several important organizational outcomes encompassing Job satisfaction (Huo and Jiang, 2021), Creative behaviour (Alikaj *et al.*, 2021), Career sustainability (Fang *et al.*, 2021), and so on.

Hypothesis Development

Inclusive leadership and Thriving at work

The “Socially embedded idea of the TAW (Spreitzer *et al.*, 2005) highlights a favourable strategy that is highlighted by people experiencing a sense of learning and vitality” for maintaining organizational sustainability. Together this two facet of thriving helps individuals to gauge in a positive path and adjust to work environment leading to organizational growth. Drawing “on Self- determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000), this” can underlined that Inclusive leaders fosters employee motivation to thrive at work by making a favourable work environment and a culture of increased autonomy in which employees contribute in decision making. Such a behaviour acts as a potent motivator to form atmosphere where workers are comfortable applying novel approaches to problems with coming up with fresh ideas (Simmons and Yawson, 2022; Khan *et al.*, 2024). Furthermore, Fang *et al.*, (2021) established a linkage by recognizing the advantageous association of IL style in developing TAW. In similar vein, Zeng *et al.*, (2020) confirmed linkage of IL in nurturing TAW and enhancing organizational viability. Drawing from the evidence found in the previous literature, the hypothesis is that:

H1: Inclusive leadership is positively associated with Thriving at work.

Psychological safety as a mediator

Inclusive leadership and Psychological safety

PS is a set of belief in which individuals at workplace feel that its permissible and secure to take chances at work settings (Kahn, 1990; Edmondson, 1999). More extensively, it is an individual trust that their peers wont punish/ embarrass

them for expressing distinct opinions, questions or concerns (Edmondson, 2018). Based “on self determination theory (Forner *et al.*, 2020), Leadership style” is significant contextual component in organizational setting. By being reachable, approachable, and accessible, an inclusive leaders make a workspace marked by quality leader-member interactions, empowering and enabling employees to establish trust and think differently (Carmeli *et al.*, 2010; Gu *et al.*, 2024). Such interpersonal ties facilitates the occurrence of PS and make staff feels secure to communicate with employers without any distress of failure. Empirical studies have indicated that IL boosts the feeling of PS among employees (Khan *et al.*, 2020; Li and Peng, 2022; Siyal, 2023; Vakira *et al.*, 2023) thereby leading to improved job performance. Taking cues from above literature, the hypothesis is that:

H2: Inclusive “leadership is positively associated with Psychological” safety.

Psychological safety and Thriving at work

When individuals feel comfortable in a workplace, they can speak out, take chances and risks without fear of judgements or blame from peers/ supervisors (Kahn, 1990). A psychologically safe work atmosphere encourages trust, cooperation and innovation paving the path for workers to thrive at work (Paterson *et al.*, 2014). Studies suggested that when organizations promote higher degree of decision making and providing employees greater freedom, it leads persons feeling that the workplace is psychologically safe which further increases their TAW (Guan and Frenkel, 2020; Zeng *et al.*, 2020; Lee, 2022; Rabiul *et al.*, 2023). In similar vein, Schein and Bennis (1965) emphasized that those are more prepared to thrive at work where supportive climate exists. Thus, considering the literature mentioned above, the hypothesis is that:

H3: Psychological “safety is positively associated with” thriving at work.

According to above hypothesis, it has highlighted that Il fosters employees PS thereby improving staffs TAW. Thus it is hypothesized as:

H4: Psychological “safety mediates the relationship between inclusive leadership” and thriving at work.

Materials and Methods

Sampling method & Procedure used:

The respondents worked in the Guwahati (Assam) hotel industry. Convenience sampling was employed for data collection. 412 workers from different hotels were asked to respond. Out of them, 355 employees responded, and 47 were eliminated because their responses were poor or lacking. 308 people participated in the study overall as a result. The response rate is 86.2%. The researcher described goal of the study to the HR (Human Resource) management of several hotels. They received assurances that whole statistics would be kept private and exclusively applied for scholarly. After outlining the research goal to the HR Manager, permission to gather data was asked. 308 replies were subjected to data analysis using Smart PLS 3. 3.2.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Profile	Item	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	46.4
	Male	53.6
Work experience (as a whole)	Up to 3 years	62.7
	3 to 10 years	27.2
	>10 years	10.1
Time period regarding working in current organisation (in years)	0 to 5 yrs	61.7
	5 to 10 yrs	36.2
	More than 10 years	2.1

Source- Survey method

According to the demographic outline of the respondents, Females highlight 46.4% of the sample, while males highlight 53.6%. In addition, 62.7% of respondents had up to work experience of three years, 27.2% had 3-10 years, and 10.1% had work experience beyond 10 years. Furthermore, 61.7% participants had worked for 0 to 5 years in their current organization, 2.1% “had >10 years of work experience, and 36.2% had 5-10 years of work” experience.

Measures

A “five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5) was used for collection of” data.

Inclusive leadership:- IL has been evaluated “with a 9-item scale” (Carmeli *et al.*, 2010)

Psychological safety: - PS “has been assessed with a 3-item” scale (May *et al.*, 2004)

Thriving at work:- TAW has been assessed with “a 10-item scale” (Porath *et al.*, 2012)

Data Analysis and Interpretation

In PLS-SEM, the measurement model serves as basis for quality assessment of the construct. This starts with analysis of factor loading (Table 2) which is then followed by the determination of the construct’s reliability (Table 3), Convergent validity (Table 4 and 5) and Discriminant validity (Table 6 and 7). Furthermore, structural model (Table 8 and 9) evaluates the relevance and path co-efficient i.e., to analyse the interconnection of one variable with other.

Measurement Model

Table 2: Measurement Model (Factor loadings)

“Construct	Scale items	Factor loadings
Inclusive leadership	IL 1	0.76
	IL 2	0.804
	IL 3	0.862
	IL 4	0.824
	IL 5	0.85
	IL 6	0.87
	IL 7	0.862
	IL 8	0.78
	IL 9	0.82
Psychological safety	PS 1	0.924
	PS 2	0.882
	PS 3”	0.926

Source: Author compilation

Table 2 represents factor loading of each item found to be >0.7, i.e., above accepted area (Hair *et al.*, 2019), indicating items in the pertinent construct adequately represent their respective variables

Table 3: Measurement Model (Construct Reliability analysis)

“Construct	Scale items	Composite Reliability	Cronbach Alpha
Inclusive leadership	IL 1	0.952	0.924
	IL 2		
	IL 3		
	IL 4		
	IL 5		
	IL 6		
	IL 7		
	IL 8		
	IL 9		
Psychological safety	PS 1	0.942	0.894
	PS 2		
	PS 3”		

Source: Author compilation

In Table 3, Composite “reliability (CR) values of the constructs were found to be higher than accepted value of 0.7 (Hair *et al.*, 2014), and Cronbach's alpha values were greater than accepted value of 0.7. Subsequently, the construct reliability” was proved.

Table 4: Measurement Model (Construct Convergent validity)

Constructs	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Inclusive leadership	0.662
Psychological safety	0.842

Source: Author compilation

In Table 4, constructs convergent validity was ascertained. Convergent validity is the extent to which several methods of evaluating the same idea yields consistent results (Bagozzi *et al.*, 1991). Here, each constructs Average variance extracted was above 0.5 (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 5: Measurement Model (Construct validity of formative scale i.e., Thriving at work)

Construct	Sub-dimension	Items	Weight	VIF	t-value
Thriving at work	Learning	L1	0.438	1.34	23.52**
		L2	0.434	1.42	
		L3	0.446	1.467	
	Vitality	V1	0.337	2.7	16.46**
		V2	0.234	1.44	
		V3	0.348	2.74	
		V4	0.308	2.28	

** p<0.001 (VIF-Variance inflation factor)

To evaluate the construct validity of formative construct (Thriving at work), variance inflation factor, t-statistics and outer weights were used (Hair *et al.*, 2018). Values of the variance inflation factors were found to be less than 3 and t-values of all dimensions of the formative constructs were significant.

Table 6: Measurement model (Discriminant validity i.e., Fornell- Larcker's Criterion)

	IL	TAW	PS
IL	0.89		
TAW	0.62	0.88	
PS	0.48	0.92	0.9

Source: Author compilation

Table 7: Measurement model (Discriminant validity i.e., HTMT Ratio)

	IL	TAW	PS
IL			
TAW	0.84		
PS	0.46	0.84	

Source: Author compilation

The HTMT ratio test and discriminant validity were employed to assess Fornell-larcker. Fornell Larcker determines whether or not the AVE square root value of each variable exceeds its intended connection with any other research constructs. HTMT levels were discovered to be greater than recommended limit of 0.85 (Henseler *et al.*, 2016).

Structural model

Table 8: Structural Model (Direct Effect)

“Relationship	Path Co-efficient	T-Statistics	p values	Outcome
IL ---> TAW	0.66	13.68	0	Significant
IL ---> PS	0.48	6.48	0	Significant
PS ---> TAW	0.334	3.326	0.002	Significant
IL- Inclusive leadership; PS- Psychological” safety; TAW- Thriving at work				

Source: Author compilation

We investigated the each construct affected the others directly. Results showed an important association among IL and “TAW ($\beta = 0.66$, $p < 0.005$), which validated the hypothesis first (H1). Moreover, when mediating variable PS is taken into account, we find a positive association among PS and TAW ($\beta = 0.334$, $p < 0.005$) as well as between IL and PS ($\beta = 0.48$, $p < 0.005$). The hypothesis second (H2) and hypothesis” third (H3) are both supported by these results.

Table 9: Structural Model (Indirect Effect)

“Relationship	Path Co-efficient	T-Statistics	p values	Outcome
IL ---> PS ---> TAW	0.063	2.367	0.002	Significant
IL- Inclusive leadership; PS- Psychological” safety; TAW- Thriving at work				

Source: Author compilation

Additionally, using PS as a mediator, we observed indirect effects of IL on TAW. The findings support our fourth hypothesis (H4) by showing the PS mediates relationship among IL and TAW ($\beta = 0.063$, $p < 0.005$).

Findings

A workplace where each team member feels empowered, valued, and respected is fostered through IL, and this leads to better decision-making, higher employee morale as well as employee engagement. The researcher postulated that there is a favorable correlation between IL and “TAW. The data analysis outcomes show a positive correlation among TAW and IL ($\beta = 0.66$, $p < 0.005$). This is in line with past research on TAW and IL (Zeng *et al.*, 2020; Fang *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, outcomes” display existence of IL results in employees feeling psychologically safe, regardless of whether this is a positive effect or not ($\beta = 0.48$, $p < 0.005$). Outcomes so align with previous research on PS and IL (Vakira *et al.*, 2023; Siyal, 2023; Fu *et al.*, 2022). Similarly, study found PS increases TAW, meaning that when an employee feels free to show their opinions to take calculated risks without fear about the consequences, they are likely to promote their overall wellbeing, which

leads to TAW ($\beta=0.334$, $\rho<0.005$). Moreover, this study originates that relationship among IL and TAW is positively mediated by PS ($\beta=0.063$, $\rho<0.005$).

Implications

The work enhances to the corpus of knowledge in a number of significant ways. It first illustrates how IL leads to the success of employees in Guwahati's hotel sector. The researcher offers empirical evidence supporting the positive relation between IL & TAW, which is in line with earlier research on benefits of IL (Zeng *et al.*, 2020; Rosari *et al.*, 2025). Although relations among PS, TAW, and IL were strengthening recently, there aren't many studies specifically examining these elements interact in Guwahati's hotel sector. Second, the significance of self-determination exchange theory is reinforced by this study. Self-determination theory emphasizes on assembly three psychological demands of people: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. By creating a PS environment that meets needs of staff, inclusive leaders promote TAW. Additionally, various earlier research concentrated on ethical leadership (Yousaf *et al.*, 2019; Nguyen, 2025), Empowering leadership (Ali *et al.*, 2018; Li *et al.*, 2016), Servant leadership (Jiang and Wei, 2024; Wang *et al.*, 2019; Sheikh *et al.*, 2019), Transformational leadership (Lin *et al.*, 2020), Authentic leadership (Durrah *et al.*, 2024; Mortier *et al.*, 2016), however such studies centered on the characteristics of leader in promoting TAW. The research aims to illustrate significance of their followers and leaders in enhancing IL. Our understanding of how to encourage managers and leaders to create a positive and psychologically safe workspace where staff may freely voice their opinions in order to foster friendly relationships among coworkers within the company will therefore be strengthened by this study.

Conclusions, Limitations and Future Directions

In today's evolving world, thriving is essential for both employees and organization's overall success. In order to investigate the relationship among PS, TAW, along with IL, the experiment has been conducted. Through mediation of PS, we conclude that there is an important and relevant relation between IL and TAW. It thus offers insights and empirical proofs to bolster the idea that IL behaviour of leaders enables in shaping a person's acumen that the organization is good for generating advantageous benefits for the organization.

Despite its implications, like any other study, this too has its own limitations. First, the study was confined on collecting information from a single source i.e., hospitality industry personnel's which may not be able to raise the confidence in results due to single source effects. Future studies can try to test the relationship by including responses of both employers and employees for better results. Second, this study concentrated on only one type of positive Leadership style such as IL. Future studies can try to include various leadership styles like, ethical leadership, transformational leadership and many more with similar dependent variables to increase robustness of findings. Third, the research focussed on collecting data from employees at Guwahati alone which might fail to generalize. Therefore, future studies can test the relationships with larger sample size.

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