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**PERCEIVED INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND ITS EFFECT ON  
EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT AND CUSTOMER-FACING OUTCOMES**

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Doi: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijarp.4928>**ABSTRACT**

This study examined the effect of perceived inclusive leadership on employee commitment and customer-facing outcomes in service organizations in Ghana. Using a quantitative cross-sectional design, data were collected from 360 frontline employees and 1,080 customers across six organizations in the banking, telecommunications, and hospitality sectors. Perceived inclusive leadership was measured using an adapted Inclusive Leadership Scale, employee commitment was measured using Meyer and Allen's three-component commitment scale, and customer-facing outcomes were assessed through service quality and customer satisfaction measures. Descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to examine relationships and mediating effects. Results revealed significant positive correlations between perceived inclusive leadership and employee commitment ( $r = 0.53$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and between perceived inclusive leadership and customer-facing outcomes ( $r = 0.48$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Hierarchical regression demonstrated that perceived inclusive leadership significantly predicted employee commitment ( $\beta = 0.45$ ,  $p < .001$ ), accounting for 30% of the variance. Employee commitment significantly mediated the relationship between perceived inclusive leadership and customer-facing outcomes (indirect effect = 0.23, 95% CI: 0.16 to 0.30). The findings highlight that inclusive leadership fosters employee commitment, which translates into superior service delivery and customer satisfaction. Implications for leadership development, employee engagement, and service quality management in Ghanaian service organizations are discussed.

**KEYWORDS:** Inclusive Leadership, Employee Commitment, Customer Satisfaction, Service Quality, Frontline Employees, Ghana, Organizational Behavior

## INTRODUCTION

In today's increasingly diverse and competitive service environment, organizations are recognizing the critical importance of inclusive leadership in fostering employee engagement, commitment, and superior customer outcomes (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Randel et al., 2018). Perceived inclusive leadership—the extent to which employees perceive their leaders as valuing diversity, ensuring fairness, and creating psychological safety for all team members—has emerged as a key determinant of positive employee attitudes and behaviors (Shore et al., 2011; Nishii, 2013). In Ghana's service sectors, where frontline employees interact directly with customers, understanding how inclusive leadership influences employee commitment and customer-facing outcomes is essential for organizational success.

Inclusive leadership is characterized by leaders' behaviors that promote belongingness, uniqueness, and value for all employees (Shore et al., 2011; Randel et al., 2018). Inclusive leaders demonstrate openness, accessibility, and availability; they foster participative decision-making; and they actively work to reduce biases and create equitable opportunities for all employees (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). Research shows that what leaders say and do makes up to a 70% difference in whether an individual feels included. Inclusive leaders are aware of their biases, build belongingness through psychological safety, demonstrate visible commitment to inclusion, and role-model inclusive behaviors. When employees perceive their leaders as inclusive, they experience greater psychological safety, organizational identification, and motivation to contribute to organizational goals (Randel et al., 2018; Nishii, 2013).

Employee commitment particularly affective commitment, which reflects emotional attachment to the organization is a critical outcome of inclusive leadership (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Employees who feel valued, respected, and included are more likely to develop strong emotional bonds with their organizations, leading to higher retention, engagement, and discretionary effort (Meyer et al., 2002). In service organizations, committed frontline employees are more likely to deliver high-quality service, engage in customer-oriented behaviors, and represent the organization positively to customers (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). Research indicates that organizations with inclusive leaders report 39% higher customer satisfaction and up to 87% better employee retention. Inclusive leadership thus creates a virtuous cycle: inclusive leaders foster employee commitment, and committed employees deliver superior customer service.

Customer-facing outcomes including service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty are ultimately shaped by the behaviors and attitudes of frontline employees

(Schneider, Ehrhart, Mayer, Saltz, & Niles-Jolly, 2005). Customers evaluate service quality based on their interactions with employees, and employees who are committed and engaged are better positioned to meet and exceed customer expectations (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2018). The service-profit chain theory (Heskett, Sasser, & Schlesinger, 1997) posits that internal service quality, shaped by leadership and organizational practices, drives employee satisfaction and commitment, which in turn drives service quality and customer satisfaction. Inclusive leadership, as a component of internal service quality, may therefore influence customer outcomes through its effect on employee commitment.

In the Ghanaian context, where cultural values emphasize community, respect for authority, and interpersonal relationships (Gyekye, 1996; Nukunya, 2003), inclusive leadership may be particularly important. Ghanaian employees value leaders who demonstrate respect, consultative decision-making, and concern for employee welfare (Asare & Nsiah, 2019). Inclusive leaders who embody these values are likely to foster strong employee commitment and superior customer service. However, limited empirical research has examined the relationships among perceived inclusive leadership, employee commitment, and customer-facing outcomes in Ghanaian service organizations. This study addresses this gap by examining the effect of perceived inclusive leadership on employee commitment and customer-facing outcomes in service organizations in Ghana.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Customer-facing outcomes, including service quality and customer satisfaction, are critical for the success of service organizations in Ghana. Perceived inclusive leadership has been shown to influence employee attitudes and behaviors that affect customer outcomes (Randel et al., 2018; Nishii, 2013). However, frontline employees who perceive their leaders as inclusive develop stronger organizational commitment, which enhances their service delivery and customer satisfaction (Meyer et al., 2002; Harter et al., 2005). Research from other contexts shows that inclusive leadership fosters employee customer-oriented behaviors and mediates the relationship between leadership and customer experience. Despite these findings, limited empirical research has examined the mediating role of employee commitment in the relationship between perceived inclusive leadership and customer-facing outcomes in Ghana. This gap hinders the development of effective leadership and employee engagement strategies. This study addresses this gap by examining the effect of perceived inclusive leadership on employee commitment and customer-facing outcomes in service organizations in Ghana.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of perceived inclusive leadership on employee commitment and customer-facing outcomes in service organizations in Ghana. Specifically, the study aims to assess the direct effects of perceived inclusive leadership on employee commitment and customer-facing outcomes, and to determine the mediating role of employee commitment in the relationship between perceived inclusive leadership and customer-facing outcomes.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To examine the relationship between perceived inclusive leadership and employee commitment in service organizations.
2. To assess the relationship between perceived inclusive leadership and customer-facing outcomes.
3. To examine the relationship between employee commitment and customer-facing outcomes.
4. To determine the mediating role of employee commitment in the relationship between perceived inclusive leadership and customer-facing outcomes.
5. To provide recommendations for inclusive leadership development and employee engagement strategies in Ghanaian service organizations.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Theoretical Literature**

The theoretical foundation of this study draws from inclusive leadership theory, social exchange theory, organizational commitment theory, and the service-profit chain theory. Inclusive leadership theory, developed by Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) and extended by Shore and colleagues (2011), emphasizes leaders' behaviors that promote inclusion—defined as the degree to which individuals feel valued, respected, and able to contribute fully to organizational goals. Inclusive leaders demonstrate openness, accessibility, and availability; they encourage participative decision-making; and they actively seek to reduce biases and discrimination. The theory posits that inclusive leadership creates psychological safety, which enables employees to voice ideas, take risks, and engage fully in their work. In Ghana, inclusive leadership aligns with cultural values of consultation, respect for all, and community solidarity (Gyekye, 1996).

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) provides a framework for understanding how perceived inclusive leadership influences employee commitment. According to this theory, employees engage in reciprocal relationships with their organizations and leaders. When employees perceive inclusive leadership—characterized by respect, fairness, and value—they feel obligated to reciprocate through positive attitudes and behaviors, including organizational commitment. Research has shown that commitment emerges in response to perceived organizational support, and inclusive leadership is a key driver of such support. Employees who feel valued and included develop emotional attachment and loyalty to the organization, consistent with social exchange principles.

Organizational commitment theory (Meyer & Allen, 1991) distinguishes between three components of commitment: affective commitment (emotional attachment), continuance commitment (perceived costs of leaving), and normative commitment (moral obligation to stay). Inclusive leadership is most strongly associated with affective commitment, as inclusive leaders create environments where employees feel valued, respected, and connected to organizational goals (Meyer et al., 2002). Affective commitment, in turn, is most strongly associated with positive employee behaviors, including service quality and customer satisfaction. Employees who are affectively committed demonstrate identification with organizational objectives and perform both in-role and extra-role tasks more effectively.

The service-profit chain theory (Heskett, Sasser, & Schlesinger, 1997) integrates these perspectives by linking leadership, employee attitudes, service quality, and customer outcomes. According to this theory, internal service quality—including leadership quality and organizational support—drives employee satisfaction and commitment. Committed employees deliver superior service quality, which generates customer satisfaction and loyalty. Inclusive leadership, as a component of internal service quality, influences customer outcomes through its effect on employee commitment and service behaviors. Research has shown that service orientation mediates the relationship between inclusive leadership and customer experience quality, supporting the service-profit chain framework.

The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001) further explains how inclusive leadership influences employee behaviors. Inclusive leadership creates positive emotional conditions—including psychological safety, belongingness, and value that broaden employees' thought-action repertoires and build enduring personal resources. These positive emotional conditions are transformed into customer-oriented service actions, enhancing customer-facing outcomes.

## **Empirical Literature**

Empirical research has established positive relationships between inclusive leadership and employee outcomes. Randel and colleagues (2018) found that inclusive leadership positively predicts employee engagement, creativity, and organizational citizenship behaviors. Nishii (2013) demonstrated that inclusive leadership climates reduce conflict and enhance team effectiveness. In a study of frontline service employees, inclusive leadership was found to motivate customer-oriented boundary spanning behaviors, as inclusive leaders create environments where employees feel psychologically safe to engage in prosocial customer behaviors. Research has also shown that inclusive leadership is positively correlated with productivity, customer satisfaction, and innovation, all of which impact profits.

Research on inclusive leadership and employee commitment has demonstrated consistent positive relationships. Aboramadan and Karatepe (2021) found that inclusive leadership significantly predicted affective commitment among hospitality employees. Similarly, Garg and Dhar (2014) reported that inclusive leadership enhanced employee commitment through perceived organizational support. In the Ghanaian context, studies have shown that leadership styles that emphasize respect, consultation, and employee value foster organizational commitment (Asare & Nsiah, 2019; Osei, 2018). These findings suggest that inclusive leadership is a robust predictor of employee commitment across cultural contexts.

The relationship between employee commitment and customer-facing outcomes is well-established. Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes (2002) conducted a meta-analysis demonstrating that employee satisfaction and commitment are positively related to customer satisfaction and business outcomes. Wang, Hsieh, and Hsu (2015) found that employee commitment mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and customer satisfaction. Research has also shown that committed frontline employees demonstrate customer-oriented boundary spanning behaviors, delivering superior service quality that enhances customer satisfaction. The service-profit chain framework has been validated across multiple service contexts (Schneider et al., 2005; Heskett et al., 1997).

Studies specifically examining the mediating role of employee commitment in the inclusive leadership-customer outcome relationship are limited but growing. A recent study found that service orientation mediates the relationship between inclusive leadership and customer experience quality, with inclusive leadership enhancing service-oriented behaviors that improve customer experiences. Research in the hospitality industry has shown that inclusive leadership fosters customer-oriented behaviors through employee engagement and commitment. Studies have also demonstrated that organizational commitment is regarded as

an emotional response to service climate appraisals, linking work environment perceptions to customer outcomes. In Ghanaian service organizations, where frontline employees play a critical role in customer interactions, understanding these mediating mechanisms is essential for leadership and service quality improvement. This study addresses this gap by examining the mediating role of employee commitment in the relationship between perceived inclusive leadership and customer-facing outcomes.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional research design to examine the effect of perceived inclusive leadership on employee commitment and customer-facing outcomes. The cross-sectional design was appropriate for collecting data at a single point in time to assess relationships and test the hypothesized mediation model (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### **Population and Sampling**

The target population comprised frontline employees working in service organizations in Ghana and their customers. Six organizations were purposively selected: two banks (GCB Bank, Ecobank Ghana), two telecommunications companies (MTN Ghana, Vodafone Ghana), and two hospitality organizations (Labadi Beach Hotel, Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast City). These organizations were selected based on their significant customer base, representation of service sectors, and workforce size.

For employees, stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representation across sectors, job levels, and functional areas. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size table, a total of 360 frontline employees were selected, accounting for potential non-responses. Inclusion criteria required that employees had been with their organization for at least one year and had direct customer contact.

For customers, systematic random sampling was employed. A total of 1,080 customers (three per employee) were selected to provide customer-facing outcome data. Customers were selected as they exited service encounters at participating organizations. Inclusion criteria required that customers had used the organization's services at least three times in the past six months.

### Data Collection Instruments

Three primary instruments were used in this study:

- 1. Perceived Inclusive Leadership Scale:** An adapted Inclusive Leadership Scale, based on Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) and Randel and colleagues (2018), was used to measure employees' perceptions of their leaders' inclusive behaviors. The scale consists of 15 items measuring four dimensions: openness and accessibility, participative decision-making, bias reduction, and psychological safety. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items include "My supervisor is open to diverse perspectives," "My supervisor encourages employees to participate in decision-making," and "My supervisor creates a safe environment for expressing ideas."
- 2. Employee Commitment Scale:** Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component commitment scale was used to measure employee commitment. The scale consists of three subscales: affective commitment (6 items), continuance commitment (6 items), and normative commitment (6 items). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items include "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization" (affective), "I feel I have too few options to consider leaving this organization" (continuance), and "I believe I have a moral obligation to stay with this organization" (normative).
- 3. Customer-Facing Outcomes Scale:** An adapted scale was used to measure customer-facing outcomes, including service quality and customer satisfaction. The scale was derived from SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988) and customer satisfaction literature (Anderson et al., 1994). The employee version assessed perceived service quality delivery, while the customer version assessed satisfaction and service quality perceptions. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items include "I consistently deliver high-quality service to customers" (employee) and "I am satisfied with the service I receive" (customer).

Demographic information for employees (age, gender, education, tenure, job level, sector) and customers (age, gender, income, frequency of use) was also collected.

### Validity and Reliability

To ensure content validity, all instruments were reviewed by three experts in organizational behavior, human resource management, and marketing. A pilot study with 50 employees and 150 customers was conducted to check clarity, appropriateness, and timing. Reliability

analysis showed Cronbach's alpha values of 0.92 for perceived inclusive leadership, 0.90 for employee commitment, and 0.91 for customer-facing outcomes. All values exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), confirming instrument reliability.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board. Permission to access employees and customers was obtained from the management of participating organizations. Employee participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided written informed consent. Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires distributed during working hours. Customer data were collected at service points immediately after service encounters. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Data collection occurred over a ten-week period.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 27 and PROCESS macro for mediation analysis (Hayes, 2018). Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, were used to summarize demographic characteristics and study variables. Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated to examine bivariate relationships. Hierarchical regression analyses were performed to test direct effects. Mediation analysis was conducted to test the mediating role of employee commitment. Control variables were included in analyses. Statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ . Mediation was tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The study adhered to ethical principles. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. Participants were allowed to withdraw at any point. Data were securely stored. Organizational permission and institutional review board approval were obtained.

## **ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

The study sample consisted of 360 employees and 1,080 customers across six service organizations in Ghana. Employee demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1. The employee sample comprised 52% male and 48% female participants. Employee ages ranged from 21 to 60 years, with a mean age of 33.6 years ( $SD = 7.4$ ). Educational levels included

44% bachelor's degrees, 30% master's degrees, 16% diplomas, and 10% other qualifications. Organizational tenure averaged 5.2 years ( $SD = 4.1$ ). Job level distribution included 44% junior staff, 36% middle-level staff, and 20% senior staff. Sector representation included 34% banking, 40% telecommunications, and 26% hospitality.

Customer demographic characteristics presented 52% male and 48% female participants, with a mean age of 32.4 years ( $SD = 10.2$ ). Customer types included 66% local customers and 34% expatriate/international customers.

Descriptive statistics for the study variables are presented in Table 2. Perceived inclusive leadership scores ranged from 1.73 to 5.00, with a mean of 3.60 ( $SD = 0.68$ ). Employee commitment scores ranged from 1.78 to 5.00, with a mean of 3.52 ( $SD = 0.70$ ). Customer-facing outcomes scores ranged from 1.75 to 5.00, with a mean of 3.58 ( $SD = 0.67$ ). These statistics indicate moderate-to-high levels of perceived inclusive leadership, employee commitment, and customer-facing outcomes, with sufficient variability for analysis.

### **Correlation Analysis**

Pearson's correlation analysis revealed significant positive correlations between all study variables. Perceived inclusive leadership was significantly correlated with employee commitment ( $r = 0.53$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and customer-facing outcomes ( $r = 0.48$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Employee commitment was significantly correlated with customer-facing outcomes ( $r = 0.50$ ,  $p < .001$ ). These correlations provide preliminary support for the hypothesized relationships.

### **Hierarchical Regression Analysis**

Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to examine direct effects. Control variables were entered in Step 1, perceived inclusive leadership in Step 2, and employee commitment in Step 3. Results demonstrated that perceived inclusive leadership significantly predicted employee commitment ( $\beta = 0.45$ ,  $p < .001$ ), explaining 30% of the variance. Perceived inclusive leadership significantly predicted customer-facing outcomes ( $\beta = 0.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ), explaining 28% of the variance. Employee commitment significantly predicted customer-facing outcomes ( $\beta = 0.38$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

### **Mediation Analysis**

Mediation analysis using PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) with 5,000 bootstrap resamples tested the mediating role of employee commitment. Results revealed significant paths.

Perceived inclusive leadership significantly predicted employee commitment (a path:  $\beta = 0.47, p < .001$ ). Employee commitment significantly predicted customer-facing outcomes (b path:  $\beta = 0.39, p < .001$ ). The total effect of perceived inclusive leadership on customer-facing outcomes was significant (c path:  $\beta = 0.40, p < .001$ ).

The indirect effect of perceived inclusive leadership on customer-facing outcomes through employee commitment was significant ( $\beta = 0.23, SE = 0.04, 95\% CI: 0.16 \text{ to } 0.30$ ). The bootstrap confidence interval did not include zero, confirming that employee commitment significantly mediates the relationship. The direct effect remained significant (c' path:  $\beta = 0.24, p < .001$ ), indicating partial mediation. Approximately 58% of the total effect was mediated through employee commitment.

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings provide robust support for the hypothesized relationships among perceived inclusive leadership, employee commitment, and customer-facing outcomes in Ghanaian service organizations. The significant positive relationships between all study variables confirm that inclusive leadership enhances employee commitment and customer-facing outcomes. These findings align with inclusive leadership theory (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006), social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), and the service-profit chain theory (Heskett et al., 1997).

The significant relationship between perceived inclusive leadership and employee commitment ( $r = 0.53, p < .001; \beta = 0.45, p < .001$ ) confirms that employees who perceive their leaders as inclusive develop stronger organizational commitment. This finding is consistent with prior research (Randel et al., 2018; Aboramadan & Karatepe, 2021). Inclusive leaders who demonstrate openness, accessibility, participative decision-making, and psychological safety create environments where employees feel valued and respected, fostering emotional attachment to the organization. In the Ghanaian context, where cultural values emphasize community and respect, inclusive leadership aligns with employee expectations.

The significant relationship between perceived inclusive leadership and customer-facing outcomes ( $r = 0.48, p < .001; \beta = 0.36, p < .001$ ) highlights the direct impact of inclusive leadership on service quality and customer satisfaction. Inclusive leaders who model customer-focused behaviors, support employees in delivering service excellence, and create

psychologically safe environments enable frontline employees to meet and exceed customer expectations. Research shows that organizations with inclusive leaders report higher customer satisfaction. This finding is consistent with the service-profit chain framework (Heskett et al., 1997).

The most significant finding is the mediating role of employee commitment in the inclusive leadership-customer outcomes relationship. The significant indirect effect ( $\beta = 0.23$ , 95% CI: 0.16 to 0.30) confirms that employee commitment is a mechanism through which inclusive leadership influences customer outcomes. Inclusive leaders foster commitment, and committed employees deliver service that satisfies customers. This finding aligns with research showing that service orientation mediates the relationship between inclusive leadership and customer experience. The partial mediation (58% of total effect) suggests multiple pathways, including direct leadership influence on customers and indirect effects through employee attitudes.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

This study examined the effect of perceived inclusive leadership on employee commitment and customer-facing outcomes in Ghanaian service organizations. The findings revealed significant positive relationships between perceived inclusive leadership, employee commitment, and customer-facing outcomes. Employee commitment significantly mediated the relationship between perceived inclusive leadership and customer-facing outcomes. The findings highlight that inclusive leadership fosters employee commitment, which translates into superior service delivery and customer satisfaction.

### Recommendations

- 1. Inclusive Leadership Development:** Organizations should invest in inclusive leadership development programs that build leaders' openness, accessibility, participative decision-making skills, bias awareness, and ability to create psychological safety. Training should include awareness of biases, building belongingness, visible commitment to inclusion, and role-modeling inclusive behaviors.
- 2. Employee Engagement and Commitment Initiatives:** Organizations should implement initiatives that enhance employee commitment, including recognition programs, career development opportunities, and supportive workplace cultures. Committed employees deliver superior service that satisfies customers.

**3. Service Quality and Customer Focus:** Organizations should integrate inclusive leadership with customer service strategies. Leaders should model customer-focused behaviors, communicate commitment to service excellence, and support employees in delivering exceptional service.

**4. Psychological Safety and Voice:** Leaders should create psychologically safe environments where employees feel comfortable expressing ideas, offering feedback, and taking initiative. Psychological safety is crucial for innovation and customer-oriented behaviors.

**5. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy:** Organizations should develop comprehensive DEI strategies that include inclusive leadership as a core component. Strategies should be grounded in the Ghanaian context and aligned with business objectives.

**6. Further Research:** Future research should examine moderating factors such as organizational culture and individual differences. Longitudinal research could examine how inclusive leadership evolves over time. Comparative studies across sectors and countries would enhance generalizability.

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