THE LEADERSHIP SUPPORT IN PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AND INNOVATIVE WORK BEHAVIOR IN ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract
The current research examined the links between leadership support, psychological safety, and innovative work behavior with the Pakistani organizations with special emphasis on the mediating effects of psychological safety. It was a cross-sectional survey of 620 workers in different areas of work, including the banking industry, education, telecommunications, healthcare, and the government. The measures of leadership support, psychological safety, and innovative work behavior were measured using standardized measures and the data analyzed with descriptive statistics, correlation, multiple regression, and mediation analyses. The findings showed that the support of leadership was a positive predictor of psychological safety (0.58, p <.001) and innovative work behavior (0.29 p <.001). Another factor that became a major predictor of innovative work behavior (= -.38, p = -.001) was psychological safety which to some degree mediated the linkage between leadership support and innovative work behavior, which suggests that leaders not only facilitated innovation but also did it by providing a safe and supportive work environment. These results highlight the need to have supportive leadership and psychologically safe climates to facilitate innovation, especially across hierarchical and collectivist organizational cultures like those found in Pakistan. The research also contributes to theory, as it confirms the mediating role of psychological safety in a non-Western culture, and to practice as it puts the organizational policies and the efforts to support leadership development and encourage employee creativity and innovativeness.

Keywords *Leadership support, psychological safety, innovative work behavior, mediation, Pakistani organizations.*

Introduction

The modern world of knowledge-based economy is becoming more and more dependent on the creative power and innovative behavior of employees in order to stay competitive and sustainable. Organizational innovation does not merely require technological resources or structural strategies, but also the psychological and social factors that influence the behavior of the employees. Psychological safety is one of the most significant psychological states that lead to innovation and this refers to a situation where workers feel safe to share ideas, make risky decisions and raise issues without the fear of being punished and humiliated (Edmondson, 1999).

In the contemporary organization, the challenges that employees are often facing are complex and demand experimentation, creativity, and teamwork in solving problems. Innovation however is a process of uncertainty and a possible failure. Workers who believe their workplace is psychologically unsafe are likely to reduce the risk-taking behavior and inhibit innovative ideas. On the other hand, in the setting of psychological safety, people are free to make suggestions, ask questions and offer creative solutions that eventually boost

organizational performance (Newman, Donohue, and Eva, 2017). The most recent research has emphasized the fact that psychological safety is a key element in facilitating innovative work behavior, which can be described as the deliberate generation, fostering, and adoption of novel ideas at the workplace (Janssen, 2000). Innovative work behavior entails the idea generation, idea promotion, and idea implementation, and all these serve to make the organization effective. The studies indicate that employees are more inclined to think innovatively and work on a problem when they assume that their ideas will be taken into account and that they will be respected (Frazier et al., 2017).

The leadership support is also vital in the development of psychologically safe environments. Leaders who support help establish trust and transparency and teamwork, and employees feel free to share ideas without the possibility of any adverse repercussions. Inclusive and transformational leadership styles have been determined to elevate the level of psychological safety and employee innovativeness to a great extent (Carmeli, Brueller, and Dutton, 2009). When leaders are participative, give constructive feedback, and can tolerate mistakes, the organization climate of innovation is developed. The presence of hierarchical structures and power distance in Pakistani organizations tends to shape communication patterns among the employees and the supervisors. Fear of being criticized or judged negatively by the supervisors may make employees reluctant in expressing innovative ideas. These cultural aspects can restrict the culture of psychological safety development in workplaces. Thus, it is especially crucial to know how psychological safety is linked to innovative work behavior in Pakistani organizations when it comes to enhancing organizational performance and employee involvement.

Although the topic of psychological safety is becoming a topic of growing international concern, little empirical studies have been conducted in this area in terms of developing economies and especially Pakistan. The majority of the past researches have been carried out in Western settings in which there is a marked difference between the organization culture and leadership styles in South Asian cultures. There is therefore a need to examine the role of psychological safety in driving innovative work behavior in Pakistani work environments and how leadership support can mediate this connection. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of psychological safety on innovative work behavior among the employees operating in Pakistani organizations. In addition, it explores how leadership support is a contextual issue that enhances psychological safety and encourages innovative behavior at work.

Definition of Variables

➢ **Psychological Safety**: Psychological safety is the ability of individuals to perceive the working environment as safe against taking interpersonal risks and that employees can communicate freely to express ideas, concerns and mistakes without the fear of any negative consequences (Edmondson, 1999).

➢ **Innovative Work Behavior**: Innovative work behavior can be described as the process by which the employees conceive, sell, and execute new ideas that enhance organizational processes, product or service (Janssen, 2000).

➢ **Leadership Support**: Leadership support is the degree to which leaders are able to give encouragement, resources, and emotional support to the employees so that they can be able to carry out their duties effectively, as well as contribute towards the innovation of the organization (Carmeli et al., 2009).

Problem Statement

The employees of most organizations have good ideas and knowledge that can enhance the performance of the organization. Nonetheless, employees can be afraid of being criticized, or there is no supportive leadership, and they are afraid of sharing innovative ideas

because of hierarchical organizational structures. This psychological insecurity makes the employees less willing to take part in innovative behaviours. Employees in Pakistan organizational, where the authority structure is sometimes robust and communication might be formalized, might not be willing to make interpersonal risks. Thus, they need to explore the effects of psychological safety on innovative work behavior and determine whether the support of leaders can increase the confidence of employees to be able to express new ideas.

Research Objectives

1. To determine the association between psychological safety and innovative work behavior.
2. To examine how leadership support contributes to the promotion of psychological safety.
3. To explore the effect of the leadership support in enhancing innovative work behavior within the organizations.

Research Questions

1. Does psychological safety affect innovative work behavior by employees?
2. What is the relationship between leadership support and psychological safety in companies?
3. Does leadership support improve innovative work behaviour among employees?

Hypotheses

1. H1: Innovative work behavior is positively related with psychological safety.
2. H2: Leadership support is positively related to predicting psychological safety among employees.
3. H3: Leadership support has a positive effect on innovative work behavior.
4. H4: Leadership support and innovative work behavior have a mediating variable in the form of psychological safety.

Literature Review

Psychological safety is an organizational behavior principle that is used to describe the perception that employees have towards their work surroundings that they can put forward ideas, questions, concerns or errors without the fear of being penalized or humiliated (Edmondson, 1999). Workers feel psychologically safe when they work in a specific environment, which allows them to communicate openly, exchange knowledge, and take interpersonal risks that may lead to learning and innovation (Frazier et al., 2017). Studies have repeatedly shown that a culture of trust and cooperation has been developed in organizations that are psychologically safe. With psychologically safe workplaces, the employees become more relaxed to engage in conversations, propose changes, and test new concepts (Newman et al., 2017). Conversely, as employees are afraid of negative appraisal or criticism, they tend not to voice out, or offer innovative solutions, thereby, restricting organizational learning and innovation (Detert and Burris, 2007).

According to recent studies of organizations, the psychological safety is of particular significance in the industries based on knowledge in which teamwork and the ability to solve problems play a crucial role. As an example, Edmondson and Lei (2014) underlined that psychologically safe work environments have a positive impact on employee engagement, learning behavior, and innovative performance. This finding implies that the organization that fosters psychological safety is in good positions to adjust to the dynamically changing business environment.

Innovative work behavior (IWB) is a deliberate move of the employees to introduce and implement innovative ideas, processes, or approaches that enhance organizational performance (Janssen, 2000). It has various processes that involve idea generation, idea promotion, and idea implementation (Scott and Bruce, 1994). Organizational innovation does

not just rely on the individual creativity of the employees themselves but also on the organizational and social background under which the employees are working. The employees should be motivated to share new ideas and confront prevailing practices. The studies indicate that the tendency to act in an innovative manner increases when employees feel that their supervisors support them and that their idea may be important (Anderson, Potočnik, and Zhou, 2014).

The recent researches show that innovative work behavior is also an important contributor to the organizational competitiveness and success in the long run. Innovative employees assist organizations in bettering products, services, and in-house operations. As a result, a significant number of organizations strive to create an environment at the workplace, which promotes creativity and innovative behavior (Afsar and Umrani, 2020). An increasing amount of evidence demonstrates that psychological safety is an important factor in stimulating innovative work behavior. Innovation is a concept associated with uncertainty and risk thus employees must be assured that their idea is not going to result in any negative outcome. The psychological safety leads to fear of failure, encouragement to experiment, which enables an employee to find creative solutions to a challenge in the workplace (Edmondson and Lei, 2014).

The positive relationship between psychological safety and innovative behavior is backed up by empirical evidence. Indicatively, Frazier et al. (2017) established that psychological safety is a strong predictor of employee creativity, learning, and voice behavior. On the same note, Newman et al. (2017) also found that workers with greater perceptions of psychological safety are better placed to pursue innovative problem-solving and exchange of knowledge. In collectivist cultures, like in Pakistan, where power distance and hierarchical organizational structures are common, employee propensity to be open can be affected. Workers might be afraid of being criticized by the bosses and hence, not dare to question the authority or suggest something that is not conventional. Thus, in such situations, psychological safety is especially relevant in promoting the innovative work behavior.

In the perception of psychological safety, leadership support plays a crucial role and may affect the employees. The leaders are at the center of developing the organizational climate through trust, fairness, and open communication. Empowering leaders also support employees in sharing ideas and giving constructive feedback and offering participation in the process of making decisions (Carmeli et al., 2009). The benefit of transformational and inclusive leadership style in psychological safety has been well-known. Empathy, respect, and openness to employer opinions can allow leaders to boost the confidence of employees in sharing ideas and taking interpersonal risks to a great extent (Javed et al., 2019). Material in the literature of different organizational environments reveals that recognition, support, and encouragement are some of the leadership behaviors that are fundamental in developing psychologically safe working environments. Leaders should appreciate the input of employees and accept mistakes as learning opportunities, as this increases the likelihood of them sharing creative ideas (Edmondson and Lei, 2014).

The support of leaders does not only increase psychological safety but also has a direct effect on innovative work behavior. Guiding, resourceful, and supportive leaders make it possible to establish a setting in which the employees feel inspired to test new ideas and enhance the working processes (Anderson et al., 2014). Research indicates that when staff feels their leaders are offering good leadership, chances are high that they will come up with new solutions and help the organization to grow. Intrinsic motivation of employees is another factor that boosts creativity and innovation, and supportive leadership enhances it (Afsar and Umrani, 2020). Hence, leadership assistance may be dual, both supportive of psychological safety and a direct stimulus of innovative behavioral patterns in the employees.

Methodology

Research Design

The current research took the quantitative cross-sectional research design in order to test the association between psychological safety, leadership support, and innovative work behavior among the employees in Pakistani organizations. Quantitative methodology was viewed as a viable approach due to the fact that the study was going to test theoretically developed hypotheses and analyze the dependency between variables through the use of statistical methods. A common survey design in organizational psychology academic studies is cross-sectional survey designs, which are aimed at exploring the perceptions of employees and organizational behaviors at a given moment in time (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The proposed research model is that the leadership support is the predictor of innovative work behavior in both direct and indirect correlations with psychological safety. Psychological safety in this model serves as a mediating variable that describes the way in which supportive leadership behavior motivates employees to be innovative. The self-report questionnaires were utilized as standardized data collection instruments based on the use of sound scales of measurement that have previously been used in organizational behavior studies.

Research Set-up and Scenario

The studies were carried out within the frames of Pakistani organizations where the hierarchical organizational structure and strong authority relations may be discussed as the peculiarities of working culture. These cultural peculiarities can affect the desire of the staff to share ideas and take part in innovative processes. Most Pakistani organizations have employees who are afraid of being criticized or judged negatively because they do not want to go against their supervisors or offer unconventional ideas. Thus, the analysis of psychological safety in this cultural setting offers a very useful data on how organizational climate, as well as leadership practices, affects employee innovation. The data were gathered in the organizations located in the main urban areas of Pakistan such as Lahore, Islamabad and Karachi where various sectors including banking, education, telecommunication, and healthcare and public administration are concentrated. The presence of various organizational sectors made the findings more generalizable and provided the study with a comprehensive picture of the experiences of the employees.

Population and Sample

The study population was full-time employees of Pakistani organization (both in the public and private sector). Managerial, supervisory and non-managerial employees were included to provide an overall picture of workplace experiences in regards to psychological safety and innovation. There were 620 employees who took part in the study. The sample size was found to be sufficient to perform sophisticated statistical tests like regression and mediation analysis. Hair et al. (2019) state that the statistical power and reliability of behavioral research are highly augmented by large samples, which comprise more than 500 participants. The participants were chosen using the multi-stage sampling technique. First, the organizations operating in other industries were approached and the permission to carry out the research was requested. This was followed by the invitation of employees working in different departments to be part of it on a voluntary basis. The sampling technique was used to represent the employees who had various education levels, job rank, and work experiences.

Demographic Characteristics of the participants

The sample was diverse in terms of gender, age, and education as well as professional experience. Out of the 620 respondents, about 56 percent were male and 44 percent were the female employees. The participants were aged between 22 and 55 years with most of the respondents being between the age group of 26 to 35 years of age and this is one of the major proportions of the working population in Pakistan. In terms of educational qualifications, the

majority of participants had undergraduate or postgraduate degrees which represent the educational requirements of contemporary organization system. With regard to work experience, participants indicated that they had professional experience of between one year and over fifteen years with an average work experience of about seven years. The sample size included representatives of various industries such as banking, education, telecommunication, healthcare, and government agencies and thus enabled the research to be representative of a diverse workplace environment and leadership practices.

Measurement Instruments

Standardized measurement scales were used to collect the data with pre-existing scales having been previously tried and proven in research studies in the field of organizational behavior. The Psychological Safety Scale with seven items created by Edmondson (1999) was used to determine psychological safety. The scale evaluates how the employees perceive their workplace environment to facilitate open communication and interpersonal taking of risks. The items included in the rating procedure were whether the employees feel safe to share ideas or confess errors in their teams. A leadership support scale modified by Carmeli et al. (2009) was used to measure leadership support. This scale considers how much leaders encourage, guide and offer emotional support to the employees. It evaluates how employees feel about the supervisors about whether they appreciate their input and give them constructive feedback. The innovative work behavior was assessed based on the nine-item Innovative Work Behavior Scale which was developed by Janssen (2000). This tool measures the engagement of the employees in creating, marketing and adopting new ideas in the work place. The measurement items were rated on a five-point Likert scale, 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (strongly disagree), 3 (strongly disagree), 4 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree). The more the scores, the more the perceptions of the leadership support, psychological safety, and innovative work behavior.

Data Collection Procedure

Before the data collection process, the organizational management was consulted to allow the researcher to distribute questionnaires to employees. The participants were made aware of the aim of the study and they were assured that their answers should be treated as confidential and would only be used in academic orientation. The data collection was done by use of online and paper questionnaires to make it accessible to the employees in various organizational contexts. The respondents had enough time to fill in the questionnaire and their involvement was voluntary. There were 670 questionnaires that were distributed, with 620 of them being completed and usable hence the response rate achieved was about 92%. The final dataset was restricted to complete or consistent responses to exclude incomplete or inconsistent responses to improve the accuracy of the data.

Ethical Considerations

The research was conducted in strict ethical principles. The respondents were educated about the voluntary nature of the participation and they were promised that their individual identities would not be disclosed. No personal data about the employees like names or ID numbers was gathered. The respondents were also made aware of the fact that they could pull out of the study at any point with no repercussions. All the gathered information was kept in safe place and utilized only to conduct academic research.

Data Analysis Strategy

The data that were collected were analyzed through use of Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). First of all, descriptive statistics were described in order to present demographic measurements and general reactions. Reliability analysis was done to examine the internal consistency of measurement scales using Cronbach alpha coefficients. Subsequent Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the correlation between

the variables of leadership support, psychological safety, and innovative work behavior. The direct influences of leadership support and psychological safety on the innovative work behavior were tested with the help of multiple regression analysis. In order to consider the mediating influence of psychological safety, the mediation analysis was performed in the manner proposed by Hayes (2018). In this way, the study could establish the existence of the linkage between leadership support and innovative work behavior as explained by psychological safety.

Results

A total of 620 employees from various Pakistani organizations participated in this study. Participants represented multiple professional sectors including banking, education, telecommunications, healthcare, and public administration. The demographic distribution of respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 620)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Male	348	56.1%
	Female	272	43.9%
Age	22–25 years	118	19.0%
	26–35 years	296	47.7%
	36–45 years	146	23.5%
	46+ years	60	9.8%
Education	Bachelor's	238	38.4%
	Master's	304	49.0%
	MPhil/PhD	78	12.6%
Work Experience	1–5 years	214	34.5%
	6–10 years	246	39.7%
	11–15 years	108	17.4%
	16+ years	52	8.4%

Regarding age, the vast majority of participants were between the age regimes of the 26-35 years age group (n = 296, 47.7%), which takes up the highest percentage of the sample. This was preceded by age groups of participants of age 36-45 years (n = 146, 23.5%), 22-25 years (n = 118, 19.0%), and 46 years and above (n = 60, 9.8%) meaning that the respondents were mostly young people and middle aged workers. Regarding the education level, almost half of the respondents had a degree of a Master level (n = 304, 49.0%), then there were those

with a degree of a Bachelor (n = 238, 38.4%), and slightly smaller proportion had a degree of a MPhil/PhD (n = 78, 12.6%). In terms of work experience, the most common group of respondents had an experience of 6 years and above (n = 246, 39.7), then there were those who had a work experience of 1-5 years (n = 214, 34.5). The number of people who had experience of 11-15 years included 108 (17.4%), and the number of 52 (8.4%), thus the total experience was 16 or above. All in all, the demographics factor shows that the sample was mostly composed of well-educated employees, with moderate professional experience, which gives this type of sample an adequate foundation to study the variables of the study.

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliability of Study Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Cronbach Alpha
Leadership Support	3.84	0.67	.89
Psychological Safety	3.71	0.64	.87
Innovative Work Behavior	3.76	0.70	.91

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, and reliability coefficients of the key study variables. The findings show that the variable results have all achieved acceptable to excellent internal consistency with Cronbach alpha value of .87 to .91 which is above the recommended internal consistency of a reliable coefficient of 0.70. The average of the Leadership Support was M = 3.84 and SD = 0.67 which means that respondents had an average perception of the support of their leaders relatively high. The scale also had a high level of reliability (α =.89) implying that the items are highly consistent in order to measure leadership support. In the case of Psychological Safety, the average was found to be M = 3.71 with SD = 0.64 and a psychological safety among the employees in the working environment was a moderately high score. Reliability of this scale was also high (α =.87), which means that the items are always measuring the construct. On the same note, the mean score of Innovative Work Behavior was M = 3.76 and SD = .70 implying that workers had reported quite a favorable level of innovative behaviors at work. This variable exhibited an excellent level of reliability (α =.91), which means that the high extent of internal consistency among the items was very high. In general, all descriptive statistics indicate that the level of leadership support, psychological safety, and innovative work behavior in the representatives is moderately high, and the values of Cronbach's alpha indicate that the measurement scales applied in the study are reliable and can be used in additional statistical operations such as correlation and regression.

Table 3
Correlation Matrix of Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3
1. Leadership Support	1	1	1
2. Psychological Safety	.58**	1	1
3. Innovative Work Behavior	.46**	.53**	1

Note: p < .01

The correlation findings show that support of leaders has a positive relationship with psychological safety (r =.58, p <.01), which implies that employees who feel supported by

their leaders have higher chances of working in a psychologically safe environment. On the same note, psychological safety demonstrates a high positive correlation with innovative work behavior (r =.53, p <.01), which implies that psychologically safe employees are more prone to innovate. Innovative work behavior is also closely related with leadership support (r =.46, p<.01), indicating that supportive leadership is a direct contributor to the willingness of the employees to develop and use new ideas in the workplace. These results are in line with the past research that proved that leadership behaviors and workplace climate are significant in facilitating employee innovation (Anderson et al., 2014; Edmondson and Lei, 2014).

Table 4

Regression Analysis Predicting Innovative Work Behavior

Predictor	β	t	p
Leadership Support	.29	7.18	< .001
Psychological Safety	.38	8.64	< .001

Table 4 displays the findings of the multiple regression analysis exploring how much the leadership support and psychological safety predict the innovative work behavior among the employees. The results show that innovative work behavior can be predicted by the support of leadership significantly (β =.29, t = 7.18, p <.001). This finding implies that those employees who feel more supported by their leaders have higher chances of being innovative at their workstations. Leadership support in terms of offering guidance, encouragement and recognition seems to be significant in driving the employees to come up with and put into practice new ideas. Likewise, the significance and stronger predictor of innovative work behavior was identified to be in the form of psychological safety (β=.38, t= 8.64, p=.001). The greater beta coefficient shows that the psychological safety is more influential than the leadership support. This observation means that in instances where a workforce is secure to exchange ideas, risking, and discussing opinions without the threat of reprisals, there are higher chances of such employees engaging in innovative actions. Generally, the regression findings indicate that both leaders support and psychological safety have a significant contribution to the innovative work behavior of employees with psychological safety having a stronger predictive power. The findings underscore the need to design a favorable leadership approach and the establishment of a safe working environment, which is psychologically supportive, to promote innovation in organizations.

Table 5

Mediation Analysis

Path	β	p
Leadership Support → Psychological Safety	.58	< .001
Psychological Safety → Innovative Work Behavior	.38	< .001
Leadership Support → Innovative Work Behavior (Direct)	.17	< .01

Table 5 has the mediated analysis investigation into the relationship of leadership support and innovative work behavior mediated through psychological safety. The findings show that psychological safety is strongly predicted by leadership support (β=.58, p <.001)

indicating that the higher the degree of leadership support perceived by the employees, the higher the likelihood of having a psychologically safe work environment. This means that, supportive leadership practices like encouragement, openness, and recognition play a role in developing an environment in which employees can feel free to air their ideas and opinions. Moreover, the psychological safety is a strong predictor of innovative work behavior (β=.38, p =.001). This observation means that psychologically safe employees have higher chances of undertaking innovative projects such as coming up with and putting new ideas into practice in the company. The direct effect of leadership support on the innovative work behavior also remained significant even with the inclusion of the psychological safety in the model (β=.17, p <.01). This implies that although psychological safety describes some of the correlation between leadership support and innovative work behavior, leadership support nonetheless has an independent impact on innovation. Altogether, these results can be interpreted as the proof that the interaction between leadership support and innovative work behavior is partly mediated by the psychological safety. That is, the support of leadership improves the innovative work behavior both directly and indirectly by creating the psychological safety in the workplace.

Interpretation of Results

This research paper provides valuable insights into the significance of the leadership support and the psychological safety in facilitating the innovative working behavior in Pakistani organizations. The findings indicate that when employees believe that their leaders are supportive, there are higher chances of developing psychological safety that will make them share innovative ideas and engage in creative activities. These results are consistent with the earlier studies that indicated that leadership practices strongly influence how employees perceive climate at work and would be ready to pursue innovation (Carmeli et al., 2009).

The correlation between psychological safety and innovative work behavior is very strong and surpasses normal expectations implying that employees would be more ready to experiment with new ideas when they feel not threatened by criticism or any kind of negative assessment. Employees in hierarchical organizational cultures like in Pakistan might not be able to speak up to present unconventional ideas since they are afraid of authority or social stigma. Consequently, psychological safety has to be fostered in order to promote the innovation and learning within the organization.

Moreover, the results of mediation suggest that the support of leadership is related to the innovative work behavior both directly and indirectly through the psychological safety. This observation implies that leaders that promote open dialogue, acknowledge the input employees put and the value of experimentation may help to build an organization where employees feel free to present innovative ideas. In general, the findings can highlight the role of supportive leadership and psychologically safe work conditions in driving innovation within contemporary organizations.

Discussion

The current research focused on the connections between leadership support, psychological safety and innovative work behavior in Pakistani organizations based on a sample of 620 employees. The findings indicated that the innovative work behavior was strongly predicted by the leadership support and psychological safety, and the relationship between the leadership support and innovation was mediated partially by the psychological safety. These results are also in line with the theoretical presumptions made using the social exchange theory and psychological safety theory, which could be crucial in encouraging employee creativity and supportive leadership and safe organizational climates.

In particular, the analysis found that leadership support is significantly positively correlated with psychological safety ($r = .58$, $p < .01$). When employees believe that their leaders are supportive, inclusive and receptive to their contributions they report greater levels of psychological safety. This result is aligned with previous studies that demonstrate that inclusive and transformational leadership behaviors prompt employees to become interpersonally risky and share their ideas without experiencing the fear of adverse outcomes (Carmeli et al., 2009; Javed et al., 2019). In hierarchical and collectivist cultures, such as Pakistan, where power and social conformity tend to be highly valued, leadership support is especially necessary to facilitate the establishment of a psychologically safe environment that would be conducive to innovation.

The researchers also revealed that an innovative work behavior is highly predicted by the psychological safety ($r = .53$, $p = .01$). When employees feel free to share ideas, make errors and test new solutions, chances are high that they can be engaged in creative problem-solving and practice new solution. This is in line with the statement by Edmondson and Lei (2014) that psychological safety enables employees to explore and learn on mistakes that are essential to innovation. The findings support the notion that creating a safe climate is more than a soft management practice but it is a strategic facilitator of organizational performance.

The mediation analysis showed that psychological safety moderates the impact of the leadership support on the innovative work behavior. Leadership support has a direct and an indirect contribution towards innovation in the form of psychological safety. This observation shows that although leaders are capable of directly promoting innovation by using the motivators of recognition and autonomy, their impact is further amplified when they build a specific environment in which their employees feel psychologically safe. The same patterns were seen in the earlier research carried out in Pakistani setting, which validates the appropriateness of supportive leadership and psychological safety to stimulate innovation in various areas of organizations (Javed et al., 2019; Anderson et al., 2014).

Generally, the results of this paper highlight the mutual nature of leadership and psychological safety in facilitating innovative work behavior. Leaders who build on trust, openness and inclusiveness will provide the environment that enables employees to innovate, even in hierarchical and high-power distance settings.

Theoretical Implications

The results of the given work contribute to the literature on organizational psychology and innovation management in a number of ways:

1. **Inclusion of Leadership and Psychological Safety Theory**: The research findings are empirical studies that support the idea that leadership support leads to innovative work behavior, which is indirectly caused by psychological safety. It builds upon the existing theoretical models because it focuses on the mediating role of psychological safety in high-power distance, collectivist organizational cultures such as Pakistan.

2. **Cross-Cultural Validation**: The majority of the previous research on psychological safety and innovation was carried out in a Western setting. This study offers the evidence that such relationships are true and applicable to a Pakistani-specific scenario, which is characterized by cultural and organizational peculiarities, such as hierarchies and social conformity pressures.

3. **Innovation Enablement Framework**: The paper illustrates that the role of leadership is not enough to achieve innovation since leaders should also enable employees to develop the feeling of interpersonal safety in order to take some risks. This upholds the models where leadership, climate and employee behavior are combined to forecast innovative performance.

Practical Implications

The research has a number of practical implications among organization leaders and policymakers:

1. **Development of Leadership Skills**: The management and supervisors should be trained in organizations on inclusive, transformational, and supportive leadership skills. The leaders are to be trained in the manner of promoting participation, acknowledging contributions and constructive feedback.
2. **Nurturing Psychological Safety**: Organizations need to have practices that promote psychological safety, which include the establishment of open forums to exchange ideas, learner tolerance of errors as a learning process, and promotion of teamwork. Employees can be made active in the innovation process by policies that decrease the fear of punishment that can be met by sharing ideas.
3. **Innovation-Oriented HR Practices**: The recruitment, performance assessment, and rewarding systems must focus on innovation and risk-taking by promoting the employees to offer innovative solutions and not be afraid of being judged negatively.
4. **Application to Cross-Sectors**: The strategies can find application in various sectors such as banking, education, health and care, and government administration. The establishment of a supportive leadership culture coupled with psychological safety can be used to increase organizational competitiveness and employee contentment.

Limitations

Although it contributes, this study is limited in the following ways:

1. **Cross-Sectional Design**: The research design was the cross-sectional design, which reduces the causal inference. Even though statistical associations were established, longitudinal research is required to support the direction of effects.
2. **Self-Reported Measures**: The entire data were used in self-reported questionnaires so that it might lead to the common method bias or the social desirability effect. Future research may integrate the assessment of the supervisor and the behavioral signs of innovation.
3. **Cultural Context**: The researchers conducted the study on only Pakistani organizations. Although this gives important context specific information, it may not be easily generalized to other countries or cultural contexts.
4. **Sector Representation Multiple** sectors were represented, but certain industries might be underrepresented. Further studies might use industry-specific studies to establish differences in the relationship of leadership, safety, and innovation.

Future Research Directions

Based on the present results, future studies can examine:

1. **Longitudinal Studies**: The investigation of the dynamic relations of the Leadership support, psychological safety, and innovative work behavior within a period of time.
2. **Multi-Source Data**: Self-report, peer-report and supervisor-report. A combination of self-reports and peer-evaluation and supervisor-report should be used to eliminate bias and enhance validity.
3. **Moderating Variables**: Researching on potential moderators (organizational culture, team, or worker personality traits e.g. proactive personality, openness to experience).
4. **Sector-Specific Analyses**: The in-depth studies in the particular industries, like IT, healthcare, or education, to examine the context-specific differences in leadership, as well as psychological safety impacts.

Conclusion

The current research supports the idea that leadership support and psychological safety are the major precursors of innovative work behavior in the Pakistani organizations.

Leadership supports builds confidence in employees and allows them to exchange ideas whereas psychological safety gives the employees a space to experiment, learn, and adopt new ideas. The fact that psychological safety has a partial mediation effect sheds light on the fact that innovation is not only promoted by leadership behaviors, but also by the climate they provide. The theoretical importance of these findings is that they provide support of the mediation role of psychological safety in a non-Western setting, and the practical importance of the results in organizing leadership development and innovation-friendly practices in organizations. Pakistani organizations can improve staff creativity, flexibility, and performance by supporting innovative leadership and creating a safe working atmosphere which would lead to the sustainable organizational development.

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