Impact of Ethical Leadership on Employees' Psychological Safety and Voice Behavior; With Mediating Role of Belongingness

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Abstract

This study investigates the association between Ethical Leadership (EL), psychological safety (PS), and Voice Behavior (VB). Belongingness was the key mediator between these relationships. Data was collected through a survey of 374 employees working in banks and credit unions, and analysis was done through SPSS. Results showed that EL was positively associated with PS and VB and that the perception of belongingness mediated the relationship between EL and psychological safety. These results suggest that EL can help create a psychologically safe environment by encouraging employees to feel a sense of belonging. Implications for organizational psychology and management are discussed.

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Introduction

Organizational psychology has been expanding its scope to discover how leaders can lead with integrity and foster a psychologically safe work environment (Gillis & Frese, 2005). An effective leader should be able to balance both morality and integrity (Maak & Pless, 2015). This balance is achieved through EL, which is defined as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making" (Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2004, p. 714). Scholars have found that EL can create a positive work environment and improve employee satisfaction, motivation, and performance (Ouakouak, Zaitouni, & Arya, 2020). Previous studies demonstrated the importance of PS in the workplace (Edmondson, 201). PS refers to "feeling safe to take interpersonal and cognitive risks in expressing divergent views and believing others in the organizational context won't penalize you for doing so" (Edmondson, 2018, p. 66). Thus, it is important that EL model an atmosphere in which workers feel supported and encouraged to express themselves freely and openly. Ethical leaders should also be adept at intervening and mediating conflicts as they arise and setting boundaries to protect employees from psychological harm. The present study intends to examine the effect of EL on PS and VB within organizations. The current research examines how EL can affect the well-being of employees and the degree to which employees are willing to discuss topics openly within the workplace. Specifically, this study seeks to identify if EL can promote PS and if it urges workers to take part in VB. Furthermore, this research will explore if EL can protect employees from psychological threats posed by unethically led workplaces. The study focuses on these overlooked mediating mechanisms, relationships between EL and psychological safety, and VB. The present study considers belongingness (as a psychological process) as a mediating mechanism. Employees' sense of belongingness at work. Belonging is one's emotional desire to be acknowledged as a part of a group (Godard, 2001). Everyone has an innate need to feel like they are a vital community member about more than themselves, whether that community is based on blood ties, shared interests, or religious convictions. We anticipate that EL has contributed to a stronger feeling of community inside the company. The study also looks at PS(a psychological process) and VB (a challenging behavior at work). Spreitzer (1995) said that PS is a type of motivation that shows itself through four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. VB, on the other hand, is behavior that shows a constructive challenge meant to make things better (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). As was said before, EL is expected to affect belongingness positively, and belongingness is expected to increase PS and VB among employees. This study will give insight into the relationship between EL and PS and VB, which may inform organizational leaders on effectively creating a psychologically safe workspace. Overall, research mentions that PS is a crucial element that must be present in the workplace to ensure employee well-being. EL can serve as the link between the two by facilitating an environment in which employees feel safe and supported while also upholding the organization's core values through sound decision-making.

Literature Review
Ethical Leadership

Leadership is not a new idea, and there have been a lot of studies on it and a lot of books written about it over the years. Leaders are not only important to the success of an organization, but they are also responsible for setting an ethical tone and putting in place ethical standards (Grojean et al., 2004). Ethical behavior is considered one of the most significant parts of being a leader, which sets EL apart from other types of leadership. Other leadership styles may or may not have any ethical qualities, such as servant, authentic, spiritual, transformational, and abusive leadership (Brown et al., 2006, 2010; Avolio, 1999; Kanungo et al., 1996; Bass et al.,

1993) EL is defined as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making" (Brown et al., 2005, p.120). This definition talks about the relationship's nature, either because the person is a moral person or because they use EL principles (the moral manager aspect). Ethical leaders have an effect not just on the people who work directly for them, but on everyone in the company. (Schaubroeck et al., 2012). The most important work on EL was done by Treviño, Hartman, and Brown, (2000). They identified the two main pillars of EL as being an ethical manager and an ethical person. Brown et al., 2006, also supported their work. Where they highlighted the importance of having two dimensions in the leader as a means to be ethical. The ethical leader by nature and his dealings with people, but if he is unable to impose the standards of EL within the organization, he is seen as a weak leader. On the other side, a leader who is ethical by nature but imposes standards of EL within the organization is seen as a hypocrite. For an ethical person, what matters are traits like honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness, as well as actions like doing the right thing, caring about other people, being open, having personal morals, and being objective when making decisions (Treviño et al., 2000). For an ethical manager, what matters is setting a good example through actions, discipline, and rewards and talking about morals and values (Treviño et al., 2000). Studies have shown that EL is essential to keep in mind that the ethical decisions made by leaders operating at various levels within an organization will produce a wide variety of positive outcomes. When it comes to motivating employees to respond, EL conduct at the supervisory level is more successful, although the ethical behavior of top and intermediate-level managers typically translates into bigger factors such as organization performance and citizenship behavior toward the company (Mozumder 2018). Ethical leaders have the power to influence whether their colleagues avoid or seek feedback, which may significantly impact the employees' ability to improve their performance (Moss et al., 2019). Despite the extensive study that has been done on the results of EL, what has not yet been explored is what are the things that lead a leader to act in an ethical manner, and this needs to be researched in depth. Accordingly, individual, and Situational factors can both lead to the EL behavior (Brown et al., 2009). Walumba and Schaubroeck (2009) added to this idea by saying that a leader is called an ethical leader if he or she has certain personality traits, like being responsible and getting along with other people.

Belongingness

Human is a social being by nature. So, the instinct of social being drives him to form relationships and social bonds, which increases his ability to adapt and survive. Many theorists support the similar concept of human is a social being (Ainsworth, 1989; Axelrod & Hamilton, 1981; Barash, 1977; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bowlby, 1969; Buss, 1990; Moreland, 1987). Failure to form personal bonds has implications for mental and physical health (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The common drive-in humans to form close human bonds has been expressed in the phrase "the need to belong." This term has been cited extensively. Since then, the term needs to belong has become the general term for the desire to form relationships. However, filling the need to belong the general sense is through the formation of positive relationships. Only giving a sense of complete acceptance to the person is not sufficient. Indeed, it satisfies the need for social relationships by joining a sorority or a fraternity. For instance, it does not guarantee a full feeling of belonging. In this study, our interest in belonging went beyond whether or not someone has good relationships. We were also interested in how it feels to have relationships that make you feel like you fit in. Having a sense of belonging, or to be more precise, belongingness is what we call this. People seem to have a biological need to be with other people (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Baumeister (2005) says that the need to belong

and the ability to understand large systems of meaning are linked in the human mind in a way that can't be separated. So, it seems likely that feeling like your life has meaning depends at least in part on feeling like you belong. Some people think that close relationships give people a sense of symbolic immortality because they offer a promise of lastingness and continuity (e.g., Lifton, 1979). Moreover, a sense of belonging in a social group may assist individuals in providing stability and establishing a shared social identity, allowing them to achieve greater collective goals that give life a new meaning. (Baumeister, 2001; Mellor et al., 2008; Tajfel, 1972). Goodenow (1993) defined belongingness in the educational setting as the level to which pupils feel individually accepted, respected, included, and supported. Consistent with Goodenow's explanation, Hagerty and colleagues defined sense of belonging as "the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment" (Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky et al., 1992, p. 173). Similarly, with the help of multi-method qualitative data analysis, they revealed two core aspects of a shared feeling of belonging: "(1) the person experiences being valued, needed, or important with respect to other people, groups, objects, organizations, environments, or spiritual dimensions; and (2) the person experiences a fit or congruence with other people, groups, objects, organizations, environments or spiritual dimensions through shared or complementary characteristics" (p. 174).

Psychological Safety
In the contemporary business world, more and more companies are asking their workers to help improve the organization's processes and practices by doing things that make learning possible (e.g., voicing new ideas, cooperating with other adherents of the organization, and investigating new ways of doing things; Edmondson, 1999, Nembhard and Edmondson, 2011). Even though these kinds of activities might be good for the organization, they pose risks for the individual. For instance, bringing up new ideas might encounter the way things have always been done and go against other people's interests in the organization (Hon, Bloom, & Crant, 2014; Shalley, & Gilson, 2004). Researchers mention that, trying out new ideas at work could backfire and make the people involved look bad (Hon, Bloom, & Crant, 2014). As a result, there is more and more evidence to suggest that employees might not contribute to learning processes because of these risks. This would slow down both individual and organizational learning (Stein, 2014). Creating a work environment that is safe for the psyche (For example, one in which employees feel safe to speak out, eagerly seek responses, provide honest feedback, cooperate, take risks, and experiencece, is one way to overcome such threats to individual and organizational learning; (Edmondson, 1999). Researchers recently found that PS was the most important trait of high-performing, successful teams (Bergmann & Schaeppi, 2016). PS is especially important in work environments where worker and customer safety are a top priority, like the healthcare or aviation industries, because it has been shown to be important in reducing employee errors and improving safety (Carmeli, Brueller, & Dutton, 2009; Leroy et al., 2012; Nembhard and Edmondson, 2011). PS has been defined in different ways. Still, most studies agree with Edmondson's (1999) definition that it is a shared belief among people about whether or not it is safe to take interpersonal risks at work (Edmondson et al., 2007, Edmondson & Lei, 2014). In a psychologically safe work environment, employees feel that their coworkers won't judge them for being themselves or saying what they think. They also respect each other's skills and are interested in each other as people. These individuals are also having good intentions toward each other and can have constructive conflict or confrontation. Similarly, they also feel it's safe in such situations and can try new things by taking risks (Edmondson, 1999). When workers feel safe psychologically, they are more likely to share their thoughts and opinions and seek help. Researchers find it challenging to honestly share their thoughts and feelings, and they recognize the inherent dangers of asking

others for their opinions (Pearsall & Ellis, 2011). Edmondson and Lei, (2014), show that it affects things like learning and performance in the workplace. Even though PS and trust have some things in common, they are not the same thing. PS is about how group members see a group norm, while trust is about how one person sees another (Vaida, & Ardelean, 2019). Whether or not an individual feels safe psychologically is a matter of personal preference. Choosing to feel psychologically safe is not the same thing as choosing to trust someone else (Edmondson, Kramer, & Cook, 2004).

Voice Behavior
Having a voice is a big part of being a good citizen, and it can also help an organization grow in many ways (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998). Nevertheless, VB too has consequences for the employee, as it may cause him personal risks and expose him to severe pressure, which consumes his mental resources (Lam, Lee, & Sui, 2019). Actively engaging in VB requires sufficient motivation and psychological enthusiasm. We conclude that workers' moods can play a crucial role in the performance of voice activities since prior literature has shown that mood can operate as a type of impetus to affect individuals' views and drive different actions (such as cooperative behavior and risk-taking behavior, see Elfenbein, 2007). Previous research suggested that employee voice would improve error detection (Morrison & Milliken, 2000), decision quality (Nemeth, 1997), the performance of the organization (Frazier & Bowler, 2015), and the fruitful application of new practices (Frazier & Bowler, 2015). Those who participate in vocal behaviors, however, risk upsetting management or hurting interpersonal connections (Burris, 2012; Detert & Edmondson, 2011). Since VB is a contradictory sort of conduct that may be advantageous to enterprises while putting people at risk, employees who make voice-based decisions frequently face psychological challenges. Numerous scholars have looked at voice decisions as markers of efficacy and taken a logical approach to the question of how management may lessen employees' tendency to keep their thoughts to themselves. (See, for example, Morrison, Wheeler-Smith, & Kamdar, 2011; Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012). Employees can weigh the pros and cons of speaking up by carefully detecting environmental signs and evaluating the preference of social circumstances. Several studies have found that when workers feel safe in their social environment, they are more likely to use their voices in their jobs. (See, for instance, Chiaburu et al., 2013; Frazier & Bowler, 2015). Yet not all prior studies have had the same conclusions. Negative views about the voice, as stated by Detert and Edmondson (2011), might limit such conduct implicitly and instinctively, and no amount of organizational action can alter or change such beliefs. For instance, the studies found that certain employees' natural reluctance to use their voices at work meant that the administration's transparency really could not motivate them to do so. Morrison (2014) argued that it was necessary to validate and investigate the emotional and unconscious processes behind vocal conduct in order to properly comprehend its nature.

Ethical Leadership and Psychological Safety
PS means that everyone in a work unit thinks it's safe for them to take risks with other people. Edmondson, (1999) says that PS is more than just feeling and seeing high levels of trust between people. It also includes a work environment where people treat each other with respect and feel free to talk about their differences. Leaders play a key role in removing the barriers that keep motivating followers to speak up about their concerns and other ideas (Sağnak, 2017). In places where PS is high, leaders also make it clear how important this kind of behavior is and promise that it won't hurt the individual or the work unit as a whole (Walumbwa, & Schaubroeck, 2009). In this way, EL might be especially important, but this role isn't given enough attention in the literature. Honest and truthful relationships with their followers are important to leaders with high moral standards. People think that they act based

on their core values and beliefs, not because of outside pressures or short-term, narrow interests. When leaders are honest and open with their followers, it builds trust and respect between the followers and the leader and among the followers themselves (Engelbrecht, Heine, & Mahembe, 2017). Giving employees a psychologically safe place to work can be a double-edged sword for leaders, though. Even if good solutions come out of it, leaders often have to listen to feedback that goes against their plans and goals (Walumbwa, & Schaubroeck, 2009). Even though it's hard and complicated, leaders must let people disagree and resist the urge to use power and authority when doing so could make people feel less safe. Ethical leaders also share information openly and have high moral standards for themselves. When people in charge share information and explain why doing the right thing is important, trust between them and those who follow them goes up (Engelbrecht et al., 2017). This is done both by setting a good example and by letting subordinates know that individual rent-seeking, social undermining, and other actions that make it hard for employees to trust each other will not be allowed. Also, when followers believe their leader has enough ability, kindness, and integrity, which are key elements of employee trust (Engelbrecht, Heine, & Mahembe, 2015), they will be more willing to take interpersonal risks because they believe the leader will not punish them unfairly if the risk leads to a bad result. This suggests that there is a positive connection between EL and psychological safety. We hypothesized that this connection would explain how EL is related to PS and VB. Blau's (1964) social exchange theory says that people form trusting or transactional relationships with other people based on their experiences with them. Economic exchange or social exchange can be the basis of a relationship (Fan, Li, Mao, & Lu, 2021). Relationships based on the economic exchange are transactional; they focus on short-term interactions and "quid pro quo" exchanges in which obligations are limited to a specific exchange. Shared identities, loyalty, and emotional connections are all parts of social interactions. One important part of social exchange theory is that the most direct cause of behavior is the quality of the relationship between the two people. In other words, people's actions depend a lot on how they feel about the other person. Brown et al. (2005) said that EL encourages good employee actions, like helping each other. When a leader treats employee fairly, and they trust the leader, employees are more likely to think of their relationship with the manager in relations of social exchange than economic exchange. One way to make up for being treated badly is to act in a positive way. Also, it makes sense that people who feel safe psychologically would think that doing good things doesn't put their own well-being at risk much.

     H1: EL is positively related to psychological safety.

Ethical Leadership and Voice Behavior
The term "employee voice" means "promotive behavior that emphasizes expression of constructive challenge intended to improve rather than merely criticize" (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998, p. 109). It has to do with regular employees coming up with new ways to improve processes and making suggestions for small changes to what is usually done. Extra-role behavior includes many things, and VB is one of them (researchers define extra-role behavior as positive and discretionary behaviors that are not needed by the organization but required to enable effective organizational functioning; Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006). EL was found to be a strong predictor of how people act. Mayer et al. (2009) say that it is a distinct category of extra-role behaviors. Similar behaviors to helping behavior and constructive VB should be recognized by the leaders because it can bring up problems and solutions and point to other ideas that can help the work unit run better (Chen, & Hou, 2016). The main idea behind EL theory is that ethical leaders "give followers a voice" (Brown et al., 2005, p. 120). EL means calling out unethical behavior in public and emphasizing doing the right thing. According to the social learning theory, leaders who go out of their way to make the workplace fair are held up as models for others to follow (Bandura, 1977). Brown et al. (2005) say that they set a good

example for their teams when it comes to morals. Leaders who put ethics first also encourage their followers to share their thoughts and ideas on how to improve not only the ethical climate of the workplace but also its procedures and operations as a whole. Cheng, Chang, Kuo, & Cheung, (2014) says that there is a strong link between EL and employees' willingness to talk to upper management about problems. VB is when an employee says something when they think a company policy or practice is wrong or unethical, or when they try to solve problems before they happen. This led us to believe that having leaders with high moral standards would make it possible to raise voice.

> **H2:** *EL is positively related to VB.*

Mediating Role of Belongingness in Relation Between Ethical Leadership and Psychological Safety

Belongingness is a strong human drive that shows itself in the desire to make and keep good relationships with other people (Fiske, 2018). This research uses the SET (Blau, 1964) to address this gap in the literature by exploring the role that feelings of belonging in the workplace play in the association between EL and followers' use of their voices in discussions on ethical issues. That is, on the one hand, leaders value their employees' contributions and treat them with respect and fairness (Qi, Liu, Wei, & Hu, 2019). On the other hand, employees' sense of belonging to their organization is a vital tool for survival in periods of transition because it lessens the impact of bad things that happen because of transition (Hoogervorst, De Cremer, & Van Dijke, 2013). In a similar way, when employees understand the reasoning behind any new initiative, special in a time of transition, they are better able to connect themselves in their working environment to their own needs and goals (Neves, Almeida, & Velez, 2018). We believe that it's EL which makes the flow of information possible, and employees are considering this source to be trustworthy. This study believes that in such circumstances, employees may be able to find out that we belong to this environment, and this thing may give a sense of psychological safety. The researcher believes that being a social being every individual wants recognition. Recognition gives you a sense that you are someone that belongs here. Individuals Psychologically pursue such things to feel safe in the environment. When people talk about how they "feel at home" in a group, they refer to their sense of acceptance and identification with the other group members (Haug, 2018). While the concept of the desire or need to belong is not new, the experience of having a genuine sense of belonging is a more recent development in the field of psychology. Belongingness has been consistently studied and found to be in significant link with psychological health or distress depending on its presence or absence (Holt-Lunstad, 2021). People are more prone to suicide ideation and depressive and anxious feelings (Cohen, 2004) when they don't feel like they fit in with society as a whole. In contrast, research shows that people's subjective well-being and pleasure levels increase when they experience a sense of community (Holt-Lunstad, 2018). The degree to which an individual feels they belong anywhere appears to be directly related to their level of psychological status. On behalf of these beliefs, this study also assumes that its belongingness may be playing an interesting role (mediating) in the relationship between EL and psychological safety.

> **H3:** *Belongingness mediate the relationship between EL and psychological safety.*

Mediating Role of Belongingness in Relation Between Ethical Leadership and Voice Behavior

Given the importance of employee voice to efficient and EL, it is surprising that so little is known about the settings under which it is exercised. A leader's moral identity is a good indicator of whether or not they give followers a voice and accurately judge them (Brebels, De Cremer, Van Dijke, & Van Hiel, 2011). This study thinks that it's EL that gives employees a voice,

which makes them feel like their opinions are taken into account by decision-makers and, as a result, that they have more power to change things than when they don't have a voice. According to the SET perspective, the positive effects of EL are shown in the following ways: (a) Leaders influence the ethical behavior of followers by building in exchange relationships with them. They give employees direction and make sure that high moral standards are always communicated to them. They also spend a lot of time with employees, which helps build a sense of belongingness and a relationship of mutual respect/trust that is good for the organization. Leaders encourage their followers to act in a moral way and say what they think at work. When employees work in a place that is so friendly and fair, they tend to act more socially responsible, including with their voices. The way EL works in organizations has also been linked to Blau's (1964) SET theory. Brown et al. (2005) said that managers in organizations could give rewards, control resources, and hold employees responsible for their actions (Trevino et al. 2003). You can keep or break agreements and mental contracts based on these rewards and consequences. In return, fair treatment and fair procedures at work by management encourage employees to be fair and act ethically (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck 2009). As it was early mentioned that this relationship is not a direct relationship, because this study believes that people with sense of belongingness will give voice to their words. The voice can be constructive are totally opposing the leader's view. In case someone does not sense that I am not belonged to this place he may be feeling worried to exercise his voice with a more uncertain mind and unsatisfied. Psychological ownership grabs the attention of researchers. Like psychological ownership is the combination of self-efficacy, accountability, belongingness, and identity (Avey, Avolio, Crossley, & Luthans, 2008). Very little is known about the role that can be played by belongingness in relation between EL and VB. But here we believe that the belongingness role is very important in bringing the voice of employees for the usefulness of people and their organization. That's why we assume the following hypothesis:

H4: *Belongingness mediates the connection between EL and VB*

Conceptual Framework
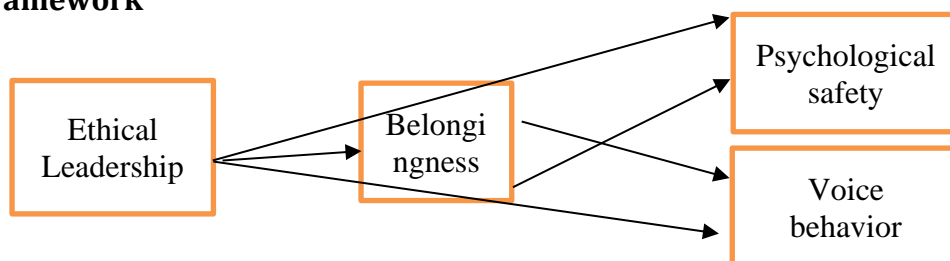
Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature. The sample for the present study was employees working in banks and credit unions of the Syrian Arab Republic. In this study, we used the non-probability convenience sampling method. We went to the human resources department of each company and told them what the study was about. We only got information from workers who wanted to contribute to our study. Contributors who worked for at least six months were the criteria for inclusion. The participants of the study were told that their information would not be shared. The data were collected two times, two months apart each time. Each respondent was given an ID. Code was also assigned that was unique to them. The ID was employed to match each respondent's answers from the two-time lags. At time 1, data were collected on EL, VB, and demographic variables. At time 2, we had PS and belongingness. The employees answered all of the study's variables, so the data were all self-reported. The biggest problem with single-source data is common method bias, which can be reduced using a time-lagged study (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). This is why the time-lagged research design was used. The reason behind time lagged was solely to reduce to reduce common method bias.

Other researchers have also used a time-lagged study to reduce the effect of the common method bias (see Reference for more information; Qasim, Irshad, Majeed & Rizvi, 2022; Irshad, Majeed & Khattak, 2021). During the time 1 distribution, 500 questionnaires were handed out. Out of 500 surveys, 49 replies were lacking or unengaged. As a result, the ultimate sample size ended up being 374, with a response rate of 74.8 percent. All of the surveys were finished and submitted. Out of the 374 respondents, 71% were male, and 29% were female. Most of the study participants had bachelor's degrees 41.2%, and respondents having master's degrees were only 14.4%. The rest had intermediate (32.9%) and matriculation-level qualifications (11.5%). We considered only those respondents to reach and collected data from them with more than six months of experience. So, the experience of employees ranged from 1-5 (33.4%), 6-10 (17.4%), 11-15 (23.5%), 16-20 (9.9%), and above 20 years (15.8%) of experience.

Measurements
Ethical Leadership
EL will be measured using 10 items developed by Brown et al.'s (2005). This scale is the very frequently used and highly reliable in measuring EL. Sample items include "My supervisor listens to what employees have to say" and "My supervisor conducts his/her personal life in an ethical manner." Cronbach alpha was 0.88.
Belongingness
Three items scale of Godard, 2001, were utilized to gauge belongingness at work. Items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much so). Alpha Cronbach value was 0.72.
Psychological safety
Employees indicated the level of PS they experienced using Edmondson's (1999) 7-item measure. The reliability value was 0.87.
Voice Behavior
This study measured employee VB by considering six item scale of Van Dyne and LePine's (1998) as an instrument. A sample item is "I communicate my opinions about work issues to others even if my opinion is different, and others disagree with me." Cronbach alpha reliability value was 0.85.

Control Variables

Table 1 ANOVA

Demographics	Dependent Variables	F	Sig
Gender			
	Psychological Safety	.69	.41
	Belongingness	.01	.92
	Voice Behavior	.25	.62
Age			
	Psychological Safety	1.18	.26
	Belongingness	.59	.93
	Voice Behavior	.63	.90
Position			
	Psychological Safety	.33	.80
	Belongingness	.50	.68
	Voice Behavior	.47	.70
Education			
	Psychological Safety	.12	.94
	Belongingness	3.01	.03
	Voice Behavior	.17	.91
Tenure			
	Psychological Safety	1.88	.11
	Belongingness	.21	.93
	Voice Behavior	1.76	.13

Using an analysis of variance (ANOVA) test, the current study investigated whether or not the age, gender, level of education, and years of experience of respondents affected the variables being studied. ANOVA is done to determine the significant variation created owing to control variables. Control variables are factors that are not a part of the study itself but have a substantial influence on the variables that are the subject of the investigation. According to what is shown in table, gender, age, and experience do not explain any meaningful variance in the factors being mediated by one another. So, we will not consider them in any future investigation. The findings of the ANOVA for education indicate, however, that it is a substantial contributor to the variation in belongingness (F = 3.01, P <0.05).

Correlation Analysis

Table 2, Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlations Analysis

	Variables	Mean	S.D	1	2	3	4	5
1	Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	Ethical Leadership	5.23	.84	.01	-	-	-	-
3	Psychological Safety	5.45	.85	-.03	**.332****	-	-	-
4	Voice Behavior	5.09	.96	.04	**.210****	**.392****	-	-
5	Belongingness	4.95	.75	-.10*	**.231****	**.175****	**.249****	-

The results of the correlations between the study's control variables and its primary studied variables are presented in the table that can be found above. According to the findings, a level of education is significantly associated with belongingness (r=-.10, p<.05). The results also indicate how the main study variables correlate in this study. EL had a positive link with belongingness (r=.231, p<.01), PS(r=.332, p.01), and VB (r=.210, p<.01). It was shown that belongingness had a positive correlation with both PS(r =.175, p<.01) and VB (r =.249, p<.01).

Direct and Indirect Effects
Direct Influence of Ethical Leadership
The results of this study can be seen in Table 3, which details the direct effects of EL on the dependent variables ("Belongingness"). The direct impacts of EL from model 4 of Preacher and Hayes's macros are presented in table 3 after the influence of education has been controlled. Results show that EL has a significant relationship with PS(*β= 0.29, p< 0.01*). and VB (*β= 0.19, p< 0.01*). Hypotheses 1 and 2 of the present study were supported.

Table 3 Direct Effects

	Path			Coefficient	SE	t	P
H1	Ethical Leadership	→	Psychological Safety	.29	.04	5.86	.000
H2	Ethical Leadership	→	Voice Behavior	.19	.05	3.40	.000
	Ethical Leadership	→	Belongingness	.31	.06	4.59	.000
	Belongingness	→	Psychological Safety	.13	.03	3.67	.000
	Belongingness	→	Voice Behavior	.12	.04	2.87	.004

Table 4 Indirect effect of EL on PS and VB through Belongingness

	Indirect Path				95% Bias Confidence Interval			
					Indirect effect	Boot SE	LL	UL
H 3	Ethical Leadership	→	Belongingness	→	Psychological Safety	.042	.016	.014	.077
H 4	Ethical Leadership	→	Belongingness	→	Voice Behavior	.039	.019	.007	.082

Indirect Effects of Ethical Leadership
Table 4 demonstrates that belongingness mediates EL, psychological safety, and VB. The mediation results are illustrated by Hayes' Process Macro Model 4, which may be seen here. The findings also indicate that belongingness has a considerable direct influence on a person's PS and VB. So, this research investigates the possibility that belongingness might mediate in relationships involving EL, psychological safety, and VB. The data shown in table 4 demonstrate, in addition, that the connection between EL and PS is mediated by belongingness ((Indirect effect=.042, 95%CI for LL=.015 and UL=.079)). The findings also indicate that a connection between EL and VB is mediated by belongingness (Indirect impact =.039. 95% CI for LL =.008 and UL =.083). Based on the above results, hypotheses 3 and 4 were also supported.

Discussion
EL involves leaders exhibiting effective communication, being responsible to various stakeholders, developing ethical values in the organization, observing ethical principles in decision-making, and modeling ethical behaviors and standards (Den Hartog, 2015). This study model aimed to create "values-driven" organizations that promote organizational integrity and high performance. It emphasizes a leader's role in creating a safe and secure environment where employees feel they belong, has a voice, and can learn and grow. Leaders strive to build trust and create a sense of fairness and consistency in relation to reward systems and productivity. Overall, the EL model promotes values-driven organizations with ethical leaders. The findings of this study indicate a significant effect of EL on belongingness. EL was also found to be directly related to PS and VB, and belongingness mediates the relationship. The findings of this study were in line with previous studies that also showed that EL could bring a sense of safety to the workplace. Different researchers found that EL practices generate positive outcomes and play an important role in establishing a sense of belonging in the workplace (Crawford, 2022). Organizational belongingness is a psychological construct that includes the sense of being accepted by others in the work context and the feeling of being embedded in a work community (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Van Orden, Cukrowicz, Witte, & Joiner Jr, 2012). The study's results revealed that EL positively influenced the sense of belonging within an organization by encouraging an appreciation of diversity, developing mutual respect, and helping to develop an ethical culture. By examining the mediating role of belongingness between EL and psychological safety/VB, the study that feeling of belonging provides the medium for EL to enhance the sense of safety and VB. Findings demonstrated that feeling a sense of belonging significantly mediated the relationship between EL and psychological safety/VB. The study results further revealed that if leaders can foster a sense of belonging among their team members, this helps to enhance the quality of EL and its downstream benefit of psychological safety. The findings suggest that feeling a sense of belonging is key to being able to experience PS and, thus, is essential to a successful implementation of EL. Overall, this study provides evidence that an increased understanding of the mediating role of belongingness in relationships between EL and PS is important to support the long-term goal of promoting a psychologically safe work environment in organizations. The findings underline the importance of leader-driven strategies that prioritize strong relationships and enable individuals to feel an atmosphere of safety and connectedness at work. Studies suggest that EL is associated with an organization's heightened sense of psychological safety, positive attitudes, and trust (Men et al., 2020). EL involves leaders engaging in behaviors that demonstrate ethical principles such as respect, fairness, and responsibility. Psychological safety, however, is more than just following the rules and regulations. So PSis crucial because an employee's psychological environment permits them to take risks, express their opinions, and be creative without fear of negative consequences (Newman, Donohue, & Eva, 2017).

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This research provides valuable insights into organizational processes, such as the influence of EL on workers' psychological well-being. Generally, EL can focus on ethical decision-making, ethical motivation, and ethical strategies related to interpersonal relationships. When implemented properly, EL practices can create an environment that encourages employees to feel respected and included, thus resulting in a greater sense of organizational belongingness.

Limitations of the Study

The scholarly study was conducted within a limited geographical region, so the findings may not apply to a larger population. The research was based on self-reported survey data, which may be a common method bias. Somehow, we try to adopt time-lagged data collection to minimize the risk of common method bias. The study was conducted with a relatively small sample size, thus potentially reducing the generalizability of the findings. The study was limited to an individual's perception of belongingness, psychological safety, and VB, which may not accurately reflect an individual's actual behavior. The study was conducted over a limited time frame, so that the results may be subject to temporal limitations.

Future Research Directions

Future research in this field should focus on a more in-depth analysis of the variables involved, such as the role of different types of EL approaches, to gain a more thorough knowledge of the impact of EL on organizational belongingness. Further examination of how different demographic and cultural disparities might affect the relationship between organizational belongingness and EL is necessary. Furthermore, research into how EL initiatives can empower a wide range of individuals across multiple hierarchical levels should be explored. Finally, research should continue to explore the development of EL training programs and how organizations can use these programs to ensure the development of ethical norms for their employees and the organization.

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