

## Research Paper

# The mediating role of psychological security in the effect of perceived ethical leadership style on the voice behavior of teachers

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
## Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the mediating role of psychological security in the effect of perceived ethical leadership style on teachers' voice behavior. The current research was descriptive-correlative, and the statistical population included primary school teachers of Ray city in the academic year of 2022-2023 as many as 849 people, and the sample size was obtained 383 people by using Cochran's formula and stratified random sampling method., Three questionnaires were used in order to collect data: ethical leadership questionnaire by Brown et al. (2005), Hames' voice behavior questionnaire (2012), and Edmonson's psychological security questionnaire (1999). The reliability of the questionnaires was obtained through Cronbach's alpha coefficient: 0.88 for ethical leadership, 0.85 for voice behavior, and 0.90 for psychological security. Research data analysis was done by Smart Pls and Spss statistical software at descriptive and inferential levels. The results showed that the mean of ethical leadership (3.06) is slightly higher than the average (3), and the mean of voice behavior (3.23) and the psychological security of teachers (3.71) were higher than the average (3). The effect coefficients showed that ethical leadership with (Beta=0.74, P=0.001); psychological security with (Beta=0.134, P=0.001); and ethical leadership with (Beta= 0.53, P=0.001) have positive and significant effects respectively on the voice behavior; the voice behavior of teachers; and psychological security.

## Keywords:

Ethical leadership Style,  
Perceived Ethic,  
Voice behavior,  
Psychological Security

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## Extended abstract

### Introduction

In today's complex educational environment, schools are facing increasing challenges. What can be helpful in accompanying the changes are teachers, their ideas, and their thoughts (Zhang & et al, 2021). In fact, schools, in order to respond to these ever-increasing changes, are forced to become a learning organization (Kools & et al, 2020) and during this paradigm shift, teachers should be more involved with work environment issues in line with overall school reforms (Shahid & Din, 2021). The involvement of teachers and the expression of ideas, concerns and suggestions about work-related issues with the aim of improving the work unit or organization is their voice behavior (Morrison, 2011). In developing countries, the concept of employee voice is a relatively new concept and not much research has been done on it (Emelifeonwu & Valk, 2019) and the need to investigate it is inevitable. On the other hand, it is worth mentioning that the activity, participation and involvement of teachers with school affairs can improve the quality of education (Ghasemian & et al, 2020) and what is needed in this regard is the appropriate leadership style and the creation of an atmosphere full of psychological security (Duan & et al, 2017; Kessel & et al, 2012) that can help to realize the organizational voice of teachers. Reviewing the research literature shows that a suitable style of leadership supportive of open communication in the organization can lead to the promotion of a sense of psychological security in the organization, and when the workforce reaches the understanding that expressing their opinions and ideas will not be faced with a negative reaction by the organization, silence will no longer be their preference, because leadership is the main factor that develops psychological security in the organization (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006) and there is a positive relationship between ethical leadership and psychological security (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009).

Based on the above arguments, the current research seeks to investigate the effect of perceived ethical leadership style on teachers' voice behavior with the mediating role of psychological security.

### Theoretical Framework

The leaders of the organization have a fundamental role in encouraging employees to express their thoughts. Authoritarian leadership cannot be a good predictor of employee voice (Li & Sun, 2015). But with their positive behaviors, ethical leaders provide the context for sound behavior. Ethical leadership is presented by Brown & et al (2005) and is defined as the manifestation of normatively appropriate behaviors through personal actions and interpersonal relationships and the promotion of such behavior in followers through mutual communication. Normatively, the term appropriate behavior expresses the moral element of ethical leaders who have personality traits such as responsibility, trust, honesty and fairness in their behavior (Sarwar & et al, 2020). Ethical leaders value the voice of their employees and create the environment for it to happen (Brown & et al, 2005). Voice behavior includes discussing problems with managers, offering solutions and suggestions, voicing ideas for changing a work policy, or consulting with unions or organizational professionals (Travis & et al, 2011). The voice behavior of teachers facilitates the improvement of school status, increases the effectiveness of educational decisions, and accelerates the interpersonal communication of teachers (Zhang & et al, 2021).

Ethical leaders convey high moral standards to their employees and encourage them to express their opinions and ideas not only on ethical issues but also on any other issues related to work and the organization (Avey & et al, 2012). This sense of security in the organization is known as psychological security. Gerlach & Gockel (2018) consider psychological security as a resource available to teachers that can be exploited for the benefit of the school, a



resource that should be considered by school leadership. Psychological security is a characteristic of an atmosphere formed by trust and mutual respect (Liu & et al, 2015). In such an atmosphere, employees can easily express differences; as a result, an atmosphere full of psychological trust is created, and employees accept the risk of expressing their opinions, even if it is unpleasant, because they have come to believe that they will not be punished. Psychological security facilitates learning in school and allows people to overcome their anxiety and talk about their new information easily (Kark & Carmeli, 2009). A sense of psychological security is a positive belief and is influenced by job engagement, team learning, and participation in continuous quality improvement efforts. Research results show that high levels of psychological security make employees more willing to communicate and talk (Kessel & et al, 2012).

### Research Methodology

The current research was descriptive-correlative, and the statistical population included primary school teachers of Ray city in the academic year of 2022-2023 as many as 849 people, and the sample size was obtained 383 people by using Cochran's formula and stratified random sampling method. The total sample size was 383 people and about 358 questionnaires were returned. Considering that the return rate was 0.93, statistical analysis was done on 358 subjects. Three questionnaires were used to collect data: a) ethical leadership questionnaire by Brown et al (2005) in 10 items with five-point Likert scale, b) voice behavior questionnaire (Hames, 2012) in 12 items and c) psychological security questionnaire (Edmonson's, 1999) in 7 items. The reliability of the questionnaires was obtained through Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.88 for ethical leadership, 0.85 for voice behavior and 0.90 for psychological security. Research data's analysis was done using Smart Pls and Spss statistical softwares at descriptive and inferential levels.

### Research Finding

The descriptive findings showed that 45% of the sample group was male teachers and 55% were female. 27% had 1 to 10 years of service, 38% 11 to 20 years, and 35% had 21 to 30 years.

The results showed that the mean of ethical leadership (3.06) is slightly higher than the average (3) and the mean of voice behavior (3.23) and the psychological security of teachers (3.71) were higher than the average (3). Single sample t-test showed that these differences at the error level of 0.05 are insignificant only for ethical leadership.

According to the results, the indices of Cronbach's alpha coefficient, combined reliability and mean extracted variance of all variables are relatively favorable. In the ethical leadership variable, items 8 and 10 with 0.83; in psychological security, item 1 with 0.85; and in voice behavior, encouragement and efficiency component with 0.96 had the highest weight and factor load.

The effect coefficients showed that ethical leadership with (Beta=0.74, P=0.001), psychological security with (Beta=0.134, P=0.001), and ethical leadership with (Beta= 0.53, P=0.001) have a positive and significant effect respectively on the voice behavior, the voice behavior of teachers, and psychological security.

### Conclusion & Discussion

The results showed that the variables mean of perceived ethical leadership, voice behavior and psychological security was above average and at a relatively favorable level. The results show that ethical leadership has a positive and significant effect on teachers' organizational voice. That is, if teachers have a positive perception of the situation of organizational ethical



leadership, they will show more voice behavior. This result is in line with the research results of Sagnak (2017) and Fan & et al (2022).

Also, there is a positive and significant relationship between psychological security and teachers' voice. This result is in line with research results of Sagnak (2017). The effectiveness of a leader is also shown by promoting the psychological security of the organization (Frazier & et al, 2017). When psychological security is considered in the school, teachers are given the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions, teachers and their demands receive attention and their words are given importance, even though they are different.

In addition, the mediating role of psychological security in the effect of ethical leadership on teachers' organizational voice was positive and significant. This result is in line with the research results of Shahid & Din (2021), Sagnak (2017) and Zhang & et al (2021).

Ethical leaders in schools respect teachers, value their growth and development, support them, instill confidence in teachers, and seek to build the school in cooperation with teachers. Such an atmosphere in the school is the one from which teachers perceive psychological security. This sense of psychological security is a positive belief that makes them more involved with their jobs and work environment.

In this regard and according to the results of the research, it is suggested that the managers of the organization, by using a suitable reward system encourage the employees and teachers to express their ideas and organizational problems, and their ideas and suggestions are fairly examined; to be diligent in improving the organizational communication space and involve employees in decision-making processes; use effective listening techniques in interacting with employees; and show in behavior and action that employees' information is important to them.