

Mediating Effect of Psychological Safety on the relationship between Ethical Leadership and Employee's Work Passion: Case Study of HEI's of Baluchistan, Quetta

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Abstract

The major purpose of this study was to find out the impact of ethical leadership on employee's work passion with mediating role of psychological safety among a sample of 270 permanent faculty members and administrative staff (grade 17 & above) of HEI's of Quetta, Baluchistan. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed among the participants for data collection. Data analysis was done by using SPSS 23 software. Pearson correlation coefficient and Mediation analysis by using "PROCESS" were applied to find out the association between ethical leadership, psychological safety and employee's work passion as well as the mediating effect of psychological safety between ethical leadership and employee's work passion. The study clearly signified the positive link of ethical leadership with psychological safety and work passion. Moreover, the mediation analysis showed that psychological safety partially mediated this link. These findings incite the importance of ethical leadership in the organizations by exhibiting that employee's feeling to be psychologically safe make them more passionate about their work. This study guides the leaders, managers and supervisors that they need to pay more attention to their behavior at work place. Moreover, this study indicates that psychological safety of the employees is strongly affected by the ethical behavior of leader which in return increases the work passion of the employees.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Psychological Safety, Employee's Work Passion, HEI's.

Introduction

In perspective of the ancient belief, philosophers trust that the ethics is in reality about shaping up amazing spirit in individuals so that both people and social orders may prosper and grow (Avey, 2012). Sufficient study of business recommends that ethics and business are related inevitably (Banerji and Krishnan, 2000). As far as organizations are concerned ethics is being given careful consideration over recent couple of years. Purposes behind this improvement may be the personal satisfaction related to quality of life, which is winding up increasingly vital these days (Carlson and Perrewe, 1995).

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Trevino et al., (2006), has documented that leadership, especially ethical leadership has turned into an imperative field of research when we want to investigate about ethical conduct at work place. Ethical leadership is characterized by Brown et.al., in 2005 as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making". This definition incorporates leader's cautious state of mind towards supporters, trustworthiness and reasonable basic leadership and proactive practices that empower exchange of moral standard with supporter (Brown and Trevino, 2006). Accordingly, ethical leaders turned up individual focused, and they attempt to make an ethical atmosphere at the work places with their ethical conduct (Brown & Trevino, 2006; Kanungo, 2001).

Ethical leadership relies upon social learning theory (Brown et al., 2005). It concentrates on the possibility that existences of ethical leader in the organizations are envisioned as good examples, employees often inclined to pursue them and demonstrate strong practices to provide their organizations with the best (see e.g. Bandura, 1977). Social exchange theory claimed that when people experience great, legitimate and helpful attitude towards them they reciprocate the same. Similarly, employees who perceive existence of an ethical leader as their role model tend to demonstrate extra role behavior at their workplace (Neubert et al., 2009), and workers feel psychologically safe if ethical leadership exist at workplace (Mitonga-Monga and Cilliers, 2016). As Kahn (1990) stated that "People experienced Psychological safety when they feel to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career".

Researches about psychological safety have indicated that mental security is linked with positive outcomes such as work engagement (Olivier et al., 2007), motivation for innovative work exercises (Edmondson et al., 2006), and high level of work enthusiasm (Zigarmi, 2009). "Employee Work Passion is an individual's persistent, emotionally positive, meaning based state of well-being stemming from continuous, reoccurring cognitive and affective appraisals of various job and organizational situations, which results in consistent, constructive work intentions and behavior". (Zigarmi, et al., 2009).

Significance of the study

This study is going to contribute in existing literature of ethical leadership by incorporating the connection between ethical leadership and employees' work passion specifically with the mediating effect of psychological safety in the context of HEI's of Balochistan, Quetta.

Review of literature

Beforehand a few analysts attempted to investigate the connection between ethical leadership and worker's attitude (Brown and Trevino, 2006) which includes learning (Brown et al 2005), organizational commitment (Kim et al 2011), innovation and creativity (Ma and Zhou 2013), work commitment (Den and Belschak 2012) and job satisfaction (Williams and Anderson 1991). Ethical leaders, the moral pioneers, are the drivers of contentment for the workers. Brown and Trevino (2009) highlighted a positive connection between ethical leadership and organizational commitment and also a positive connection between ethical leadership and motivation. Trevino et al., (2000) argued that workers experience good inspiration and dedication to work when the leader acts morally. Keeping in view above discussed literature it is clear that commitment, engagement, creativity, innovativeness, motivation and learning are the characterizing attributes of work passion, so it may be accomplished that;

H₁: Ethical Leadership has a positive impact on Employee's Work Passion.

Nembhard & Edmondson (2006) stated that practices and attitude of the leaders adds to the feeling of psychological safety of the workers. Specifically, it is recorded by Edmondson (2004) that some personality traits of leaders like receptiveness, simplicity of approach, and comprehension, builds up worker's mental wellbeing at the work setting. Workers can devise new proposals, if conveyed by the leaders that they won't confront any hazardous impacts because of such conduct (Carmeli, 2010). Past researches have highlighted the fact that trustworthiness in leader's conduct, facilitate to reduce workers' business allied anxiety and vulnerability (Chi and Chi, 2014). The character and practices of immediate boss impart incredible effect on employees' work related outcomes (Hofmann and Morgeson, 1999). Therefore, Edmondson(2004) emphasized that the degree of psychological safety which employees observe, is strongly identified with the states of mind and practices of leaders in the organization. Thus, it can be accomplished that;

H₂: Ethical Leadership has a positive impact on Psychological Safety.

A significant number of the researches on leadership bring up that the trust of the workers and associates might be lost because of lack of integrity and honesty in the leadership, accordingly prompting the employee's' anxiety to quit the organization, and furthermore jeopardize the survival and achievement of the organization (Parry et.al, 2002). Subsequently, the absence of trust for the leaders weaken the inspiration and motivation as well as worker's work passion, accordingly workers feel like to change the organization (Ning & Jin, 2009). The faculties of doubt and sadness can incite the signs of burnout, remaining absent without solid reason and low commitments at work put (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). In opposition to this when workers experience psychological safety at their work put, they esteem their association with the work place, favor social trade instead of fiscal advantages (Li et., 2014).). This proposes:

H₃: Psychological Safety has a positive impact on the Employee Work Passion

Literature locate that moral initiative from the leaders specifically influences psychological safety (Parker 2003) resulting in work passion of employees (Zigarmi 2009). So these imply that psychological safety can act as mediator in the relation between ethical leadership and employees' work passion. Along these lines it is theorized that:

H₄: Psychological safety will act as a mediator in ethical leadership and employee's work passion.

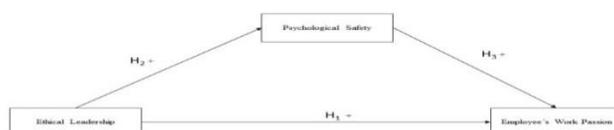


Fig 1.1 Theoretical Framework

Methodology

The study was cross sectional based on the quantitative positivist research approach. To obtain the necessary data survey method was used. The population of the study was HEI's of Quetta city which comprises of 4 public sector universities and 1 private sector university. Targeted population of all HEI's included faculty and administrative staff (grade 17 and above).

Sampling and Procedure

A self-reported survey questionnaire was developed consisting all the scales used earlier to study ethical leadership, psychological safety and employee work passion. Keeping in view the time and accessibility constraints non probability sampling method was adopted, further more Convenience sampling technique was used. Total 350 questionnaires were distributed, 270 questionnaires with 77.1% response rate were retained for analysis.

Instruments

The instrument used in this study comprised of 4 parts. The demographic data included age, gender, organizational status, experience on current job, total work experience and education. Ethical leadership measured by 10 items scale by Brown et al., (2005) with α 0.95 and sample item "My supervisor has best interest of employees in mind". Psychological safety scale was borrowed from Schepers et al., (2007) with α 0.89 and sample item "I am not afraid to express my opinion in my group/organization". Employee's work passion measured by a 13 item scale developed by Rupali Johri (2015) with α 0.96 and sample item "I generally feel excited to go to my work".

Analysis: All the analysis was done by using SPSS 23 version. In order to perform different statistical analyses, it was needed to establish that the data in fact are cleaned and measured effectively.

Results

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Gender wise 58.9% (159) were male and 40.4% (109) were female, 2 participants did not respond. 30.0% (81) of respondents were working in scale 17, majority of the participants [46.7% (126)] were working in scale 18, 12.6% (34) were working in scale 19, 5.2% (14) were working in scale 20 and only 1.9% (5) participants were working in scale 21, 10 participants did not respond about their job scale. 5.9% (16) participants were Bachelor's degree holder, majority of the participants were the holders of Master's degree [45.2% (122)] followed by MS degree [34.8% (94)], Ph.D. [13. % (35)], and 1.1%(3) did not responded. 86.3% (233) participants were from public sector universities and 13.3% (36) participants were from private sector university, only 1 participant did not answer. 68.9% (186) participants were working as faculty in HEI, s and 30.7% (83) were working at administrative positions, 1 participant did not respond to the question.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Pearson correlation:

Variable	Mean	S D	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3
Ethical Leadership	4.91	1.54	.01	-.23	(.95)		
Psychological Safety	5.04	1.39	-.08	-.46	.41*	(.89)	
Work Passion	5.48	1.18	-.08	.25	.57*	.44*	(.96)

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 level(2-tailed).

Note: Cronbach's Alpha on diagonal.

The normality test values (skewness and kurtosis) in the table 1 confirms that the data was normal. The internal reliability of the scales was measured by using Cronbach alpha's value. All the scales used in study were reliable.

Table 1 also shows that ethical leadership is found to be positively and significantly correlated with psychological safety ($r = .413, p < .01$) and employee's work passion ($r = .572, p < .01$) respectively. Correlation results also showed positive significant associations of psychological safety with employee's work passion ($r = .447, p < .01$). Correlation results of the present study indicates moderate correlations among the variables.

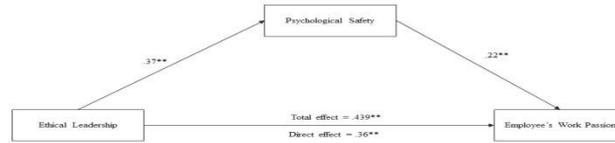


Figure 1.2

Hypotheses Testing

In line with Barron and Kenney's (1986) recommendation, mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS macro in SPSS 23. The results indicated significant total effect of ethical leadership on employee's work passion ($\beta=.439$, $p < .05$). Ethical leadership significantly predicted psychological safety; $\beta = .37$, $p < .05$. Psychological safety significantly and positively predicted employee's work passion; $\beta = .22$, $p < .05$. After controlling for psychological safety, ethical leadership significantly predicted employee's work passion; direct effect = $.36$, $p < .05$. Thus, a decrease in total effect (c path) as indicated by direct effect (c prime path), is indicative of a partial mediation.

Discussion

A positive and significant association between ethical leadership and employee's work passion was supported by the results of the study. As research has proved a very strong connection between leader's and employees' behaviors. May et al. (2003) emphasize that if a leader display concern for desires and feelings of employees, a positive and encouraging environment at the work place may be created which helps the employee to work with great passion.

The result also supported the significant positive relations between ethical leadership and psychological safety. According to Brown & Trevino, 2006 ethical leaders are concerned about people and society. Ethical leadership is very important to leader's integrity and extent to exert influence (Piccolo et al., 2010). This integrity in ethical leaders create an environment of trust among leaders and followers (Bellingham, 2003) and this trust results in psychological safety of the employees.

The Link between psychological safety and employee's work passion, as hypothesized from the literature was also supported by results of the study. As it was argued by Settoon et al., (1996) that desired behaviors at work, are linked with status of the manager-employee relationship. If the level of trust, confidence, respect and loyalty among manager and subordinate exists the work passion of employee increases thus leading employee to perform well. Psychologically safe employee tries to take risk in order to work with more passion. (Kark and Carmeli, 2009). Results also proved the link of ethical leadership with employee's work passion through mediation of psychological safety. The impact of ethical leadership on employee's work passion with mediating role of psychological safety is addressed very first time in this study. A research by Walumbwa and Schaubroeck's (2009) point outs that psychological safety mediates the link between ethical leadership and employee voice, but the concept of employee work passion was under looked in past researches.

The study have important managerial implications. Given that ethical behavior of the leader can help the employee to feel psychologically safe in the organization, so leaders need to pay more attention to their behaviors which may also help to promote employee's work passion. Future researchers may explore the relationships of the variables in this study in other types of organizations which may include business organizations and in HEI's. of other areas and locations.

Conclusion

The contribution of the study is both empirical and practical by providing more comprehension about the variables under study. The study also helped to ascertain some relationships that were not discovered in previous studies. To conclude, presence of ethical leadership at work place lead the employees to work with a great passion and employees feel safe psychologically thus able to take risk and provide suggestions for improvement in the organizations.

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