

# The Impact of Inclusive Leadership on Employee Well-being: The Mediating Role of Organizational Trust

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## Abstract

In recent years, people pay more and more attention to employees' work experience and mental health, especially employee well-being. Leadership style is one of the factors that affect employee well-being. Recently, there have been more and more researches on inclusive leadership in China. However, the research on the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee well-being in China is still in its infancy, and the mechanism between the two still needs to be further studied. This paper investigates the mediating effect of organizational trust on the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee well-being by using a questionnaire survey of Chinese workers. Based on a survey of 153 participants, the results show that organizational trust can mediate the positive impact of inclusive leadership on employee well-being. At the same time, after the addition of organizational trust as an intermediate variable, the study found that the establishment of organizational trust has a driving effect on improving employee well-being.

**Keywords:** inclusive leadership, employee well-being, organizational trust

## 1. Introduction

With the rapid development of social economy, the competition between enterprises is becoming more and more fierce, and the employees are also facing various pressures. For example, employees in the Internet industry often work overtime, and the topic of "996" has been hotly discussed by the public. Study shows that this can lead to lower job satisfaction, burnout and even great physical and mental harm (Messersmith, 2012). So, the concept of "humanistic management" gradually gains popular support. Employees' emotional experience at work is becoming an important topic that managers and enterprises must pay attention to.

Employee well-being refers to the physical, mental, and emotional health of the employee in and out of the workplace (Warr, 1978), and it is an important research content of humanistic management. Studies had shown that employee well-being is associated with performance (Staw, 1994). Therefore, how to effectively improve employee well-being at work has become one of the important themes of human resource management.

As a leadership style based on the concept of "humanistic management", inclusive leadership is one of the hottest research fields in recent years. A large number of studies (Hirak, 2011; Weiss, 2018) have focused on the effects of inclusive leadership on employees, including how it affects employees' creativity, voice behavior, task performance, etc. However, there are few studies focusing on the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee well-being.

In addition, compared to older employees, contemporary young employees have more ideas of their own, not obedient to rigid leadership or organization. Therefore, traditional empowering leadership, which lacks of enough communication and trust, will only increase the negative emotional experience of contemporary employees, resulting in low level of personal and organizational performance, and even employees' demission behavior, which are all signs of a lack of organizational trust. There were existing literature focusing on the mediating role of trust in inclusive leadership and employee well-being. Therefore, to better understand and expand this psychological mechanism, organizational trust is also taken into consideration to be confirmed if it could act as a mediator. Previous studies had shown that organizational trust positively supports organizational identity (Gao, 2018; Liu et al., 2016) and organizational identity is positively correlated with employee well-being (Ren, 2015).

Therefore, this study focuses on how inclusive leadership influences the employee well-being by introducing the mediator of organizational trust. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee well-being, and to verify the mediating role of organizational trust at the individual level. At the same time, it is hoped that this study has certain guiding and practical significance for enterprises to strengthen employees' trust and sense of belonging in the organization, enhance their initiative in work, and then increase employee well-being.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Theoretical foundation

#### 2.1.1 Inclusive leadership

##### 2.1.1.1 Definition of inclusive leadership

Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) first proposed the concept of inclusive leadership style in the field of management. They believed that "inclusive leadership" refers to a relationship-based leadership style that includes two aspects. Firstly, managers who adopt this leadership style will recognize and appreciate the contributions made by employees; Secondly, managers who adopt this leadership style will be willing to listen to and accept the suggestions and opinions of their subordinates. Hollander (2012) defined inclusive leadership as an interdependent interpersonal relationship with common goals and visions that both organization and individual can be win-win. Carmeli & Ziv (2010) believed that inclusive leadership is a specific relational leadership style, which refers to "leaders who exhibit openness, accessibility and availability when interacting with their followers".

Since 2011, Chinese scholars have begun to pay attention to the concept of inclusive leadership style. Zhu (2011) believed that inclusive leadership is a new leadership method that guides, supports and encourages team members to achieve organizational goals, and its main connotation is reflected in four aspects: openness, democracy, humanism and justice. Gao (2012) believed that inclusive leadership is a dynamic system. In order to strengthen the core capabilities of enterprises and complete organizational tasks with optimal efficiency, three factors—equal opportunities, fair distribution and sharing of development achievements—should be emphasized in the leadership process. Li et al. (2012) believed that inclusive leadership style is not a unilateral leadership process, but a mutual relationship generated based on the interaction between the leader and employees. He (2014) believed that inclusive leadership is characterized by respect, tolerance and altruism, and is manifested by participation, openness and sharing. Fang (2014) proposed that inclusive leaders should encourage horizontal communication and cooperation, tolerate the failure of employees and give guidance, be reasonably tolerant to members, be fair to members.

##### 2.1.1.2 Measurement of inclusive leadership

Through reading and summarizing the literature, although Nembhard & Edmondson (2006) first introduced the concept of inclusive leadership into research in the field of management, they did not give a clear definition. Instead, they regarded it as a single-dimension concept and developed a single-dimension scale of inclusive leadership based on this, consisting of three items. Carmeli & Ziv (2010) proposed that inclusive leadership should be a three-dimensional concept based on the research of Nembhard & Edmondson (2006), namely openness, accessibility and accessibility. Based on these three dimensions, they developed a scale with a total of 9 items.

In recent years, Chinese scholars have also analyzed the structure of inclusive leadership. Zhu (2011) & He (2014) both conducted research on the concept of inclusive leadership, but unfortunately, they did not develop a measurement scale for empirical research.

Fang (2014) proposed that inclusive leadership should include three dimensions: "embrace ideas and failures", "recognition and cultivation", and "fair treatment". On this basis, he developed a three-dimensional scale suitable for Chinese situation. In addition, in another study for China's scientific research team in universities, he developed a new five-dimension scale with 19 items in total.

Based on the Chinese organizational context, Peng et al. (2017) used qualitative and quantitative research methods, proposing that the concept of inclusive leadership in the Chinese context should include "accommodating others", "allowing mistakes", "respecting subordinates", "recognizing subordinates" and "showing sympathy for subordinates". Based on this, a five-dimensional localized measurement scale with 22 items was developed.

This definition of inclusive leadership has always been controversial among scholars, and there is no conclusion yet. However, from the perspective of the scale, it can be seen that most scholars have taken inclusiveness as the focus of the measurement of inclusive leadership, and developed the scale based on this. Although Chinese scholars have developed corresponding inclusive leadership measurement scales based on the specific context of Chinese organizations, their applicable objects are still limited. Carmeli & Ziv (2010) developed a three-dimensional 9-item scale based on the

research of Nembhard & Edmondson (2006), which is the most widely recognized inclusive leadership measurement scale. Based on the above considerations, this study will adopt the scale developed by Carmeli & Ziv (2010).

### 2.1.2 Employee well-being

#### 2.1.2.1 Definition of employee well-being

With the development of society, happiness has gradually become the focus of people's attention. Therefore, scholars in different fields have conducted researches on happiness. Especially in recent years, with the development of positive psychology, scholars have begun to discuss subjective well-being and psychological well-being from a positive perspective (Seligman, 2002). Later, with the development of positive organizational behavior proposed by scholars represented by Luthans (2002) and others, the research on well-being was extended to the fields of management and organizational behavior. Only then did the research on employee well-being in organizations gradually receive more attention (Sonnetag & Llies, 2011).

In recent years, more and more scholars have paid attention to the construction of employee well-being and conducted in-depth discussions on its definition. At the beginning, some scholars only defined employee well-being as a psychological and health state at work, and measured employee well-being with related concepts such as job satisfaction, job burnout, emotional exhaustion, or work stress (Katariina & Nurmi, 2004; Kausto et al., 2005; Wright & Cropanzano, 2004). Some other scholars thought that previous definitions lacked attention to work emotion, so they adopted positive and negative emotion to measure employee well-being (Diener et al., 1995; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Later, some scholars put forward that the definition of employee well-being was too narrow, which should not only focus on the state at work, but also pay attention to all the psychological feelings and health conditions in non-work aspects. For example, Vanhala & Tuomi (2006) believed that employee well-being should include holistic happiness, job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion. Ilies et al. (2007) believed that employee well-being could be considered from both personal and environmental aspects, and these two aspects could be divided into working level and non-working level. Lu et al. (2006) divided employee well-being into job satisfaction, family satisfaction, life satisfaction and positive emotion. According to Diener and his collaborators, employee well-being should also include negative emotions (Diener & Ryan, 2009; Diener & Seligman, 2002). As the discussion deepened, the definition and connotation of employee well-being continue to expand, and more and more researchers believe that employees' subjective well-being, psychological well-being, job satisfaction and positive and negative emotions should be organically integrated (Zou et al., 2015). Zheng et al. (2015) proposed from the perspective of integration that employee well-being is not only the cognition and perception of employee satisfaction at work and life level, but also the emotional psychological experience and satisfaction state displayed at work level and non-work level. It mainly includes three aspects, namely employee's life well-being, employee's work well-being and employee's psychological well-being.

#### 2.1.2.2 Measurement of employee well-being

Different scholars put forward different views on the measurement method of employee well-being. Diener & Ryan (2009) believed that employee well-being should include three dimensions: positive affect at work, negative affect at work, and overall job satisfaction. The first two dimensions are used to evaluate emotion, while the last two dimensions are used to evaluate cognition. And on this basis, they compiled a well-being scale with 5 items. Ryff & Carol (1989) divided well-being into six dimensions: autonomy, environmental control, personal growth, interpersonal relationship, life goals and self-acceptance. This division of well-being dimensions played an important role in the later development of the theory of employee well-being. Wen (2006) formed seven dimensions of employee well-being based on the division by Ryff & Carol, which includes job value, welfare and treatment, development prospect, environmental control, self-acceptance level, interpersonal relationship level and autonomy. In addition, Zheng et al. (2015) developed an effective measurement scale based on qualitative and quantitative research.

At present, there is no consensus among scholars at home and abroad on the scale of employee well-being, while the scale developed by Zheng et al. (2015) is based on the Chinese situation, which is applicable for this study. So, this study will adopt the operational definition of employee well-being and the scale developed by Zheng et al. (2015)

### 2.1.3 Organizational trust

#### 2.1.3.1 Definition of organizational trust

Organizational trust has become an important research topic in organizational behavior. From the perspective of organizational behavior, organizational trust is an important part of organizational culture and a very important social capital, which will have a huge impact on the behavior of employees and the entire organization. The concept of organizational trust climate was proposed by Costigan et al. (1998) which was described as a special organizational climate. Since organizational trust is an individual's comprehensive judgment of its environment, including multiple

components, McCauley & Kuhnert (1998) first proposed that organizational trust should cover both horizontal level trust and vertical level trust. The so-called horizontal level trust mainly refers to an individual's trust in other team members or colleagues, while the vertical level of trust mainly refers to individuals' trust in their direct leaders, senior managers and subordinates. At the same time, they emphasized that in order to construct a comprehensive concept of organizational trust, researchers should also take into account the individual's trust in the people and institutions of the organization. Recently, organizational trust has been defined as the degree of trust between subordinates and leaders, which reflects the level of trust in the organization and leadership among subordinates (Zeng, 2017).

### 2.1.3.2 Measurement of organizational trust

Mayer et al. (1995) divided organizational trust into power type, goodwill type and integrity type. Nyhan & Marlowe (1997) divided organizational trust into two dimensions, system trust and interpersonal trust. Rousseau et al. (1998) divided organizational trust into dimensions from the perspective of contract, believing that intimidation, relationship and system are all types of organizational trust. McAllister (1995) divided organizational trust into two dimensions, namely cognitive trust and emotional trust. Based on these two dimensions, the organizational trust measurement scale is developed, which consists of 11 measurement items.

With a high reliability, the scale developed by McAllister's (1995) is the most widely-cited organizational trust measurement scale. This study will also adopt the operational definition of organizational trust and the scale developed by him.

## 2.2 Model development and hypotheses

### 2.2.1 Relationship between inclusive leadership and employee well-being

Studies have confirmed that superior managers who adopt inclusive leadership style are more likely to form a good interactive relationship with employees (Gao, 2012). For subordinate employees, the relationship with superior managers is often closely related to the relationship between individuals and organizations. Therefore, the relationship with superior managers is an important part of an employee's working environment.

The working environment, including the sense of work value, job competency and the matching degree of work and employees' interests, is important for employee well-being. The research found that when superior managers adopt inclusive leadership style, they will more recognize and appreciate the contributions made by subordinates, especially the contributions that are beneficial to the organization outside of work (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). This management mode can enhance employees' organizational commitment and thus enhance their recognition of work value. In addition, this kind of managers is good at listening to employees' opinions and suggestions, so employees can participate in decision-making and goal setting. Employees will have a stronger acceptance of the goals they set, thus generating a higher sense of job success and work interest.

Herrbach & Mignonac (2003) proved that employee well-being can be improved when work can provide employees with a high sense of meaning. Under inclusive leadership, positive interaction can be formed between subordinate employees and superior managers, and subordinate employees can effectively participate in goal setting, so as to understand more sufficient information about task, which can promote employees to form a stronger sense of work significance. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*Hypothesis 1: Inclusive leadership is positively related to employee well-being.*

### 2.2.2 Relationship between inclusive leadership and organizational trust

Trust is essential in our lives, especially in social communication, and we tend to evaluate others' behaviors and personalities according to the contact and communication. According to Zeng's definition of organizational trust, organizational trust is the level of trust between subordinates and leaders, which reflects the level of trust in the organization and leadership among subordinates (Zeng, 2017). Chen (2015) used the transformational leadership scales to conduct research and found that the three dimensions of transformational leadership can significantly affect organizational trust. Zeng (2017) also studied the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational trust, finding that organizational trust is a mediator of the relationship between transformational leadership, job satisfaction and turnover intention. Therefore, organizational trust is closely related to leadership style, and leadership style also has an important impact on organizational trust. As one of the relational leaderships, inclusive leadership requires leaders to care about subordinates, listen to their opinions and suggestions, and accept new ideas and technologies beneficial to work and organizational goals. To sum up, inclusive leadership style is conducive to creating an organizational atmosphere and enhancing employees' organizational trust through leaders' behavior in daily work. Based on this, hypothesis is proposed:

*Hypothesis 2: Inclusive leadership is positively related to organizational trust.*

### 2.2.3 Relationship between organizational trust and employee well-being

Scholars represented by Diener (2004) found a very close relationship between job satisfaction and employee well-being. At the same time, a large number of scholars have conducted theoretical or empirical studies on the relationship between organizational trust and job satisfaction and find that there are some connections between the two factors. For example, study has found that organizational trust has a significant positive predictive effect on job satisfaction and emotional commitment in terms of individuals (Yu et al., 2007). In addition, some scholars believe that organizational factors and interpersonal factors are important influencing factors of employee well-being, and interpersonal trust and systematic trust in organizational trust will have a significant impact on interpersonal relationship and organization respectively (Alfredo et al., 2009). Based on the above literature, employees are more likely to feel safe and happy at work when they build trust in the organization, which in turn may increase their well-being. So, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*Hypothesis 3: Organizational trust is positively related to employee well-being.*

### 2.2.4 The mediating role of organizational trust

With a better organizational environment, employees can get more resources, which is more conducive to the smooth development of work and the stability of employees. And it can also enhance employees' understanding of the organization, believing that the organization can bring due benefits to them and thus enhancing the trust of the organization. At the same time, an open-minded leadership style allows employees to enjoy more freedom in their work, which means they can get more opportunities to realize their own value, thus enhancing the organizational trust.

Inclusive leadership focuses on the communication and interaction between the leader and the subordinate employees. Through the inclusive behaviors of the leader, the actions and attitudes of the subordinate employees are influenced, and their job satisfaction and happiness are improved, so as to improve their organizational trust. Song & Liu (2014) studied the relationship between leader's empowering behavior, organizational trust and employee voice behavior, and the empirical results show that leader's empowering behavior is conducive to improving employee voice behavior, and organizational trust plays a partial intermediary role in it. Zhang (2014) found that transformational leadership has a significant positive impact on employees' innovation behavior, and organizational trust plays a partial intermediary role in both. Leaders can stimulate employees' innovation enthusiasm by creating a good communication and organizational trust environment.

Therefore, it is speculated that organizational trust has a mediating effect on the relationship between leadership behavior or leadership style and employee behavior. Based on this, hypothesis is proposed:

*Hypothesis 4: Organizational trust can mediate the effect of inclusive leadership on employee well-being.*

In summary, the purpose of this study is to explore the mechanism of the influence of inclusive leadership on employee well-being. Based on previous studies, we believe that organizational trust mediates the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee well-being. Therefore, this study includes organizational trust as a mediating variable into the model and conducts an empirical study on the relationship between inclusive leadership, organizational trust and employee well-being. The theoretical model of this study is as follows:

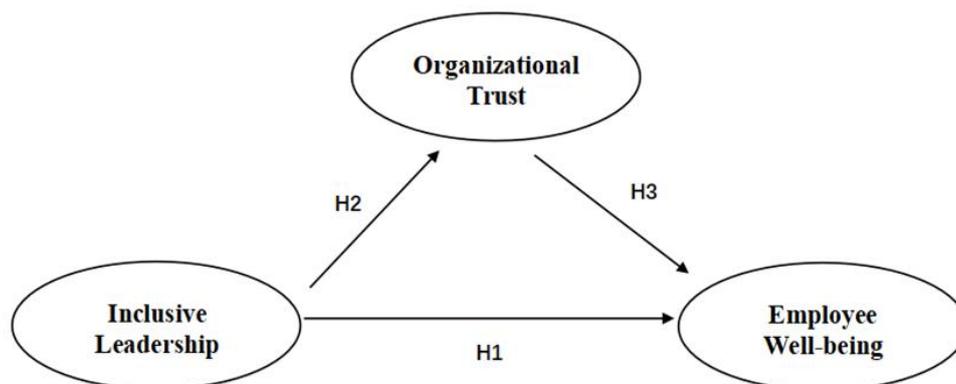


Figure 1. Theoretical model

### 3. Methodology

This study intends to conduct an empirical study on the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee well-being. As hypothesis testing is required and the measurement of variables needs to be quantified, this study will adopt quantitative research method.

The first step is to select appropriate variable measurement scales to design a questionnaire. Then, the questionnaire will be distributed to the respondents, and in order to understand the sample characteristics of the collected data, they will be subjected to sample distribution analysis. The assessment of measurement model will also be conducted, including reliability and validity analysis. Finally, this study will use correlation analysis and regression analysis to test the structural models and hypotheses presented above.

#### 3.1 Variable measurement scale design

All items are measured on a 5-point Likert scale, and the respondents are asked to choose from "1-strongly disagree" to "5-strongly agree" according to the degree of agreement with each statement. Options 1 to 5 are scored 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively. Each question is set as a required answer, no skipping is allowed.

##### 3.1.1 Measurement scale of inclusive leadership

The recently developed and validated Inclusive Leadership Questionnaire (ILQ) ( $\alpha=0.89$ ) is used in this study (Carmeli & Ziv, 2010). They classified inclusive leadership as openness, accessibility and availability. The validity of ILQ has been tested and supported by Hira, Peng, Carmeli and Schaubroeck (2011).

In the study, participants rate their leaders on inclusive characteristics. For example: "The manager is open to hear new ideas"; "The manager is available for consultation on problems".

##### 3.1.2 Measurement scale of employee well-being

This paper partly adopts the scale developed by Zheng et al. (2015) to measure employee well-being. This scale is developed based on the Chinese situation, which is applicable for this study. The internal consistency coefficient of this scale is 0.88. This scale contains three dimensions: work well-being, life well-being and psychological well-being. This study mainly focuses on the perspective of working environment, so only six questions related to work well-being are adopted.

In the study, respondents are asked to say how satisfied and happy they are with their jobs. For example: "I am satisfied with my work responsibilities." "In general, I feel fairly satisfied with my present job."

##### 3.1.3 Measurement scale of organizational trust

The measurement scale of organizational trust variables is the Effective Organizational Trust Questionnaire (OTQ) ( $\alpha=0.95$ ) developed by McAllister (1995), which contains two dimensions—cognitive trust and emotional trust. This scale has high reliability, which has been widely cited by many scholars and has been verified by Chen (2015) and other scholars.

In the study, respondents are asked to express their actual feeling and experience in the work. For example: "I have great faith in my leader." and "I believe my leader takes the company and all the staff into consideration."

#### 3.2 Data collection and sample description analysis

##### 3.2.1 Data collection

Since there is no public data available, questionnaire survey is used to collect data. The distribution of questionnaires mainly depends on my own social resources and family resources. In this study, Sojump is used to collect online data, and the questionnaire is anonymous, which is conducive to reducing the defensive psychology of respondents and ensuring the authenticity of the questionnaire. Considering the necessary time required to fill in the questionnaire, the necessary time is estimated before the questionnaire is issued and it is believed that the time required to finish the questionnaire is 210 seconds. Therefore, the effective filling time of the questionnaire is set to be more than 180 seconds. At the same time, the questionnaire is also distributed offline. In order to ensure regional diversity, the questionnaire is distributed to employees from all over the country, but most of them come from Guangdong.

After the questionnaires are distributed and collected, the questionnaires are screened. For the data collected in Sojump, the detailed results are directly downloaded in the form of Excel, and the invalid questionnaires are eliminated. The invalid questionnaires are as follows: a) In the whole questionnaire, all the items of the research variables are given the same score. b) More than two-thirds of the study variables are rated as 3 points. c) The answers present obvious patterns. If any of the above conditions appear on the questionnaire, it will be eliminated. In the end, a total of 178 questionnaires are collected by these two methods, of which 153 are valid, with effective recovery rate of 85.96%.

## 3.2.2 Sample description analysis

Table 1. Sample distribution analysis

Variables	Classifications	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	60	39.22%
	Female	93	60.78%
Age	≤29	110	71.90%
	30-39	23	15.03%
	40-49	18	11.76%
	50-60	2	1.31%
Education background	High school and below	3	1.96%
	Junior college	5	3.27%
	Undergraduate	123	80.39%
	Master or above	22	14.38%

It can be seen from Table 1 that in terms of gender, there are 93 females among the respondents, accounting for 60.78%, while 60 males accounts for 39.22%. In terms of age, the majority of respondents are under the age of 29, the proportion of which is 71.9%, and the proportion of people over 50 years old is very small, only 1.31%. It can be seen that the respondents are young, most of whom are post-90s. From the perspective of educational background, undergraduates account for 80.39%, and only 1.96% are high school and below. It can be seen that the respondents are highly educated, most of whom have bachelor degree or above, and the distribution of education background is reasonable.

#### 4. Data analysis

##### 4.1 Descriptive statistical analysis

In order to further understand the distribution of the variables studied in this paper, the maximum value, minimum value, mean value and standard difference are tested.

Table 2. Descriptive analysis

Variables	Sample sizes	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Inclusive Leadership	153	1	5	3.756	0.721
Employee Well-being		1	5	3.390	0.773
Organizational Trust		1	5	3.247	0.730

It can be seen from the above table, inclusive leadership, employee well-being and organizational trust all satisfy the standard deviation less than the mean value, which indicates that the sample data of this study is suitable for modeling and analysis.

The above table shows that the average level of inclusive leadership is 3.756, higher than the median value of 3, indicating that the overall level of inclusive leadership perceived by respondents is above the average level. The mean value of employee well-being is 3.390, higher than the median value 3, indicating that the average level of employee well-being of the respondents in this survey is above the average level. The mean value of organizational trust is 3.247, higher than the median value of 3, indicating that the respondents' organizational trust is relatively high.

On the whole, the standard deviation of each variable is small, indicating that the distribution of data is relatively balanced and the volatility is small, so the sample has good representativeness and reliability.

##### 4.2 The assessment of measurement model

###### 4.2.1 Reliability analysis

Before the formal regression analysis of the data, the reliability of scales should be tested. Therefore, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient and Composite Reliability (CR) are used to analyze the reliability of inclusive leadership, organizational trust and employee well-being scale. The reliability analysis results of the three scales are shown in Table 3:

Table 3. Scale reliabilities and average variance extracted

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Inclusive Leadership	0.891	0.892	0.573
Employee Well-being	0.879	0.879	0.672
Organizational Trust	0.953	0.955	0.701

It can be seen from Table 3 that the  $\alpha$  coefficients of the scale of inclusive leadership, organizational trust and employee voice behavior are all above 0.8, indicating the high internal consistency of these three scales. Secondly, the composite reliability and average variance extracted values are higher than the required 0.6 and 0.5 respectively, indicating that these three scales all have high reliability.

#### 4.2.2 Validity analysis

Validity analysis mainly includes content validity and structure validity. These three scales used in this study are all mature scales derived from authoritative literature, which has been widely verified in empirical studies. In addition, these three scales basically cover the factors affecting inclusive leadership, organizational trust and employee well-being, which shows that these scales have good content validity. So, this study no longer validates content validity, but only structure validity.

Table 4. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure and Bartlett's Test

Variables	KMO	Bartlett's Test		
		Approx. Chi-square	df	Sig.
Inclusive Leadership	0.936	2536.856	36	0.00
Employee Well-being	0.852	2983.192	66	0.00
Organizational Trust	0.903	1566.255	28	0.00

The Test results are shown in Table 4. The KMO values of inclusive leadership, organizational trust and employee well-being are all higher than 0.8. Bartlett's Test results show that the P-values of inclusive leadership, employee well-being and organizational trust are less than 0.01, which means that the scales used in this study are of good structural validity.

### 4.3 The assessment of structural model

#### 4.3.1 Correlation analysis

In order to verify whether there is a certain degree of correlation between variables and provide a basis for regression analysis, the correlation analysis on sample data is conducted. The test results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Correlation analysis results

Variables	Inclusive Leadership	Employee Well-being	Organizational Trust
Inclusive Leadership	1		
Employee Well-being	0.356**	1	
Organizational Trust	0.613**	0.713**	1

Note :  $<$  \*\*:  $P < 0.01$

(two-tailed test)

The results show that inclusive leadership is significantly positively correlated with employee well-being ( $r=0.356$ ,  $p<0.01$ ); there is a significant positive correlation between inclusive leadership and organizational trust ( $r=0.613$ ,  $p<0.01$ ); there is a significant positive correlation between employee well-being and organizational trust ( $r=0.713$ ,  $p<0.01$ );

The data show that there is a significant correlation between each variable and the correlation coefficients are all less

than 0.8, so there is no multicollinearity problem among variables. The results show that this study is suitable for follow-up regression analysis.

#### 4.3.2 Regression analysis

##### 4.3.2.1 Regression analysis of the impact of inclusive leadership on employee well-being

In order to further explore the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee well-being, gender, age and education background are used as control variables, and employee well-being is used as dependent variable, and inclusive leadership is used as independent variable to conduct linear regression analysis. The results are shown in Table 6:

Table 6. Regression analysis of the impact of inclusive leadership on employee well-being

Data types	Variables	Employee well-being	
		M1	M2
Control variables	Gender	0.083	0.044
	Age	0.012	0.010
	Education background	0.100*	0.050
Independent variable	Inclusive leadership		0.267***
Results	R <sup>2</sup>	0.040	0.145
	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.025	0.129
	F	2.604*	8.852***

Note: \*:  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*:  $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*:  $P < 0.001$  (two-tailed test)

In Table 6, M1 is a model composed of employee well-being as a dependent variable and gender, age and education background as control variables. M2 is a model composed of inclusive leadership on the basis of M1. It can be seen from M2 that F value of model is 8.852, and is in the range of  $p < 0.001$ ; the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of the model is 0.129, indicating that M2 is 12.9% more explanatory than M1. The regression coefficient is  $0.267 > 0$  ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Therefore, *Hypothesis 1* is supported: inclusive leadership is positively related to employee well-being.

##### 4.3.2.2 Regression analysis of the impact of inclusive leadership on organizational trust

In order to further explore the relationship between inclusive leadership and organizational trust, gender, age and educational background are used as control variables, organizational trust is used as dependent variable, and inclusive leadership is used as independent variable to conduct linear regression analysis. The results are shown in Table 7:

Table 7. Regression analysis of the impact of inclusive leadership on organizational trust

Data types	Variables	Organizational trust	
		M3	M4
Control variables	Gender	0.009	-0.084
	Age	0.024*	0.020*
	Education background	0.200***	0.080
Independent variable	Inclusive leadership		0.629***
Results	R <sup>2</sup>	0.105	0.520
	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.091	0.511
	F	7.335***	56.277***

Note: \*:  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*:  $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*:  $P < 0.001$  (two-tailed test)

In Table 7, M3 is a model composed of organizational trust as the dependent variable and gender, age and education background as the control variables. M4 is a model composed of inclusive leadership on the basis of M3. It can be seen from M4 that F value of model is 56.277, and is in the range of  $p < 0.001$ . The adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of the model is 0.511,

indicating that the interpretation amount of M4 increases by 51.1% compared with M3. The regression coefficient is  $0.629 > 0$  ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Therefore, *Hypothesis 2* is supported: inclusive leadership is positively related to organizational trust.

#### 4.3.2.3 Regression analysis of the impact of organizational trust on employee well-being

In order to further explore the relationship between organizational trust and employee well-being, gender, age and educational background are taken as control variables, employee happiness as dependent variable and organizational trust as independent variable to conduct linear regression analysis. The results are shown in Table 8:

Table 8. Regression analysis of the impact of organizational trust on employee well-being

Data types	Variables	Employee well-being	
		M1	M5
Control variables	Gender	0.083	0.079
	Age	0.012	0.001
	Education background	0.100*	0.004
Independent variable	Organizational trust		0.480***
Results	R <sup>2</sup>	0.040	0.332
	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.025	0.319
	F	2.604*	25.804***

Note: \*:  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*:  $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*:  $P < 0.001$  (two-tailed test)

In Table 8, M1 is a model consisting of employee well-being as a dependent variable and gender, age and education background as control variables. M5 is a model consisting of organizational trust on the basis of M1. It can be seen from M5 that the model F value is 25.804, and the value is in the range of  $p < 0.001$ ; the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of the model is 0.319, indicating that the explanatory amount of M5 increases by 31.9% compared with that of M1. The regression coefficient is  $0.480 > 0$  ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Therefore, *Hypothesis 3* is supported: organizational trust is positively related to employee well-being.

#### 4.3.2.4 Test of the mediating role of organizational trust

The above regression results show that the inclusive leadership positively affects employee well-being, and organizational trust also has a positive influence on employee well-being. Therefore, a relational model consisting of control variables (gender, age and education), dependent variable (employee well-being), independent variable (inclusive leadership) and mediating variable (organizational trust) is constructed. Next, a three-step regression mediation test analysis is performed on the model, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Results of the test of mediating role of organizational trust

Data types	Variables	Employee well-being		
		M1	M2	M6
Control variables	Gender	0.083	0.044	0.088
	Age	0.012	0.010	0.000
	Education background	0.100*	0.050	0.007
Independent variable	Inclusive leadership		0.267***	-0.066
Mediation variable	Organizational trust			0.528***
Results	R <sup>2</sup>	0.040	0.145	0.335
	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.025	0.129	0.320
	F	2.604*	8.852***	22.388***

Note: \*:  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*:  $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*:  $P < 0.001$  (two-tailed test)

In Table 9, M1 is a model consisting of employee well-being as a dependent variable and gender, age and education background as control variables. M2 is a model consisting of inclusive leadership on the basis of M1. M6 is a model consisting of independent variable inclusive leadership and mediation variable organizational trust. It can be seen from M2 that F value of model is 8.852, and is in the range of  $p < 0.001$ ; the adjusted  $R^2$  of the model is 0.129, indicating that M2 is 12.9% more explanatory than M1. The regression coefficient is  $0.267 > 0$  ( $p < 0.001$ ).

It can be seen from M6 that F value of model is 22.388, and is in the range of  $p < 0.001$ ; the adjusted  $R^2$  of the model is 0.320, indicating that M6 is 32.0% more explanatory than M2, and the influence of inclusive leadership on dependent variables is no longer significant ( $\beta = -0.066$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), while organizational trust has a significant positive effect on the dependent variable of employee well-being ( $\beta = 0.528$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Therefore, it can be concluded that organizational trust plays a completely mediating role in the impact of inclusive leadership on employee well-being. So, *Hypothesis 4* is supported.

To sum up, multiple tests and analyses of sample data are carried out in the empirical analysis of this study, and the hypotheses proposed in the analysis are deduced and demonstrated. The final results are as follows:

Table 10. Results of hypothesis verification

	Hypothesis	Results
H1	Inclusive leadership is positively related to employee well-being	Supported
H2	Inclusive leadership is positively related to organizational trust	Supported
H3	Organizational trust is positively related to employee well-being	Supported
H4	Organizational trust can mediate the effect of inclusive leadership on employee well-being	Supported

#### 4.4 Findings

Based on the empirical analysis of valid questionnaires provided by 153 respondents, the findings are as follows:

##### 4.4.1 The positive impact of inclusive leadership on employee well-being

The study of Warr (2007) confirmed that external work characteristics are important factors affecting employee well-being, including job value, job competence, job autonomy, and the matching degree of work and employees' interests. When managers adopt an inclusive leadership style, they are more likely to recognize and appreciate the contributions of their subordinates. In this management style, the organizational commitment of employees can be greatly increased, so that employees more identify with the value of their work. Working in a recognized environment is a surefire way to improve employee well-being at work.

In this empirical study, the regression coefficient of inclusive leadership to employee well-being is 0.267, and there is a significant positive correlation between the two, which indicates that the more inclusive leadership styles a leader exhibits, the higher employee well-being will be.

##### 4.4.2 The positive impact of inclusive leadership on organizational trust

The results of this study indicate that inclusive leadership can positively affect employees' organizational trust to a large extent. If leaders give employees more opportunities to express themselves and listen humbly to the opinions and suggestions of employees, and show support by providing certain help or resources when they are in trouble, employees will believe that the leader is in their interests and consider that following him will lead to more room for growth. Therefore, the employees will trust the leader and organization, which leads to a high sense of organizational trust.

In this empirical study, the regression coefficient of inclusive leadership to organizational trust is 0.629, and there is a significant positive correlation between the two, which indicates that the more inclusive leadership styles a leader demonstrates, the higher organizational trust will be.

##### 4.4.3 The positive impact of organizational trust on employee well-being

The organizational trust comes from the trust of employees to others, especially their direct superior leaders. Leaders generally have advantages over their subordinates in some aspects, such as experience, interpersonal resources, information resources and so on. Employees' trust in their leaders depends on the extent to which their resources are used in work and whether they consider the development of their subordinates and the whole organization. Good organizational trust will form a good atmosphere in the enterprise, which makes employees more consciously forge ahead along the enterprise's goals. In this case, employees will feel that what they value is valued, and perceive that they are aligned with the values of the organization, thus generating a higher sense of work success and work interest.

In this empirical study, the regression coefficient of organizational trust and employee well-being is 0.480, and there is a significant positive correlation between the two, which indicates that the higher organizational trust is, the higher employee well-being will be.

#### 4.4.4 The mediating role of organizational trust on the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee well-being

Inclusive leadership will make employees have higher organizational trust, which is because the inclusive leadership emphasizes the attention and care of superiors to subordinates. Therefore, in the communication between leaders and subordinates, employees will perceive the warmth of the organization and enhance their trust in leaders and the organization. This is also conducive to reducing friction between employees and leaders, establishing a harmonious and effective two-way relationship, and make it easier for leaders and employees to realize mutual recognition. Secondly, by tolerating employees' failures and allowing them to participate in decision-making, leaders can make employees more likely to have a sense of self-efficacy and competence for work, thus improving subordinates' job satisfaction, which is an important part of employee well-being.

This empirical study confirms that organizational trust is a complete mediator between inclusive leadership and employee well-being.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper explores the influence mechanism of inclusive leadership on employee well-being, and further analyzes the mediating role of organizational trust, so as to provide suggestions for effectively improving employee well-being.

### 5.1 Practical implications and significance

This study investigates the mechanism of inclusive leadership on employee well-being to prove that the former has a positive effect on the latter. It will lay a certain foundation for future research, and it will also have a certain enlightenment effect on the management of enterprises. Based on the results of theoretical analysis and empirical research, this study puts forward the following management recommendations:

#### 5.1.1 Recruit and develop inclusive leaders

When recruiting leaders, enterprises should not only consider his working techniques and leadership skills, but also consider whether the interviewees show inclusive behaviors, such as treating employees fairly, respecting employees' achievements and tolerating employees' occasional mistakes. An inclusive leadership style can be roughly judged in the following three ways. Firstly, it is the current popular psychological evaluation method, and psychology has a mature evaluation method in this aspect today, for example, Five-Factor Model, Adolescent Personality Development, Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory and Emotions of Normal People. Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory is perfect for measuring leadership style, because it is the best at detecting lies among them. The second way is "situational simulation", HR will take the initiative to give a scenario to begin with. In this scenario, the employee will play a role, then the interviewer will judge the leadership style based on specific performance and team leadership. Finally, background investigation is another useful method, detailed investigation of their background will be used to judge the specific style of leaders.

In addition to being selective in recruiting leaders, it is also necessary to cultivate inclusive leadership skills for corporate leaders. By teaching knowledge and behaviors about inclusive leadership, managers can deepen their understanding and application of inclusive leadership style. Leaders should conduct self-reflection and correction in a timely manner, often reflecting on whether they treat each subordinate fairly and justly; whether they tolerate the accidental mistake of subordinates and help them correct it; whether they have good communication with subordinates to understand their working needs and psychological state.

#### 5.1.2 Strengthen communication among organization members

Communication is an essential element for successful work. In the work, the good communication is conducive to the efficiency of the work and the solution of problems. Inclusive leadership requires managers to show concern for subordinates and allow them to participate in decisions, which requires effective communication on both sides. Managers can obtain employees' opinions on some problems through communication, which is helpful for the organization to solve some realistic problems. Therefore, strengthening the communication among the members of the organization can not only make everyone closer, which is conducive to the smooth development of daily work, but also can express dissatisfaction, which is conducive to reduce frictions.

#### 5.1.3 Create a good organizational atmosphere

The culture will have a certain influence on the atmosphere of the organization. For employees, working in an environment that aligns with their values can be a pleasant experience. So, enterprises should pay attention to cultivate

employees' recognition of organizational culture to form organizational values. Good organizational atmosphere is conducive to attract external talents and retaining employees; it is also beneficial to establish harmonious interpersonal relationship and cultivate mutual trust among employees. Creating a good organizational atmosphere can make employees work more easily and happily in the organization, and then improve their satisfaction and well-being.

#### 5.1.4 Raise awareness of employee well-being

When employees perceive that their psychological needs can be satisfied in the organization, they will have strong personal needs and a sense of identity with the organization's supply, thus generating positive emotional experience and benign work motivation, and are willing to show more positive behaviors beneficial to the long-term healthy development of the organization. Therefore, organizations and managers should strive to improve the welfare of employees, such as improving salary, providing promotion opportunities, providing career security, and providing career development training, all of which can improve the employee well-being and motivate employees to make greater contributions to the enterprise.

### 5.2 Limitations

This study uses literature analysis and questionnaire survey to explore the impact of inclusive leadership on employee well-being, and verifies the moderating effect of organizational trust on the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee well-being. However, this study still has the following limitations:

#### 5.2.1 Limitations of the sample

Most of the samples in this study are from Sojump. Although they are distributed widely, only 153 valid questionnaires are collected due to my lack of social resources. The sample size is small, and the gender structure and age structure of the sample are unbalanced. Among 153 valid samples, only 60 are male, accounting for 39.22%; There are 93 female samples, accounting for 60.28%. In terms of age structure, 110 samples are under the age of 29, accounting for 71.90%. In addition, the samples are concentrated in Guangdong province, and the lack of sample data from other regions will affect the research to a certain extent. The above situations may lead to the bias of empirical research.

#### 5.2.2 Limitations of measurement scales

There are many scales of inclusive leadership, organizational trust and employee well-being at home and abroad, but scholars have different views on this, and there is no unified definition. In the questionnaire design of this study, I did not develop a new scale for each research variable, but designed the questionnaire by referring to the scale recognized by domestic and foreign scholars and making some modifications. In this study, the reliability and validity of the selected scale are verified. However, in view of the different practical situations at home and abroad, some wording in the scale may be different in Chinese and foreign contexts. At the same time, the applicability of the foreign scales in the Chinese context may be limited. Especially for the scale of employee well-being, this study adopts the simplified version after some items are deleted. Therefore, the results of this study may deviate from reality to some extent.

#### 5.2.3 Limitations of the research model

Variable data in this study come from respondents' perception of external environment and other people's behaviors, as well as their own inner feelings, so there may be deviations between respondents' answers and the actual situation, which may affect the results of the study to a certain extent. In addition, when choosing the mediating variable, this study only selects organizational trust, and does not select other variables as mediating variables or moderating variables to make the model more convincing. All the above factors may have some adverse effects on the results of the study.

### 5.3 Future research prospects

The above limitations can also become breakthroughs for further research, which can be improved from the following three aspects:

#### 5.3.1 Broaden the range of respondents

Expanding the scope of respondents and making the sample distribution relatively balanced, which can ensure the validity of sample data. Most of the samples in this study are from Guangdong Province, so we can increase the distribution of questionnaires to other provinces. In order to make the research results more realistic and convincing, the selection of respondents should be more strictly controlled and the sample distribution should be relatively balanced as far as possible to make the research results more universal.

#### 5.3.2 Design a questionnaire more in line with the Chinese context

In the use of scales, this paper adopts scales with high recognition. Although the reliability and validity are tested, the applicability in Chinese context has not been solved. In future research in related fields, researchers can design a set of

questionnaires on inclusive leadership, organizational trust and employee well-being in the context of Chinese local culture by conducting in-depth interviews with employees in different regions and different job categories to ensure the applicability and accuracy of relevant research in the Chinese context.

### 5.3.3 Introduce other variables for mediating or moderating effects

Through literature analysis and questionnaire survey, this study verifies the positive impact of inclusive leadership on employee well-being and the mediating role of organizational trust. However, whether there are other variables involved in this process, or whether there are more complex relationships between variables, is not further explored in this study. Future research can further explore the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee well-being, and more objective variables can be studied. For example, self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation can be introduced into the model for mediating effect analysis. The organizational climate and power distance can be introduced into the model for moderating variable analysis.

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### Appendix 1: Questionnaire

(1) Please choose according to the interaction with your leader at work.

"1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=uncertain, 4=strongly agree, 5=strongly agree". Please tick "√" below the figure represented by your level of conformity.

Please describe your leader at work:	1	2	3	4	5
1) The manager is open to hearing new ideas					
2) The manager is attentive to new opportunities to improve work processes					
3) The manager is open to discuss the desired goals and new ways to achieve them					
4) The manager is available for consultation on problems					
5) The manager is an ongoing "presence" in this team—someone who is readily available					
6) The manager is available for professional questions I would like to consult with him/her					
7) The manager is ready to listen to my requests					
8) The manager encourages me to access him/her on emerging issues					
9) The manager is accessible for discussing emerging problems					

(2) Please choose your trust to your leader according to your actual feelings and experiences in your work.

“1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=uncertain, 4=strongly agree, 5=strongly agree”. Please tick "√" below the figure represented by your level of conformity.

Please describe your relationship with your leader at work:	1	2	3	4	5
1) I have great faith in my leader.					
2) I believe my leader takes the company and all the staff into consideration.					
3) I can talk freely to my leader about difficulties I am having at work and know that (s)he will not look down on me.					
4) I would have to say that we have both made considerable emotional investments in our working relationship and we have a good relationship.					
5) If I shared my problems with my leader, I know (s)he would respond constructively.					
6) I have a good understanding of my leader, and it is easy to recognize each other’s views.					
7) I believe my leader has the ability to bring better development to the company.					
8) While working with my leader, my colleagues and I agree that (s)he is trustworthy.					
9) While working with my leader, my colleagues and I agree that (s)he is trustworthy.					
10) I see no reason to doubt my leader's competence.					
11) I can confirm that the trust in my leader is not based on a personal relationship.					
12) Other work associates of mine who must interact with my leader consider him/her to be trustworthy.					

(3) Please choose your work situation according to your actual feeling and experience in the work.

“1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=uncertain, 4=strongly agree, 5=strongly agree”. Please tick "√" below the figure represented by your level of conformity.

Please describe your work experience:	1	2	3	4	5
1) I am satisfied with my work responsibilities.					
2) In general, I feel fairly satisfied with my present job.					
3) I find real enjoyment in my work.					
4) I can always find ways to enrich my work.					
5) Work is a meaningful experience for me.					
6) I feel basically satisfied with my work achievements in my current job.					

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