



The Mediating Role of Employee Work Engagement in the Relationship between Leadership Psychological Skills and Employee Voice Behavior

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(Received: April 9, 2021; Revised: October 30, 2021; Accepted: November 6, 2021)

Abstract

Intensified competitiveness in global markets has directed most organizations toward retaining their employees as their most important intangible assets, because losing such individuals can impose huge costs to them. Therefore, managers do their best to keep employee satisfaction. For this purpose, they need to understand the needs of their employees and the organization's conditions. In such a situation, employees' positive voice behavior is of utmost importance for managers as it helps enhance their awareness. Therefore, it is essential to identify the factors inducing this behavior. Given that workplace comfort might shape employee voice behavior (EVB) and managers with leadership psychological skills (LPSs) can create a state of calmness for these individuals, as highlighted in previous research, the present study reflected on the relationship between the effects of LPSs on EVB. As employee work engagement (EWE) can be also influenced by LPSs and consequently shape EVB, the mediating role of this variable in the relationship between LPSs and EVB was further discussed. To meet the research goals, a total number of 310 employees working in Iranian food industry companies were employed as the study sample. Structural equation modeling (SEM) and the LISREL software were used for data analysis purposes. The study results ultimately demonstrated that LPSs could affect EVB when mediated by EWE.

Keywords: leadership psychological skills, employee voice behavior, employee work engagement.

1. Introduction

Today's organizations must constantly seek to deal with existing problems and meet their stakeholders' satisfaction if they aim to survive in competitive environments. As employees are one of the most important stakeholders who are aware of organizations' activities, managers need to know about their views to improve organizational performance. The significance of receiving employee feedback has thus led to the formation of a concept called "employee voice behavior" (EVB), which emerged as one of the major channels of communication for organizations. However, there is not always a positive standpoint toward EVB, and some deem it as practices that fail to be constructive for organizations and result in organizational progress (Hsiung, 2012). Different, and sometimes contradictory, definitions of EVB have been proposed so far. Such voices can represent employees' statements about their dissatisfaction with their job positions or barriers to participation in the decision-making

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process (McCabe & Lewin, 1992). In this respect, Hagedoorn et al. (1999) have reflected on EVB as a considerable or aggressive voice, with the former being a positive process and the latter a negative one. According to Millward et al. (2000), there are three separate channels for EVB, including agency, committee involvement, and direct employee participation. As well, Dundon et al. (2004) proposed an analytical framework to express the voice of employees that contains four principles, i.e., conveying individual satisfaction, voicing collective attitudes toward the organization, participating in management decision-making, and showing relationships. Another definition for EVB refers to the delivery of information by employees to improve organizational performance, divided into the two categories of promotion and prohibition (Tian & Huang, 2013). Moreover, Liu et al. (2010) classified this concept into two types, namely top-down and bottom-up. The effect of leadership on EVB has been further studied by some researchers. For instance, Hsiung (2012) shed light on the impact of authentic leadership on EVB. The effect of leaders' behavioral integrity on EVB has been also proven by Peng and Wei (2019). Tian and Huang (2013) have additionally investigated the impact of leader empowering behavior on EVB. In their study, Donaghey et al. (2019) stated that management skills could shape EVB. Moreover, Zheng et al. (2021) found that authoritarian leadership could be negatively associated with higher voices in employees to boost existing conditions, controlled by motivational mechanisms. Furthermore, Guo et al. (2020) established that inclusive leadership is positively correlated with promotive and prohibitive voice behavior, and the power distance, in part, could mediate this relationship. Wang et al. (2019) correspondingly found that EVB could be affected by transformational leadership. The impact of servant leadership on this concept has been similarly evidenced by Yan and Xiao (2016).

Employee work engagement (EWE) is also an important concept in organizational behavior, defined as a positive practice that organizations need in today's competitive environment. EWE is also described as a satisfying positive feeling portrayed with dedication, vigor, and absorption at work, which can continue unabated. Here, vigor means that a person is very energetic, enthusiastic, and diligent in their work and shows high mental resilience once a problem occurs. Dedication also denotes that a person is heavily involved in work and experiences a sense of meaning, passion, and challenge, while absorption suggests that it is difficult for a person to give up work and leave (Simsek & Gurler, 2019). In another definition, EWE has been identified as an individual's motivation to spend mental, physical, and emotional energy in the organization (Cheng et al., 2014). According to Anitha (2014), engaged employees are people who could play their roles to the highest levels, and they are also willing to perform the assigned tasks in the organization. Studies in this line have further shown that the presence of employees in the organization can be beneficial in many different ways, as a useful element in terms of both individual behavior and organizational performance. Researchers are also certain of a positive relationship between EWE and EVB. In this regard, employees tend to raise their voices for organizational promotion when they have a high level of work engagement. On the contrary, they feel being away from the organization and think that progress and promotion are not of importance to them once the level of work engagement is low, so positive EVB is reduced and even negative protests may take place in the organization (Simsek & Gurler, 2019). The positive relationship between EWE and EVB had been also previously established by Tangirala et al. (2013) and Takeuchi et al. (2012).

Furthermore, psychological capital is one of the concepts considered by organizational management researchers in recent years. By definition, it is the ability to answer questions such as "Who am I? What do I know? What do I need to know?" (Luthans et al., 2006). In another definition, Luthans et al. (2006) described psychological capital as a positive

psychological position of individual development and outlined four dimensions, including self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience. Here, self-efficacy means an individual's ability to face challenges, optimism represents positive attitudes toward present and future success, hope shows the ability to identify goals and lead activities to feel success, and ultimately resilience denotes the capacity to cope with problems and continue until the problem is resolved. According to Rego et al. (2010), cognitive capital includes the five dimensions of optimism, confidence, tenacity, willpower, and path force. Studies in the field of organizational behavior have further examined the effects of psychological capital on organizational outcomes. Among other things, Avey et al. (2011) believed that psychological capital is significantly correlated with organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, employee performance, job stress, and turnover. Sweetman and Luthans (2010) have similarly stated that psychological capital could elevate employees' intrinsic motivation and oblige them to be loyal to the organization. According to Adil and Kamal (2016) and Li (2019), psychological capital as one of the most important dimensions of organizational capital could augment EWE. The effect of psychological capital on creativity has been similarly proven by Zubair and Kamal (2015). Moreover, Madrid et al. (2018) have examined the impact of psychological capital dimensions on organizational performance in terms of productivity, efficiency, and adaptability, and have found that the given relationship was statistically significant. Jena et al. (2017) have also demonstrated that psychological well-being could affect organizational trust. Furthermore, Ziyae et al. (2015) have found that psychological capital could shape innovation in information technology. Besides, Iqbal et al. (2020) have confirmed that sustainable leadership have an indirect impact on sustainable performance through psychological safety, which could be enhanced in the presence of psychological empowerment. Wu and Chen (2018) have also shown that psychological capital has a remarkable effect on organizational commitment and employee creativity. In their study, Kim et al. (2020) have further stated that psychological capital could affect well-being and performance satisfaction. Researchers also believe that psychological conditions (i.e., meaningfulness, safety, and availability) can give rise to EWE. In this respect, May et al. (2004) have reported that the two psychological dimensions of safety and meaningfulness could be significantly correlated with EWE. In another study, Oliver and Rothmann (2007) proved that all three dimensions of psychological conditions could be a strong predictor of EWE while there is no significant difference between their effects. As well, Chikoko et al. (2014) have found that the meaningfulness dimension of psychological conditions could be strongly correlated with EWE.

Some studies have further examined the effects of leadership on various aspects of employee and organizational performance. For instance, Coakes et al. (2011) in their study on sustainable innovation and right to market have established that supportive leadership could augment innovative ideas. Accordingly, encouraging employees to share their experiences and values could provide constructive feedback and engage them in risk-taking behavior. Thakur (1999) in their survey on investment size, opportunity choice, and human resources in new venture growth have further verified that effective leadership could exploit opportunities. Investigating how authentic and transformational leaders could influence employees' psychological capital and service innovation behavior, Schuckert et al. (2018) have found that effective leadership could create a culture, enabling knowledge exchange and developing an organization towards a learning one. Moreover, De Brentani and Kleinschmidt (2004) have asserted that interactions between leadership and primary clients could facilitate new service offerings by providing critical support for innovation champions, whilst innovation could be encouraged by communicating ideas for improvement via intentionally participative management and a positive manner (Binder et al., 2016). Although these studies have

evaluated the impact of leadership on different aspects of employee behavior and performance, no attempt is observed, to the best of the authors' knowledge, about examining the role of leadership psychological skills (LPSs) on EVB. Evaluating this role can thus increase the level of theoretical concepts in this field based on some theories such as EWE, EVB, and so on. Moreover, as a mediating variable, EWE can provide better insights into the relationship between LPSs and EVB. Consequently, this research could contribute to developing leadership capabilities in the organization. Identifying the impact of LPSs on EVB would further help companies achieve higher profitability through motivated and active employees. Therefore, the present study aimed to bridge the existing gap by investigating the effect of LPSs on EVB, mediated by EWE, in Iranian manufacturing companies.

This article is organized as follows. In the first section, the conceptual model and the research hypotheses are developed. This section is then followed by the methodology and the analysis of empirical findings in Section 2. Finally, Section 3 outlines the conclusions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Background

2.1.1. EWE

EWE refers to a positive, emotional, and motivating work-related state of mind, consisting of three components, i.e., vigor, dedication, and absorption. Here, vigor reflects the high level of energy at work, dedication stands for the importance of work (a sense of pride in the workplace as well as a sense of inspiration), and absorption shows the degree of concentration at work. EWE is also a positive feeling that is on a par with well-being and is the opposite of burnout (Li, 2019). In another definition, it includes four components, namely physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. Accordingly, physical engagement involves redoubled efforts to perform one's duties, while cognitive conflict means the conflict of mind and thought at work. Moreover, emotional engagement means employees' passion and commitment to the organization. Behavioral engagement indicates employee participation in organizational activities (Tiwari & Lenka, 2016). When the level of work engagement is high, employees may thus show their commitment and trust in the organization because they are motivated to play their role effectively in such situations. EWE can also increase employee connectivity to the organization as it can raise the sense of ownership and loyalty (Jena et al., 2017).

2.1.2. EVB

According to previous research, EVB can have two different aspects, with one being the reaction caused by dissatisfaction and problems to destroy or provoke the organization, and the other including spontaneous behavior aimed to improve the situation in the organization (Hsiung, 2012). It also considers employees' voices as behaviors that can be defined differently in various disciplines. In human resources management, EVB indicates an increase in complaints about work and decision-making problems. In organizational behavior, voices also represent practices outside the role that reflects employees' willingness to challenge the current situation and provide constructive advice for change (Kougiannou, 2019). Moreover, this behavior is different from complaints, warnings, and assistance. In this sense, a complaint is just output and fails to improve effectiveness, a warning is given when a person is in danger, and assistance represents a kind of social behavior to maintain harmony. As a whole,

EVB is more challenging since it can create interpersonal conflicts or ruin harmony in the organization (Zhou et al., 2017).

2.1.3. LPSs

The activity of organizations is normally based on maintaining and developing existing resources as much as possible. Employees are one of the most important assets of organizations whose replacement can be costly. The importance of employees is not limited to their job abilities, but their psychological and behavioral skills are also sources that become worthy to the organization over time (Li, 2019). Psychological skills can thus include positive thinking, self-confidence, trust in others, courage, self-control, self-efficacy, realism, etc. Moreover, the existence of LPSs not only can change a person's work but also affect the performance of other members in the organization. Therefore, the effect of psychological skills has been thus far discussed in different aspects.

2.2. Hypothesis Development

2.2.1. LPSs and EVB

EVB is defined as a protest or idealistic message to ban or promote certain actions. Consequently, it can have positive or negative aspects (Cheng et al., 2014). Related studies have accordingly shown that employees feel safe and secure when psychological safety is created for them in the workplace, and this can affect a variety of organizational outcomes. Psychological safety is also established for employees at work once the person is both psychologically safe, and the psychological characteristics of those in the workplace are such that the person feels comfortable with them (Iqbal et al., 2020). In this line, Chen and Tjosvold (2012) have stated that leadership and team characteristics could affect employees' perceptions of psychological safety. Coakes et al. (2011) have further found that innovative ideas could be increased by supportive leadership, and encouraging employees to share their experiences and values could provide constructive feedback and engage them in risk-taking behavior. Moreover, Aragon-Correa et al. (2007) have proven that commitment to leadership could enable organizations to create a participative culture and a positive climate. This leadership commitment could be thus regarded as a key non-technological driver in the process of innovation management, which could lead to the development of managerial support, organizational and individual learning, as well as employee motivation (Tajeddini et al., 2020). Besides, Duane Hansen et al. (2016) have found a significant relationship between psychological safety and employees' responsibilities. Edmondson and Lei (2014) have also reported that psychological safety could influence the implementation of innovative technologies. According to the planned behavior theory, psychological factors are effective in predicting employees' planned actions. Considering this approach, EVB could be thus affected by people's psychological safety, providing some conditions for employees to express their opinions in order to improve organizational performance. Psychological safety could additionally set the conditions for employees to be able to express what they feel dissatisfied with or what they thought could enhance the situation with no fear and anxiety (Liang et al., 2012).

According to previous studies, if managers have high LPSs and provide employees with psychological safety, negative EVB would be reduced.

H₁: LSP affects EVB.

2.2.2. *ESP and EWE*

Kahn (1990) first introduced the concept of psychological safety in relation to organizational behavior. He stated that psychological safety means that a person could express their beliefs, thoughts, and attitudes at a lower organizational level with no fear of dismissal, change of job position, or self-loathing. Thus, organizations aimed at creating a suitable psychological environment for employees can help them develop new competencies, express their opinions explicitly, increase their role in the organization, and lead other employees. Even if employees experience failure in their workplace, they continue to work with greater seriousness (Tiwari & Lenka, 2016). Accordingly, having a work environment that provides psychological safety for employees can have a positive effect on EWE. Previous studies have also evaluated this assumption. For example, Azadegan and Pai (2008) have presented a framework for increasing the psychological safety of employees in their work environment, concluding that employees' psychological safety could affect their engagement.

As stated in previous studies and considering the role of management in the development of psychological safety in employees, it is argued that LPSs could have a significant impact on EWE.

H₂: LPSs affect EWE.

2.2.3. *EWE and EVB*

Previous studies have suggested that EWE could be considered as a strong predictor of EVB (Blader & Tyler, 2009). EWE could also lead employees to devote their physical, emotional, and psychological abilities to the organization, suggesting that the future of the organization and its development is very important for the employees engaged. Consequently, increasing engagement can cause employees to report it when they see weaknesses in the organization and try to make their voice heard by higher authorities. To substantiate this claim from a theoretical point of view, Salanova and Schaufeli (2008) examined employees in Spain and the Netherlands and found a positive relationship between EWE and EVB. In a five-day study, Sonnentag (2003) further established that EWE could be associated with EVB. As well, Cheng et al. (2013) examined employees' behavior in Taiwanese companies and found that EWE was a factor shaping EVB. Cheng et al. (2014) further investigated a number of companies in northern Taiwan and reported that EWE could have a considerable effect on EVB.

H₃: EWE affects EVB.

2.2.4. *Relationship Between LPSs and EVB Mediated by EWE*

Considering the issues addressed in the previous sections and given that LPSs could shape EWE and affect EVB, it is argued that EWE could play a mediating role in the relationship between LPSs and EVB. This means that if LPSs are such that they can boost EWE by creating an environment full of employee psychological safety, this can improve EVB and organizational performance.

H₄: EWE mediates the relationship between LPSs and EVB.

3. Methodology

3.1. *Research Model*

Figure 1 shows the research model developed in this study, where LPSs directly and indirectly affect EVB through EWE. The structural equation modeling (SME) and the LISREL software were used to fit the model to the data.

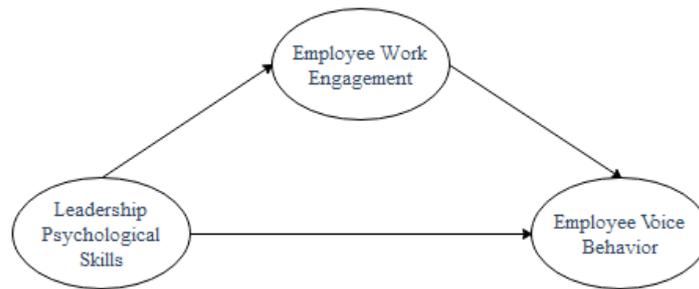


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

3.2. Instruments and Measures

The questionnaire administered in this study was comprised of two sections. The first section consisted of 62 items, including 18 items for EVB (items no. 1-18), nine items for EWE (items no. 19-27), and 35 items for LPSs (items no. 28-62). The second section was related to demographic characteristics information such as gender, age, level of education, and work experience.

EVB was accordingly measured with reference to Vantilborgh (2015), and EWE was assessed using the relevant questionnaire developed by Teo et al. (2019). The eight-dimension Mental Skills Questionnaire (MSQ; Bull et al., 1996) was additionally recruited to determine LPSs. The study constructs were also measured by close-ended items based on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from *strongly agree* (5) to *strongly disagree* (1). In addition, the follow-up reviews were carried out based on a survey obtained from experts as professors familiar with the research context and the private sector. In addition, the reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

3.3. Participants

The statistical population in this study included employees working in food exporting companies in Qazvin Industrial Estate, Qazvin, Iran. Sampling was done using proportional sampling method. The sample size was determined between 5 and 15 times more than the number of items in the questionnaire because the variables were latent and SEM was used to analyze the data in this study. Therefore, the sample included 310 individuals, five times more than the number of items in the questionnaire, and finally, 310 employees were randomly selected. The questionnaires were distributed by e-mail or in-person, and 310 completed questionnaires were selected for data analysis.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Characteristics Information

The demographic characteristics information about the participants, including their age, gender, and work experience is shown in Table 1. In this study, the majority of the participants were male (n=171), aged 30-40 years old (n=121), and had 5-10 years of work experience (n=161).

The descriptive statistics for the research constructs in the conceptual model and the bivariate correlations between them are further illustrated in Table 2. This bivariate correlation analysis was carried out to test the correlations between the independent variables, which indicated the need for an SEM-type analytical approach to test the hypotheses.

Table 1. The Demographic Characteristics of the Study Samples

Demographic profile	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	171	55%
	Female	139	45%
Age	<30	50	16%
	30-40	121	39%
	40-50	89	29%
	>50	50	16%
Work experience	<5	57	18%
	5-10	161	52%
	10-15	77	25%
	>15	15	5%

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

Variable	Mean	SD	KS	Sig.	EWB	EWE	LPSs
EVB	2.984	.499	.032	.898	1		
EWE	2.956	.487	.039	.722	.562**	1	
LPSs	2.930	.539	.039	.707	.473**	.528**	1

According to the obtained results, the mean value of the variables was less than 3, indicating their low level in the study sample. The significance value of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) test was also greater than 0.05, suggesting that the variables were normal. Considering the correlation between the variables, the significant value of the relationships was less than 0.05, which confirmed a strong relationship between them. With regard to the positive correlation coefficient, there was a significant positive relationship between the variables.

4.2. Path Analysis

Before fitting the model to the observations to validate the research hypotheses, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was utilized to evaluate the significance of the items. If the factor loading value were greater than 0.5 and the t-statistic were greater than 1.96, the item could be retained in the model, otherwise it must be removed.

Table 3. CFA for Questionnaire Items

EVB					EWE					LPSs						
Item	Factor loading	Chi-Square	df	RMSEA	Item	Factor loading	Chi-Square	df	RMSEA	Item	Factor loading	Item	Factor loading	Chi-Square	df	RMSEA
1	0.30	236.62	135	0.049	1	0.34	43.52	25	0.049	1	0.43	19	0.60	924.12	560	0.046
2	0.26				2	0.43				2	0.27	20	0.51			
3	0.45				3	0.45				3	0.30	21	0.25			
4	0.45				4	0.33				4	0.57	22	0.24			
5	0.58				5	0.38				5	0.38	23	0.50			
6	0.57				6	0.56				6	0.42	24	0.33			
7	0.47				7	0.48				7	0.50	25	0.40			
8	0.39				8	0.46				8	0.53	26	0.40			
9	0.42				9	0.58				9	0.16	27	0.49			
10	0.51				10	0.29	28	0.39								
11	0.44				11	0.28	29	0.39								
12	0.29				12	0.21	30	0.38								
13	0.33				13	0.28	31	0.48								
14	0.29				14	0.23	32	0.43								
15	0.37				15	0.46	33	0.31								
16	0.39				16	0.33	34	0.32								
17	0.64				17	0.43	35	0.31								
18	0.43				18	0.47										

The LISREL software with maximum likelihood estimation was also used to test the research hypotheses and investigate the causal relationships between the variables. According to the threshold criteria, there was a good fit between the model and the data. The fit indices for the measurement model were $X^2=69.28$, $df=43$, $X^2/df=1.61$, $RMSEA=.044$, $GFI=.91$, $CF=.94$, and the results implied the acceptable fitness of the measurement model. The composite reliability and the average variance extracted (AVE) for the scales were further computed. Moreover, the measurement model with the method factor did not improve the fitness of the measurement model. To test the mediating effect, the Sobel test was utilized. The results of the relationship coefficients are presented in Figure 2.

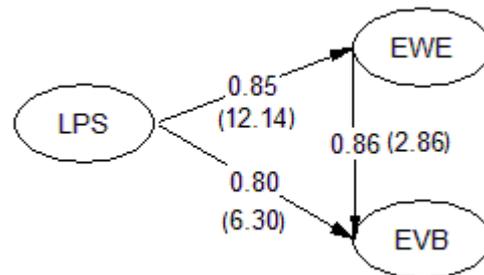


Figure 2. Final Model

Based on the results, LPSs could improve EWE ($\beta=.85$, t -statistic=12.14), EWE had a positive effect on EVB ($\beta=.86$, t -statistic=2.86), and LPSs affected EVB ($\beta=.80$, t -statistic=6.30). As well, LPSs could influence EVB through the mediating role of EWE ($\beta=.72$, Sobel-test value=2.77).

Table 4. Relationships Between Variables

Independent variable	Mediating variable	Dependent variable	Path coefficient	T-statistic	Sobel-value
LPSs	-----	EWE	.85	12.14	-----
LPSs	-----	EVB	.80	6.30	-----
EWE	EVB	EVB	.72	-----	2.77

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the present study highlighted the relationship between LPSs and EVB. The mediating role of EWE in the relationship between LPSs and EVB was also evidenced. This meant that if the organizations aimed to enhance EVB, they needed to improve LPSs. EVB could also play a key role in organizations, especially in manufacturing companies such as food exporting ones, particularly in the Iranian market wherein there are a variety of competitors in business struggling to increase their market share. As well, LPSs could help develop EWE that would ultimately lead to improved EVB. The results of the present study were accordingly consistent with previous research. Although the complete model (used in this research) was never tested in the current form, there were some studies, independently investigating the interrelationships among different variables that were recruited in this research. The present study also highlighted the effect of LPSs on EVB. In other words, employees could feel confident and secure to offer their suggestions or express their reproof and opinions whenever psychological safety was provided in the organization. These findings were in line with the reports of Liang et al. (2012). The results of our study also supported those in Iqbal et al. (2020) and Edmondson and Lei (2014). Accordingly, LPSs could positively affect EVB. Iqbal et al. (2020) had further found that if psychological safety was prepared for employees, they could feel safe and secure, and this could shape different aspects

of organizational performance. Psychological safety could similarly provide conditions for employees to spell out their opinions to improve organizational performance. It could further create the conditions for employees to express what they were dissatisfied with or what they thought could enhance the situation with no fear and anxiety (Liang et al., 2012).

According to the results of this study, the relationship between LPSs and EWE was confirmed. In fact, LPSs led to an increase in EWE. These findings corresponded to the studies by Tiwari and Lenka (2016) and Azadegan and Pai (2008), revealing that organizations, providing a suitable psychological environment for employees, could help them develop new competencies and express their opinions explicitly, and redouble their role in the organization. In these types of organizations, employees could try to work in a hard and accurate manner even if they failed (Tiwari & Lenka, 2016).

With regard to the third research hypothesis, the relationship between EWE and EVB was confirmed, consistent with the findings reported by Blader and Tyler (2009), Salanova and Schaufeli, (2008), Sonnentag (2003), Cheng et al. (2013), and Cheng et al. (2014). Moreover, Salanova and Schaufeli (2008) had proven a positive relationship between EWE and EVB by examining employees in Spain and the Netherlands. Sonnentag (2003) in their five-day study had further demonstrated that EWE could be associated with EVB. Moreover, Cheng et al. (2013) and Cheng et al. (2014) had studied employees' behavior in Taiwanese companies in northern Taiwan and had found that EWE had a significant effect on EVB. Consequently, it could be claimed that EWE was a strong predictor of EVB (Blader & Tyler, 2009).

According to the fourth hypothesis addressed in this study, the role of EWE as a mediating variable between LPSs and EVB was accepted. Therefore, it was maintained that if LPSs were such that they could improve EWE by providing a workplace full of psychological safety, then this could increase EVB and organizational performance

6. Managerial and Theoretical Implications

This study could advance the management literature on LPSs and EVB so that the findings could be practical for managers, practitioners, and academicians in a variety of ways. First, this study bridged the gap in the literature by bringing great clarity and greater understanding to the mediating role of EWE in the relationship between LPSs and EVB. In addition, the study results revealed that LPSs could have beneficial effects on EVB. According to the results of this study, it was argued that leaders and managers could increase EVB by showing psychological skills to improve employees' confidence and safety. Therefore, leaders could avoid organizational silencing by amplifying some skills to make employees feel more safe and secure to express their opinions. If employees felt free to give all viewpoints, creativity and suggestions in the organization would be augmented, and organizations could consequently use employees' ideas as solutions or innovations to expand their share in the market. Correspondingly, based on the study findings, organizations that aimed to create a suitable psychological workplace for employees could help them develop new competencies, express their opinions explicitly, and increase their role in the organization. Even if employees' experience failed, they would continue to work with greater seriousness. As a result, employees would feel more motivated and committed to the organization, which could enhance organizational performance and decrease employee turnover.

Furthermore, this study proved that EWE could play a mediating role in the relationship between LPSs and EVB. One advantage was that if managers and leaders could develop some positive psychological attributes to bring safety and confidence in the workplace, they could inspire work engagement and EVB simultaneously. Both of these factors could further enhance organizational performance and market share. In other words, EWE could be

considered as a strong predictor of EVB, suggesting that the more motivated and devoted the employees were, the more the suggestions and complaints they could express. As well, if employees could offer their opinions at work with enough engagement, they would gain adequate courage to participate in the organization's decision-making process. This involvement in decision-making could further increase their commitment to organizational decisions and goals, and help them improve their performance to reach these goals.

As a whole, higher LPSs could have many benefits for organizations as they could draw employees' attention to the current and future conditions of companies and receive their feedback, if needed, by providing appropriate solutions. Problem-solving could further address existing risks and improve organizational performance.

7. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Although various factors could affect EVB, only the variables of LPSs and EWE were considered in this study. Future research can thus incorporate other variables such as interpersonal justice, conflict, and active listening as the factors shaping EVB. Another limitation facing this study was the effect of some variables such as participants' motivation and different mental states at the time of answering the questionnaire items that were beyond the researcher's control but might have affected the results. Therefore, it is recommended to carry out further research based on a mixed-methods design to ensure the reliability and generalizability of the results. Moreover, not considering demographic characteristics such as the level of education and work experience as moderating variables was another limitation in this study. It seems that each of these factors could affect EWE. In addition, it is suggested to examine EVB in other fields such as service companies in future research since this study merely reflected on this concept in manufacturing ones.

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