

Inclusive leadership and project success: Mediating and moderating effects

Shaikh Aqeeb Ur Rehman¹,  Shahid Mehmood^{2*}, Shiza Shahid³, Adnan⁴, Aribah Saleem⁵

^{1,3}Capital University of Science & Technology, Islamabad, Pakistan; aqeebsh222@gmail.com (S.A.R.)

shizashahid1997@gmail.com (S.S.).

²Department of Management Sciences, Faculty of Management Sciences and IT, Mohi-Ud-Din Islamic University Nerian Sharif, Tararkhel, AJ&K, (12080) Pakistan; shahid.mehmood@miu.edu.pk, mshahid.mehmood@hotmail.com (S.M.).

⁴Mohi-ud-Din Islamic University, Nerian Sharif, AJ&K, 12080, Pakistan; adnan_abbasi89@yahoo.com, adnan@miu.edu.pk (A.).

⁵Department of Business Administration, Iqra University Islamabad, Pakistan; aribahsaleem29916@iqraisb.edu.pk (A.S.).

Abstract: This study aims to investigate, via empirical means, how inclusive leadership (IL) affects project success (PS), considering the moderating influence of person-job fit (PJF) and the mediating role of project team member silence (PTMS). Data were collected using a questionnaire with a convenience sampling technique. Five hundred employees and project managers working in different project-based organizations in Pakistan's twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad were chosen to complete the questionnaire. Using SPSS, data were analyzed, and correlation and regression analyses were performed for the relationships in the study. The MACRO process was deployed for testing mediation and moderation in the current research. Results revealed that inclusive leadership has a positive relationship with project success, and project team member silence mediated this relationship. Furthermore, person-job fit moderated the relationship between project team member silence and project success. Although leadership has been widely discussed in literature, and there has been growing interest among researchers in related studies, empirical evidence for the relationship between inclusive leadership and project success remains scarce. Many existing studies are based on non-project companies, leaving a gap in understanding how inclusive behavior can influence project outcomes. The current research fills this gap by deploying a quantitative technique to validate data from project-based organizations in the twin cities of Pakistan.

Keywords: *Inclusive leadership, Person job-fit, Project success, Project team member silence.*

1. Introduction

Dynamically transforming and complex environment of projects, the success of projects is now increasingly dependent on the ability of leaders to enhance an inclusive environment. An inclusive environment is characterized by openness, availability, and accessibility. Therefore, inclusive leadership is an influential style that can help managers promote psychological safety. Improved psychological safety can, in turn, help increase project success. Project-based organizations have greater importance for the inclusive leadership style because they usually have a diverse workforce and need proper attention, support, and availability of their leaders.

Based on Social Exchange Theory (SET) [1] and LMX theory [2], current research suggests that the leadership style of inclusive leadership helps management and organizations foster high levels of social and relational sharing and exchanges with subordinates and team members. It creates a positive environment, especially one oriented toward trust, respect, and psychological safety. In such an environment, project team members feel highly valued and supported by the organization and leaders. This, in turn, boosts their motivation and satisfaction. In this environment, project team members' silence increases due to some cultural factors of the Pakistani context; if they are well motivated and satisfied with their organization and leaders, there is no need to waste time remaining silent, and they

continue working at their best level. This also helps increase PJF, and all these positive psychological and social relational conditions support employees and leaders in achieving a high rate of project success.

Fostering an environment where different viewpoints, experiences, and perspectives are appreciated and incorporated into decision-making and project execution is a key component of inclusive leadership in a project-based organization. This strategy encourages team members to work together, be innovative, and be engaged [3, 4]. Project success is significantly increased by inclusive leadership. Inclusion fosters a climate in which each team member feels empowered to offer their distinctive ideas, abilities, and experiences [5]. When executives prioritize inclusivity, they can unleash their people's full potential and improve project results. To end team member silence, inclusive leaders encourage team members to express their original thoughts and viewpoints [6]. This variety of viewpoints can produce more original and creative responses to the problems faced by a project. Team members are more inclined to think outside the box when they feel comfortable sharing their thoughts [7, 8].

Team member silence describes circumstances in which people in a team context withhold their ideas, worries, or feedback. As it impedes efficient problem-solving and communication, this could be damaging to the success of the project [9]. Every time possible, inclusive leaders include team members in the decision-making process. When team members have a voice in decisions that will directly affect them, they are more invested in the results and are less inclined to keep their worries or reservations to themselves [10]. Open and honest communication among team members is actively encouraged by inclusive leaders. They set the tone by exhibiting these behaviors and encouraging active listening. When team members observe their leaders and coworkers being open about sharing information and criticism, it fosters a transparent environment [11].

The acts that leaders take to value others in doing their duties are referred to as "inclusive leadership." All parties involved benefit when inclusive leadership is practiced. Inclusive leaders take accountability for achieving organizational goals and recognize all employees who contribute at all levels within the organization [12, 13]. Inclusive leaders can create inclusive organizations, and inclusive organizations are those that employ people of all racial and ethnic origins while elevating the contributions of each employee on an equal basis. Organizational programs are created by inclusive businesses using the requirements of all employees [14].

In a project-based organization, "person-job fit" is essential for project success and overall organizational effectiveness. Ensure individuals assigned to a project have the necessary skills and qualifications to perform their roles effectively. Consider the level of experience required for a particular project role [15]. Some projects may benefit from the fresh perspective of junior team members, while others may require the expertise of more experienced professionals. This includes technical skills, knowledge, and experience relevant to the project's requirements. Whyte et al. [16] suggested that individuals assigned to a project must have the necessary skills and qualifications to perform their roles effectively. This includes technical skills, knowledge, and experience relevant to the project's requirements. Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each team member in the project. This helps prevent overlapping, confusion, and conflicts. Each team member needs to know their specific tasks and how they contribute to the project's goals [17, 18].

Inclusive leadership has been studied with Project Success & it will create positive changes in project-based organizations. While there has been little research on the Project team member's silence's ability to mediate between Inclusive leadership and Project Success. It will enhance the positivity in project-based organizational sectors [19]. Moreover, Growth will help to keep people on the right track, so they will work harder than before. Due to Inclusive leadership, positivity will increase, and it will be a reason to increase project team member silence (PTMS) in the project-based organization sector, which will motivate the people to help each other more than their job duties [20].

However, Project Success refers to elements that are exclusive to that project, such as time, task, team, and context [21]. In line with the transient and team-based nature of projects, for instance, calls for cooperative behavior and project compliance among personnel [22]. In the meantime, task-oriented

and context-embedded project elements encourage staff to submit fresh ideas and model connections with preceding team members to expedite the completion of current projects and activate new ones. Project Success has been found to have positive effects on project "iron triangle" goals (time, money, and quality), the effectiveness of team interactions, and the future potential of an organization [23, 24].

Therefore, the major aim of the current study is to examine the relationship between inclusive leadership and project success by using the implications of social exchange theory and LMX. Researchers are more interested in learning how social exchange theory (SEC) affects employee behavior or viewpoints negatively, such as causing jealousy or envy among individuals, but with the aspect of Person-Job Fit, this negativity can be reduced [25, 26]. Social exchange theory is strong relationships between leaders and followers encourage both parties to learn from their interactions in the project-based organization [27]. According to the social exchange theory, these linkages positively affect project-based organizations. As a result, leader-member exchange offers an advantageous connection to the organization and individuals working within it [28, 29].

Above highlights show that inclusive leadership has been widely discussed in previous research studies. However, limited focus has been found regarding the role of inclusive leadership and project-related outcomes using underpinning theories: LMX and Social Exchange Theory. Particularly, current research indicates a lack of literature clarifying the mediating role of project team members' silence in the relationship between inclusive leadership and project success, especially within the Pakistani and collectivist cultural context.

Social Exchange Theory is an overarching framework developed for current research. It suggests that when leaders exhibit inclusive behavior at workplaces, employees and leaders will have high-quality social exchanges. Prominent features of such exchanges include trust and respect, which are closely related to LMX. The current research aims to examine the impacts of inclusive leadership on project success, highlighting the strong connection between LMX and SEC theories in this context.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Inclusive Leadership and Project Success

Project success is significantly influenced by inclusive leadership in today's diverse and dynamic work environments. When leaders prioritize inclusivity and create an environment where all team members feel valued and heard, it can have a profound impact on the project's outcomes [30]. Diverse teams are encouraged by inclusive leaders, who also actively seek out the opinions of people with different experiences and viewpoints. A wider range of ideas, more inventive solutions, and creative problem-solving can result from this diversity of thought, which can be especially helpful in complex undertakings [31, 32]. Collaboration and teamwork are encouraged by inclusive leaders. They foster an atmosphere where team members feel free to voice their opinions and worries. Stronger teamwork is cultivated by this open communication, which enhances project coordination and results. By giving team members ownership of their jobs and duties, inclusive leaders empower their colleagues [33]. Team members are more likely to accept responsibility for their job and put in extra effort to see a project through to completion if they feel respected and trusted [34, 35]. Similarly, Waseem et al. [36] reported that humble leadership has positive outcomes for the success of projects, and team engagement can mediate the relationship.

Inclusive leaders consider a wide range of perspectives when making decisions. This results in well-informed and more thoughtful choices that are less likely to overlook critical factors, ultimately leading to better project outcomes [37, 38]. Inclusivity fosters a sense of belonging and creates a great work atmosphere, which causes team members to be more motivated and engaged. This enthusiasm can be a driving force behind project success. An inclusive environment is less likely to experience conflicts and misunderstandings related to diversity and inclusion issues. Lower conflict and a greater sense of belonging reduce turnover and help maintain a stable project team [39, 40]. Inclusive leadership encourages open discussions about potential risks and challenges. Team members from diverse backgrounds can bring unique insights into potential risks, which can be addressed proactively,

reducing the likelihood of project setbacks. Inclusive leaders consider the needs and perspectives of all project stakeholders, including clients, end-users, and team members [41, 42]. This broader consideration can lead to greater stakeholder satisfaction and project success. Based on the above literature review, H1 has been established for the current research.

H₁: Inclusive leadership is positively and significantly associated with PS.

2.2. Inclusive Leadership and Project Team Member Silence

Inclusive leadership is vital in ensuring that team members feel comfortable speaking up and are not silenced in project environments. Team members are more willing to share ideas, concerns, and feedback when they feel empowered and respected for their varied viewpoints, which ultimately improves project outcomes [43, 44]. A psychologically safe space is created by inclusive leaders so that team members can freely share their ideas without worrying about backlash or mockery. This encourages team members to share their thoughts and concerns and fosters open communication. Inclusive leaders are active listeners who pay close attention to what team members are saying [45]. They show empathy and respect when team members speak, which makes individuals more willing to share their thoughts and concerns. Inclusive leaders actively seek out diverse perspectives and value them. They recognize that different team members may have unique insights to offer and actively encourage team members to share their viewpoints [46, 47].

Inclusive leaders provide regular feedback and recognize the contributions of team members. This positive reinforcement makes team members feel appreciated and motivated to continue sharing their ideas. Inclusive leaders establish clear communication expectations within the team [48]. This includes setting the tone for open and honest dialogue, which minimizes the fear of speaking up. Inclusive leaders possess effective conflict resolution skills. When differences of opinion arise, these leaders address conflicts constructively, helping team members feel that their concerns will be addressed rather than dismissed [49]. Inclusive leaders provide training and education on topics pertaining to inclusion, equity, and diversity. Members of the team gain a better understanding of the significance of diversity and inclusivity as a result. In some cases, team members may feel more comfortable providing feedback anonymously or through alternative communication channels. Inclusive leaders should be open to these methods to ensure that no team member feels silenced [25].

Inclusive leaders actively promote a culture of speaking up. They communicate that sharing concerns and ideas is not only encouraged but also necessary for the project's success. Inclusive leaders often invest in diversity and inclusion training to create awareness and understanding among team members [14]. This training can help team members appreciate the value of diverse voices and feel more comfortable sharing their perspectives. Team members are more inclined to speak out, offer their opinions, and help the project succeed when they feel heard and respected. Inclusive leadership creates a positive and open work environment that minimizes team member silence and allows for a rich exchange of ideas and feedback, ultimately enhancing the quality of project outcomes [50]. As a result, inclusive leaders behave kindly towards their followers in the manner of parents, which ultimately increases the project team members' silence in the organization. On the other hand, they demand absolute loyalty and compliance from those under them as employees [51]. This research will provide a positive relation of Inclusive leadership and project team members' silent roles as mediators in project-based organizations.

H₂: There is a significant relationship between Inclusive Leadership and Project team member silence.

2.3. Project Team Member Silence & Project Success

Project team member silence, where team members withhold their concerns, feedback, and ideas, can have a noteworthy adverse effect on the project's success. When individuals on the team are afraid to speak up, it can lead to miscommunication, misunderstandings, and project failures [52]. When team members remain silent, valuable insights and opportunities may be missed. Team members often have

different perspectives, experiences, and knowledge that can contribute to more effective problem-solving and decision-making. Silence can result in incomplete information being shared among team members. This can lead to misunderstandings, errors, and delays in project tasks, potentially derailing the project timeline. Team member silence can lead to the neglect of quality concerns or errors in project work. If team members are not comfortable pointing out quality issues, the project may deliver subpar results [51, 53].

Silence may be driven by a desire to avoid conflict. However, unresolved conflicts can fester and negatively impact team dynamics and project progress. Open communication is essential to address and resolve conflicts effectively [54]. Effective problem-solving relies on open discussions and the collective intelligence of the team. Team member silence can lead to suboptimal solutions and project delays. Team members who do not speak up about potential risks or issues can hinder effective risk management. Identifying and addressing risks early is crucial for project success. When team members feel their input is not valued or heard, they can start to lose interest and motivation. This may lead to a decline in productivity and make it more difficult to finish project duties successfully [55].

Silence can lead to unresolved issues that accumulate over time [56]. These issues can resurface later in the project, causing disruptions and affecting the project's success, in a setting where team members can freely share their opinions, worries, and suggestions without worrying about consequences [57]. Encourage a culture of open communication and active listening, where all team members are expected to contribute their thoughts and concerns. Organize frequent check-ins and team meetings to give team members a chance to voice their problems and ideas. Establish formal and informal feedback mechanisms to gather input from team members, such as suggestion boxes or anonymous feedback channels [58]. Develop conflict resolution strategies and ensure team members are comfortable addressing conflicts constructively. Recognize and reward team members for their contributions, which can motivate open communication. Provide training on effective communication and the importance of speaking up in project settings. Although, as per research by Morrison [48], team members' silence does not lead to positive outcomes for employees and organizations, the above literature is closer to our research rationale. Society and work environment have a higher power distance and collectivist approach in the Pakistani context [59]. Therefore, the current research study hypothesized that:

H₃: Project team member silence has a strong and favorable correlation with Project Success

2.4. Project Team Member Silence as a Mediator

Project team member silence refers to the phenomenon where individuals on a project team withhold their thoughts, ideas, concerns, or feedback. This silence can manifest in various ways, including team members choosing not to speak up during meetings, not sharing important information, or not expressing their opinions and insights [60]. Team members may be afraid that if they speak up or raise concerns, they will face negative consequences, such as criticism, retribution, or even job insecurity. Psychological safety is the conviction that one can express oneself without worrying about unfavorable outcomes. When team members do not perceive their work environment as psychologically safe, they are less likely to voice their thoughts and concerns. Team members may believe that their input won't be valued or acted upon, leading them to think it's pointless to speak up [61].

Silence among team members can have a big impact on organizational culture and norms. Certain organizations may have an unwritten rule of not challenging authority or not rocking the boat [49]. If team members do not feel empowered to make decisions or contribute to the project's direction, they may stay silent. Project team member silence can have significant implications for the success of a project and the organization. When team members don't share their insights, concerns, or ideas, it can lead to missed opportunities, unaddressed issues, and suboptimal project outcomes [48]. In contrast, an open and communicative team can benefit from diverse perspectives, solve problems more effectively, and make informed decisions. The connection between project performance in a project-based organization, inclusive leadership, and silent project team members can be complex, and researchers

have explored various aspects of this dynamic [12]. In this context, PTMS can be both a mediator and an outcome of inclusive leadership.

Inclusive leadership can enhance psychological safety, making team members more likely to speak up. Conversely, a lack of inclusivity can reduce psychological safety, leading to team member silence. Inclusive leadership encourages information sharing, which can reduce silence [62]. Members of a team are more inclined to contribute when they feel appreciated and include knowledge and expertise. Inclusive leadership can promote a sense of team cohesion and trust, which can encourage open communication. In contrast, non-inclusive leadership may lead to mistrust and reluctance to share. Project success can be measured in various ways, including meeting project objectives, staying on budget, delivering on time, and achieving stakeholder satisfaction [63]. The impact of inclusive Silence from team members and leadership regarding project success may vary depending on the specific success criteria.

Research by Morrison and Milliken [64] claimed that team member silence is usually referred to as a barrier or hurdle for knowledge sharing, innovativeness, and learning behavior at workplaces. Employees at workplaces often withhold their concerns or their ideas due to the prevalence of low psychological safety. However, research by Brinsfield [65] claims that silence from the employee side is not always exhibiting a negative side; in some specific contexts or cultures like Pakistani project-based organizations, employees may choose silence in strategic perspectives to maintain harmony in the team, for the prevention of conflicts, or to show a greater level of respect for authorities. Similarly, Knoll et al. [66] claimed that silence from the employees' side is sometimes more beneficial because silence used by employees is just due to respect for individuals, their team or group members, or to keep the workplace environment autonomous and conflict-free [67]. Therefore, the effects of silence are totally dependent on the underlying level of motivation, whether it is defensive, prosocial, or acquiescent, especially in project-based companies. In project-based firms, interdependence is at its peak, and time pressure is very high. Inclusive leadership plays a pivotal role in reshaping the nature of silence from the employee side, transforming it into defense-oriented silence that may lay the foundation for constructive participation and voice, thereby influencing project success [68]. Hence, it has been hypothesized in current research that:

H₆: Project team member silence plays a mediating role between Inclusive leadership and Project Success.

2.5. Person Job-Fit as a Moderator

Person-job fit, or person-environment fit, is the term used to describe how well an individual's traits, aptitudes, and preferences match the needs of a particular job or work setting [69]. This concept is important in the fields of human resources, organizational psychology, and organizational behavior. This aspect focuses on the extent to which an individual's attributes align with the requirements of a particular job. Skill fit assesses whether the individual possesses the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) required to perform the tasks and responsibilities of the job effectively [70]. An individual with a high skill fit is well-equipped to handle the job's technical demands. Personality fit examines whether an individual's personality traits, values, and work style align with the organizational culture and the expectations of the job. A high personality fit suggests that the individual's personal characteristics are in harmony with the work environment [71].

This aspect assesses how well an individual's preferences, needs, and values are met by the job and the broader work environment. When there is a good fit, People are more likely to be content with their jobs, which can boost engagement, motivation, and productivity [72]. When individuals are in jobs that match their skills, abilities, and preferences, they are more likely to be content with their jobs, which might result in increased drive and dedication. Individuals who experience a strong person-job fit are often more effective and productive in their roles, as their skills and attributes are aligned with the job's requirements [73]. A person-job fit can reduce turnover rates. When individuals are happy with their jobs and the work environment, they are less likely to leave the organization in search of a better fit

elsewhere. A poor person-job fit can lead to stress and burnout, as individuals may struggle with tasks and work settings that do not align with their abilities and preferences [74].

In the context of a project-based organization, examining person-job fit as a moderator between project team member silence and project success is an interesting research direction. To clarify, it is necessary to explore whether the degree of alignment between an individual's skills, abilities, and preferences (person-job fit) influences how project team member silence impacts project success [75, 76]. As mentioned earlier, project team member silence refers to team members withholding their thoughts, concerns, or feedback. It can be detrimental to a project because it may lead to unaddressed issues, missed opportunities, and suboptimal decision-making. Person-job fit, in this context, acts as a moderator variable [77]. It influences the strength or direction of the relationship between project team member silence and project success. Specifically, whether the level of fit between an individual and their job influences how the negative effects of team member silence on project success are mitigated or amplified [78]. Studying the role of person-job fit as a moderator between project team member silence and project success can provide valuable insights into how organizations can better manage project teams and improve project outcomes. It underscores the importance of not only addressing team member silence but also considering individual fit within the project team to optimize success [79]. *Based on the literature review following hypothesis has been developed:*

H₅: Person Job-Fit plays a moderating role between Project team member silence and Project Success in such a way that high Person Job-Fit will strengthen the relationship between Project team member silence and Project Success.

2.6. Research Model

To show the diagrammatic view of the research model, Figure 1 has been designed. Figure 1 represents all the relationships among the variables of the research study. Based on social exchange theory, the current research extracted hypotheses after an in-depth literature review. The study focused on determining the relationship between IL and PS, with PTMS as a mediating role. The moderating role of PJJ is also an important aspect of the current research.

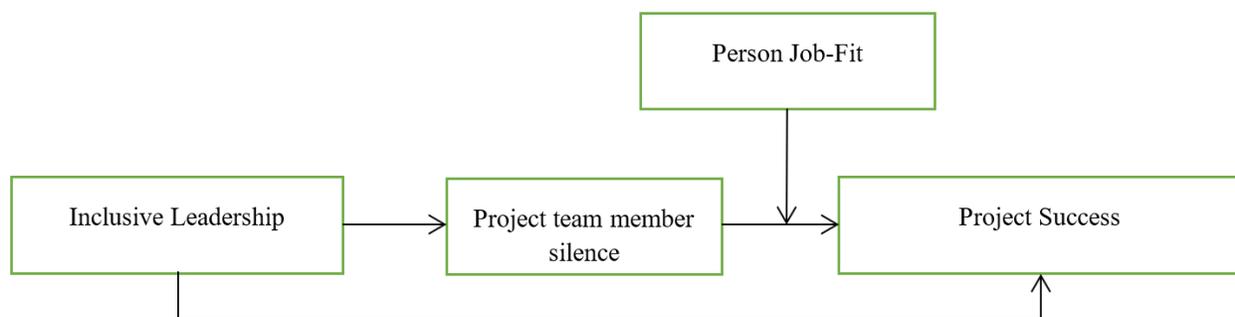


Figure 1.
Research Model.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample & Data Collection/ Participants & Procedure:

Participants in this study come from a variety of public and commercial project-based organizations in the twin towns of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Because the population was unknown, the sample size was determined by G-power. Managers and staff from various project-based organizations served as the sample for this study, which examined the relationship between inclusive leadership and project success, employing project team member silence and person-job fit as mediators in the negotiation process. Research design is a method that researchers employ to address the research questions for data collection and its justification using a research questionnaire. Closed-ended questions were used to

collect data for the research variables, and the questionnaire was modified from earlier research. Quantitative research is a type of investigation. The study is based on positive philosophy and relies heavily on real scientific data, such as statistics and controlled experiments. Two constraints cause the time horizon to be cross-sectional. One is a time crunch; the other is a resource crunch. Sample in current research has been figured by using convenience sampling as suggested and used by Tamasevicius et al. [80]. Furthermore, to avoid the researchers' bias in data collection common biased method was used as suggested by MacKenzie and Podsakoff [81]. Although convenience sampling has a negative side for generalizability of results, in time-sensitive and resource deficiency, convenience sampling is feasible for research studies of social sciences and management sciences and is commonly used [82].

Non-Probability kind of sampling, particularly convenience sampling, may lessen generalizability and may be the reason for bias too [83]. However, with a tight limit of resources like time, availability, and ease of sample units, and accessibility constraints, we can deploy convenience sampling [84]. The current research study used convenience sampling from data collection in project based organization situated in the twin cities of Pakistan that are Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Convenience sampling is helpful when the researchers reach to the population is difficult. Furthermore, in settings where it is difficult to figure out, convenience sampling is the most suitable technique. However, researchers in this research ensured to minimize the chances of biasness drawing the participants from diverse project sectors like construction, IT, development, and education. Secondly, data were collected from multiple organizations and projects to reduce the organizational bias. Furthermore, voluntary participation and anonymity were ensured to minimize the social desirability bias. Lastly, screening of responses was done to ensure consistency and completeness to enhance the quality of data. All these collectively helped us to mitigate the limitations related to convenience sampling, and also all these helped to strengthen the reliability of the findings.

3.2. Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The current research study is quantitative in nature, and the data in this research were collected with the help of a questionnaire. Therefore, the data collected in the current research are of a primary nature. To ensure ethical consideration, the written Ethical Approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee constituted under the Office of Research Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC) of Mohi-Ud-Din Islamic University, AJ&K, numbered (NO.ORIC.ER/722/2023) to interact and gather data from the respondents for research purposes. Therefore, respondents (only volunteers) were informed and engaged for data collection through the consent approved by the University Ethical Committee. Hence, consent was informed through an officially approved document, whilst an annexed written statement. Furthermore, the considered study is not retrospective in nature, nor is it based on samples archived.

3.3. Sample Characteristics

Every project-based organization has leaders, and leaders typically invest in their team. The descriptive study that follows shows how diverse organizations are in terms of things like gender, age, qualification, and experience, which are shown in Table 1. Gender, age, qualification, and experience are also demographic/control variables used in current research.

Table 1.
Demographics.

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	284	69.3	69.3	69.3
Female	126	30.7	30.7	100.0
Total	410	100	100	
Age				
18-25	148	36.1	36.1	36.1
26-33	140	34.1	34.1	70.2
34-41	42	10.2	10.2	80.5
42-49	43	10.5	10.5	91
50-above	37	9	9	100
Total	410	100	100	
Qualification				
Matric	13	3.2	3.2	3.2
Intermediate	287	70	70	73.2
Bachelor	55	13.4	13.4	86.6
Masters	52	12.7	12.7	99.3
PHD	3	0.7	0.7	100
Total	410	100	100	
Experience				
5-Jan	58	14.1	14.1	14.1
10-Jun	267	65.1	65.1	79.3
15-Nov	32	7.8	7.8	87.1
16-20	38	9.3	9.3	96.3
21-above	15	3.7	3.7	100
Total	410	100	100	

3.4. Measurement

In this study, four factors were measured using a closed-ended questionnaire. utilizing the five Likert scales, which range from "Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree," with 1 denoting strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, and 5 strongly agree.

Reliability analysis was conducted by researchers, and results confirmed that all scales adopted for the current research are reliable enough to meet the requirements. Reliability for the scale of inclusive leadership was found to be 0.755, reliability value for the scale of project team member silence was 0.840, Cronbach alpha value for the scale of person job fit was found to be 0.719, and finally, reliability value for the scale of project success was found to be 0.832. Hence, all values are greater than or equal to 0.70 and are in an acceptable range.

3.5. Inclusive Leadership

The scale for inclusive leadership is adopted from the study of Carmeli et al. [85]. Among them are statements like "The manager is ready to listen to my requests" and "The manager is open to hearing new ideas." Javed et al. [86] have utilized the questionnaire. We adopt 13 items from Zhu et al. [87]. Which includes, "In this mega project, I am not willing to speak up with suggestions for change because I am disengaged".

3.6. Person Job-Fit

The four basic aspects of person-job fit were created by Saks and Ashforth [88]. "To what extent do your information, skill, and ability match the needs of the job?" is the sample question. and "How much more does the job satisfy your requirements?"

3.7. Project Success

The published literature does not provide a standard technique for measuring project performance; instead, a tool based on prior research is provided by Mir and Pinnington [89]. Aga [90] previously

employed a 10-item scale. Examples include "The project was completed on schedule" and "The project was completed within the allocated budget."

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Analysis

The means and standard deviations for each variable are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2.

Descriptive Analysis.

Descriptive Statistic	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Inclusive Leadership	1.13	5.00	3.1939	0.86522
Project team member silence	1.55	5.00	3.5361	1.03502
Project Success	1.50	5.00	3.5732	0.92034
Person Job-Fit	1.20	5.00	3.2878	1.05269

Note: N=410, Inclusive Leadership (IL), Project team member silence (PTMS), Person Job-Fit (PJF), Project Success (PS).

Table 3.

Correlation.

	Inclusive Leadership	Project Success	Person Job Fit	Project Team Member Silence
Inclusive Leadership	1			
Project Success	0.231**	1		
Person Job Fit	0.189**	0.635**	1	
Project Team Member Silence	-0.130**	0.530**	0.393**	1

Note: N=410, **=P<0.001, p<0.05, Inclusive Leadership (IL), Project team member silence (PTMS), Person Job-Fit (PJF), Project Success (PS)

The correlation between all the variables involved has been shown in Table 3. Every correlation value falls between +1 and -1, indicating a strong link between the mediating, moderating, dependent, and independent factors.

4.2. Regression

H₁: Project success is favorably and significantly correlated with inclusive leadership.

Table 4.

Standardized Coefficients for Structural Paths.

Structural Path	B	SE	T	P-Value
IL>PS	0.3642	0.0474	7.6868	0.0000

Note: ***=P<0.001, β =unstandardized regression coefficients, S<E=Standard Error.

As a result, the table's hypothesis H1, which suggested that inclusive leadership and project success are positively correlated, is accepted. Results in Table 4 revealed that inclusive leadership has a positive and significant relationship with project success. As per the results shown in Table 4, there is a positive ($\beta = .3642$) and significant ($p = .000$) relationship between IL and PS.

H₂: There is a significant relationship between Inclusive Leadership and Project team member silence.

Table 5.

Standardized Coefficients for Structural Paths.

Structural Path	B	SE	T	P-Value
IL>PTMS	0.5601	0.0389	14.3827	0.000

Note: ***=P<0.001, β =unstandardized regression coefficients, S>E=Standard Error.

Table 5 indicates that a single unit change in inclusive leadership corresponds to a 56-unit change in the silence of project team members. As per results shown in Table 5, there is a positive ($\beta = .5601$) and significant ($p=.000$) relationship between IL and PS. Therefore, the findings confirm hypothesis 2, which postulated that there is a positive correlation between inclusive leadership and project team members' silence.

H₂: Project team member silence is positively and significantly related to Project Success.

Table 6.
Standardized Coefficients for Structural Paths.

Structural Path	B	SE	T	P-Value
PTMS>PS	0.5313	0.2144	2.4781	0.000

Note: ***= $P<0.001$; β =unstandardized regression coefficients, S>E=Standard Error.

As per the results in Table 6, a single unit change in a project team member's silence results in 53 units of change in PS. The results in Table 6 show a positive ($\beta=.5313$) and significant ($p=.000$) relationship between IL and PS. According to the data, hypothesis 3, which proposed that PS and project team member silence are strongly associated, has been validated. These findings contradict previous literature, possibly due to Pakistani culture's high power distance and collectivist approach [59]. Therefore, the results are justifiable in the cultural and work context of a Pakistani organization.

H₃: Project team member silence plays a mediating role between Inclusive leadership and Project Success.

Table 7.
Standardized Coefficients for Structural Paths.

IL->PTMS->PS	Effect	SE	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
Bootstrapping Result for the Indirect Effect	0.3642	0.0474	7.6868	0.0000	0.2711	0.4574

Note: ***= $P<0.001$; **= $P<0.05$; β =unstandardized regression coefficients, S<E=Standard Error, Inclusive Leadership (IL), Project team member silence (PTMS), Project Success (PS).

A mediation test was conducted using the MACRO process of Preacher and Hayes. The results indicate a mediation effect of project team member silence in the relationship between inclusive leadership and project success. According to Table 7, both LLCI and ULCI are non-zero, confirming the presence of mediation. Consequently, Hypothesis 4 is validated.

H₄: Person Job-Fit is a moderating factor that influences the link between project team member silence and project success. A high Person Job-Fit will enhance this relationship.

Model 1 of Preacher and Hayes was conducted using the IBM SPSS PROCESS macro to examine the moderating role of Person-Job Fit in the relationship between project team member silence and project success. The interaction effect ($\beta = .1242$, $p < 0.005$) indicates that Person-Job Fit moderates this link.

Table 8.
Moderation Analysis.

Structural Path	Effect	SE	T	P-Value	LLCI	ULCI
PS(PTMS*PJF)	0.1242	0.0506	2.4518	0.0	0.0246	0.2237

Note: ***= $P<0.001$; **= $P<0.05$; β =standardized regression coefficients, S>E=Standard Error, Inclusive Leadership (IL), Project team member silence (PTMS), Person Job-Fit (PJF).

There is significant moderation because the ULCI (.2237) and LLCI (.0246) values in Table 8 are both in the same direction. The findings demonstrate that Person-Job Fit moderates the relationships; for example, a high Person-Job Fit results in a stronger association between project team member silence and project success. Therefore, as the table indicates, hypothesis 5 is accepted.

5. Discussion

The study designed by authors aimed to determine the relationship between inclusive leadership and project success, with the mediating role of project team members' silence. Furthermore, another objective was to test the moderating role of person-job fit in the relationship between project team members' silence and project success. Findings revealed that inclusive leadership is a crucial aspect of any project because it helps organizations ensure project success. The results supported the hypothesis that inclusive leadership is significantly and positively associated with project success. Project citizenship is more likely when inclusive leadership is prevalent in project-based organizations. Project managers in organizations operating on a project basis should practice inclusive leadership with their subordinates. Additionally, they should inspire team members to collaborate and proactively contribute new information. The results show that fostering inclusive leadership within a company can increase project success.

Results of current research are consistent with findings that inclusive leadership is expected to have a direct positive impact on project success. Leaders who embrace inclusivity tend to foster open communication, collaboration, and a sense of belonging within the team [91]. This, in turn, enhances overall project performance. Team member silence, where individuals withhold opinions or concerns, can act as a barrier in this relationship. In the context of inclusive leadership, a lack of inclusivity may lead to increased silence within the team. These findings supported the H2 of the study, and the findings of the current research study are similar to the findings reported by Asghar et al. [92], as they found that organizations that have leaders of an inclusive nature help and support employees, which increases the satisfaction among employees, and employees feel more secure in such environments. As per hypothesis 3, the study aimed to assess the impact of project team members' silence on project success. Results provided important insights: when team members feel excluded or unsupported, they are more likely to withhold valuable input, affecting communication and project success. Although these findings oppose traditional literature, increased employee silence can lead to negative outcomes [93]. When employees feel secure and are highly satisfied with their leaders due to their inclusive approach, members can raise their voices at appropriate times to speak for creativity and innovation. Therefore, team members sharing innovative thoughts and feedback with managers can lead to project success. However, results indicate that employee silence has a positive relationship with project success. This may be due to the collectivist and high-power distance culture of Pakistani workplaces. Hence, H3 received support from the results. Findings related to H3 are consistent with the findings of Islam [59] and Saiyarod [94]. In contrast, there are various Western researchers, like [95-97], who reported that project team member silence has negative outcomes for project success. Therefore, the current study is very interesting as reported positive side of team member silence for project success in the Pakistani context, where a collectivist culture and power distance environment exist.

The results confirmed that team members' silence mediated the relationship between inclusive leadership and project success. Therefore, H4 got support from the results of the current research study. Recognizing the mediating role of team member silence, organizations should actively work to reduce barriers to communication and encourage open dialogue within project teams [98]. It's an interesting point of our research that we concluded a positive relationship between team member silence and project success. A finding that is conversely found in comparison of the majority literature is that team member silence is detrimental to performance and innovation [64, 99]. However, our results claimed that silence may also exhibit adaptive value under contingent and cultural conditions. In Pakistan, where power distance and a collectivist context of cultural silence is playing its role as a prosocial, or harmony-preserving behavior rather than disengagement. Silence may be chosen by employees as a strategic tactic to avoid conflicts and to maintain unity among team members, which helps smooth execution and completion to projects' tasks. Therefore, where silence is found as a barrier to communication or may be a reason for less motivation for expression of ideas, in some settings, like different cultural context silence may contribute for high rate of project success via preventing interpersonal conflicts and sustainable group dynamics. Considering the moderating role of person-job fit, HR practices should

emphasize the importance of aligning individual strengths and values with the requirements of the job. Inclusive leadership style can positively influence project success, and understanding the mediating and moderating roles of team member silence and person-job fit provides a nuanced perspective for organizations aiming to optimize their project team dynamics.

Person-job fit can moderate the relationship between team member silence and project success. This supported H5 of the current research study, and the results of the current research are in line with the findings that when there is a strong person-job fit, individuals are more likely to feel a sense of alignment with the organization's values and goals [100]. This alignment may reduce the likelihood of team member silence, as individuals feel more comfortable expressing their opinions in a supportive environment. Additionally, a person-job fit may enhance the positive impact of inclusive leadership on project success. In an integrated model, inclusive leadership has a direct positive impact on project success [101]. Simultaneously, inclusive leadership is negatively associated with team member silence, and team member silence is negatively associated with project success. Person-job fit moderates the relationship between inclusive leadership and team member silence [101].

As most of the hypotheses in current research got substantial support from the results, some variations are also reported, like the positive side to team member silence, which reflects some contextual influences. Especially in the South-Asian cultural context in which power distance and hierarchical relationships are high [102], therefore, employees may not express concerns or ideas due to hesitation, even working under inclusive leaders. Possibly, this may explain why the mediating role of team member silence was found to be significant but not as strong as expected. Furthermore, the positive role of inclusive leadership style on project success can be pronounced, especially in collectivist cultures like Pakistan, where openness and fairness of leaders may enhance mutual respect and cohesion [103]. Hence, the findings of this research suggest that cultural values influence how leaders, particularly inclusive leaders, are perceived by project teams. This highlights the importance of considering socio-cultural dynamics when analyzing the effects of leadership.

5.1. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

First off, the information was only collected once due to scheduling restrictions. Data can be gathered by future researchers using a time lag. Second, this study has a limited sample size because information was only gathered from two cities in Pakistan. It's possible that the 410 participants are not enough from the industry in terms of traditional organization working or dealing with projects. Only two cities' worth of data was used in this analysis. This research should be done in the future on project-based organizations from other industries and geographical locations. Because project management research on Inclusive leadership is extremely scarce. Future research on Inclusive leadership should include a range of mediators and moderators, including structural empowerment and employee voice. The cross-sectional research design was adopted in the current investigation. Future research could be done using alternative research methodologies, including a longitudinal approach. Although current research has figured out the sample by using non-probability sampling that may reduce the generalizability of results. Therefore, future researchers should focus on probability kind of sampling for this kind of research. The current research study depicted valuable insights for the role of inclusive leadership for project success. Therefore, findings need to be interpreted with great care due to some special contextual limitations. Generalizability of results by considering other sampling techniques may also work well, as the current research study deployed convenience sampling for only two twin cities of Pakistan, which are Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Therefore, future researchers may choose probability sampling to improve or to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Different leadership styles can be part of research in future studies. Researchers in future research may use another sampling technique instead of convenience sampling, as it limits the generalizability of results. Furthermore, IL is a positive style in nature; future researchers may explore the effects of dark sides of leaderships like despotic leadership, and Dark Triad, etc.

5.2. Theoretical Implications

The present study makes numerous contributions to the fields of inclusive leadership and project success in project management. Scholars have looked into or noted the existence of inclusive leadership in many other countries since the first descriptions of it in Chinese firms, including Turkey, Chile, Brazil, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Pakistan, and Korea [104-106]. Inclusive leadership has rarely been studied in the context of project management in past literature. The impact of inclusive leaders on project performance is primarily demonstrated by current research, but the variable of project team member silence has not been previously investigated in the context of inclusive leadership and project success. The current study provided evidence supporting the beneficial relationship between inclusive leadership and project success. It was discovered that project team member silence partially mediates the association between inclusive leadership and project success after the mediating role of project team member silence was also conceptualized. The results also indicate a moderating effect of Person-Job Fit between project team member silence and project success. Although inclusive leadership is well-discussed in past literature, this study has greater importance for Pakistani-based organizations. Therefore, this study contributes to filling a contextual gap in the literature.

This research is novel as it contributes uniquely to the literature on inclusive leadership and project success. It highlights that in cultures like Pakistani organizations, team member silence is not always harmful. In collectivist and high power distance cultures, silence may stem from respect for leadership, potentially enhancing project success in such environments.

5.3. Practical Implications

Pakistan is known for its high-power distance society, making this study crucial for both leaders and subordinates. It is advised that project managers use inclusive leadership with their team members in various project-based organizations. Additionally, managers need to ensure that this inclusive leadership style is not abused, either inside or outside the organization. Project success ultimately depends on managers' inspirational leadership and their silent treatment of team members.

The accomplishment of the intended goals of a specific project is made possible for project-based organizations through the successful implementation of project activities. Project managers can encourage subordinates by showing respect for their ideas and work. Supporting one another at work allows employees to see the results of their efforts, increasing project success. Supervisors can also support employees by offering training, which better prepares them to perform their duties with confidence, effectiveness, and efficiency.

In the context of projects, where success results from the combined efforts of a person, a team, and a leader, the inclusive leader exemplifies the project team member's silence in a way that helps teams stay motivated and focused on their objectives. This study will help practitioners understand the underlying conditions affecting project success within the literature on project management. It offers a new perspective on team silence when evaluating performance.

6. Conclusion

The current research aimed to examine the relationship between inclusive leadership and project success. Furthermore, the mediating role of the project team member's silence was also tested. The moderating role of person-job fit between team member silence and project success was examined. The study was conducted on project-based organizations in Pakistan. Findings revealed that inclusive leadership has a positive and significant effect on project success. Thus, when leaders adopt an inclusive style and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, there are greater chances of project success. Similarly, effectively managing project team member silence in Pakistani project-based organizations can help bridge the relationship between inclusive leadership and project success.

As a result, Person-Job Fit moderates the relationship between project team member silence and project success. For example, when Person-Job Fit is high, the relationship between project team member silence and project citizenship will be stronger. Based on the findings, this study concluded that

project-based organizations could perform better if inclusive leadership is encouraged. This is because inclusive leadership can foster a sense of family among members, allowing them to support one another beyond their assigned responsibilities.

Additionally, optimistic workers who support one another by delegating tasks tend to work harder to achieve their goals with Person Job-Fit, as evidenced by project success. Furthermore, the findings suggest that when workers treat each other like family, there are fewer unethical behaviors, and they function better as coworkers while demonstrating inclusive leadership within their company.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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