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## ABSTRACT

As globalization grows , the need for sustainable education becomes more and more important , setting goals and values is a challenge for higher education institutions (HEIs). For leaders in HEIs,

inclusion is a critical challenge . This paper investigates Leader-member exchange (LMX) in mediating the relationship between inclusive leadership (IL) and employees' creativity (EC) by applying it to workers at Kafr El-Sheikh University, and the survey was used as a tool to collect data from the study sample of (307) members representing the academic staff and the assistants of members at Kafr El-Sheikh University. The results of the study showed that the pattern of IL has a significant positive effect on EC , and also it showed that LMX, in the presence of IL, enhances EC. Moreover, indirect effects showed the partial mediation between the IL and the EC through mediating Loyalty, contribution and professional, but

the results also ensure that no mediation between the IL and EC through mediating support.

## 1. Introduction :

Education is a fundamental tenet of social and economic progress , over the past ten years , there have been significant changes to higher education , and these changes are ongoing , where the higher education institutions (HEIs) nowadays play a crucial role in creating The knowledge, skills and abilities of workers in order to provide services effectively , the higher education sector in Egypt is presently undergoing a fast transition that calls for extraordinary creativity and leadership , organizations can also overcome new challenges in the ever-changing workplace by utilizing employees creativity in presenting, promoting and implementing new ideas (Alwali,2024) .

Moreover, previous researchers have indicated that there are a number of critical factors that urge leadership in various contexts and motivates employees to engage in creative tasks, for instance (Odetunde ,Ufodiana , 2017) examines that how organizational culture and transformational leadership affect employees innovative and creative projects in Nigeria's oil and gas industry. Similarly, research by (Cheung & Wong , 2011 ; Dhar , 2015) demonstrated how transformational leadership and nature of leader can enhance an employee's creativity. Employee vision is stimulated by transformational leadership and socio-emotional concerns are addressed by leader support and sufficient resources are provided . Meanwhile (Hirst et al., 2009) uses a social identity analysis to predict employee creativity

mediated by the individual's creative effort, in addition to, corporate social responsibility can influence employees' sense-making to foster their creativity through work engagement and psychological safety (Ahmed et al., 2022).

Academic leadership in HEIs faces major challenges that require rethinking and renewing traditional management, organizational policies and practices (Aboramadan et al., 2022). Undoubtedly, the academics performance greatly influenced by leadership, where the leadership can boost employees creativity by providing them a supportive work environment, that plays a major role in the enhancement of the quality of higher education (Gbobaniyi, 2024) indicated that HEIs should build their academic management and leadership strategies around the theme of inclusivity rather than imitating the corporate sector. They pointed out that equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are the cornerstones of inclusive leadership practice in HEIs. According to study (Chavez-Haroldson, 2020), which supported the findings of the previous study, inclusive leadership "shifts the focus from affirmative action and equity toward equality, social justice, fairness, and the leveraging of diversity effects in the system", thereby fostering inclusive work environments and trustworthy relationships that contribute to the development of human capital. On the other hand leader-member exchange (LMX) theory supports the inclusive leadership, This theory argues that it can be implied the supportive and inclusive leadership qualities cause workers to feel obligated to give back to their boss and leader (Yin, 2013). Thus, Inclusive leadership in the LMX perspective encourages positive LMXs that could develop cognitive thinking and motivation to engage in creative performance. Likewise, inclusive leadership

emphasizes to team members suggestions , fostering close bonds with them , and involving them in decision-making , in these circumstances , they foster an atmosphere that supports the LMX theory alignment of goals between leaders and followers (Yasin, et al., 2023) .

Given the specific focus and context of the present study, the following some potential research gaps were identified. First , we investigate the field of inclusive leadership (IL) , which has not yet been thoroughly investigated by academics or practitioners alike until today, few studies have been conducted in the context (Aboramadan et al., 2022 ; Gbobaniyi , 2024) , additionally ,the nexus between IL and EC has not been given adequate attention in the empirical literature , Second , investigates Leader–member exchange (LMX) role in mediating between inclusive leadership and the assistants of teaching staff members at Kafr El-Sheikh University , where there is no previous study that addressed the dynamics of these variables' relationships combined in higher education settings , This study thus advances the research stream of HEIs and leadership by establishing the role of Inclusive leadership in nurturing LMX and motivating creativity of assistants staff's in Kafr El-Sheikh university . Third, this study relied on the viewpoint of faculty assistants, which was not addressed in any of the previous studies. Finally , it is expected discussions on this study variables will add to the body of knowledge already in existence , especially when it comes to HEIs. The study's conclusions can also serve as a valuable addition to the body of literature already in existence and underpinning for future investigations into these relationships within various

organizational contexts, thus, To fill all these research gaps, we have conducted this research study.

## **2. Theoretical background and hypotheses development**

### **2.1. Inclusive Leadership and Employees' Creativity :**

Creativity has been a topic of interest to both scholars and practitioners for more than 35 years (Amabile & Pillemer, 2012; Cai et al., 2020). Continuing changes such as globalization, the continued development of technology, and excessive organizational competition have contributed to increased interest in creativity in the workplace. The growing interest in creativity in organizational literature is not surprising because it has shifted many organizations from a production focus to a knowledge focus, and thus the business has become increasingly dependent on the creativity of its employees, and therefore creativity is essential to the organization where the workplace creativity plays a substantial role in sustaining organizational survival and enhancing core competence (Hou et al., 2024).

Employee Creativity (EC) is defined as the extent to which employees realize that they generate new and useful ideas about products, services, procedures, or work procedures in the work environment (Dul & Ceylan, 2011). Leadership is particularly important to influence employees' creativity and innovation in organizations as acknowledged by various scholars (Shah et al., 2021, Asif et al., 2019). A review of relevant literature reveals that most previous literature researchers have extensively investigated the effect of leadership on outcomes of EC, for example, empowering leadership, according to (Zhou et al., 2024) empowering leadership was positively related to employees' commitment to constructive change, and

employees' sense of commitment to constructive change was related to Positively influences job crafting behavior and hence EC .In a study (Hanaysha, 2023), the results demonstrated that participatory leadership positively affects organizational citizenship behavior as well as employee creativity. The results also showed that autocratic leadership really has no effect on creativity and organizational citizenship behavior of employees.(Hou et al., 2024) noted that entrepreneurial leadership is positively associated with EC .

Inclusive leadership (IL) has recently drawn increased attention in leadership and organization studies , due to its unique effects on employee , team , and organizational outcomes (Umrani et al., 2024) , Inclusive leadership creates a climate in which staff has a culture of inclusion, more accountability , independence in making decision , and sense of duty , as well as support (Saleem & Irshad, 2023) . recent research endeavors indicate that inclusive leadership (IL) recognized as an emerging leadership style to explain employee creativity in which the inclusive leader provides followers with organizational resources, information, and time to cultivate creative endeavors (Carmeli et al., 2010), IL was originally proposed in the field of management by (Nembhard & Edmondson ,2006) , It has been presented as “the words and actions of a leader or leaders that indicate invitation and appreciation for the contributions of others”. IL is an open, effective, and accessible leadership method which is widely applied and recognized in academia. (Hollander, 2009 ;Carmeli et al.,2010 ; Choi et al., 2016), IL emphasizes the idea that everyone matters and has equal opportunities to contribute to the change process. In the existing literature, there are multiple definitions of inclusive

leadership. Inclusive leadership refers to “leaders who demonstrate vision, accessibility and availability in their interactions with their followers or their employees coming up with new ideas creating a context where people are psychologically safe to express ideas that may often not be in sync with norms. (Carmeli et al., 2010). (Ospina & El Hadidy, 2011) argued that an inclusive leader is a valuable asset for an organization that accepts employees from all levels of an organization and listens to their ideas. While inclusive leaders empower their teams by giving people the freedom to make their own decisions. They also communicate the organization's vision and goals to employees and take their opinions into account. As a result, employees' commitment to the company's goals increases, and their efforts to achieve those goals become more motivated and focused (Mansoor, 2021). According to (Fang et al., 2012) believes that recently, with the increasingly diverse workforce, researchers are focusing on inclusive leadership and its ability to retain high-quality and more creative employees. where leader's support is always related to motivation to creative behaviors.

Based on previous research on IL, it turns out that IL that includes encouragement and tolerance is more effective in influencing employee creativity. The study (Zhao et al., 2023) indicates that IL can enhance the impact of skilled HR practices on employees' psychological well-being. When the level of comprehensive leadership is low, even if the organization successfully implements funny HR practices, employees cannot understand their innovative attitudes to leadership behavior, and their psychological well-being remains low. Additionally, study (Ye et al., 2019), suggested that the role of IL in developing distinct team processes that



facilitate innovation, it was demonstrated that an inclusive open leader's behavior sends a stronger message that different ideas are welcome. Thus, team members are more likely to develop creative ideas and engage in innovative activities. Similarly, the study (Dinibutun, 2024) argued that green inclusive leadership was positively and significantly linked to green creativity, and this association was significantly mediated by green passion and green absorptive capacity. Additionally, (Shah et al., 2021) state the relationship of employees perception of social responsibility (CSR) of the banking sector and EC with the mediating effect of (IL), The findings validate the direct relationship between CSR and employee creativity, also it confirm the mediating effect of IL in this relationship. Similarly, the study (Althoff, 2023) anticipates that organizations can leverage the full creative potential of their workforce, better job performance, reduced turnover, and more sustainable innovation by implementing inclusive leadership strategies.

On the other hand, (ZHU et al., 2020) indicated that the negative effect between inclusive leadership and creativity, which it has produced contradictory results. By they tried to explain the contradictory findings based on the antecedent-benefit-cost framework (ABC). We found that inclusive leadership discouraged subordinates' creativity by reducing challenge-related stress but promoted subordinates' creativity by enhancing subordinates' psychological safety.

In this research, the academic definition of IL, those who demonstrate 3 dimensions (Edmondson, 2004; Carmeli et al., 2010; Hirak et al., 2012; Ramati-Navon et al., 2022), openness, accessibility, and availability, that has been widely used to describe inclusive leadership (Carmeli et al., 2010; Banney et al.,

2020;Wiyono et al., 2024). The first dimension of inclusive leadership is openness, which means that leaders should be approachable and able to inspire their staff to think creatively and actively participate in organizational decision-making. The second dimension of inclusive leadership is availability, which calls for leaders to be accessible to employees in times of need and to be prepared to offer support or encouragement in the event that an employee raises a new issue. The third dimension of inclusive leadership is accessibility, which calls on leaders to respect and encourage their employees, engage in active communication with them, get along well with them, and so foster an environment that is open, tolerant and equal.

based on the previously mentioned information and in light of prior studies (Ye et al., 2019, Shah et al., 2021, Zhao et al., 2023, Althoff, 2023, Dinibutun, 2024) that indicated there is positive and significant effect of Inclusive leadership on employees' creativity. This will be tested through the first hypothesis of the study:

H1. IL positively correlates with EC.

## **2.2. Inclusive leadership and Leader-Member-Exchange (LMX)**

Leader-Member-Exchange (LMX) is a strong descriptive theory defines work units using Blau's theory of social exchange and role theory (Sidani et al.,2021), LMX theory is a relationship-based method for studying leader-follower relationships, the relationship between the leader and the follower is one of interdependence, in the context of an organization, this close, interpersonal relationship is distinct, where both parties rely on one another for information, resources, and services geared to achieving a common goal. the quality of social exchange that occurs

between supervisors and employees also indicates as LMX, When employees feel that their relationship with their leader is important , they may reciprocate (Decoster et al., 2014) .

Early research over the past 40 years showed that LMX was one of those very active schools of research (Day & Antonakis, 2012), and LMX was defined as the extent to which employees perceived relationships with their supervisors as built on trust, respect, and mutual commitment. Which works to generate influence between employees and their supervisor (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Leadership effectiveness depends largely on leader-member exchange (LMX), not just on what the leader does (Van Breukelen et al., 2006). Good LMX may increase employees' positive and inclusive perception of inclusive leadership and thus improve their psychological well-being and leadership identification (Wang, & Shi,2021), also LMX theory follows one of two types, The multidimensional theory emphasizes that roles are multifaceted and include people who prioritize their tasks over social interactions, people who prioritize social interactions over tasks, or unidimensional which representing the role theory by relying on the work behaviors of leaders and subordinates(Duncan & Herrera,2014).

prior researches indicates that LMX research has grown exponentially in the last decade, the theory of LMX advanced the scholarly literature on leadership, where the historical development of LMX theory passed through four stages , Stage (1) is the discovery of differentiated dyads, vertical dyad linkage (VDL), researchers discovered that leaders in this stage developed distinct relationships with their subordinates , in contrast to the prevalent leadership approach , which presumed

that leaders behaved consistently toward all subordinates in their work units (Martin, et al., 2010), Stage (2) LMX relationships and its outcomes, refers to investigation of characteristics of LMX relationships and to identify the results of the leader's relationship with high- and low-quality followers, and their impact on organizational implications such as job satisfaction, performance, leaving work, and others (Furtado, 2016), Stage (3) is the description of dyadic partnership building, and refers to focusing on how they can work with each person on an individual basis to strengthen their relationship with one another (Kim & Taylor, 2001), stage (4), The final stage involves aggregating differentiated dyadic relationships to group and network levels, this broadens the focus from the dyad to larger collectives and explores how dyadic relationships are organized both within and outside of the organizational system (Furtado, 2016).

According to (Ke et al., 2022) the findings show that workplace spirituality is a medium through which inclusive leadership and civil servants' job performance are positively correlated, positive relationships are mediated by two moderators: LMX and perceived dissimilarity, also (Javed et al., 2021) asserted that in Small Capitalized Textile Firms of Pakistan, LMX mediates the relationship between IL and Innovative Work Behavior. Furthermore, (Assefa et al., 2024) illustrate the mediating role of leader-member exchanges in the structural relationship between perceived organizational justice and employee voice behavior in higher education, they concurred that when workers view their leader and organization as fair, their rapport with them is likely to strengthen, and as a result, in educational institutions, organizational justice has a positive relationship with LMX. Additionally, in the

South Korean hospitality industry, high-level employees may consider LMX more important than making turnover decisions than do those in lower-level position , which also indicated that the relationship between LMX and turnover intent is expressed differently in workers at different organizational levels(Kim et al., 2010) , Moreover , (Lee , 2005) demonstrated that transformational leaders are individuals who guide their teams by serving as role models and showing as interest in developing their followers sense of loyalty and contribution . this results in the development of high-quality interactions between them and their followers because their followers will see their leaders as taking calculated risks or making personal sacrifices for the beneficial to the work team , On the other hand, a study (Gu, 2024) showed that moral leadership in China's emerging market is positively associated with LMX, which places a high importance on ethics, justice , and integrity, it calls for leaders to treat subordinates with decency , kindness, and fairness, as well as to exhibit high levels of trustworthiness by taking care of their staff , Similarly, the study (chan & Mak , 2012) finds that LMX mediates the relationship between benevolent leadership and follower task performance and organizational citizenship behavior towards the organization,

Some scholars noted through the previous literature found that IL is one of the significant factors affecting LMX, where the higher levels of IL result in higher levels of LMX , the inclusive leaders gain trust and commitment from employees when exhibit actions that are valued by staff members , such as listening and responding to employees' opinions, valuing their contributions, and asking for their involvement in decision making, (Hsiung, 2012). additionally, when employees

and leaders have close working relationship, employees will actively support the organization and work team by fully comprehending the workplace and subsequently exhibiting more behaviors that support organizational development, Employees will also offer Innovative suggestions on how to improve the efficiency of teamwork (Li & Hang , 2017) , according to systematically identified by (Hollander ,2009) , IL is follower-centered, respectful of workers and understands their needs. group leaders can signal their own acceptance of employees from different backgrounds and build high-quality relationships with them , the study (Nishii & Mayer, 2009) indicated that the Inclusive Leaders help to reduce turnover in Diverse Groups by the Moderating Role of LMX in the Diversity to turnover relationship, where the inclusive leadership, are most effective when they empower their followers, where as the group managers afford followers greater discretion in the way they do their jobs , Therefore interpersonal interactions improve, then it reflected in lower turnover

In this research, according to the academic definition of LMX, there are 4 dimensions suggested by (Liden & Maslyn,1998 ; Lee , 2005 ; Ordun & Beyhan, 2014) , LMX relationships are based on: Loyalty (expressions of public support or consistent faithfulness) , Contribution (perceived contribution to the exchange) ,Professional Respect (required to more fully capture LMX) ,affect (mutual affection).

Based on the previously mentioned information and in light of prior studies (Hollander ,2009 ; Nishii & Mayer ,2009; Hsiung, 2012 ; Li & Hang , 2017 ) , that

indicated there is positive and significant effect of Inclusive leadership on LMX. This will be tested through the second hypothesis of the study:

H2. IL positively correlates with LMX

### 2.3. Leader-Member-Exchange and Employees Creativity

Creativity is a social process (Chiu & Kwan , 2010) , Creativity is a social process (Chiu & Kwan , 2010) , when assessing a company's human capital , one of the most crucial factors is the creativity of its workforce . EC is defined as the extent to which employees perceive that they generate novel and useful ideas about products, services, or work processes in the work environment place. It is also necessary for employees' creativity to enjoy greater independence and freedom of action, that is appears in high LMX relationships (Seibert et al.,2001) .

The LMX model of leadership becoming increasingly important for fostering creative engagement throughout the workplace , numerous studies examined the main effects of LMX on EC performance (e.g. Han, Bai , 2020) contend that an employee's creative self efficacy is more likely to be amplified when they have a high quality LMX with their leader , who has the ability to assess the employee's performance , Similarly , data from 116 teams comprising 828 employees in a Chinese manufacturing company revealed that self-efficacy was a unique way for LMX to have indirect effects on employee creativity (Joo, et al., 2014) . Furthermore, a study (Mascareño, et al., 2020) focused on separating creativity from innovation may help clarify the relationship between LMX and innovation, and the study found that LMX was more closely related with creativity from innovation , while LMX also stimulates idea generation (employee creativity) This in turn enhances

employee innovation. Moreover, Some scholars (e.g. Gu et al., 2024), pointed out that employee identification with the leader and LMX as mediators in examining the relationship between ethical leadership and employee creativity, showed that LMX quality is positively related to employee creativity in the Chinese context. meanwhile, emotional commitment and psychological empowerment mediated the relationship between LMX and CE in a study (Pan et al., 2012) that involved 367 pairs of leaders and followers in three industrial companies in the People's Republic of China, LMX also has an indirect impact on EC through psychological empowerment, Stronger than in mechanical synthesis when it comes to the organic synthesis of work-unit structure.

We used (Coelho; Augusto, 2010; Fu, et al., 2022) to measure EC, which included five items, based on prior studies (Pan et al., 2012; Joo, et al., 2014; Han, Bai, 2020; Mascareño, et al., 2020; Gu et al., 2024), that indicated there is positive and significant effect of LMX on EC, This will be tested through the third hypothesis of the study:

H3. LMX positively correlates with EC

#### **2.4. Mediating Role of Leader-Member-Exchange between Inclusive leadership and Employees' Creativity**

In the existing literature, IL has been linked to LMX (Ke et al., 2022; Javed et al., 2021), they discovered that inclusive leaders build strong bonds with staff members, who then trust and cooperate with one another to support one another, LMX has also been linked with the EC (Han, Bai, 2020; Gu et al., 2024), they reached out to that employees have opportunities to develop their skills when they



enjoy challenging tasks, care, and greater access to job-relevant information and this occurs at high LMX. The goal of this study was to determine whether LMX moderates the association between IL and EC , which the fourth research hypothesis, which will be tested, is:

H4. LMX mediates between IL and EC

### Theoretical Framework

Impact of inclusive leadership on innovative work behavior

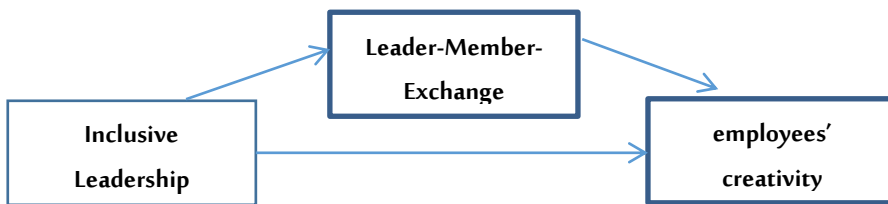


FIGURE 1. THE HYPOTHESIZED MODE

### Research Methods

#### Participants, sampling and procedure

To resolve issues of ambiguity with language, questions and content , two Staff Members from Kafr El-Sheikh (Kfs) University examined the questionnaire , minor revisions were made to the questionnaire. data for this study were collected from the academic staff and the assistance of academic staff working in the Kafr El-Sheikh University, Which includes 21 faculty (Agriculture, Al-Alsun , Education , Law , Literature , medicine , Veterinary Medicine , physical therapy , Dentistry , Nursing , Engineering , Commerce , Specific Education , Physical Education ,

Science , Pharmacy , Aquatic and Fisheries Sciences , Computers & Information , Artificial Intelligence, Nano Science & Technology Institute , Institute of Drug Development & Innovation Research). The population of the study is nearly 2150 people from the staff members and assistants staff members at Kafr El-Sheikh University, They were computed using the Sample Size Calculator website and numbered (307), Following the distribution of the questionnaires, the researcher obtained 229 error-free questionnaires with a recovery rate of 229 that were appropriate for statistical analysis.

The researcher used proportionate stratified sampling technique , the number of sample items was determined using a proportional allocation method according to the number of items, this technique ensures that all the groups are represented in the required sample , Each stratum features can be determined and allows comparisons (Sekeran & Bougie, 2016) , The following table shows the number of assistant faculty members at Kafr El-Sheikh University.

### **Measure**

All the measurement scales were drawn from prior studies. The questionnaire was developed in two-sections: the first section included questions relating to the key study constructs, while the second section comprised questions pertaining to the respondent's demographic information, their faculties and experience with using online learning. All the items were measured on 5-point Likert scale ranged from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5)

## Data analysis and results

### Measurement model

#### 1- Reliability

Reliability refers to the ability of the questionnaire to elicit the same results if it was repeated after a specific period of time but under identical conditions. Thus, reliability, in general, is an indicator of the consistency of the measure (Questionnaire) (Postlethwaite, 2005). The most widely used measure of reliability is the Cronbach alpha where questionnaire is said to be reliable if the value of Cronbach's alpha is greater than or equals 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010). While the validity test is used to demonstrate the validity of the statements of the survey list in measuring what it was designed for, and to confirm that the statements of the list give the respondent the same meaning and concept that the researcher intends. In this regard, I use the square root of Cronbach's alpha. Consequently, the results of reliability and validity can be summarized in the following table as follow:

*Table No. (1): the results of reliability and validity*

Variables	Reliability	Validity
openness	0.842	0.918
Existence	0.867	0.931
Connectivity	0.868	0.932
Inclusive Leadership	0.948	0.974
Loyalty	0.864	0.930
Contribution	0.838	0.915
Professional	0.892	0.944
Support	0.883	0.940
Leader-Member-Exchange	0.965	0.982
Employees' Creativity	0.930	0.964

According to the above table No. (1):

- For the Independent Variable Inclusive Leadership the Cronbach's alpha is 0.948 which represents a good indicator of the reliability of this construct. While the Cronbach's alpha is 0.842, 0.867, 0.868 for the three dimensions respectively (openness, Existence and Connectivity) which also mean high level of reliability for all dimensions.
- For the Mediator Variable Leader-Member-Exchange the Cronbach's alpha is 0.965 which represents a good indicator of the reliability of

this construct. While the Cronbach's alpha is 0.864, 0.838, 0.892 and 0.883 for the four dimensions respectively (Loyalty, Contribution, Professional and Support) which also mean high level of reliability for all dimensions.

- For the Dependent Variable Employees' Creativity the Cronbach's alpha is 0.930 which represents a good indicator of the reliability of this construct.

## 2- Descriptive statistics:

The research contains three basic variables: Inclusive Leadership, which represents the independent variable and includes three, dimensions (openness, Existence and Connectivity), in addition to the Leader-Member-Exchange, which includes four dimensions (Loyalty, Contribution, Professional and support). Finally, employees' creativity which represent the dependent variable. The results of the descriptive analysis of these variables can be presented in Table No. (2) as follows:

*Table No. (2): Descriptive statistics results*

	Mean	Std .Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
openness	3.562	1.013	-0.024	-1.195
Existence	3.597	1.012	-0.112	-1.167
Connectivity	3.568	1.025	-0.113	-1.193
Inclusive Leadership	3.575	0.968	0.017	-1.241
Loyalty	3.592	1.009	-0.106	-1.181
Contribution	3.512	1.020	0.038	-1.324
Professional	3.582	1.034	-0.095	-1.289
Support	3.581	1.027	-0.120	-1.200
Leader-Member-Exchange	3.567	0.977	0.029	-1.262
Employees' Creativity	3.609	1.002	-0.137	-1.173

According to the above table No. (2):

- The dimensions of the Inclusive Leadership have means that ranged between (3.562: 3.597), where the openness has the lowest value of the means by 3.562, while the Existence has the highest value of the means by 3.597. Accordingly, the dimensions of the Inclusive Leadership are available to my entire sample.
- The dimensions of the Leader-Member-Exchange have means that ranged between (3.512: 3.597), where the contribution has the lowest value of the means by 3.512, while the loyalty has the highest value of

the means by 3.597. Accordingly, the dimensions of the Leader-Member-Exchange are available to my entire sample.

- Employees' Creativity has a mean 3.609 so it has a great agreement of my entire sample.
- Finally, the variables are normally distributed where the skewness is ranged  $\pm 3$  and the Kurtosis ranged  $\pm 10$ .

### 3- Deductive analysis:

In this part, the researcher performs analysis based on structural equation modeling. This analysis is carried out through two basic stages, where the first stage is to conduct exploratory factor analysis, while the second stage is to test the study hypotheses, based on AMOS version 26, as follows:

#### **3.1: Exploratory Factor Analysis:**

Exploratory factor analysis was used within the framework of the current study to determine the main factors that determined the study variables and the variance explained by the identified factors, based on principal components analysis, which relies on building a model in which the factors are based on the total variance and the KMO Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin scale, which seeks to Measuring the adequacy and suitability of the sample, and for the data to be usable, its value must not be less than 0.5, using exploratory factor analysis using SPSS V.26 for a sample of (387 individuals). The results of the factor analysis were according to table No. (3) below:

*Table No. (3): KMO & Bartlett's Test for all variables*

Variables	Dimensions	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	
			Chi Square	Sig.
Inclusive Leadership	Openness	0.721	283.000	0.000
	Existence	0.723	340.187	0.000
	Connectivity	0.735	332.683	0.000
Independent Variable: Inclusive Leadership		0.928	1722.216	0.000
Leader-Member-Exchange	Loyalty	0.738	320.398	0.000
	Contribution	0.720	272.154	0.000
	Professional	0.750	393.654	0.000
	Support	0.739	373.545	0.000
Mediator Variable: Leader-Member-Exchange		0.946	2717.578	0.000
Dependent Variable: Employees' Creativity		0.895	882.951	0.000

As illustrated in table (3), KMO scale for all variables is greater than 0.5. Additionally, Bartlett's Test significant for all variables, therefore the data are high quality and dependable for structure equation model.

### **3.2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis:**

To measure construct validity, both convergent and discriminant validity should be investigated. Convergent validity was first tested using the factor loadings in which



the values of loadings can be considered to be significant if they are equal to or greater than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010). Furthermore, convergent validity also measured by (AVE) in which the value can be accepted if it was higher than 0.5. Further, the reliability of the measurement model was measured using the dimensions of my main variables. Consequently, Byrne, (2010) stated that goodness of fit shows the extent to which the measurement model fits to the collected data from the sample. The study utilized the most common indices to evaluate the model fit as it is shown in table (4) as follow:

**Table No. (4): The indices of model fit for the measurement model**

Measure	Estimate	Threshold	Interpretation
GFI	0.976	Closer to 1	Accepted
RMR	0.031	Closer to 0	Accepted
CFI	0.977	Closer to 1	Accepted
TLI	0.983	Closer to 1	Accepted
RMSEA	0.032	Less Than 0.08	Accepted

The value of CFI is 0.977 which is accepted as it is greater than 0.95. Furthermore, the value of RMR index is also satisfied because it is lower than 0.05. Similarly, RMSEA equals 0.032 which lies under 0.08 as proposed by (Byrne, 2010). The value of GFI which equals 0.976 is accepted as it is higher than 0.8 (Byrne, 2010). Therefore, the measurement model fits the data collected from the sample.

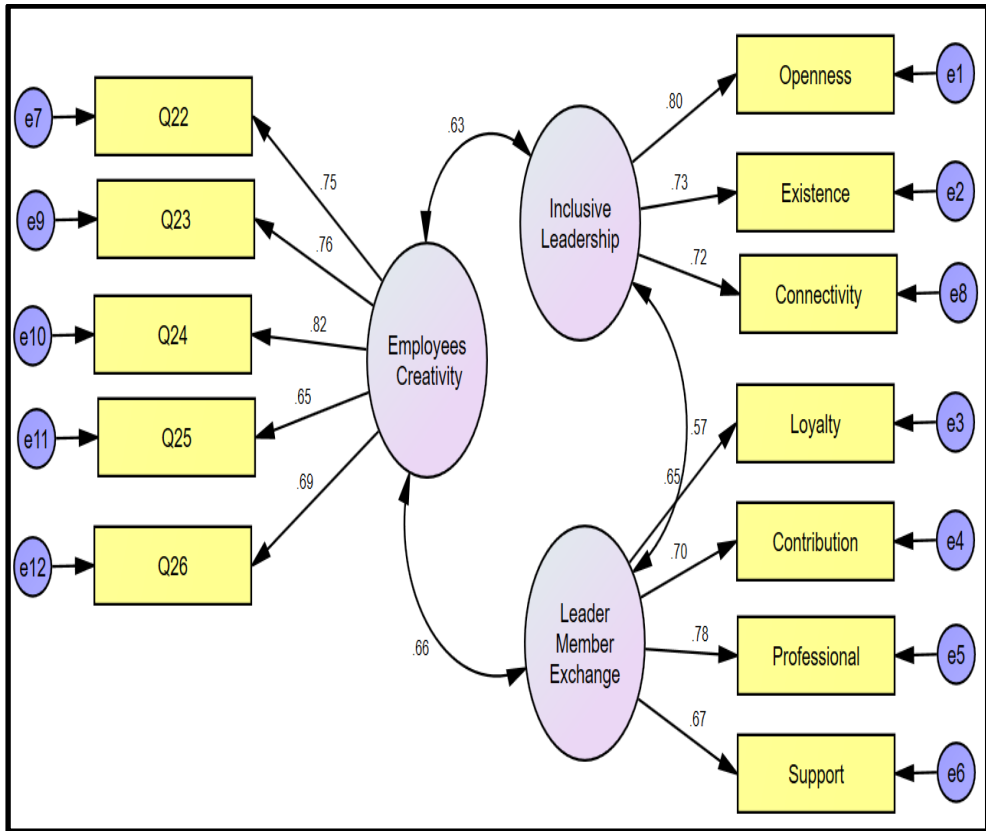


Figure No. (1): The measurement Model

Based on the above modification indices of my model I can show the results of both convergent and discriminant validity through tables No. (5 &6) as follow:

*Table No. (5): The validity and reliability of the measurement model*

Variables	Factor Loading	AVE	CR
<b>Independent Variable: Inclusive Leadership</b>		0.749	0.735
Openness	0.798		
Existence	0.727		
Connectivity	0.721		
<b>Mediator Variable: Leader-Member-Exchange</b>		0.700	0.695
Loyalty	0.654		
Contribution	0.700		
Professional	0.778		
Support	0.669		
<b>Dependent Variable: Employees' Creativity</b>		0.735	0.715
Q22	0.753		
Q23	0.761		
Q24	0.815		
Q25	0.654		
Q26	0.691		

The results presented in Table No. (5) indicate that all factor loadings are acceptable, as (Hair, et al., 2014) believe that the values of acceptable factor

loadings must be equal to or greater than 0.5, so all of the above measures don't be excluded.

The (CR) values show that all factor loadings are statistically significant at (0.001), and the convergent validity values expressed by the average variance extracted (AVE) and the composite reliability (CR) are of large values, as the composite reliability values were greater than 0.6, and then Accepting the convergent validity of the model if the average variance is higher than 0.5, as acceptable AVE values must be equal to or greater than 0.5. This means that the latent variable is able to explain 50% or more of the variance in the observed variables and that the rest is due to measurement error, which is considered evidence that all dimensions measure the variables associated with them and is confirmed by common validity.

Moreover, Discriminant validity refers to the extent of the distinctiveness or contrast of the latent variables, and is calculated by comparing the correlation values between the variable with other variables with the average variance extracted (AVE) for this variable. Discriminant validity is available when the average variance extracted for the variable is greater than any value of the average correlation values between this variable and other variables. Discriminant validity between the study variables was calculated by calculating the covariance between the variables and ensuring that these variances were less than the average variance calculated for each variable. Table No. (6) displays the covariance matrix between the study variables.

*Table No. (6): Construct Correlations and Square Root of Average Variance  
Extracted*

	Independent Variable: Inclusive Leadership	Mediator Variable: Leader-Member-Exchange	Dependent Variable: Employees' Creativity
Independent Variable: Inclusive Leadership	0.865		
Mediator Variable: Leader-Member-Exchange	0.786	0.837	
Dependent Variable: Employees' Creativity	0.753	0.774	0.857

According to the results presented in Table No. (6), it is clear that the values of the average variance calculated for each variable are greater than the values of the common variance between this variable and other variables, because the values of the extracted variance are  $\geq 0.5$ , and this means that the latent variable is able to explain 50% of the variance. In the observed variables and the rest is due to measurement error.

**3.3: Assessing the structural model and hypotheses testing:**

Structural model is utilized to present the causal relationships between research constructs. It is also used to test the hypothesized research model (Byrne, 2010). Table (7) involves the indices used to test the fit structural model as follow:

**Table No. (7): The indices of model fit for the measurement model**

Measure	Estimate	Threshold	Interpretation
GFI	0.963	Closer to 1	Accepted
RMR	0.029	Closer to 0	Accepted
CFI	0.971	Closer to 1	Accepted
TLI	0.972	Closer to 1	Accepted
RMSEA	0.027	Less Than 0.08	Accepted

The value of CFI is 0.971 which is accepted as it is greater than 0.95. Furthermore, the value of RMR index is also satisfied because it is lower than 0.05. Similarly, RMSEA equals 0.027 which lies under 0.08 as proposed by (Byrne, 2010). The value of GFI which equals 0.963 is accepted as it is higher than 0.8 (Byrne, 2010). Therefore, the measurement model fits the data collected from the sample. Therefore, based on the above indices, the structural model utilized in the current study shows an acceptable degree of fitness. The structural model is presented in figure (2).

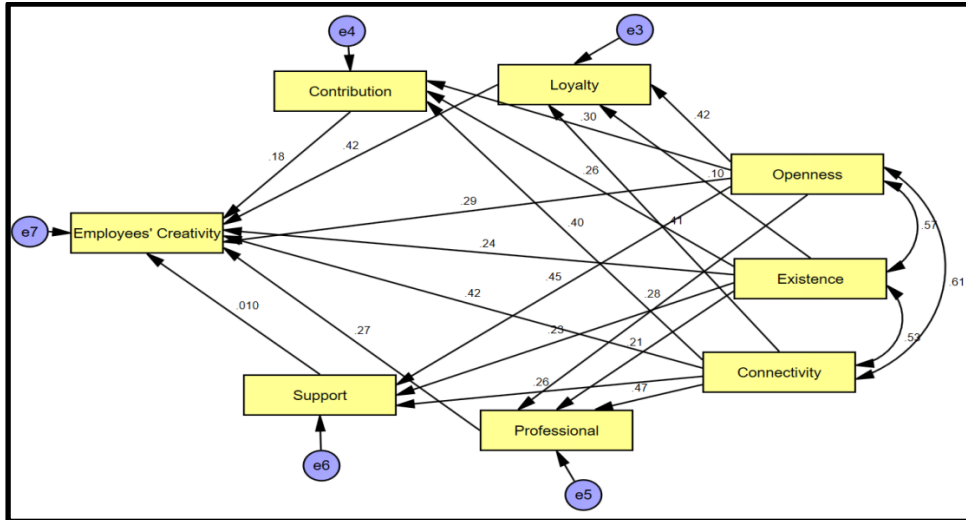


Figure No. (2): The Structural Model

3.3.1: The Direct Effect Results:

The study relies on directly testing three main hypotheses, and Tables No. (8, 9, 10) show the values of the path coefficients for these hypotheses in the structural model as follows:

Table No. (8): The direct effects results of H1

Independent Variable Dimensions	Dependent Variable	Standardized Coefficients Beta	S.E	CR	Sig
Openness	Employees' Creativity	0.294	0.061	4.770	0.000
Existence		0.237	0.060	3.908	0.000
Connectivity		0.420	0.063	6.535	0.000

The First hypothesis predicts that: 'There is positive effect of Inclusive Leadership dimensions on the Employees' Creativity'. The results of table No. (8) ensure that all dimensions of Inclusive Leadership (Openness, Existence and Connectivity) have a significant positive effect on the Employees' Creativity where the path coefficients are positive (0.294, 0.237, 0.420) respectively.

Consequently, I can accept the first hypothesis of my research as follow: ***H1, There is significant positive effect of Inclusive Leadership dimensions on the Employees' Creativity.***

***Table No. (9): The direct effects results of H2***

Independent Variable Dimensions	Dependent Variable	Standardized Coefficients Beta	S.E	CR	Sig
Openness	Loyalty	0.439	0.063	6.959	0.000
Existence		0.095	0.062	1.527	0.128
Connectivity		0.408	0.065	6.202	0.000
Openness	Contribution	0.303	0.057	5.382	0.000
Existence		0.262	0.056	4.749	0.000
Connectivity		0.404	0.058	6.883	0.000
Openness	Professional	0.284	0.059	4.945	0.000
Existence		0.212	0.058	3.762	0.000
Connectivity		0.466	0.061	7.772	0.000
Openness	Support	0.451	0.065	6.980	0.000
Existence		0.230	0.064	3.623	0.000
Connectivity		0.261	0.067	3.876	0.000



The Second hypothesis predicts that: 'There is significant positive effect of Inclusive Leadership dimensions on the Leader-Member-Exchange'. According to the results of table No. (9), I can show some comments as follow:

The results of table No (9) show that all dimensions of Inclusive Leadership (Openness and Connectivity) except Existence have a significant positive effect on the Loyalty as one of the Leader-Member-Exchange dimensions where the path coefficients are positive and significant (0.439 & 0.408) respectively.

In addition the results of table No (9) show that all dimensions of Inclusive Leadership (Openness, Existence and Connectivity) have a significant positive effect on the Contribution as one of the Leader-Member-Exchange dimensions where the path coefficients are positive and significant (0.303, 0.262 & 0.404) respectively.

Moreover, The results of table No (9) show that all dimensions of Inclusive Leadership (Openness, Existence and Connectivity) have a significant positive effect on the Professional as one of the Leader-Member-Exchange dimensions where the path coefficients are positive and significant (0.284, 0.212 & 0.466) respectively.

Finally, The results of table No (9) show that all dimensions of Inclusive Leadership (Openness, Existence and Connectivity) have a significant positive effect on the Support as one of the Leader-Member-Exchange dimensions where the path coefficients are positive and significant (0.451, 0.230 & 0.261) respectively.

Consequently, I can accept the second hypothesis of my research as follow: ***H2, There is significant positive effect of Inclusive Leadership dimensions on the Leader-Member-Exchange.***

***Table No. (10): The direct effects results of H3***

Independent Variable Dimensions	Dependent Variable	Standardized Coefficients Beta	S.E	CR	Sig
Loyalty	Employees' Creativity	0.421	0.067	6.282	0.000
Contribution		0.178	0.065	2.674	0.008
Professional		0.268	0.063	4.144	0.000
Support		0.095	0.062	1.492	0.137

The Third hypothesis predicts that: 'There is positive effect of Leader-Member-Exchange dimensions on the Employees' Creativity'. The results of table No. (10) ensure that all dimensions of Leader-Member-Exchange (Loyalty, Contribution and Professional) except Support have a significant positive effect on the Employees' Creativity where the path coefficients are positive and significant (0.421, 0.178, 0.268) respectively.

Consequently, I can accept the third hypothesis of my research as follow: ***H3, There is significant positive effect of Leader-Member-Exchange dimensions on the Employees' Creativity.***

**3.3.2: The Indirect Effect Results:**

The fourth Hypothesis predicts the indirect effect of Inclusive Leadership on the Employees' Creativity by mediating the Leader-Member-Exchange and its dimensions. Consequently, the results of the indirect effects can be summarized on the following table as follow:

**Table No. (11): The indirect effects results of H4**

Independent Variable Dimensions	Mediator Variable	Dependent Variable	Standardized Coefficients Beta	S.E	CR	Sig	Mediation
Openness	Loyalty	Employees' Creativity	0.185	0.062	4.589	***	partial Mediation
Existence			0.040	0.061	1.212	NS	
Connectivity			0.172	0.060	4.643	***	
Openness	Contribution		0.054	0.055	1.207	NS	partial Mediation
Existence			0.047	0.061	1.207	NS	
Connectivity			0.072	0.061	3.741	***	
Openness	Professional		0.076	0.057	3.952	***	partial Mediation
Existence			0.057	0.057	1.177	NS	
Connectivity			0.125	0.063	4.085	***	
Openness	Support		0.043	0.057	1.246	NS	No Mediation
Existence			0.022	0.057	1.246	NS	
Connectivity			0.025	0.065	1.246	NS	

The fourth hypothesis predicts that: 'There is significant positive indirect effect of Inclusive Leadership dimensions on the Employees' Creativity through mediating the Leader-Member-Exchange'. According to the results of table No. (11), I can show some comments as follow:

- The results of table No (11) show that some dimensions of Inclusive Leadership (Openness and Connectivity) have a significant positive indirect effect on the Employees' Creativity through mediating the Loyalty as one of the Leader-Member-Exchange dimensions where the indirect path coefficients are positive and significant (0.185 & 0.172) respectively. So I can ensure the partial mediation in this case.
- In addition, The results of table No (11) show that one dimension of Inclusive Leadership (Connectivity) have a significant positive indirect effect on the Employees' Creativity through mediating the contribution as one of the Leader-Member-Exchange dimensions where the indirect path coefficients is positive and significant (0.072). So I can ensure the partial mediation in this case.
- Moreover, The results of table No (11) show that some dimensions of Inclusive Leadership (Openness and Connectivity) have a significant positive indirect effect on the Employees' Creativity through mediating the Professional as one of the Leader-Member-Exchange dimensions where the indirect path coefficients are positive and significant (0.076 & 0.125) respectively. So I can ensure the partial mediation in this case.

- Finally, The results of table No (11) show that all dimensions of Inclusive Leadership (Openness, Existence and Connectivity) have no significant positive indirect effect on the Employees' Creativity through mediating the Support as one of the Leader-Member-Exchange dimensions where the indirect path coefficients are not significant for all dimensions. So I can ensure that no mediation in this case.

Based on the above results, I can partially accept the fourth hypothesis of my research as follow: ***H4, There is significant positive indirect effect of Inclusive Leadership dimensions on the Employees' Creativity through mediating the Leader-Member-Exchange.***

Finally, for the purposes of comparing the results before and after entering the mediating variable represented by Leader-member-exchange in its dimensions (Loyalty, Contribution, Professional and support), the results of the statistical analysis resulted in the following Table No. (12):

**Table No. (12): The Standardized Coefficients Before and after including the mediator variable of leader-member-exchange**

Independent Variable Dimensions	Mediator Variable	Dependent Variable	Standardized Coefficients Before	Standardized Coefficients After	Change direction
Openness	Loyalty	Employees' Creativity	0.294	0.479	positive change
Existence			0.237	0.276	positive change
Connectivity			0.420	0.592	positive change
Openness	Contribution		0.294	0.348	positive change
Existence			0.237	0.283	positive change
Connectivity			0.420	0.492	positive change
Openness	Professional		0.294	0.370	positive change
Existence			0.237	0.294	positive change
Connectivity			0.420	0.545	positive change
Openness	Support		0.451	0.337	positive change
Existence			0.230	0.259	positive change
Connectivity			0.261	0.445	positive change

It is clear from the results of Table No. (12) that the standard coefficient values for all of the independent variables change positively with the dependent variables

under all dimensions of the mediating variable. These results indicate a change with an increase in the effect after including the mediating variable leader-member-exchange on the direct relationship of all relationships between inclusive leadership and employees' creativity. Thus, the leader-member-exchange as a mediating variable has contributed to increasing the direct impact of inclusive leadership and employees' creativity.

## Discussion

### Summary of findings

This paper mainly discusses the impact of inclusive leadership on employees' creativity, and confirms the mediating role of Leader-Member-Exchange in Kafr El-Sheikh University in Egypt. This investigation is conducted in a distinct cultural context that has not received much attention from other academic scholars.

The first hypothesis of this study consistent with previous findings regarding the effect of IL on EC (Shah et al., 2021; Fu et al., 2022), the results of the study indicate that all dimensions of IL have a significant positive effect on the EC. where IL indicate that Connectivity is a greatest direct effect on EC ( $\beta = 0.420, p = 0.000$ ). These results align with the findings of previous studies that an inclusive leader helps followers develop their creative potential at work by giving them access to information, organizational resources and interpersonal support, fosters a win-win situation for the organization by encouraging a shared vision based on the interdependent relationship with followers; tolerate followers mistakes and supports them appropriately. Each of these elements is crucial for encouraging

employee creativity . Therefore, faculty members and their assistants may look to leaders who demonstrated more comprehensiveness of their new ideas, technologies and processes, as they imagined , being given more consideration and appreciated by their leaders , thus increasing their creativity.

The second hypothesis enhancing that IL has a significant effect on LMX, that consistent with previous findings (Liden & Maslyn,1998 ; Lee , 2005 ; Ordun & Beyhan, 2014) , where Connectivity is a greatest direct effect on EC ( $\beta = 0.420, p = 0.000$ ) , this explains that IL practices is crucial to creating a better work environment because it demonstrates leaders openness, availability, and accessibility to their subordinates , also IL considers feedback from all staff members and communicates openly , this emphasizes the importance of professional such as a mutual respect and recognition between Leader-Member (LMX) , as well as their ability to recognize and value one anthers opinions , in this regard, followers exhibit a strong quality relationship with the leader based on social exchange to attain creative freedom , Inclusive leaders send a signal to employees that they can openly share their views, share work-related problems, encouraging participation of employees in decision making. Therefore, IL emphasizes its strong on building quality LMX, or in other words, the quality of LMX increases with leader's inclusiveness (Javed et al.,2021) consequently, employees perceive the leader as caring and committed to their needs..

According to the third hypothesis indicated that LMX has a significant effect on EC, the results of the study indicate that all dimensions of LMX have a significant



positive effect on the EC, where Loyalty . is a greatest direct effect on EC ( $\beta = 0.421$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) ,while this study consistent with previous findings (Han, Bai , 2020 ; Mascareño, et al., 2020 ; Gu et al., 2024) ,This means that attention should be paid to appropriate mechanisms and the search for more of them through which comprehensive leadership stimulates followers' creativity.

As for the fourth hypothesis , which relates to indirect effect of inclusive leadership on employee creativity through mediating LMX, the results of the current research found that As demonstrated in the structural model of Table 12, the path coefficients between inclusive leadership dimensions (openness, existence, and Connectivity) increased from 0.294, 0.237 and 0.420 to 0.479, 0.276 and 0.592 respectively in case of mediating loyalty, in addition the path coefficients increased from 0.294, 0.237 and 0.420 to 0.348, 0.283 and 0.492 respectively in case of mediating contribution, moreover the path coefficients increased from 0.294, 0.237 and 0.420 to 0.370, 0.294 and 0.545 respectively in case of mediating professional, finally the path coefficients increased from 0.294, 0.237 and 0.420 to 0.337, 0.259 and 0.445 respectively in case of mediating support. The path coefficients were significant in the direct effect and not significant to some dimensions so I can support the partial mediation.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Inclusive leadership is still a relatively new idea , and the current study contributes to by filling the following knowledge gaps , by contains several significant

theoretical and practical contributions, Initially, our study emphasizes the role of LMX as a mediator between inclusive leadership and employee creativity.

First, this study considering that a leader, particularly an inclusive leader, is crucial role in fostering an environment where workers feel psychologically comfortable, certainly, employees cannot be creative without build a safe work environment, where they work without fear of failure when they perceive their environment to be safe. where the majority of the study IL has focused on other positive work outcomes, such as the roles of team proactivity and collective thriving (Zhao et al., 2023), team innovation, (Ye et al., 2019), Green creativity (Dinibutun, 2024), the sustainability of employee relations (Shah et al., 2021), while we focus on IL as a positive work outcomes.

Second, is the consideration of this study for LMX as mediator. Although prior literature, as per our knowledge has discussed, the role of LMX in an employees creativity, In addition to, LMX in a leadership framework, the mediating effects of LMX between an IL and EC were not highlighted.

### **Managerial implications:**

In this study, where although there is already evidence of a direct association between IL and EC, this work investigates an indirect relationship by looking at the IL intermediate mechanism, which has not been examined before.

The research has several important managerial implications that should be emphasized

First , This research shows that when inclusive leadership provides psychological satisfaction to employees, it will improve employee engagement and creativity within the organization , the results validate the reasonable use of the IL style and provide university staff members with adequate attention, the study results conclude that the academic staff and their assistance who working in the Kafr El-Sheikh University have positive opinions about the IL practices of the heads (Aboramadan et al.,2021)

also the study showed that leaders' treatment of faculty members and their assistants with respect and dignity has a significant impact on their creativity

Second, the study provide practical advice for leadership , in order to foster and preserve solid social exchange relationships with their workforce , they should encourage leaders encourage the implementation of IL practices like openness, accessibility and availability . this is especially important if they want to attract and retain creative workers . in order to do this , firms may educate and cultivate inclusive leaders by enhancing their coaching and communication abilities .

Anyway , this research adds significantly to the body of literature by offering a thorough grasp of the academic environment at Egypt Kafr El-Sheikh University . we anticipate that adding these enrichment - which draw attention to the distinctive scholarly and cultural features of the Egyptian context - will aid in filling in the gaps and provide a thorough and well-rounded argument. this will highlight how much this research has contributed to scholarly discourse.

**Limitations and Future Research Directions:**

There are a number of noteworthy limitations to the current study, while also making recommendations for future lines of inquiry.

First, it is worth to be mentioned that because the study sample was restricted to the one of the public higher educational sector, its conclusions might not apply to other businesses. Additionally in this study on Educational Institutions, based on the number of respondents from the staff members and Assistant Staff at Kafr El-Sheikh University, our current findings may offer conservative estimates of hypothesis testing since the size of the organization is small, which is reflected in sample size, which will limit generalization. Therefore, it is possible that additional industries or sectors may provide more value to the research, allowing for a bigger sample size and wider application of the findings.

Second, the study has not considered other important mediators, so it should be taken into account in future research other mediators such as "cultural factors and Trust in leader" which has a significant effect on EC, also the future research may be focus on the paradoxical effect of inclusive leadership on subordinates' creativity, as a research (Zhu, et al., 2020), that found IL discouraged subordinates' creativity by reducing challenge-related stress, along these lines, many researches can be carried out.

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