The Impact of Psychological Safety on Voluntary and Deviant Work Behaviors of Physical Education Teachers with the Mediating Role of Organizational Voice

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The purpose of the present research was to investigate the effect of psychological safety on the voluntary and deviant work behaviors of physical education teachers in Golestan province, with the mediating role of organizational voice. This applied research is correlational, and data collection was conducted in the field. The statistical population included 575 physical education teachers in Golestan province in the year 2022, with a sample size of 228 teachers estimated based on Cochran's formula. Stratified random sampling method was used to select the research sample. Data for this research were collected using three standard questionnaires on psychological safety, voluntary work behaviors, deviant behaviors, and organizational voice. The validity of the questionnaires was confirmed by experts in sports management, and their reliability was calculated in a preliminary study using Cronbach's alpha as 0.80, 0.78, 0.70, and 0.79, respectively. Collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. SPSS 25 and Smart PLS 3 software were used for data analysis. Psychological safety has a positive and significant effect on the voluntary work behaviors of physical education teachers. It was also found that the effect of psychological safety on the organizational voice of physical education teachers is positive and significant. Another part of the results showed that psychological safety has a negative and significant effect on the deviant behaviors of physical education teachers. It was determined that the effect of psychological safety on the voluntary work behaviors of physical education teachers with the mediating role of organizational voice is positive and significant. Considering the results obtained, it seems advisable to choose an appropriate management style to prevent the occurrence of negative behaviors and create a collaborative work environment where physical education teachers can discuss and exchange views on their work processes alongside other teachers.

Keywords: *Organizational voice, Deviant behaviors, Psychological safety, Voluntary behaviors, Physical education teachers.*

1.   Introduction

Today, organizations view their human resources very differently compared to the past, striving to meet the needs of their employees with a human-centric approach and even going beyond by creating a dynamic organizational environment to aid their growth and progress. Reducing working hours, increasing workplace flexibility, enhancing the quality of the work environment, improving employee welfare within the organization, and increasing employee salaries and benefits are just some of the actions organizations take towards their employees. The importance of human resources is undeniable, and the actions and performance of employees within an organization can lead to its success or failure (Chen et al., 2020). Employee performance is shaped within the organization, and the prevailing atmosphere can lead to the development of positive or negative job behaviors (Lee & Idris, 2017). Organizational climate has always been a focus of researchers and managers, and creating a healthy climate to increase employee well-being and improve their performance has become a crucial task for organizational managers (Berberoglu, 2018; Lee & Idris, 2017; Lu et al., 2017). One of the most important components of organizational climate is psychological safety, which has attracted significant attention in recent years (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Psychological safety reflects employees' perceptions of organizational responsibility towards their needs and the enhancement of their psychological welfare (Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Zadow et al., 2017). Edmondson and Lei (2014) believe that psychological safety represents employees' perceptions of the risks present in interpersonal, group, and organizational relationships within their work environment. With increased psychological safety at work, employees' suggestions, ideas, and even mistakes are welcomed by colleagues and managers, supporting employees in taking risks regarding new work methods and processes. Managers strive to create appropriate psychological safety to facilitate more significant roles for teachers (Mansour & Tremblay, 2018). Moreover, psychological safety, by developing interpersonal and group communication networks, increases individual and group trust among employees, encouraging teamwork and collaborative efforts (Remtulla et al., 2021). In such an environment, employees can express their ideas and opinions without fear of negative reactions from managers and colleagues and receive feedback on their performance, thereby enhancing organizational voice (McLinton et al.,

2018). Additionally, increased psychological safety in the workplace leads to a justice-based environment where managers pay equal attention to all employees and encourage them to play an active role in organizational processes, reducing their involvement in counterproductive and deviant activities (Amponsah-Tawiah et al., 2020).

Alongside the mentioned aspects, psychological safety is a crucial factor that can strengthen positive job behaviors among employees, such as voluntary and organizational citizenship behaviors (Clark et al., 2014). According to social exchange theory, when organizational managers initiate two-way interactions with their employees, paying sufficient attention to their needs and supporting them in their job duties, employees' attitudes towards managers and the organization will positively change (Brunetto et al., 2022; Lee & Idris, 2017). Based on this theory, when managers' behavior meets individual and job-related needs, employees strive to reciprocate by benefiting the managers and organization. In such conditions, employees meticulously perform their job duties and even go beyond, appreciating their managers' actions (Lu et al., 2017).

Nowadays, schools face more challenges than ever before. Shortages of resources and facilities, lack of sports spaces, and teacher demotivation are among the factors that have exacerbated school problems. In recent years, researchers concerned with the causes of deviant and harmful behaviors in work environments have dedicated many studies to human resource management. Neglect of duty, lying, inappropriate jokes, aggressive behaviors, various harassments especially sexual harassment, bribery, and personal use of workplace property are among the issues examined in organizational research. The primary reason for this attention is the increasing prevalence of such behaviors in the workplace and the significant costs they impose on organizations. Evidence of this is the numerous studies that show both the costs and the negative psychological and social effects of these harmful and damaging behaviors on the organizational climate and atmosphere (Brunetto et al., 2022).

The changes brought about in society for various reasons, including the COVID-19 pandemic, have presented various organizations, including educational ones, with numerous challenges. To address these problems and challenges and to increase organizational capabilities, it is necessary for organizational managers to make changes in their organizational environment to enhance the knowledge, skills, and abilities of their employees and to make appropriate use of their human resources to the fullest.

Paying attention to psychological safety in the work environment of physical education teachers and its development can lead to increased participation of these teachers in their schools' work processes. Moreover, developing such a climate can increase these teachers' sense of responsibility towards their job duties, which can be considered a basis for the development of positive job behaviors such as organizational voice and voluntary behaviors. Additionally, developing psychological safety in the work environment of physical education teachers can increase their commitment and attachment to their job, preventing the formation of negative job behaviors such as deviant behaviors. Given the importance of the topic and the lack of comprehensive research in this area, the main goal of this research is to study the effect of psychological safety on the voluntary and deviant work behaviors of physical education teachers in Golestan province with the mediating role of organizational voice.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study was applied in purpose and descriptive-correlational in terms of data collection, conducted in the field. The research population comprised all physical education teachers in Golestan province, totaling 575 individuals in 2023. The exact population size was determined based on information obtained from the Physical Education Department of Golestan's Education Office. Based on Cochran's formula (significance level of 0.05), the sample size was estimated to be 228 physical education teachers, and stratified random sampling was used to select the research sample. Three standard questionnaires were used to collect data for this research: Psychological Safety from Edmondson & Lei (2014) (Edmondson & Lei, 2014), Voluntary Work Behaviors from Podsakoff et al. (2000)

(Amponsah-Tawiah et al., 2020), Deviant Employee Behaviors from Bennett & Robinson (2000) (Song et al., 2020), and Organizational Voice from Van Dyne & LePine (1998) (Amponsah-Tawiah et al., 2020). To ensure the content validity of the questionnaires used in the research, feedback from sports management specialists with doctoral degrees was sought. A preliminary study was conducted to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaires, in which 40 physical education teachers completed the preliminary research questionnaires. After analyzing them through Cronbach's alpha test, reliability coefficients of 0.80, 0.78, 0.70, and 0.79 were calculated for psychological safety, voluntary work behaviors, deviant behaviors, and organizational voice, respectively, indicating the suitable quality of the research instruments. Following the validity and reliability assessment phase, the questionnaires were distributed to the research sample, and a total of 228 questionnaires were collected and analyzed.

2.2. Data analysis

Collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. SPSS 25 and Smart PLS 3 software were used for data analysis.

3. Findings and Results

The descriptive analysis results showed that the highest frequency percentage regarding the age of the respondents to the research questionnaires was allocated to the age group of 31 to 40 years (49.6%). Also, the results indicated that the majority of the research sample held a master's degree (64.5%). Regarding the participants' tenure, the highest frequency percentage belonged to the group with 11 to 20 years of experience (47.3%), and finally, the results showed that the highest frequency percentage regarding the gender of participants was female (59.2%).

Table 1

Description of Research Variables

Variable	Statistic	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation
Psychological Safety		228	3.67	0.7
Voluntary Work Behaviors		228	3.73	0.66
Deviant Behaviors		228	2.55	0.73
Organizational Voice		228	3.48	0.75

As observed in Table 1, the mean and standard deviation for the variables of psychological safety, voluntary work behaviors, deviant behaviors, and organizational voice were 3.67±0.7, 3.73±0.66, 2.55±0.73, and 3.48±0.75, respectively.

Table 2

Reliability and Validity Indices of the Measurement Model

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Psychological Safety	0.868	0.898	0.559
Voluntary Work Behaviors	0.839	0.879	0.512
Deviant Behaviors	0.913	0.926	0.514
Organizational Voice	0.873	0.900	0.532

To evaluate the quality of the research model and test the hypotheses, structural equation modeling based on PLS was utilized. To assess the fit of the research model and its appropriateness in the PLS-based structural equation method, the fit of the measurement model must first be analyzed, followed by the hypotheses in the context of the structural model fit. Reliability, convergent validity, and divergent validity criteria are used to analyze the appropriateness of the structural model. To evaluate the reliability of the research variables, composite reliability indices, average variance extracted (AVE), and factor loadings are used. If the composite reliability value is greater than 0.7, AVE is greater than 0.5, and factor loadings are significant and greater than 0.5, the research model's reliability is confirmed. These criteria for analyzing the research model fit are presented in Table 2, indicating the model's appropriateness. Moreover, since the composite reliability values exceed the baseline criterion of 0.7, the research constructs have appropriate convergent validity.

Table 3

*Direct and Indirect Relationships of Research Variables*

Relationships in the Model	Beta Value	T-Statistic	Significance Level
Psychological Safety -> Voluntary Work Behaviors	0.212	3.905	0.001
Psychological Safety -> Organizational Voice	0.776	21.977	0.001
Psychological Safety -> Deviant Behaviors	0.223	-2.952	0.001
Psychological Safety -> Voluntary Work Behaviors with Mediating Role of Organizational Voice	0.554	10.907	0.001
Psychological Safety -> Deviant Work Behaviors with Mediating Role of Organizational Voice	-0.552	-8.424	0.001

As seen in Table 3, the research results showed a positive and significant relationship between psychological safety and voluntary work behaviors (β=0.212, t=3.905). Additionally, a positive and significant relationship was observed between psychological safety and organizational voice among physical education teachers (β=0.776, t=21.977). Another part of the research results indicated a positive and significant relationship between psychological safety and deviant behaviors of experts (β=0.223, t=2.952). The Sobel test was used to examine the mediating role of openness to change. The results of this test showed that the relationship between psychological safety and voluntary work behaviors of physical education teachers, with the mediating role of organizational voice, is positive and significant (β=0.554, t=10.907), and the relationship between psychological safety and deviant behaviors of physical education teachers, with the mediating role of organizational voice, is positive and significant (β=0.552, t=8.424).

Figure 1

Structural Model with T-values
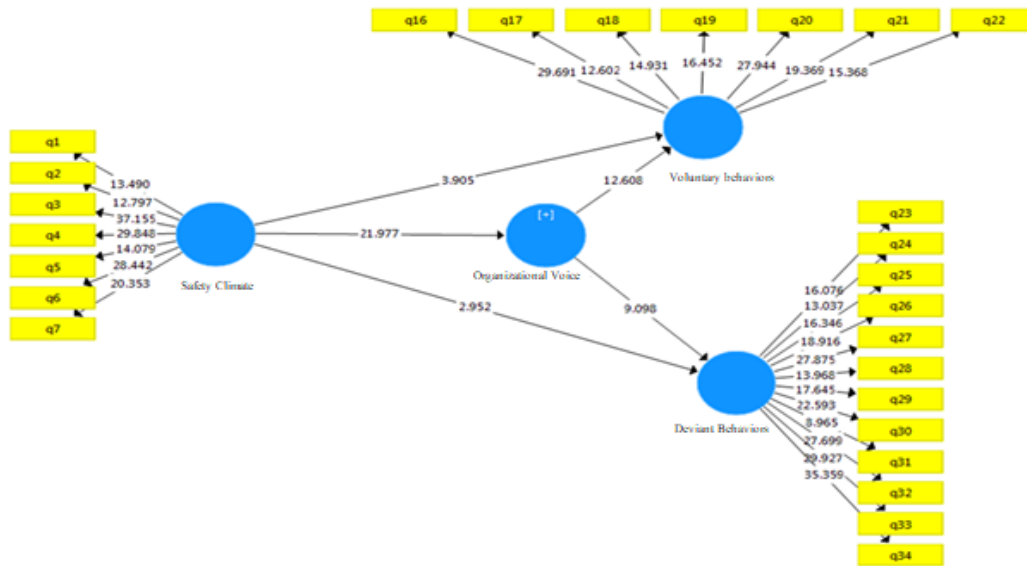
In Figure 1, the factor loadings of the indicators (items) of the research variables are visible. Since all factor loadings are above the baseline level of 0.5, the reliability of the measurement model is confirmed.

4.   Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of the current research was to investigate the effect of psychological safety on voluntary and deviant work behaviors of physical education teachers in Golestan province with the mediating role of organizational voice. The research findings revealed that psychological safety has a positive and significant effect on the voluntary work behaviors of physical education teachers, aligning with the results of researchers such as Apponsah-Tawiah et al. (2020), Mansour & Tremblay (2018), and Bernato et al. (2021). Nowadays, organizations' perspective towards their human resources has significantly changed compared to the past, striving to meet their employees' needs with a human-centric approach and even going beyond by creating a dynamic organizational environment to aid in their growth and progress. Reducing working hours, increasing workplace flexibility, improving the quality of the work environment, enhancing employee welfare within the organization, and increasing employee salaries and benefits are just some of the actions organizations take towards their employees. Based on these changes, organizations also have expectations from their employees; expectations that employees can meet to benefit themselves and their organization. One of the significant expectations organizations have from their employees is the development of voluntary behaviors. Voluntary behaviors refer to actions where employees voluntarily sacrifice themselves for the organization and overlook their short-term benefits for the long-term benefits of the organization. In the school environment, teachers exhibit such behaviors as well. Spending extra time in class for students and taking care of student affairs outside working hours are among these behaviors. One of the factors contributing to such behaviors in teachers is the perceived psychological safety by them. When teachers realize that the policies and guidelines of their school are clear and that the managers support them by creating the necessary conditions and paying attention to their mental well-being, they are more likely to engage in such behaviors.

The research findings demonstrated that psychological safety has a positive and significant impact on the organizational voice of physical education teachers, aligning with the findings of researchers such as Amponsah-Tawiah et al. (2020) and Brunetto et al. (2021) (Amponsah-Tawiah et al., 2020; Brunetto et al., 2022). This outcome suggests that when physical education teachers perceive a suitable level of psychological safety in their work environment, their organizational voice will also increase. In conditions where organizations strive for greater growth and excellence, their managers endeavor to identify their strengths and weaknesses using information obtained from various sources (Brunetto et al., 2022). One of the most accessible and critical sources that organizations can utilize in this regard is their employees. Organizations should allow

their employees to express shortcomings, strengths, weaknesses, and organizational issues without fear or worry and collaborate in addressing them, which reflects organizational voice. Organizational voice or voice behavior represents the extent to which an organization encourages employees to express their thoughts and ideas. In an organizational context, voice is defined as the discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns, or opinions about work-related issues with the aim of improving organizational or unit performance. Moreover, organizational voice indicates the amount of time and authority given to employees to express their opinions in organizational decision-making (Amponsah-Tawiah et al., 2020). In the context of schools, managers cannot achieve the set educational goals without the cooperation and assistance of their teachers. Undoubtedly, the role of teachers in schools is not limited to teaching, and one of the most critical expectations from them is to assist managers in addressing problems and play a central role in decision-making. For this purpose, it is necessary for managers to create suitable psychological safety, facilitating a greater role for teachers. When teachers perceive their work environment as one where managers are attentive to their health, progress, and welfare, and value such matters, they will undoubtedly strive to offer more of their practical ideas and suggestions for the success of their school.

The research results also revealed that psychological safety has a negative and significant effect on the deviant behaviors of physical education teachers, consistent with the findings of researchers such as Amponsah-Tawiah et al. (2020) (Amponsah-Tawiah et al., 2020). This means that when physical education teachers sense an appropriate level of psychological safety in their work environment, they are less likely to engage in deviant behaviors. Deviant behaviors in the workplace, including harassment, violence, theft, and vandalism, can cause significant problems for the work environment and the organization. Misuse and loss of time, increased employee turnover, absenteeism and sickness, creation of tension among colleagues, poor or decreased productivity, loss of morale, and depletion of organizational resources are just some of the consequences of deviant behaviors within an organization. Deviant employee behaviors are not limited to any specific organization, and teachers can also engage in this destructive behavior for various reasons. The occurrence of deviant behaviors among teachers in the workplace is rooted in many factors, perhaps the most significant of which is teachers' perception of their work environment. When teachers feel that justice is a

significant part of their work environment, there is no discrimination among teachers, resources are allocated based on their capabilities, and the created atmosphere within the organization is such that all teachers have equal opportunities to express their problems, challenges, and suggestions, they are less likely to engage in deviant behaviors (Amponsah-Tawiah et al., 2020). Additionally, policies and rules established in the formal structure of schools can lead to the intensification or reduction of teachers' deviant behaviors. Accordingly, when the established rules lead to the creation of a healthy and safe work environment, an environment where teachers feel they can progress and assist their organization, the occurrence of deviant behaviors will undoubtedly decrease.

The research findings indicated that psychological safety has a positive and significant effect on the voluntary work behaviors of physical education teachers with the mediating role of organizational voice, consistent with the findings of researchers such as Purdy et al. (2023) and Amponsah-Tawiah et al. (2020) (Amponsah-Tawiah et al., 2020; Purdy et al., 2023). This means that when physical education teachers perceive an appropriate level of psychological safety in their work environment, they can more easily convey their voice to school managers and contribute more to organizational discussions, which will lead them to perform more voluntary behaviors that are not part of their responsibilities and duties. A significant part of managers' duties in schools is to create conditions where teachers feel safe, calm, and well. Creating such conditions for teachers can help form a positive attitude towards their managers and organization (Purdy et al., 2023). When such an attitude is established, the acceptance of formal and informal duties among teachers will increase, as will their sensitivity towards their work environment. Based on this, teachers will make more effort to better perform their job duties and also consider accepting additional responsibilities as a service to compensate for their managers' actions. Conversely, when teachers realize they can freely present their opinions and suggestions to managers and colleagues and that managers and colleagues pay attention to them, teachers' motivation to participate more in decision-making and organizational actions will increase.

The research results showed that psychological safety has a negative and significant effect on the deviant behaviors of physical education teachers with the mediating role of organizational voice, aligning with the findings of researchers such as Purdy et al. (2023), Remtulla et al. (2021), and Song et al. (2020) (Purdy et al., 2023; Remtulla

et al., 2021; Song et al., 2020). This means that when physical education teachers feel an appropriate level of psychological safety in their work environment and can convey their voice to school managers without fear or worry, and managers pay attention to their voice, the likelihood of teachers engaging in deviant behaviors will decrease (Remtulla et al., 2021). One of the causes of deviant behaviors in organizational environments is the neglect of employees by managers and even colleagues. When employees are ignored, their communication with managers and colleagues is severed, and they cannot convey their voice to others, leading them to form negative feelings and attitudes, creating an environment conducive to deviant behaviors. An important task for managers in this regard is to always strive to create a safe work environment, providing equal opportunities for their employees, opportunities where employees can stand alongside their colleagues and express their opinions and criticisms through individual voice (Purdy et al., 2023; Song et al., 2020). Ultimately, choosing an appropriate management style to prevent the occurrence of negative behaviors such as deviant behaviors, creating a collaborative work environment, a cultural environment in schools to prevent teachers' worries and fears, discussion and dialogue to listen to teachers' talks and statements, increasing trust in the school work environment, and demonstrating positive work behaviors for teachers are recommended.

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