



FOSTERING HEALTHY WORKPLACE PRACTICES THROUGH INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP MEDIATED BY PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT IN THE MINING INDUSTRY IN ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT: *The mining industry is facing a plethora of challenges which are militating against its potential performance despite being regarded as a leading pillar in an extractive-oriented economy. One major issue of concern is unhealthy workplace practices resulting in avoidable accidents taking place. This paper argues that inclusive leadership fosters healthy workplace practices in Zimbabwe's mining industry. The study was predicated on the belief that inclusive leadership plays an important role in reducing accidents and fostering healthy workplace practices which will enable the mining industry to achieve enormous advantages. Guided by the positivism philosophy and the deductive approach, the study adopted a quantitative research design where a cross-sectional survey was used to collect primary data from 257 participants in the mining industry. The study found that inclusive leadership had a strong positive relationship with healthy workplace practices. The study concluded that inclusive leadership has a strong and direct effect on healthy workplace practices. Leaders who use inclusive leadership impact strongly on the healthy workplace behaviour of employees. It is recommended that leaders should be open, available and accessible to their employees so that employees are free to convey their concerns and share ideas with their leaders that may assist in reducing the rate of accidents and fostering healthy workplace practices.*

KEYWORDS: Healthy Workplace Practices, Inclusive Leadership, Perceived Organizational Support.



INTRODUCTION

The mining industry is regarded as a leading pillar in an extractive-oriented economy because of the enormous contributions it makes both in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employment creation. According to the Chamber of Mines of Zimbabwe (2023), this important sector accounted for over 13% of the country's GDP and created about thirty thousand (30 000) jobs between 2021 and 2022. This has given confidence to the Government of Zimbabwe which now expects to create a US\$12 billion mining economy by the end of 2023 with platinum, gold, diamonds and lithium securing the growth trajectory. However, the mining industry is facing a plethora of challenges which are militating against its potential performance. One major issue of concern is unhealthy workplace practices resulting in avoidable accidents taking place. In certain instances, employees are coerced to work overtime resulting in stress and burnout which negatively affects their concentration and productivity. This paper argues that inclusive leadership fosters healthy workplace practices in Zimbabwe's mining industry.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

A safe working environment is one of the critical issues that can motivate people to continue rendering their services to any organization. Organizations worldwide strive to create a conducive working environment. If there are proper health and safety practices in the workplace, the mining sector can experience benefits such as improved commitment, job satisfaction and ultimately sustainable competitive advantage (Tang, Yu, Cooke & Chen, 2017).

However, the mining industry faces high labor turnover as a result of health and safety concerns. The majority of mine accidents experienced worldwide are caused by unsafe conditions and poor management practices emanating from non-compliance with health and safety regulations (Muthelo, Mothiba, Malema, Mbombi & Mphekgwana, 2022). Yin, Fu, Yang, Jiang, Zhu and Gao (2017) have observed that human error necessitated by a lack of strict enforcement of laws and regulations by management is a contributing factor to unhealthy workplace practices.

In Australia, 40% of accidents in the coal mining industry were caused by human error emanating from failure to operate machines (Lenne, Salmon, Liu & Trotter, 2012). In China, it was discovered that in a three-shift working cycle, accidents normally occurred during the last two hours of each shift as a result of employee exhaustion (Fu, Xie, Jia, Tong & Ge, 2020). In Zimbabwe, it was reported that most accidents in the mining industry occurred because of faulty machinery and failing objects resulting in employees being injured mostly on the head, legs and arms (Human Resource Report, 2022). Failure to follow proper mining procedures during drilling and blasting was also a contributory factor.

When an organization is experiencing a plethora of negative issues such as high levels of accidents and unhealthy workplace practices, inclusive leadership has been touted as the critical panacea (Javed et al., 2019; Randel et al., 2018). Having leaders and employees working together in issues such as training and implementing health and safety policies is essential because it will empower employees resulting in an engaged workforce working for the success of the organization in unity with the leadership. This will ultimately result in the fostering of healthy workplace practices.



In a study by Kusumawardani et al. (2022) about inclusive leadership and workers' safety behavior during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, it was found that inclusive leadership improves safety behavior among employees through the fostering of a safety climate. In another study by Hudie, Yun and Fuqiang (2017) about inclusive leadership, POS and work engagement, it was revealed that the influence of inclusive leadership on work engagement is mediated by POS. When leaders adopt a philosophy of openness, availability, and accessibility, employees will feel highly supported.

Shanock and Eisenberger (2006) suggested that the POS of supervisors was heavily related to their subordinates, meaning that the availability of leaders necessitated employee perceived organizational support. In the work of Hudie et al. (2017), it was outlined that a leader's attitude towards employees and their level of support can have a positive impact on perceived organizational support. Aslan (2019) suggested that inclusive leadership has a positive effect on POS and innovative work behavior.

Social exchange theory depicts that when employees realize that the organization is supporting their work through positive recognition of their outcomes, they will feel a sense of belongingness, and loyalty to the organization. Employees will exert more energy and feel dedicated to their work duties which will result in improved organizational productivity (Hudie et al., 2017). Likewise, employees with positive organizational support are engaged in their work to the extent that accidents are either totally prevented or minimized. Employees will feel involved resulting in the sense of belongingness being augmented. As such, the study was predicated on the belief that inclusive leadership plays an important role in reducing accidents in the mining industry. Therefore, the paper argues that inclusive leadership fosters healthy workplace practices in Zimbabwe's mining industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Inclusive leadership

Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) defined inclusive leadership as words and actions by a leader that show innovation and appreciation for other employees. Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon and Ziv (2010) described inclusive leadership as leaders who exhibit openness, accessibility and availability in their interaction process with followers. Mir (2019) explained inclusive leadership as a leader who avails himself to employees, understands employees' views and can be easily accessible. Further, Javed et al. (2017) described the concept as a philosophy of coming to the table with employees, sharing ideas and resulting in those that contribute something being respected, appreciated and treated fairly. Inclusive leaders involve followers in decision making and key activities taking place in the organisation (Vakira, Nemashakwe & Ndlovu, 2023). This is because inclusive leaders realize that contemporary employees have the capability to augment them in decision making.

Dimensions of Inclusive Leadership

The study considered three dimensions of inclusive leadership, namely: openness, accessibility and availability.



Openness

Leader openness means that the leader creates ample time to discuss critical issues at work and take decisions with the cooperation and interaction of employees. Open communication invites input which necessitates engagement and resultantly health and safety practices (Rodriguez, 2018). Inclusive leadership captures the diversity-friendly notion that allows everyone to contribute something in an organisational set-up. When employees are allowed to speak with their managers, they will find time to seek clarity on health and safety matters. Furthermore, employees who are allowed to participate in decision-making feel a sense of openness to speak their minds (Mir, 2019) which may assist in fostering healthy practices at work. Additionally, inclusive leaders who exercise openness towards their employees are innovative and creative at work. Together with the help of the leader, employees find better ways of mitigating accidents. Openness cultivates a scenario in which people feel a sense of psychologically safe to voice and bring in new critical ideas to the organization (Carmeli et al., 2010). Therefore, it can be argued that leader openness improves health and safety practices at work.

Availability

Leader availability denotes that when employees are facing some challenges in their work, the leader is easily available to help or to give them a solution. In case of an accident, leaders who are always available are quick to deduce the problem and work with other stakeholders to find a speedy solution. Qi, Liu, Wei and Hu (2019b) highlighted that inclusive leaders provide resources which comprise time, information, and support that trigger innovation behavior. Availing yourself as a leader allows employees to be innovative to the extent that they become aware of health and safety issues. Employees strive to follow safety laws because they know that their leaders always avail themselves at any given time.

In addition, leaders who avail themselves to employees may be able to see health hazards in time and proffer a viable solution. If there is a need of availing certain resources, inclusive leaders will be able to avail those resources before it is too late (Mir, 2019). Organizational support theory suggests that the performance of employees depends on organizational support. Consequently, if leaders are available for their employees, it means that employees can get the support they need (Qi, Liu, Wei & Hu, 2019a) which spills over to innovative behavior which may assist in preventing accidents in the organization. Leaders should be ready to listen to the requests put forward by their subordinates as a way of reducing the level of accidents and other unhealthy practices occurring in the organization (Javed, 2019).

Accessibility

Accessibility means that leaders allow subordinates to ask or visit them if they have issues which need to be deliberated. The mining industry is faced with a lot of accidents, that necessitate employees to seek clarity from their employers. Employees need to have open access to their line managers so that they can mitigate accidents that occur during organizational processes. Safety awareness is one of the pillars that can prevent accidents (Mir, 2019). Although some employees may be aware of potential hazards that may cause accidents, they may not know how to prevent those accidents on their own. Therefore, inclusive leadership may come in as a solution to mitigate the accidents from occurring. An organization with a high rate of accidents may suffer from high labor turnover especially on the part of talented and experienced employees (Fu et al., 2020).



Accessibility improves the confidence of employees because they get to know more about their leaders, and they know how to present their issues to them (Mir, 2019). Leaders who are accessible at any given time cultivate a noble relationship with their employees. A healthy relationship allows employees to work as a team resulting in accidents being prevented easily. For example, if an employee does not know how to operate a new machine, it is easy to seek help from an accessible line manager, which may militate against unnecessary accidents happening. Inclusive leaders who exhibit accessibility provide beneficial resources to their employees because they can confidently share ideas (Fit, 2017). In addition to the above tenet, these resources influence employees to be fully involved in organizational work, physically and emotionally which results in healthy practices taking root (Qi et al., 2019a).

Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

Arasanmi and Krishna (2019) described POS as the extent to which the organization values the contribution of employees and cares about their well-being. Employees view organizational support in line with what they want to receive in the organization. Kura et al. (2016) suggest that perceived organizational support is the view of employees on how the organization appreciates their contributions and how it supports and cares about their well-being. This demonstrates that POS is how employees perceive the support they are given by the organization in terms of their well-being.

Dimensions of POS

The study considered three dimensions of POS, namely: fair treatment, supervisory support and rewards and job conditions.

Fair Treatment

Fair treatment can be articulated as the application of justice in issues such as performance appraisal, health and safety, and providing employees with opportunities to communicate their concerns to their superiors (Krishnan & Sheela, 2012). The fair treatment creates an environment where all employees are allowed to interact with their line managers about issues that affect their work performance such as health and safety issues.

Supervisory Support

Supervisory support is the support given by the supervisor at work to employees which create an environment of work-family culture. The environment will allow them to work as a family supported by the line managers (Singh & Singh, 2013).

Rewards and Job Conditions

It is a process whereby employees receive rewards that satisfy their psychological needs and work in a conducive environment. Employees always want to receive a salary that allows them to satisfy their needs (Hudie et al., 2017). Happy employees can mitigate accidents at work. Fu et al. (2020) believed that recognizing employees through compensation is important because it reduces employee stress, and augments employee commitment and job satisfaction.



Healthy Workplace Practices

Grawitch, Gottschalk and Munz (2006) described a healthy workplace as any entity that intermixes the goals of employees for their well-being and organizational goals for maximizing profits and productivity. It was revealed that health and safety encompass employees' mental, emotional, and physical well-being in line with the conduct of work, which spills over to an important subject of interest impacting positively on the attainment of organisational goals (Amponsah-Tawiah et al., 2016).

Stemn et al. (2019) highlighted the role of organizational culture, for example, respect and credibility in creating a healthy workplace. The systems of health and safety management are branded as a set of institutionalized, interrelated, and interacting elements designed to ascertain and achieve occupational health and safety goals and objectives. The aim and focal point of health and safety is to mitigate accidents and illness at work (Haas & Yorio, 2016). Likewise, the organization, particularly leaders need to enforce laws and regulations that reduce accidents at the workplace. Employees are supposed to be involved in making such rules so that they can understand the objective of the organization.

Dimensions of Healthy Workplace Practices

Health and safety practices have got several dimensions that include work-life balance, employee involvement, employee growth and development, health and safety initiatives, and employee recognition.

Work-life Balance

Conflict between family and work issues can trigger low productivity and a high rate of absenteeism (Grawitch et al., 2006). The structure of work can necessitate either serious conflict with family programmes or can enhance family programmes (ibid). The organization should implement programmes that appreciate and recognise the programmes of employees outside their work duties. Literature has suggested that the availability of work-life balance programmes such as flextime can enhance employee job commitment and satisfaction (Amponsah-Tawiah et al., 2016).

Employee Involvement

Employee involvement is one of the constructs that propel a healthy workplace. As management, it is imperative to be aware of the different forms of employee involvement that include open door policy, suggestion boxes, and employee surveys, where employees are free to voice their concerns or detest practices that are upheld by the organisation (Grawitch et al., 2009). Employee involvement advocates for better collaboration between employees and the organisation, which may necessitate positive teamwork towards a healthy workplace. Involving employees in the decision-making of health and safety practices is important because they will be aware of the rules implemented by the organisation (Haas & Yorio, 2016).

Employee Growth and Development

Training and developing skills of employees is one of the facets that motivate employees to work positively in the organisation. Training and career opportunities were revealed as one of the best human resource practices that positively impact on employee commitment and job



satisfaction (Grawitch et al., 2006). Training employees about health and safety hazards is critical because it improves the knowledge of employees and their behavior towards their work. Organizations must strive to continuously train their employees in health and safety issues in the organisation (Robson et al., 2012). Prevention of accidents at work enhances production and attracts talented employees and investors. Further to that, training reduces job stress and motivates employees to report to work on time.

Healthy and Safety Initiatives

Literature has outlined that health promotion programmes are critical in augmenting organizational performance (Robson et al., 2012). It has been suggested that the organization must carry out these health promotion programmes often because they minimize employee absenteeism and health care expenditure (Grawitch et al., 2006). In that same vein, it has been noted that absenteeism and increased healthcare expenditure are related to high levels of stress and excessive body weight. Agumba and Haupt (2014) argued that the availability of health and safety resources like finance and personal protective clothing improves workplace safety. Organizations that provide their employees with protective clothing and financial help to facilitate a healthy and safe work environment attracts investors and talented personnel in addition to reducing high rates of labor turnover.

Employee Recognition

Employee recognition is one of the important factors that can alleviate organizational accidents in most sectors and the mining industry is not an exception. One of the ways of recognizing employees is through compensation, and it is one of the critical healthy workplace factors. Likewise, improved compensation attracts and retains employees (Robson et al., 2012). Employee retention is important in the mining sector because there is continuity, hence accidents can be prevented easily (Amponsah-Tawiah et al., 2016). However, it is not only monetary rewards that can motivate employees; recognition practices like award ceremonies, recognition plaques and celebration for personal achievements and professional milestones are critical in reducing the stress that can trigger accidents at work (Stemn et al., 2019).

METHODOLOGY

Guided by the positivism philosophy and the deductive approach, the study adopted a quantitative research design. The design was ideal because it enabled opinions to be quantified (Mohajan, 2020). The adoption of quantitative research design was also necessitated by the desire to measure variables numerically and statistically analyse them as enunciated by Apuke (2017). A survey research strategy employing a closed-ended questionnaire was used to collect primary data. The strategy was adopted because it is associated with the deductive approach (Setia, 2016). The strategy was also ideal so that findings could be generalised to the entire population (Mensele & Coetzee, 2014). The cross-sectional survey collected data from 257 participants chosen using proportional stratified sampling. This technique was ideal so as to improve the representativeness of the sample (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016). Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 software. The study was conducted in line with the ethical principles of anonymity and confidentiality (Akaranga & Makau, 2016), voluntary participation (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018) and the protection of participants' rights and dignity (Munhall, 2018).



FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate

Although 302 questionnaires had been distributed, 257 were returned with sufficient information to facilitate data analysis. This gave a response rate of 85% which was considered adequate for the study (Saunders et al., 2016; Hobson et al., 2012).

Sample Adequacy and Sphericity

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (BTS) were used to test for sample adequacy and sphericity and their values are depicted in table 1 below.

Table 1: Sample Adequacy and Sphericity

KMO and Bartlett's test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.865
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	14331.645
	df	1314
	Sig.	0.000

The KMO value of 0.865 was above the recommended threshold of 0.5 and showed that the sample was adequate and appropriate for exploratory factor analysis (Hair et al., 2014). The BTS value of 0.000 showed that the sample was statistically significant.

Instrument Reliability

The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using the Cronbach alpha coefficient and the results are shown in table 2 below.

Table 2: Instrument Reliability

Theme/ Dimension	Number of items	Cronbach alpha
Inclusive leadership	9	0.961
Perceived organisational support	6	0.949
Health workplace practices	29	0.844
Total	44	

All the Cronbach alpha values were above 0.7. This indicated a strong and solid covariance and proved that the instrument used for the study was reliable (Saunders et al., 2016; Gerber and Hall, 2017).

Pearson Correlation analysis

Inclusive leadership and POS versus healthy workplace practices

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to find out the monotonic relationship between inclusive leadership and healthy workplace practices and also between Perceived



Organizational Support (POS) and healthy workplace practices. The results are shown in table 3 below.

Table 3: Correlation values between inclusive leadership, POS and healthy workplace practices

Dimension	Healthy workplace practices
Inclusive leadership	0.717
Sig	0.000
N	257
Perceived Organizational Support (POS)	0.430
Sig	0.002
N	257

The Pearson correlation value between inclusive leadership and healthy workplace practices was 0.717 highlighting a strong positive relationship (Saunders et al., 2016). The relationship between POS and healthy workplace practices was positive and moderate since the Pearson correlation coefficient was 0.430 as outlined by table 3 above.

Inclusive leadership versus POS

A Pearson correlation analysis was also conducted to assess the monotonic relationship between inclusive leadership and POS and the results are shown in table 4 below.

Table 4: Correlation values between inclusive leadership and POS

Dimension	Perceived Organisational Support (POS)
Inclusive leadership	0.057
Sig	0.006
N	257

The Pearson correlation value between inclusive leadership and POS was 0.057 highlighting a positive but weak relationship (Saunders et al., 2016).

Regression Analysis

Inclusive leadership and healthy workplace practices

Regression analysis was conducted between inclusive leadership and healthy workplace practices. The results are shown in table 5 below.

**Table 5: Inclusive leadership and healthy workplace practices**

Model Summary^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.717 ^a	.514	.512	7.254	1.572
a. Predictors: (Constant), Inclusive leadership					
b. Dependent Variable: Healthy workplace practices					

The results in table 5 above showed that R was at 0.717, which means that there was a strong relationship between inclusive leadership and healthy workplace practices. R² is at 0.514 which means that inclusive leadership impel changes in healthy workplace practices by 51.4%. The Durban Watson is at 1.572, which means that there is a correlation between the variables because it is closer to 2. The association of the variables was also significant at 5% level of significance. These results are consistent with the results of Bodenhausen and Curtis (2016) and Carmeli et al. (2010).

Inclusive leadership and POS

Regression analysis was conducted between inclusive leadership and POS. The results are shown in table 6 below.

Table 6: Inclusive leadership and POS

Model Summary^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.057 ^a	.003	.001	0.006	1.634
a. Predictors: (Constant), Inclusive leadership					
b. Dependent Variable: Perceived organisational support					

The results in Table 6 showed that there was a positive weak relationship between inclusive leadership and POS because R was at 0.057. R² was at 0.003 which means that inclusive leadership necessitated a change in POS by 0.3%. The findings supported the postulation of Hudie et al. (2017) that a leader's attitude towards employees has a positive effect on perceived organisational support and innovative work behaviour. The findings were also consistent with the findings of Aslan (2019) who found a positive relationship between inclusive leadership and POS.

POS and Healthy Workplace Practices

Regression analysis was conducted between POS and healthy workplace practices. The results are shown in table 7 below.

**Table 7: POS and healthy workplace practices**

Model Summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.430 ^a	.185	.273	10.397	1.738
a. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived organisational support					
b. Dependent Variable: Healthy workplace practices					

Findings from table 7 above indicated a moderate relationship between POS and healthy workplace practices since R was 0.430. The R² was at 0.185 which means that POS was responsible for 18.5% of changes witnessed in healthy workplace practices.

Mediation Analysis

Mediation process model 4 was used to test the mediation role of POS between inclusive leadership and healthy workplace practices. The findings are shown in table 8 below.

Table 8: Mediation of POS

OUTCOME VARIABLE:						
Healthy workplace practices						
Model Summary						
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.7202	.5187	52.2783	136.8869	2.0000	254.0000	.0000
Model						
	Coeff.	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	47.5613	5.6253	8.4549	.0000	36.4831	58.6394
Inc_lead	1.9739	.1194	16.5315	.0000	1.7388	2.2091
POS_Reta	.1237	.0754	1.6405	.0004	.0248	.2723

The findings in table 8 above showed that the predictor variable was still significant in the presence of the mediator variable. The p-value for inclusive leadership was 0.000 which highlighted that the predictor variable was still significant in the presence of the mediator variable (POS) as postulated by Hayes and Rockwood (2019). These results showed that POS partially mediated the relationship between inclusive leadership and healthy workplace practices. These findings were consistent with the findings of Aslan (2019).

Direct and Indirect Effect of Variables

The direct and indirect effect of the predictor and mediation variables were tested and the results are shown in table 9 below.

**Table 9: Direct and Indirect Effects of X on Y**

DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y					
Direct effect of X on Y					
Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
1.9739	.1194	16.5315	.0000	1.738 8	2.2091
Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:					
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
POS	.0112	.0126	.0004	.0148	

The results in table 9 above showed that inclusive leadership has a direct effect on healthy workplace practices because the effect was at 1.9739. This showed that leaders who used an inclusive leadership style impacted strongly on the behaviour of employees. Openness, accessibility and availability of leaders has a strong effect on employees adopting healthy workplace practices. This means that when leaders use an inclusive leadership style, employees have a strong propensity to follow health and safety standards at work. The findings also showed that inclusive leadership has less impact when mediated by POS since the effect was 0.0112. Therefore, it can be inferred that inclusive leadership has a strong and direct impact on healthy workplace practices.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that inclusive leadership has a strong and direct effect on healthy workplace practices. Leaders who use inclusive leadership impact strongly on the healthy workplace behaviour of employees. Employees have a strong propensity to follow health and safety practices at work when they are being led by inclusive leaders. The study also concluded that Perceived Organizational Support (POS) partially mediates the relationship between inclusive leadership and healthy workplace practices. As such, inclusive leadership has less impact on healthy workplace practices when mediated by POS.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Leaders should be open to their employees so that they know what is happening in the organization especially in the areas where accidents occur frequently. It is recommended that leaders should be open, available and accessible to their employees so that employees are free to convey their concerns and share ideas with their leaders that may assist in reducing the rate of accidents and fostering healthy workplace practices. There is a need for continuous training to employees on health hazards and safety so as to mitigate human error and ultimately costly accidents. Managers should desist from coercing employees to work unwarranted overtime, even in instances where it is visible that employees are fatigued, as this may increase the frequency of accidents at the workplace.



GUIDELINES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Although inclusive leadership and healthy workplace practices are not new research areas globally, few studies have been conducted in Zimbabwe. As such, future researchers may explore the areas focusing on other sectors outside the mining industry. Since the current study was purely quantitative, future researchers are recommended to carry out either a qualitative or a mixed methods study so as to find out if similar conclusions can be reached.

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