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## **Investigating the Role of Psychological Safety and Inclusive Leadership in Enhancing Team Collaboration in Technology-Intensive Work Environments: A Study of Chandigarh's IT Sector**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates the interplay between inclusive leadership, psychological safety, and team collaboration within the technology-intensive work environments of Chandigarh, India an emerging Tier-2 IT hub that has received limited empirical attention. Despite growing theoretical consensus that inclusive leadership fosters collaborative team climates, the mechanisms through which this effect operates in non-Western, high power-distance contexts remain underexplored. This study addresses that gap by proposing and testing a mediation model in which psychological safety links inclusive leadership to team collaboration. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was employed, collecting data from 385 software developers, project managers, and IT professionals in technology firms at Chandigarh's Rajiv Gandhi Technology Park. Validated scales measured all three constructs (Carmeli et al., 2010; Edmondson, 1999; Hoegl & Gemuenden, 2001). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression-based mediation analysis (Hayes, 2018). Results indicated that inclusive leadership was significantly associated with psychological safety ( $\beta = 0.62, p < .001$ ) and team collaboration ( $\beta = 0.45, p < .001$ ), and that psychological safety was significantly associated with team collaboration ( $\beta = 0.58, p < .001$ ). Bootstrapped mediation analysis (5,000 resamples) confirmed a significant indirect effect of inclusive leadership on team collaboration via psychological safety ( $B = 0.30, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.23, 0.37]$ ), with the direct effect remaining significant ( $B = 0.15$ ), indicating partial mediation. These findings suggest that psychological safety is a key interpersonal mechanism through which inclusive leadership translates into collaborative team behavior, particularly in hierarchical organizational cultures. Implications for leadership development and team design in the Indian technology industry are discussed.

**Keywords:** *Psychological Safety, Inclusive Leadership, Team Collaboration, Technology Sector, Quantitative Study, India*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The global technology sector is characterized by rapid innovation cycles, complex problem-solving, and a demand for organizational agility. India has emerged as a significant contributor to this landscape, with growth extending beyond primary metropolitan areas to Tier-2 cities such as Chandigarh. Known as the "IT City," Chandigarh has developed into a notable center for technology-intensive firms within the Rajiv Gandhi Chandigarh Technology Park, creating an ecosystem of high-stakes, project-based work (Goyal & Kaur, 2021). In these environments, organizational success depends not merely on individual technical expertise but on the capacity of teams to collaborate effectively. Team collaboration understood as the shared creation and integration of knowledge and problem-solving across members is widely recognized as a driver of innovation and performance in knowledge-intensive settings (Salas et al., 2015).

In technology-intensive work contexts, collaboration is especially critical because tasks are highly interdependent, knowledge is distributed across specialized roles, and solutions typically require iterative experimentation rather than



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linear execution (Hoegl & Gemuenden, 2001). Yet the conditions that define such environments—tight deadlines, high performance pressure, and the omnipresent possibility of failure—can paradoxically impede the open communication that collaboration requires. When employees anticipate negative consequences for speaking up, challenging assumptions, or admitting errors, they are more likely to withhold information, disengage from joint problem-solving, and suppress concerns (Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Frazier et al., 2017). This highlights the critical importance of the socio-emotional climate within which teams operate.

Two constructs have received substantial theoretical and empirical attention in explaining this climate. Psychological safety, first articulated by Schein and Bennis (1965) and subsequently developed by Edmondson (1999), refers to the shared belief among team members that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking. In a psychologically safe environment, members feel confident that they will not be penalized for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes. A robust body of research has linked psychological safety to enhanced learning, creativity, and performance across diverse organizational settings (Frazier et al., 2017; Newman et al., 2017). In technology-intensive environments where iterative and collaborative methods are standard, psychological safety is not merely beneficial but functionally necessary.

The cultivation of psychological safety is heavily shaped by leadership behavior. Inclusive leadership, as defined by Carmeli et al. (2010), describes leaders who exhibit openness, accessibility, and availability in their interactions with followers. Inclusive leaders actively solicit and value the contributions of all team members, demonstrate fairness, and create conditions for belonging and participation (Shore et al., 2011). By signaling that contributions are welcome and that vulnerability is safe, inclusive leaders directly foster the interpersonal climate associated with psychological safety (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). Empirical research across multiple sectors has demonstrated that inclusive leadership behaviors—such as active listening, encouraging participation, and demonstrating respect—positively predict psychological safety, which in turn promotes voice behavior, adaptive performance, and engagement (Pinaar, 2024; Mohase et al., 2025; Zhao et al., 2020).

Despite this growing body of evidence, a recognized gap exists in the literature regarding how these relationships operate within the specific cultural and organizational environment of India's emerging technology hubs. Indian workplaces are frequently characterized by relatively high power-distance and hierarchical norms, where deference to authority and respect for seniority are embedded in organizational culture (Hofstede, 2001; Sinha, 1980). These characteristics can suppress psychological safety when employees perceive that questioning supervisors, admitting errors, or offering dissenting views carries professional or interpersonal risk, particularly in high-stakes technical projects (Varma & Budhwar, 2020). This cultural context therefore presents unique boundary conditions for the enactment and effects of inclusive leadership. Prior research on psychological safety and inclusive leadership has been conducted predominantly in Western organizational settings, limiting the generalizability of existing models to high power-distance, collectivist cultural contexts (Bresman & Edmondson, 2022; Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020).

This study addresses this gap by investigating the relationships between inclusive leadership, psychological safety, and team collaboration in technology-intensive firms in Chandigarh, India. We propose and test a mediation model in which inclusive leadership fosters psychological safety, which in turn enhances team collaboration. This model is theoretically grounded in the argument that inclusive leaders reshape the interpersonal climate of their teams by reducing the perceived costs of risk-taking, thereby enabling the open communication and knowledge-sharing that collaboration requires (Carmeli et al., 2010; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). By examining this process in an understudied cultural and geographic context, the study contributes empirical evidence to debates about the cultural boundary conditions of leadership theory and provides actionable insights for organizations operating in India's rapidly expanding technology sector.

The study is organized as follows. Following the introduction, Section 2 presents the methodology, including the research design, sampling procedures, measures, and analytic approach. Section 3 reports and discusses the results. Sections 4 and 5 address theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and directions for future research before concluding.

Based on the theoretical arguments above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Inclusive leadership will be positively and significantly associated with team collaboration.

H2: Inclusive leadership will be positively and significantly associated with psychological safety.

H3: Psychological safety will be positively and significantly associated with team collaboration.

H4: Psychological safety will partially mediate the relationship between inclusive leadership and team collaboration.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the associations between inclusive leadership, psychological safety, and team collaboration. A cross-sectional design is appropriate for capturing respondent perceptions at a single point in time and for testing theoretically derived associations among latent constructs using standardized instruments and regression-based modeling (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Bryman, 2016). It is important to note that this design does not permit causal inference; findings should be interpreted as evidence of association, with temporal and causal relationships reserved for longitudinal investigation. Regression analysis was selected as the primary analytic strategy given its suitability for testing a mediation model with well-validated continuous measures and an adequate sample size. Although confirmatory factor analysis via AMOS was considered during the planning phase to assess construct validity, the primary analyses relied on hierarchical multiple regression and bootstrapped mediation, consistent with the regression-based design. Researchers interested in full structural equation modeling of this model are encouraged to pursue that approach with appropriately sized samples and multiple data sources.

### **2.2 Participants and Setting**

The target population comprised professionals employed in technology-intensive companies located in the Rajiv Gandhi Chandigarh Technology Park and surrounding industrial areas in Chandigarh, India. Only employees engaged in team-based, project-oriented work structures were targeted to ensure relevance to the constructs under study. Data were collected online over a four-month period from November 2024 to April 2025.

A combination of purposive and convenience sampling was used. HR managers from 25 small to mid-sized technology firms were contacted via email with a request to distribute the online survey link to team-based employees. The 25 firms were selected based on two criteria: they were registered tenants of the Rajiv Gandhi Chandigarh Technology Park directory, and HR contacts were accessible through professional networks. This criterion-based approach was intended to ensure contextual relevance; however, it introduces a potential sampling bias toward more formally organized firms with accessible HR contacts. Results should be interpreted with this limitation in mind. Participation was voluntary, and the invitation email explained the study purpose, assured confidentiality and anonymity, and clarified that responses would be used solely for academic research.

A total of 450 surveys were distributed electronically, and 402 were returned (response rate = 89.3%). After screening for incomplete responses (greater than 20% missing values) and patterned answers, a final sample of  $N = 385$  was retained. The sample was 68% male and 32% female; this imbalance is broadly consistent with the gender composition of India's technology workforce, though it may also partially reflect sampling limitations, and readers should exercise caution in generalizing gender-related findings. The mean age was 31.4 years ( $SD = 6.2$ , range = 22–54). Job roles included software developers (55%), QA engineers (15%), project managers (12%), UI/UX designers (8%), and other

IT-related roles (10%). Mean organizational tenure was 4.8 years (SD = 3.5). All participants confirmed at least one year of experience in team-based project environments, supporting sample suitability.

**Table 1. Sample Characteristics (N = 385)**

Characteristic	n	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	262	68.1
Female	123	31.9
<b>Age (years)</b>		
Mean (SD)	31.4 (6.2)	
Range	22–54	
<b>Job Role</b>		
Software Developers	212	55.1
QA Engineers	58	15.1
Project Managers	46	11.9
UI/UX Designers	31	8.1
Other IT Roles	38	9.9
<b>Organizational Tenure</b>		
Mean (SD)	4.8 (3.5)	
Data Collection Period	Nov 2024 – Apr 2025	
Response Rate	89.3% (402/450)	

*Note. Data collected online via email-distributed survey from technology firms in Chandigarh, India. All participants confirmed  $\geq 1$  year in team-based project environments. Gender distribution is broadly consistent with Indian IT sector workforce demographics.*

### 2.3 Instruments and Measures

All survey items were presented in English, the primary language of business in India's technology sector. A 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) was used for all constructs.

Inclusive Leadership was measured using the 9-item scale developed by Carmeli et al. (2010), which assesses leader openness, accessibility, and availability. A sample item is: "My team leader is open to hearing new ideas." Cronbach's alpha in the current sample was .91, indicating excellent internal consistency.

Psychological Safety was measured using the 7-item scale developed by Edmondson (1999), which assesses the shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking. A sample item is: "Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues." Cronbach's alpha was .88.

Team Collaboration was measured using a 6-item scale adapted from the Teamwork Quality instrument by Hoegl and Gemuenden (2001). The original instrument assesses multiple dimensions of teamwork quality; the adaptation retained items focusing on behavioral dimensions of collaboration specifically information sharing, joint problem-solving, and mutual support most directly relevant to technology-intensive project teams. Items were reviewed for contextual fit

with software development and IT project environments prior to administration. A sample item is: “In my team, we actively share information and knowledge with each other to get the work done.” Cronbach’s alpha was .89.

Control Variables: Age, gender, and organizational tenure were collected as potential controls. Non-significant correlations with the primary outcome (team collaboration) at  $p < .05$  led to their exclusion from the final regression models, consistent with recommendations for parsimonious model specification (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

## 2.4 Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from the researcher’s institutional review board prior to data collection. Participants were recruited through HR managers at 25 technology firms in Chandigarh’s Rajiv Gandhi Technology Park. Each HR contact received a templated email containing a brief study overview, the survey link, and a request to forward the link to eligible employees. The survey was administered via Google Forms, configured to anonymize responses, and data were stored on password-protected university servers. Participants provided informed consent before accessing the questionnaire. The survey took approximately 10–15 minutes to complete.

Data cleaning involved screening for missing values (exclusion threshold  $> 20\%$  per case), patterned response detection, and multivariate outlier identification via Mahalanobis distance. Final data were exported to SPSS Version 28.0 for analysis, with all identifiable information removed.

## 2.5 Data Analysis Plan

Analyses followed a structured multi-step protocol. First, data screening and preparation addressed missing values (mean substitution for values  $< 5\%$  per variable; cases with  $> 20\%$  missing excluded), outliers, and distributional assumptions. Second, descriptive statistics and scale reliabilities were computed. Third, Pearson correlations examined bivariate associations among the primary variables, providing a preliminary test of H1–H3. Fourth, hierarchical multiple regression tested directional hypotheses with control variables entered first, followed by the predictors. Fifth, mediation was tested using Hayes’ (2018) PROCESS macro (Model 4) with 5,000 bootstrap resamples to generate bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals for the indirect effect. Sixth, common method bias was evaluated using Harman’s single-factor test via exploratory factor analysis. Additionally, given that the study relies on self-report data from a single source, the potential for inflated correlations due to common method variance should be acknowledged as a study limitation, complementing the statistical check. The approach of using temporally separated measurement or procedural remedies such as scale interleaving was not available in the present design and is recommended for future research.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1 Preliminary Analysis

Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, and scale reliability coefficients for the primary study variables are presented in Table 2. Cronbach’s alpha values ranged from .88 to .91, exceeding the threshold of .70 recommended for applied research (Nunnally, 1978). Missing values averaged 2.1% per variable and were addressed via mean substitution. No multivariate outliers exceeded Mahalanobis distance critical values ( $p < .001$ ), and skewness and kurtosis values fell within acceptable limits ( $\pm 1.8$ ). Harman’s single-factor test extracted four factors explaining 68.4% of total variance, with the largest single factor accounting for 29.7%, below the 50% threshold, providing some evidence against severe common method bias, though this test alone is insufficient to rule out method effects entirely.

Control variables of age ( $r = .04$ , ns) and tenure ( $r = .07$ , ns) showed non-significant correlations with team collaboration and were excluded from subsequent regression and mediation models in the interest of parsimony (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). Gender was retained as a descriptive characteristic but showed no significant association with the primary outcome.

**Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Reliability Coefficients (N = 385)**

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Inclusive Leadership	3.85	0.78	<b>(.91)</b>		
2. Psychological Safety	3.79	0.81	.62**	<b>(.88)</b>	
3. Team Collaboration	3.91	0.75	.45**	.58**	<b>(.89)</b>

Note. \*\* $p < .001$ . Cronbach's  $\alpha$  reliability coefficients shown in parentheses on diagonal. M and SD reflect 5-point Likert scale scores (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

All three hypothesized bivariate associations were statistically significant at  $p < .001$ . Inclusive leadership showed a moderate-to-strong positive correlation with team collaboration ( $r = .45$ ; H1), and the strongest correlation with psychological safety ( $r = .62$ ; H2). Psychological safety was positively correlated with team collaboration ( $r = .58$ ; H3). These associations are consistent with prior research (Carmeli et al., 2010; Edmondson, 1999) and provide a basis for proceeding with mediation testing.

### 3.2 Mediation Analysis

To test H4, Hayes' (2018) PROCESS macro (Model 4) was used with 5,000 bootstrap resamples. Results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Mediation Analysis Results: Inclusive Leadership → Psychological Safety → Team Collaboration**

Path	B	SE	t	p	95% CI
Path a: Inc. Leadership → Psych. Safety	.64	.04	15.61	<.001	[.56, .72]
Path b: Psych. Safety → Team Collab.	.47	.05	9.85	<.001	[.38, .57]
Path c': Direct Effect (Inc. Leadership → Team Collab.)	.15	.04	3.51	<.001	[.07, .23]
Total Effect (Path c)	.45	.04	10.74	<.001	[.37, .53]
<b>Indirect Effect (a × b)</b>	<b>.30</b>	.04	—	—	<b>[.23, .37]</b>

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients (B). IV = Inclusive Leadership; DV = Team Collaboration. Confidence intervals based on 5,000 bootstrap resamples. Model  $R^2 = .472$ ,  $F(2, 382) = 179.34$ ,  $p < .001$ . Regression assumptions were verified prior to analysis: linearity confirmed via residual plots, homoscedasticity via Breusch-Pagan test, and multicollinearity assessed (all VIF < 5.0).

Path a was significant ( $B = 0.64$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $t = 15.61$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.56, 0.72]), indicating a positive association between inclusive leadership and psychological safety. Path b was significant ( $B = 0.47$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $t = 9.85$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.38, 0.57]), indicating that psychological safety was positively associated with team collaboration when controlling for inclusive leadership. The total effect of inclusive leadership on team collaboration was significant ( $B = 0.45$ ,  $t = 10.74$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and the direct effect remained significant after controlling for psychological safety ( $B = 0.15$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $t = 3.51$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.07, 0.23]). The bootstrapped indirect effect was significant ( $B = 0.30$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ , 95% CI [0.23, 0.37]), as the confidence interval excluded zero. This pattern is consistent with partial mediation: psychological safety accounted for a substantial portion of the association between inclusive leadership

and team collaboration, while a direct association between the two remained. The overall model explained 47.2% of variance in team collaboration ( $R^2 = .472$ ,  $F(2, 382) = 179.34$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

### 3.3 Discussion of Findings

The results provide support for the proposed mediation model, contributing empirical evidence on the interpersonal mechanisms underlying team collaboration in Chandigarh's technology-intensive work environments.

Support for H1 and H3 confirms that inclusive leadership and psychological safety each demonstrate positive associations with team collaboration, consistent with foundational theoretical frameworks (Carmeli et al., 2010; Edmondson, 1999; Salas et al., 2015). These findings extend prior evidence to a Tier-2 Indian IT context, where rapid project cycles, cross-functional dependencies, and knowledge-intensive demands may amplify the value of open communication. Importantly, because this study employs a cross-sectional, single-source design, these associations should be interpreted as correlational rather than causal. Longitudinal research is needed to establish temporal ordering and strengthen causal inference.

Support for H2 indicates a particularly strong association between inclusive leadership and psychological safety ( $r = .62$ ). This association is among the stronger effects reported in comparable studies (see Pienaar, 2024; Mohase et al., 2025) and may reflect the cultural dynamics of high power-distance settings, where inclusive leadership signals—such as openly soliciting ideas and normalizing questions—may carry particular salience relative to baseline deference norms (Hofstede, 2001; Sinha, 1980). This interpretation is plausible but should be tested directly through cross-cultural comparative designs.

Support for H4 indicates that psychological safety partially mediates the association between inclusive leadership and team collaboration, with the indirect effect ( $B = 0.30$ , 95% CI [0.23, 0.37]) accounting for a substantial portion of the total effect. The retained direct effect ( $B = 0.15$ ) suggests that inclusive leadership is also associated with team collaboration through pathways beyond psychological safety, potentially including role modeling, facilitation of information-sharing structures, and resource provision. These alternative pathways warrant investigation in future research.

The findings are consistent with the theoretical position that inclusive leadership shapes team climate by reducing perceived costs of interpersonal risk-taking, creating conditions under which open information exchange and collaborative problem-solving are more likely to occur (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Carmeli et al., 2010). In hierarchical organizational contexts such as those found in much of India's corporate technology sector, this climate-shaping function may be especially consequential, given that deference norms can otherwise suppress the communication that effective collaboration requires (Varma & Budhwar, 2020; Bresman & Edmondson, 2022).

## 4. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

### 4.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to organizational behavior and leadership scholarship in three principal respects. First, it provides empirical evidence on the mediating role of psychological safety in the relationship between inclusive leadership and team collaboration in a non-Western, high power-distance cultural context. Most prior research on inclusive leadership and psychological safety has been conducted in North American or European settings (Carmeli et al., 2010; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006); this study extends the evidence base to India's emerging technology sector, where hierarchical norms may shape the operation and magnitude of these associations. The findings suggest that cultural context warrants greater attention as a boundary condition in leadership theory, though cross-cultural comparative designs are needed to examine this directly.

Second, by focusing on team collaboration as the outcome variable, the study addresses a gap in the mediation literature, which has more frequently examined voice behavior, adaptive performance, or organizational learning as

outcomes of psychological safety (Frazier et al., 2017; Pienaar, 2024). The partial mediation pattern observed here indicates that inclusive leadership is associated with team collaboration through both climate-level (psychological safety) and potentially other behavioral pathways, suggesting that fully accounting for this relationship may require a more comprehensive process model.

Third, the study provides evidence within a geographically understudied but economically significant context—the Chandigarh IT corridor—contributing to a broader agenda of extending organizational behavior theory beyond dominant Western research settings (Bresman & Edmondson, 2022; Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020).

#### **4.2 Practical Implications**

The findings carry several evidence-informed implications for practitioners in technology-intensive organizations, particularly those operating in hierarchical cultural contexts. These recommendations should be regarded as directions suggested by the current data rather than prescriptions with established causal warrant.

**Leadership Development:** Organizations may benefit from investing in leadership programs that develop the behavioral competencies associated with inclusive leadership, including active solicitation of team input, transparent decision-making processes, and responsive engagement with team members across hierarchical levels. These behaviors appear to be associated with stronger team climates for psychological safety, which in turn may support more open information exchange and collaborative problem-solving.

**Team Climate Interventions:** Alongside leadership development, organizations may consider interventions aimed at directly supporting team-level norms around communication and error-handling, such as structured retrospectives that normalize discussion of project challenges without attributing individual blame. These practices may help to develop the psychological safety climate that the current data suggest is associated with stronger collaboration.

**Talent and Selection Practices:** Assessment of inclusivity-relevant behaviors in leadership hiring and promotion processes may be warranted, particularly for roles overseeing complex, interdependent project teams. Structured behavioral interview protocols that assess candidates' tendencies to seek input and respond constructively to dissent may provide relevant information.

**Organizational Measurement:** Regular measurement of psychological safety and inclusive leadership perceptions at the team level, using validated instruments such as those employed in this study, may enable organizations to identify units where supportive climates are weaker and direct developmental resources accordingly.

### **5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study has several limitations that qualify its conclusions and point toward directions for future research.

First, the cross-sectional, single-source survey design does not permit causal inference. All associations reported reflect correlational patterns observed at a single point in time. Longitudinal designs that track teams across project cycles would enable stronger tests of temporal ordering. Multi-source approaches incorporating leader self-report, peer ratings, and objective performance indicators would reduce reliance on self-report and strengthen internal validity.

Second, common method variance is a concern in single-source survey research. Although Harman's single-factor test did not indicate severe method bias, this test has known limitations and should not be taken as definitive evidence against method effects (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Future research should employ procedural and design-level remedies, such as separating predictor and outcome measurement occasions or collecting data from multiple informants.

Third, the geographic and organizational scope of the sample limits generalizability. The sample was drawn from small and mid-sized technology firms in a single technology park ecosystem in Chandigarh. Whether findings generalize to larger multinational organizations, different sectors, or other Indian IT hubs (e.g., Bangalore, Hyderabad,

Pune) remains to be determined. Comparative multi-site studies across different Indian cultural and organizational contexts would help to clarify the boundary conditions of the current findings.

Fourth, self-perception bias may affect construct measurement, particularly for inclusive leadership perceptions, which reflect employees' subjective assessments of leader behavior rather than observable behavioral counts. Future research incorporating behavioral observation or multi-informant leader assessments would improve construct validity.

Fifth, additional moderators and mediators warrant investigation. Relevant contextual variables include team size, project phase (e.g., discovery versus delivery), remote or hybrid work arrangements, and individual-level characteristics such as cultural tightness-looseness orientation or tolerance for uncertainty. Multi-level modeling approaches nesting individuals within teams would also permit examination of whether psychological safety operates primarily as a team-level or individual-level construct in this context.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationships among inclusive leadership, psychological safety, and team collaboration in technology-intensive firms in Chandigarh, India. Results supported the proposed mediation model: inclusive leadership was positively associated with both psychological safety and team collaboration, psychological safety was positively associated with team collaboration, and psychological safety partially mediated the relationship between inclusive leadership and team collaboration. These associations were observed in a cultural context characterized by relatively high power-distance norms, where inclusive leadership behaviors may carry particular salience by countering baseline expectations of hierarchical deference.

The findings suggest that investing in inclusive leadership development and team climates that support psychological safety may be associated with stronger collaborative outcomes in technology-intensive project environments. Future research employing longitudinal and multi-source designs, comparative cultural samples, and multi-level analytic frameworks will be important for advancing causal understanding of these relationships and clarifying the boundary conditions under which inclusive leadership most effectively supports team collaboration.

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