

Impact of Inclusive Leadership on Innovative Work Behavior with Mediating Role of Work Engagement and Moderating Role of Perceived Job Autonomy

Nazia Kalsoom¹, Ghulam Moeen ud Din² and Israr Ahmad Shah Hashmi³

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the effect of inclusive leadership on innovative work behavior in the field of education. It was hypothesized that inclusive leadership will positively affect innovative work behavior, which will be mediated by work engagement and moderated by perceived job autonomy. A sample of workers is drawn from public educational institutions in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. A total of 300 samples participated in a questionnaire survey, the results of which were utilized to analyze the final data. Online surveys were used to get information from public sector workers. In this research, a non-probability sampling method is used. The imbalance between productivity, learning rate, quality, and performance is Pakistan's biggest problem. Our education system should support inclusive leadership. Because of authoritarian leadership, employees face numerous challenges and problems, and their creativity is harmed in this way, so in the context of Pakistan, this study has a significant impact. So, in employees' creativity, leadership plays a vital role, specifically inclusive leadership, and this research helps to understand this relationship. The idea of this research is unique: to understand the relationship between inclusive leadership and creativity so that organizations would be able to survive in a more complex environment. This research has a few limitations as well. The first limitation is that not all of them should have been included in this research. Small sample size is the second limitation, as data is collected only from one source. Cross-sectional data was the third limitation. The fourth limitation is that not all aspects of perceived job autonomy were used. Strategies that not only promote and elevate employee engagement but also make it a regular part of work should be put into place by organizations. Executives ought to recognize each worker's capacity for creativity.

Keywords: Inclusive Leadership, Innovative Work Behavior, Work Engagement.

Introduction

The working environment of organizations is more complicated nowadays. So, all organizations need to be more innovative to overcome the problems related to complicated environments. Leadership has been studied thoroughly over the past few decades. Inclusive leadership manages diverse points of view and drives the intended goals to fruition. Inclusive leadership entails ensuring everyone on your team has a voice and their perspectives are heard. It takes a genuine belief in the concepts of equality and participation and a willingness to put them into action rather than simply discussing them. Inclusive leaders inquire about people's viewpoints, stop paying attention to their comments, and actively participate through

¹Department of Management Sciences, Riphah University, Islamabad, Pakistan. Email: nazianeim@gmail.com

²Department of Economics, COMSATS University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Email: prof.moeenuddin.eco@gmail.com

³Department of Business and Economics, FG Sir Syed College, Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

Email: ahmadisrareco@gmail.com



constructive and participative execution. Hollander (2012) stated that inclusive leadership is required to achieve substantial goals for mutual benefit between leaders and followers. Traditional leadership attributes such as charm and character are stressed more, which has little influence because it ignores the fundamentals of leadership. Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) define an inclusive leader as one who recognizes and values the contributions of others. They also define *inclusive leadership* as a leader's arguments or actions. Inclusive refers to grouping at the average level, functioning as a respected supplier, and accepting full responsibility for delivering the best results. To build trust within a company, inclusive leadership is required. Interactions between office coworkers build empathy.

Inclusive leadership refers to the ability to cope with multiple points of view while driving desired outcomes. Being an inclusive leader entails accepting opposing opinions, actively seeking them out, and ensuring that everyone on your team has the opportunity to be heard. Theality and involvement should be explored, accepted, and implemented. Organizations with a diverse workforce must practice inclusive leadership to generate full appreciation and engagement from all individuals (Al-Omari et al., 2019). Many firms now use an employee empowerment strategy to drive their employees to be more productive, loyal to the company, and creative in executing their responsibilities to cope with rising competitive pressure from globalization and the desire for efficiency. This study aims to examine the relationship between innovative work behavior, job autonomy, and inclusive leadership.

This study contributes significantly to the current literature in a variety of ways by achieving its research objectives. The concept of leadership has many different interpretations. Diverse cultures have different perspectives on what constitutes effective leadership conduct, yet all demonstrate inclusive leadership. Previous research on inclusive leaders has only been conducted in two countries: the United States and Ghana, the Philippines and the United States, and Indonesia and Australia. According to research (De Jong et al., 2010), the IWB is essential in organizations. IWB can be seen in a dynamic work environment and is seen as extra-role behavior among employees. Innovative work behavior can assist firms in addressing new issues. Mahmood (2019) states that inclusive leadership is critical in motivating employees to engage in innovative workplace behavior. Organizations must adopt new work methods to ensure their survival and ability to grow.

According to Lee et al. (2019) employees play a crucial role in implementing innovation and ensuring the organization's long-term success. Inclusionary leadership is the cornerstone for employee engagement since it fosters innovative work cultures. In today's competitive business climate, organizations must innovate to flourish. Organizational behavior study fosters innovation in an organization since innovation cannot exist without employee participation. To remain in a dynamic corporate world, companies must constantly innovate, develop, and reinvent themselves in this competitive age because most firms survive and expand to adopt new work systems and processes that will increase their effectiveness and innovation. They do more than create new products or technologies (Swaroop et al., 2018). Work engagement and perceived job autonomy can significantly impact innovative work behavior, which can lead to organizational success. When making decisions with others, inclusive leaders are aware of their own opinions and actively seek out and evaluate multiple perspectives (Carmeli et al., 2010). IWB is primarily concerned with producing and implementing ideas tied to outstanding leadership. Leadership can influence innovative work behavior in various ways (Mumford & Hunter, 2005), and the primary purpose of this study is to determine the impact of inclusive leadership on creative workplace behavior. Leadership is the foundation of all accomplishments. Employee work engagement is regarded as the most significant factor in corporate performance (Strom et al., 2014). Leadership is the critical factor influencing employee engagement.

Bakker et al. (2011) investigated the relationship between positive leadership practices and

prominent levels of work engagement. This study examines how work engagement influences the relationship between inclusive leadership and innovative work behavior. When any work is assigned, we must adopt a work mindset; otherwise, we will fail (Schaufeli et al., 2010). Employees should not be pressured, but psychological safety is critical. Employees require psychological safety to avoid and manage various feelings. Employees will feel more at ease if they are psychologically safe. As a result, no one will experience dread or unfavorable effects relating to their job, profession, and so on. Employee engagement has been highlighted as influential in commitment, turnover, and retention. Employee engagement in organizational roles is measured in terms of emotional, cognitive, and physical involvement. Employees' emotional involvement is linked to their attitudes. Actual engagement is associated with actual presence at work, but cognitive participation is associated with employees' perceptions about the business, leaders, and working circumstances. Participation in one aspect, but not in another, will contribute to overall work engagement.

Literature Review

The creation of innovative ideas, the promotion of concepts, and the implementation of complex ideas are all examples of creative work behavior. In today's economy, innovation is acknowledged as one of the most essential strategies for firms. Employee inventive work behavior is the critical driver of organizational-wide innovation. IWB is the manufacturing of usable items and processes. According to De Jong (2006), IWB starts with the formulation of innovative ideas and concludes with their execution. Leaders who make themselves available to their subordinates are inclusive (Carmeli et al., 2010). A good leader's job is to ensure that their subordinates are recognized for their efforts in a learning environment. Leaders who engage demonstrate that they seek to include people in meetings where their opinions may be lacking. Employees can access decision-making processes, such as IWB, where they can actively discuss, advocate for, and implement innovative ideas. As a result, we concluded that inclusive leadership encourages employees to engage in creative work behavior. It also has an impact on the organizational work environment as it develops.

De Jong (2010) defined *innovative work behavior* as a person's conduct toward the introduction and planned inauguration of essential and distinctive ideas and courses of action inside a work capacity within an organization. Employees require the assistance of organizations. In traditional Chinese culture, the concept of "fully inclusive and equitable" serves as the foundation for inclusive leadership, which may be tailored to meet the needs of the younger generation of workers. According to Zubair et al. (2015), "leadership has a significant impact on employees' innovative behaviors". Among leadership theories, inclusive leadership may be acceptable for the next generation of workers (Liu et al., 2017). As a result, this article incorporates the inclusive leadership strategy into its analysis of employees' creative work habits.

Bakker (2011) states, "engagement is a high-energy state that is favorable, emotionally motivating, combined with high commitment and a strong focus on work." It is highly recommended that both public and private organizations undertake this. Since their involvement, their workforce has been associated with superior knowledge, customer satisfaction, and improved efficiency. This study shows a strong relationship between innovative work behavior and work engagement. Most jobs are at risk if employees do routine tasks without innovation because the new era is the era of development and technological progress, so every organization needs creativity and innovation in its tasks. Thus, the commitment level to creativity determines employees' innovative work behavior. Employee engagement is often referred to as job performance.

Work engagement is the driving force behind an employee's participation and enthusiasm for their work. Motivated people actively participate and work to benefit the organization through

increased production, improved efficiency, and significant innovation. A motivational factor such as job commitment encourages favorable employee behavior, improving their innovative work behavior (Montani et al., 2020). The level of participation determines innovative work behavior. Employee engagement is also known as job performance. Commitment to work has a positive effect on innovative work behavior. A person dedicated to work is characterized by enthusiasm and participation in work. Positively engaged employees invest in innovation, productivity, and efficiency. According to Fredrickson's broadening and building theory, people who feel good think good things, which makes them more likely to engage in creative behavior at work. Work commitment is considered a key enabler of organizational growth, efficiency (Tran & Choi, 2015), and competitiveness in a globalized competitive environment. Previous research has found that lower absenteeism, turnover, employee creativity, and productivity are related to work engagement (Busse & Regenberg, 2019). According to Woodka (2014), motivated employees can participate in many organizational programs and usually remain loyal to the organization for a long time. Employee engagement is preceded by lower turnover and less absenteeism. On the other hand, firing employees leads to deficient performance, lack of originality, and high labor turnover.

Inclusive leadership is positively related to work engagement. Employees are supported by their leaders to meet the organization's expectations, and inclusive leaders help employees achieve better results (Hollander, 2009). Emotional support from leaders builds trust with employees during interactions. Leaders value employees' constructive contributions and ideas, thereby earning the respect and loyalty of their employees (Javed et al., 2018). Committed leaders can support employees' work and encourage them to meet the company's needs (Bannay et al., 2020). Leader involvement and supportive behavior increase internal employee satisfaction and positively impact engagement. Participative leaders give employees the freedom to make decisions and solve problems. We are encouraged to contribute. Many experts believe that leadership is essential in driving innovation among employees. For many reasons, IL has been recognized as a new type of leadership that informs employee creativity. The first characteristic of an integrated host is openness. This encourages students (in this example, employees) to approach different tasks in new ways. Second, engaged leaders provide students with the support they need to develop creative skills at work. For example, it gives your students access to organizational resources, knowledge, and free time that allows them to be creative. Third, involved leaders should encourage and motivate employees to participate more in innovation. Finally, mentors provide relational support to students, essential for enhancing their creativity.

Hollander (2012) explained that a participative leader promotes a shared vision based on interdependence with followers, resulting in a win-win situation for the organization. Expressly, participative leadership assumes that it ignores the mistakes of followers and motivates them by providing them with the support and guidance they need. "Engagement at work has been identified as one of the most critical drivers of business success, and leadership is an important factor influencing engagement" (Strom et al., 2014). One of the main goals of this study is to demonstrate a strong correlation between the mediator, IV, and DV. More research on the relationship between participative leadership and innovative work behavior is needed to make an exciting contribution to the literature. Increased commitment to work leads to more creative work, and IL positively increases employee commitment to work. Employee engagement creates ways to overcome innovation difficulties (Bandura & Locke, 2003).

IL strengthens high-quality relationships by encouraging openness and collaboration where employees discuss problems with managers. Excellent and creative leaders always give their employees directions related to work progress and align them with strategies (Carmeli et al., 2010). Managers provide positive feedback to an employee's efforts because if the environment is encouraging and supportive, it creates an opportunity to solve problems effectively without

depression and pressure. Choi et al. (2015) explained that inclusive leaders can increase the emotional well-being of employees. Inclusive leadership can enhance employee innovation through work involvement, so greater work involvement leads to more creative and innovative work. Workplace communication is essential to promote the relationship between inclusive leadership and IWB. This study examines the relationship between inclusive leadership (IL), defined as "a leader who demonstrates visibility, involvement, and openness in interactions with students," and IWB (Carmeli, 2010).

Job autonomy refers to the degree of freedom an employee has to decide how to do his job" (Hackman and Oldham, 1976). Job autonomy is considered the most characteristic of functional design. Work autonomy involves an essential level of discretion in deciding about work-related activities, such as work practices and work scheduling practices. Job autonomy provides employees with more knowledge about their work. This also affects the employment status of workers. This also offers the opportunity to choose the terms and conditions for the work preparation. The sense of autonomy of work becomes easy.

When employees receive the resources and support they need from their managers, it increases their motivation and enthusiasm, contributing to innovation and creativity. Work autonomy and empowerment result from valuing the contributions of inclusive managers and employees. Empowerment and job autonomy encourage employees to create and focus on new and novel concepts (Sinha et al., 2016).

Previous studies have always found that employees become more motivated and engaged when they have more autonomy. When people have standardized job duties and follow SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) correctly, they are given more freedom and independence to complete their tasks more efficiently and on time. Thus, there is also a difference between standard and non-standard work. Work autonomy allows us to create and develop the latest ideas and implement or try to implement them in real life. Inclusive leadership helps improve employee innovation in several ways, such as fostering communication and encouraging them to discuss their ideas openly.

In most cases, employees fear punishment if they fail to complete their tasks on time and efficiently, and this fear is only because they do not receive proper instructions from their superiors. Their superiors do not trust them to achieve their goals (Piansongnorn, 2016). If they encourage their employees to approach them, most problems do not arise, and employees are encouraged to discuss their opinions with them (Carmeli et al., 2010).

Managers must constantly provide access to their employees who face recent problems and challenges. They overcome problems with their leadership and approach. Employees must have considerable freedom, autonomy, and discretion in choosing methods of planning and conducting work. This is called job autonomy. One of the critical factors in successful job planning is job autonomy. The great independence of the work implies excellent discretion in deciding on the execution of tasks, the procedures to be followed, and the work schedule. Unlike low control at work, which can lead to a passive and helpless attitude, high job autonomy increases employees' sense of empowerment and responsibility for their work (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Morinaga et al. (2023) analyzed that participative management encourages employees to make decisions, respect their views and opinions, and increase self-efficacy. Participatory management strongly focuses on providing prominent levels of protection and task flexibility, so it is particularly interested in the organization's human resources and initiatives. In addition, it tries to remove the obstacles and problems of its subordinates. They feel encouraged to learn from their mistakes because they see themselves as valuable members of the organization, so they have the impression that their managers do not blame or criticize them for their actions. A holistic leader's characteristics are Integrity, core principles, and commitment to all stakeholders (Kurian & Nafukho, 2022).

When communicating with employees, engaging leaders demonstrate openness,

approachability, and personal ability. Leadership is called open (Carrillo, 2023). Accessibility shows that managers try to show up for their employees and are willing to hear the ideas of employees. Availability indicates that managers can offer ideas to employees in professional areas. Participatory management is used in organizational management and significantly impacts team or employee performance (Chen et al., 2023). In addition, it helps foster a work atmosphere where employees are optimistic about the tasks assigned to them and feel comfortable with each other. Managers can provide free and external resources to help subordinates solve their organizational problems. One such external resource is participative leadership, which adds to organizational resources by providing subordinates with direct and professional guidance. Employee psychological frustration is reduced when inclusive leadership promotes a supportive tolerance for employee failure.

Guo Zhu and Zhang (2022) found that it is described as the manager's words and actions that express gratitude and admiration for the work done by followers for the company. We know that these drivers are the most accessible. Qurrahtulain et al. (2022) argues that they are open to simultaneously hearing current ideas from all subordinates at all levels of management. A manager can effectively fulfill his leadership role and fully release the manager's energy and creativity at work if he can shape or control his ideas or behavior (Morinaga et al., 2023). Alang, Stanton, and Rose (2022) noted that exceptional leaders with mental, cognitive, skillful, and behavioral attributes are critical to achieving goals and promoting their company's involvement. They are defined as activities that create a psychological experience that strengthens a sense of community within an organization (Roberson & Perry, 2022). Participative leadership fosters the learning of exemplary behavior by appropriately encouraging teamwork, creativity, and innovation and raising performance standards.

Methodology

This chapter focuses on methods used to examine the relationship between inclusive leadership, work engagement, perceived work autonomy, and creative work behavior. In addition, this chapter focuses on data analysis, which includes research design, population, sample size, unit of study, sampling techniques, analytical tools, etc. The data corresponding to the research questions are given in the survey structure. The data should provide accurate results. Based on research, quantitative research is the most crucial method to obtain more reliable results (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). This descriptive study examines how inclusive leadership influences innovative work behavior through the mediating role of work engagement, and perceived work autonomy moderates the relationship between engagement and creative work behavior. Three hundred online pre-surveys were used to collect data, of which only 271 were returned. To make the results more applicable, the sample used is assumed to represent the public school system.

This study is a field study, and partial data has been collected. A self-report questionnaire gathers information on all variables because respondents receive answers without external intervention. This is a cost-effective method and shows less intervention by the researcher. This method allows respondents to justify their answers. My target audience is semi-government schools in major cities of Pakistan. This population is because teachers in educational fields are ignored in most studies, which are specifically selected for this purpose.

Data Analysis

Education workers (teachers and non-teachers) comprise Rawalpindi and Islamabad's largest population. An estimate of the number of employees in private institutes in Rawalpindi and Islamabad was made. Teachers and non-teachers were selected from the perspective of these variables as observed in the education sector during and after COVID-19, especially in the semi-administrative sector. Schools like APS, where leaders did not engage with their staff

because most legacy staff (teachers, administrators, etc.) were not tech-savvy, and jobs moved online during the pandemic. So, the higher levels gave them little time to learn technology. Even their jobs were at risk because they were unaware of the technology. In the context of the global school pandemic, this study aims to assess the effect of participative leadership on creative work behavior.

The average response rate for men was 56%. During the month, questionnaires were distributed to the sample via e-mail and WhatsApp groups via a Google form of the first author's contacts. Due to time constraints, we spoke with employees of private institutions in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. By distributing three hundred questionnaires, 271 (rule 5) completed questionnaires were collected and examined. Participation in the study was voluntary and confidential. The result is a 100% utilization rate. The sample was formed by convenience sampling, and the characteristics of the general population and the study's objectives were considered.

Interpretation of Results

One-way ANOVA

The obtained data are analyzed using SPSS software. Control variables were examined with a one-way ANOVA test, and this test was used to assess the effect of demographic factors on the dependent variable in Table 1. This study's demographic variables were age, gender, marital status, employment, and experience. However, the analysis found that no demographics significantly influenced innovative work behavior. Therefore, there is no need to control demographic variables. The significance level (p-value) is > 0.05 in all population groups, which means there would be no interaction to accept the null hypothesis.

Table 1: One-way ANOVA

Demographics	Innovative Work Behaviour	
	F-statistics	p-value
Age	0.78	0.51 n.s.
Gender	3.02	0.83 n.s.
Marital Status	0.81	0.37 n.s.
Work Status	0.03	0.87 n.s.
Experience	1.53	0.22 n.s.

Note: N=271, n.s. = not significant

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation

The main objective of this research is to conduct a correlation analysis between participative management, innovative work behavior, commitment to work, and perceived work autonomy and to confirm the presented hypotheses. Table 2 presents descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, and coefficient correlations for study variables. Innovative work behavior is significantly positively correlated with IL ($r = .587$, $**p < 0.01$), work engagement ($r = .572$, $**p < 0.01$), and perceived job autonomy ($r = .618$, $**p < 0.01$), and in the expected direction. Correlation of IL with work engagement ($r = .584$, $**p < 0.01$) and perceived job autonomy ($r = .596$, $**p < 0.01$) were significant and positive and in the expected direction. Perceived job autonomy was significantly positively correlated with work engagement ($r = .659$, $**p < 0.01$) and in the expected direction. All the variable's correlations are significant at 0.01 levels (2-tailed).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1.	IL	3.86	0.74	1			
2.	WE	3.84	0.69	.584**	1		
3.	PJA	3.69	0.70	.596**	.659**	1	
4.	IWB	3.91	0.65	.587**	.572**	.618**	1

Note: N=205, **p <0.01, Reliabilities in the bracket, IL = Inclusive Leadership, WE = Work Engagement, PJA = Perceived Job Autonomy, IWB = Innovative Work Behaviour.

Regression Analysis

The main technique is regression analysis, which shows the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable. In this study, the relationship between the variables was confirmed by regression analysis (Preacher and Hayes, 2004). Regression analysis techniques were used for both mediation and moderation. A process macro model created by Hayes was used to examine each of the main effects of the hypotheses. This model was used to assess direct, indirect, mediating, and moderating effects. The obtained data are analyzed using SPSS software.

Table 3 shows that inclusive leadership has a positive and significant direct effect on innovative work behavior. The coefficient of direct effect of inclusive leadership is 0.51, which is significant at a 1% level of significance (as shown by H1). It substantiates that inclusive leadership boosts innovative work behavior. It is consistent with the existing literature, as employees feel empowered in the environment of inclusive leadership, and they direct their potential toward creative and innovative work. Analogously, work engagement also boosts innovative work behavior, as the coefficient of its direct effect on innovative work behavior is positive and significant (indicated by H2).

Further, inclusive leadership also improves work engagement, as the coefficient of direct effect is positive and significant (H3). It implies that inclusive leadership directly raises the level of work engagement of employees and improves their attitude and inclination towards work engagement. In addition to this, inclusive leadership also plays its part through the channel of work engagement in creating and strengthening innovative work behavior among employees (H4).

Taken together, inclusive leadership creates an environment where employees feel valued and respected by providing platforms of open discussion, collaboration, and active participation. So, the workers gain confidence and utilize their innovative abilities to find new ways of doing the same task more effectively and efficiently. Further, inclusive leadership also develops a sense of belonging and engagement among the workers, which in turn also fosters innovative attitudes, skills, and aptitudes among workers. Thus, inclusive leadership directly as well as indirectly develops innovative work behavior among employees.

Table 3: Standardized direct path coefficients of the hypothesized model

	Path	β	SE	p
H1	IL \longrightarrow IWB	.51	.04	.0000
H2	WE \longrightarrow IWB	.54	.05	.0000
H3	IL \longrightarrow WE	.54	.05	.0000

Bootstrap Results for Indirect Effects

	Paths	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
H4	IL \longrightarrow WE \longrightarrow IWB	.17	.05	.0825	0.2799

Note: N = 271. Bootstrap sample size = 5,000, IL = Inclusive Leadership, WE = Work Engagement, PJA = Perceived Job Autonomy, IWB = Innovative Work Behaviour. LL, lower limit; UL, upper limit.

Conclusion

Employees feel more valued in an inclusive atmosphere, which makes them work more creatively. Our results were consistent with previous studies showing that IL affects employees' innovative work behavior. Employees who are directly involved in various decisions always shape a healthy environment through their behavior (Javed et al., 2018). Thus, the results confirm the first hypothesis, according to which participative management and innovative work behavior are positively correlated. We often show that IL has a beneficial effect on innovative work behavior. Mumford and Hunter (2005) argued that leadership is a key factor in creativity and innovation in an organization. The results of our previous research also showed that "work engagement is related to positive, affective motivation with high energy combined with high commitment and a strong focus on work" (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2010). It is advisable and desirable to involve employees because this involvement leads to creative fulfillment of their tasks. It also has a favorable effect on the civic behavior of the organization. Work engagement is the driving force behind an employee's participation and enthusiasm for their work. Employees' commitment to work is strengthened by the emotional support of their managers. To earn the respect and loyalty of employees and the workforce, leaders always respond with dignity to their contributions. According to Choi et al (2015), inclusive leaders can improve the emotional health of their workforce. The present study argues that participative management can motivate employees to innovate through work engagement.

Policy Recommendations

The main practical goal of this study is to help organizations encourage their managers to work more collaboratively with their employees to increase innovation, which is important today. Another important practical implication is that participative management has a detrimental effect on innovative work behavior and work engagement. Organizations are encouraged to verify the results of this study. Organizations need more training for leaders to be more inclusive. This increases work engagement in the organization, which leads to an increase in innovative work behavior. Managers must allow their employees to work independently to a certain extent so that they can make the right and timely decisions that will help them move toward creativity and advanced methods. Organizations also train their employees to increase creativity, which ultimately increases productivity. Managers should recognize the innovative potential of all employees. A common challenge for people in the workplace is to successfully respond to the demand for innovation, especially when dealing with problems and unexpected events.

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