

Inclusive Leadership Dynamics to Enhance Motivation and Retention of Older Employees in Modern Organizations

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ABSTRACT – The growing presence of older adults in the global workforce structure demands organizations to adopt leadership styles that are fair, supportive, and empowering. This study examines how inclusive leadership contributes to enhancing work motivation and employee retention among senior workers. A quantitative approach was employed, involving respondents aged over 50 from ten companies across various sectors in Surabaya. Linear regression analysis was used to assess the relationship between inclusive leadership as the independent variable and two dependent variables: work motivation and retention. The findings highlight the pivotal role of inclusive leadership in fostering motivation among older employees, which in turn strengthens their loyalty and performance. The implications emphasize the importance of inclusion-based HR strategies and the need for organizations to invest in cross-generational leadership development. This study aims to inform HR policy reforms, particularly in building organizational resilience and promoting sustainability through age diversity appreciation.

Keywords: inclusive leadership, work motivation, employee retention, older workers, organization, human resource management, openness.

A. INTRODUCTION

In the era of shifting global workforce structures, labor force composition is increasingly shaped by aging trends and age diversity. The pressure to extend working life—driven by demographic changes and rising life expectancy—has introduced a new reality within organizational environments. This dynamic has sparked discussions on how organizations can effectively manage the balance between senior employees and younger generations within a shared work ecosystem.

Recent studies suggest that longer working lives demand adjustments in human resource management practices. Institutions are now facing tangible challenges, including the risk of losing senior talent, the need for intergenerational knowledge transfer, and the growing demand for equitable treatment across all age groups (Ali et al., 2025; De Boom & De Meulenaere, 2022).

In this context, the role of inclusive leadership has become increasingly critical in fostering a harmonious intergenerational work environment. This leadership approach creates an empowering atmosphere by promoting acceptance, valuing age diversity, and supporting the active participation of all individuals, regardless of chronological age (Mor Barak et al., 2025). Inclusive leaders are instrumental in cultivating a collaborative, fair, and supportive organizational culture—particularly for senior employees. Their presence is associated with enhanced psychological well-being and increased organizational loyalty, especially among older workers who are widely recognized as invaluable assets to the organization (Vassou et al., 2025).

Motivation and retention are two essential indicators of workforce sustainability. A work environment that is healthy, supportive, and open to age differences has been shown to boost the intrinsic motivation of senior employees—especially when they feel their contributions are acknowledged and they are given room to grow (Huyler et al., 2025; Mehmod et al., 2025). However, despite the strategic importance of this demographic, many organizations still lack policies specifically designed to support older workers. The concrete application of inclusive leadership in relation to senior employee motivation and retention remains underexplored and often neglected in practice (Ali et al., 2025; De Boom & De Meulenaere, 2022).

Many senior employees continue to face age-based stigma and limiting stereotypes within the workplace. Misconceptions about their technological adaptability and productivity often influence HR decisions, leading to exclusion from strategic roles and organizational development opportunities (Mor Barak et al., 2025). These practices not only hinder the optimization of senior employees' potential but also create psychosocial pressure that negatively affects motivation and engagement (Vassou et al., 2025). Furthermore, limited multigenerational dialogue and the lack of support from inclusive leaders often reinforce feelings of marginalization. The absence of age-inclusive policies discourages active participation and, in many cases, leads to early voluntary exits from the workforce.

Another emerging concern is the lack of access to tailored training programs for older employees, especially in areas such as technology and digital capacity building. This contributes to a widening skills gap between generations and reduces confidence among senior employees, making them feel left behind in an increasingly digital work environment (De Boom & De Meulenaere, 2022; Huyler et al., 2025). These developments highlight that the continued presence of senior employees is not only a matter of economic necessity but also a strategic opportunity to leverage experience and wisdom in a time of rapid change. Structural shifts in work relations, organizational design, and technological integration require organizations to adopt strategies that ensure the retention of experienced talent. Inclusive leadership is viewed as a key enabler in creating a conducive environment for multigenerational collaboration, helping organizations maintain their competitive edge.

Given this context, there is a pressing need to explore the role of inclusive leadership in enhancing intrinsic motivation and retention among senior employees. Modern organizations—especially those aiming for long-term sustainability—must be grounded in values of fairness, respect for experience, and continuous learning. Understanding how inclusive leadership can foster an age-inclusive work environment is thus essential, both for advancing theoretical frameworks and for informing practical human resource management policies.

B. METHOD

This study employed an associative approach using a quantitative survey design to examine the relationship between inclusive leadership as the independent variable and two dependent variables: work motivation and employee retention. A survey method was chosen to obtain empirical insights into the perceptions and experiences of employees aged over 50, who formed the core population of this research. The sample consisted of 100 purposively selected respondents from 10 cross-sector companies located in Surabaya. Respondents were characterized as permanent employees aged above 50, with a minimum of five years of service, and actively working full-time. This approach enables generalization of findings within organizational contexts that vary in structure and culture (Neuman, 2014).

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire developed based on academically validated indicators. Inclusive leadership was measured using dimensions such as leader openness to diversity, interpersonal empathy, fairness in decision-making, support for individual development, and encouragement of subordinate participation (Carmeli et al., 2010; Mor-Barak & Cherin, 1998). The work motivation scale referred to dimensions of intrinsic motivation, task ownership, and self-driven development in the workplace (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Employee retention was measured through indicators such as intention to stay, perceived career stability, and satisfaction with the work environment (Hom et al., 2017). All items were rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

The survey data were analyzed using linear regression to determine the nature and strength of the relationship between inclusive leadership and the dependent variables—senior employees' motivation and retention. Linear regression was selected for its ability to test causal relationships and quantify the effect size between variables. Prior to the main analysis, the validity and reliability of the instruments were tested. The regression results served as the basis for both theoretical interpretation and practical implications discussed in later sections. This methodological approach aims to objectively address the research questions through empirical data.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the initial stage of analysis, data were processed from 100 respondents aged over 50, drawn from 10 companies located in Surabaya. Based on the processed data, the respondent profile is as follows: the majority (52%) were permanent employees with over 10 years of tenure, while the remaining 48% had between 5 to 10 years of service. In terms of gender, 58% of respondents were male, and 42% were female.

For the inclusive leadership variable, the average score reported by respondents was within the "agree" range (mean = 4.0) on a 5-point Likert scale, with a standard deviation of 0.5. This indicates that most senior employees perceive the presence of open and empowering leadership practices. Among the measured dimensions, "fairness in decision-making" received the highest average score (4.3), followed by "leader empathy" (4.1). The indicator "openness to diversity" had an average score of 4.0.

Regarding the work motivation variable, the average score was 4.2 with a standard deviation of 0.4. Nearly all respondents reported high levels of motivation in completing their tasks and felt that their contributions were recognized and trusted by the organization. The indicator "relevant work challenges" received the highest mean score of 4.4, suggesting that senior employees continue to find their work meaningful.

For the employee retention variable, the average score was 4.05 with a standard deviation of 0.6. A total of 75% of respondents agreed they wished to remain with their current employer, while the remaining 25% were still considering but had no immediate plans to leave. The indicators "satisfaction with the work environment" and "psychological safety" received the highest average scores of 4.2 and 4.1, respectively.

Overall, the descriptive analysis indicates that senior employees across the sampled companies feel supported and motivated by the presence of inclusive leadership practices. Most also demonstrate strong loyalty and a desire to remain with their organization, provided there are continued opportunities for development and psychological support.

Instrument validity testing was conducted using Corrected Item Total Correlation (CITC). The results showed that all items across the inclusive leadership, work motivation, and employee retention variables had CITC values above 0.3. Therefore, all questionnaire items

were deemed valid, having met the minimum required correlation threshold. This confirms the appropriateness of the instruments for accurately measuring the intended variables.

Furthermore, the reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha revealed high internal consistency for all variables, with alpha values above 0.7: inclusive leadership = 0.88; work motivation = 0.84; and employee retention = 0.81. These results indicate that the research instruments are highly reliable and consistent across all measured dimensions. Thus, the data collected is considered accurate and trustworthy for further analysis.

Based on the results of simple linear regression analysis, the R-value was found to be 0.612, indicating a moderately strong positive relationship between inclusive leadership and employee work motivation. The R Square value was 0.374, meaning that inclusive leadership explains 37.4% of the variance in work motivation. The F-test result yielded a significance value of 0.000 (≤ 0.05), indicating that the regression model is statistically significant. The regression coefficient for inclusive leadership (X) was 0.368 and statistically significant ($\text{sig.} = 0.000$), meaning that for every one-unit increase in inclusive leadership, work motivation increases by 0.368 units.

These findings confirm that inclusive leadership has a positive and significant effect on the work motivation of senior employees.

Table 1. The Influence of Inclusive Leadership on Motivation

Statistic	Value	Information
R	0.612	There is a positive and moderately strong relationship
R Square	0.374	Inclusive leadership explain 37.4% of work motivation variation
F	58.662	Significant model
Sig. (ANOVA)	0.000	Significant regression model ($p \leq 0.05$)
Coefficient (X)	0.368	Each one unit increase in inclusive leadership increase work motivation for 0.368
t (X-Y1)	7.659	A very significant influence
Sig. (X-Y1)	0.000	A significant coefficient influence ($p \leq 0.05$)
Std. Error Estimate	4.725	Standard error model
Constanta (Intercept)	7.265	The value of work motivation during inclusive leadership is zero

Based on the results of the simple linear regression analysis, the R-value of 0.320 indicates a positive, albeit modest, relationship between inclusive leadership and employee retention. The R Square value of 0.102 suggests that inclusive leadership explains 10.2% of the variance in employee retention. The ANOVA F-test yielded a significance value of 0.001 (≤ 0.05), confirming that the regression model is statistically significant.

The regression coefficient for the inclusive leadership variable (TotalX1) was 0.237, with a significance value of 0.001. This means that for every one-unit increase in inclusive leadership, employee retention increases by 0.237 units.

In summary, inclusive leadership has a statistically significant positive effect on employee retention, although the magnitude of the influence is relatively limited. These findings suggest that while inclusive leadership contributes to strengthening retention among senior employees, additional factors beyond leadership style may also play a substantial role in influencing their decision to remain within the organization.

Table 2. The influence of inclusive leadership on Retention

Statistic	Value	Information
R	0.320	There is a positive and moderate relationship
R Square	0.102	Inclusive leadership explain 10,2% of employees retention variation
F	11.156	Significant model
Sig. (ANOVA)	0.001	Significant regression model ($p \leq 0.05$)
Coefficient (X)	0.237	Each one unit increase in inclusive leadership increase retention for 0,237
t (X-Y1)	3.340	A very significant influence
Sig. (X-Y1)	0.001	A significant coefficient influence ($p \leq 0.05$)
Std. Error Estimate	6.996	Standard error model
Constanta (Intercept)	13.459	The value of retention during inclusive leadership is zero

The Influence of Inclusive Leadership on Work Motivation of Senior Employees

Inclusive leadership has been proven to be a key catalyst in enhancing the intrinsic motivation of older employees. De Boom and De Meulenaere (2022) argue that leadership characterized by openness and cross-age recognition helps

reduce psychological distance between leaders and senior employees. Supportive leaders who provide fair appreciation foster a sense of being valued, build self-confidence, and boost work motivation within organizations. Furthermore, older employees who feel accepted and empowered are not only motivated to contribute more but also develop intrinsic motivation that transcends age and changing times.

Research by Ali et al. (2025) shows that inclusive supervisory behavior is positively correlated with increased social engagement at work, which in turn enhances individual internal motivation. Elements such as open communication, intergenerational collaboration, and equitable distribution of responsibilities serve as strong indicators in managing the motivation of senior employees. Active team involvement increases seniors' sense of being needed, thereby fostering sustained positive psychological energy.

The importance of a fair and age-friendly social environment is supported by findings from Huyler et al. (2025), who state that leaders with an inclusive perspective create non-discriminatory workplaces. Such stigma-free environments help senior employees build affiliation and belonging, resulting in authentic work motivation. Attention to individual needs, especially considering employees' experience and age background, fosters participative spaces that enrich work experiences.

Empathy and fairness play a central role in inclusive leadership practices within modern organizations. Improved well-being among senior employees stems from leadership that encourages intergenerational dialogue and accepts diverse perceptions and experiences. This positively impacts motivation, as seniors feel their needs are accommodated and their aspirations actively heard in decision-making processes.

Vassou et al. (2025) emphasize social inclusion as a major driver of motivation dynamics in senior workers. Leadership practices that ensure equal access to training and professional development create opportunities for all age groups to grow. Organizational ability to redesign internal education systems according to the needs of older generations contributes to sustained work motivation.

Mor Barak et al. (2025) present a theoretical model explaining how inclusive leaders evolve within organizations. This model includes reciprocal learning, allowing senior individuals

not only to adapt but also to act as ethical anchors and mediators in intergenerational conflicts. Establishing a psychologically safe and open climate positions senior employees as integral contributors who add value to organizational processes.

Mehmood et al. (2025) note that inclusive leadership fostering creativity and individual empowerment becomes valuable social capital in technology-intensive organizations. Amid digital transformation, senior employees face challenges related to access and adaptation. Inclusive leaders provide space not only for learning but also for sharing critical experiences, thus maintaining work motivation.

Kuknor et al. (2025) highlight the link between perceptions of organizational justice and organization-based self-esteem. Inclusive leaders create respectful, non-discriminatory climates oriented towards holistic development. When senior employees are positioned equally with other groups, their intrinsic motivation increases, leading to higher productivity and long-term loyalty.

Deswal and Sheokand (2025) add that flexible job design, recognition of achievements, and involvement in operational policy formulation are key factors in fostering active work motivation among senior employees. Clear roles and realistic organizational expectations help them stay enthusiastic in facing job challenges and adapt to changing organizational needs.

The contributions of Arifin and Darmawan (2021) are essential in addressing digital adaptation challenges through increased technology training and soft skills enhancement. Expanding digital personal development opportunities organized by the organization boosts self-efficacy and lifelong learning motivation. Beyond policy support, senior employees' work motivation is also influenced by non-structural factors such as interpersonal relationships, team trust, and individual self-confidence. When organizations successfully build harmonious and trusting relationships, senior employees feel emotionally safe in their tasks. The integration of psychological and social aspects within inclusive leadership makes their work experience meaningful and stimulates the desire to consistently perform at their best.

In conclusion, it is clear that inclusive leadership significantly contributes to nurturing intrinsic motivation among senior employees. Creating an organizational climate

that accommodates age diversity and treats each individual fairly will positively impact not only productivity but also the sustainability of long-term work relationships.

Inclusive leadership practices are increasingly necessary to address the challenges faced by modern organizations. Leaders who understand demographic changes, appreciate work experience, and provide active participation opportunities for senior employees will establish a strong foundation for achieving strategic company goals. The values of loyalty, stability, and mentoring offered by older employees can be optimized when inclusive leadership becomes embedded in organizational culture.

The Role of Inclusive Leadership in Enhancing Retention of Senior Employees

The discourse on senior employee retention has increasingly gained attention, especially as demographic shifts lead to an aging workforce across various sectors. Peng et al. (2025) emphasize that organizations implementing age-friendly policies tend to achieve higher retention rates among senior employees. Inclusive leadership, characterized primarily by acceptance of diversity and fairness in human resource management, fosters employee loyalty, making senior workers feel valued and secure in continuing their contributions to the organization.

Aksoy and Marcus (2025) state that senior employees' perceptions of positive organizational attribution, particularly through leadership that supports their needs, significantly influence their decision to stay. Leadership practices that acknowledge work experience, recognize past contributions, and support self-actualization reduce turnover tendencies and strengthen the desire of older employees to remain.

In line with the importance of acknowledging the contributions and experience of senior employees, the effectiveness of retention strategies is also greatly influenced by the psychological climate within the organization. Moreover, the empowerment of older workers relies not only on personal recognition but also on the presence of a work environment that fosters a sense of security and mutual respect. Therefore, effective leadership goes beyond individual appreciation and actively instills inclusive values throughout the organizational culture. Within this framework, respect for age diversity and efforts to prevent bias are integral

components of talent management strategies. Such measures directly contribute to reducing turnover intentions while simultaneously reinforcing the loyalty of senior employees. Consequently, establishing comprehensive inclusion practices represents the logical next step in strengthening the sustainability of an experienced workforce.

Retention of senior employees is closely linked to the creation of a workplace ecosystem that eliminates stereotypes and discrimination. Duan et al. (2025) stress the urgency of reducing age-based stereotype threats in the workplace. Inclusive leaders play a crucial role in establishing fair and open communication systems and providing psychosocial support to older workers, preventing identity pressure or knowledge concealment.

Sharma and Sabharwal (2025) offer both micro and macro perspectives on inclusive leadership, arguing that leaders who build trust, provide learning opportunities, and facilitate involvement in decision-making encourage senior employees to adapt, learn, and remain productive. A workplace environment founded on transparency and mutual trust strengthens senior worker retention.

Research by Shufutinsky et al. (2025) finds that inclusive leadership promoting intergenerational participation creates working conditions that recognize diverse values, experiences, and work styles. The implementation of such practices reduces senior workers' intention to resign or transfer, as they no longer feel marginalized or excluded. At the organizational level, policies that allow work flexibility, competency development opportunities, and workload adjustments also reinforce senior employees' decisions to stay. Field evidence shows that companies offering age-friendly technology training and intergenerational mentoring tend to maintain stable senior workforce retention (Peng et al., 2025).

Retention is also positively correlated with perceptions of organizational justice and feeling valued for past contributions. Shinde (2025) confirms that distributive and procedural justice—manifested through inclusive leaders' attitudes and behaviors—is a strong reason for senior employees to remain until retirement. Psychosocial support from leaders, access to non-hierarchical communication, and reinforcement of social identity within workgroups minimize social isolation risks.

Schmitt et al. (2008) demonstrate that mental health and work-life balance significantly depend on the quality of interpersonal relationships, especially among older workers. Inclusive leaders guide organizations to attend to psychological aspects that support retention. Intergenerational work practices, role allocation based on strengths, and recognition of mentoring significantly increase the likelihood of senior employees extending their tenure. When organizations manage age diversity as an asset, senior workers perceive open opportunities for self-actualization and continued recognition during transitional periods.

Amid digital transformation and performance pressures, inclusive leaders balance organizational and individual expectations. Policy changes are communicated in participative way, accompanied by evaluations of senior employees' needs, making them feel integral to the change process rather than mere objects of change.

This discussion clearly shows that senior employee retention results from the symbiosis between inclusive policies and effective leadership. The characteristic of inclusive leader are determinants in maintaining loyalty, emotional stability, and a sustained sense of security for older workers.

Inclusive leadership impacts not only the quantity of senior employees retained but also the quality of their contributions, which remain relevant and positively influence organizational performance. Retention here transcends mere numbers, becoming a culture that fosters sustainability, fairness, and cross-generational learning.

In today's dynamic work environment, managing retention of senior employees cannot rely solely on conventional policies. Inclusive leadership practices promote supportive and fair environments for all workers, regardless of age. Only through such practices can organizations build sustainable competitive advantages and harmonious, adaptive intergenerational work relationships.

D. CONCLUSION

Inclusive leadership has been shown to play a vital role in shaping work motivation among older employees. The presence of openness, interpersonal empathy, and active participation fostered by inclusive leaders significantly enhances the intrinsic motivation of senior employees and strengthens their intention to

remain within the organization. Through this leadership approach, organizations are better equipped to manage various demographic dynamics—from recognizing individual contributions to supporting capacity development—thereby ensuring greater employee retention among older workers. Both theoretical and empirical implications suggest that the quality of interaction between leaders and senior employees not only contributes to organizational stability but also enriches the strategic value of cross-generational human resource management.

The findings of this study carry important implications for human resource management, particularly in designing organizational policies that are fair and responsive to the needs of senior workers. Organizations that prioritize inclusive leadership are more likely to foster loyalty and emotional engagement among older employees, strengthen intergenerational workplace culture, and build more adaptive structures in the face of technological advancement and business environment changes. On a broader scale, these outcomes support sustainability and social equity agendas by recognizing experienced employees as both strategic assets and agents of learning in the modern workplace.

A strong commitment from top management is essential to promote the systematic implementation of inclusive leadership practices. It is recommended that organizations provide targeted training for leaders to effectively manage age diversity and build open, two-way communication systems. Additionally, policies on flexible work arrangements and professional development tailored to the needs of older employees should be integrated into HR strategies. Programs such as mentoring, digital literacy training, and fair performance recognition are also expected to help maintain motivation and improve the retention of senior talent.

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