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Leadership Cultural Competencies: Team Psychological Safety in Iraqi Apparel Market

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Abstract:
Objective: Improving the team's psychological safety in multicultural situations requires attention to the cultural competence of leaders. This is despite the fact that prosperous industries and businesses related to the clothing field that experience multicultural and diverse environments in terms of diversity of human resources in Iraq have paid less attention to this issue. Based on this, the aim of this study is to recognize the cultural competence of leaders for psychological safety.
Methods: The research method is exploratory and qualitative content analysis. The research community was experts and owners of clothing industries at the high and middle levels of companies and factories of clothing production, from which the purposeful sampling method dependent on the criterion with 22 people reached the data saturation. The data collection tool was a semi-structured interview. After implementing open and axial coding, the data were analyzed through MAXQDA software. Validation of data was done through external auditors and member checking.
Results: Finding showed that the cultural competencies of leaders for the development of psychological safety in work teams include team safety competencies, safe leadership competencies, and safety cultural competencies.
Conclusions:
Safe leadership competencies allow leaders to develop different attitudes and values as distinctive leadership capabilities to increase and improve psychological safety in the team.

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1. Introduction

The growing trend of organizations' need for resilience in interpersonal interactions to strengthen the psychology of human resources and achieve safety in the workplace has increased the importance of the psychological dimension of safety in team work (Weis-Rappaport & Kluger, 2024; Fenner et al., 2023; Han & Roh, 2020 Dusenberry & Robinson, 2020; Jain et al., 2016; O'Leary et al., 2016; Cauwelier et al., 2016).

The competencies of leaders in the 21st century need to be redefined beyond organizational boundaries and in the context of cultures (Ngayo Fotso, 2021; Ghorbani, 2023); because multicultural and diverse groups have developed in organizations.

Research has shown that employees who feel psychologically secure are better equipped to handle challenging job demands, and this psychological environment has a significant positive impact on their job skills and employability (Greenbaum et al., 2020). People who have a higher level of interpersonal trust and interpersonal security perceive fewer negative events and as a result have a higher sense of psychological security (Wang et al., 2019). This partially shows that people's psychological safety affects their employability. Employees who have a sense of psychological security can express themselves freely and do not worry or suspect that their words or actions may threaten their career advancement or position.

The main reason for this feeling is the injustice of the management of the organization in dealing with the employees in terms of dividing tasks and responsibilities, not getting job satisfaction for them and not living in a friendly environment, the lack of psychological adjustment of the individual. Iraqi organizational studies show that important individual performance variables such as organizational commitment (İzci & Ameen, 2023), job satisfaction (Marhil et al., 2023) need development; While the variable contribution of psychological security has not been studied in them.

The apparel market in Iraq depends more than anything on human capital. Human resources in Iraq are ethnically and culturally diverse, and the formation of work groups will increase leadership challenges in this industry. Therefore, the study of leadership competencies for work teams in this industry is significant as an important issue. The young human capitals of the labor market of the clothing design and sewing industry and related industries are influenced by the western culture as well as the diverse Arab cultural heritage. They are still uncertain to continue in the industry, and leaders play an important role in strengthening the psychological aspects and psychological safety.

2. Theoretical framework

Psychological safety refers to employees' positive perceptions and judgments about how safe the environment they are in is (Vakira et al., 2023; Saxe and

Hardin, 2022; Frazier et al., 2017; Pacheco et al., 2015) and is the basis for the behavior of high-performing individuals and teams (Blake et al., 2022).

Psychological safety includes implicit, cognitive and emotional structures. In this way, safety may be considered as a psychological phenomenon with a standard structure. Security can be considered as a state of inner peace, trust, positive attitude, trust, mental well-being, openness and relaxation (Zotova & Karapetyan, 2018). In the field of psychology, security and safety are close concepts (HøylandT2018). Maslow et al. (1945) describe psychological security as a feeling of assurance, security, and freedom from fear and anxiety, especially when one's present (and future) needs are met. Xiaoshi et al. (2023) defined psychological security based on Maslow (1942) as a possible feeling of danger or danger in one's physiology or psychology, as well as the feeling of one's power and inability to deal with danger or danger, which is mainly related to the sense of certainty and It defines controllability. According to the conservation of resources theory, people tend to preserve and acquire resources that are valuable to them, such as independence, self-esteem, and social status, etc. (Xiang et al., 2023).

Psychological safety is defined as "people's perceptions of the consequences of accepting interpersonal risks in a specific context such as a workplace" (Edmondson, 1999, 353). Psychological safety can also be described as the feeling that employees can express themselves without fear of negative consequences for their status, self-image, or career (Sanner & Bunderson, 2015; Kim et al., 2020; Harvey et al., 2019; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2019) According to Edmondson (2018), in his original study, psychological safety has consistently been known to promote employee voice behavior.

Conflicts are common in the interpersonal context of teams because disagreements and/or misunderstandings can occur whenever two or more employees interact (Bradley et al., 2012; Kostopoulos & Bozionelos, 2011). Recently, Turesky et al., (2020) found that creating a high-trust environment and effective conflict resolution skills of managers are critical to the performance of virtual teams. As Ugwu et al. (2014) reported, researchers found a positive effect of organizational trust on work outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior. In this regard, organizational trust, as a distant background, will be associated with group conflict through psychological safety.

The role of leadership has been highlighted in research related to psychological safety (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009: Wang et al., 2018). Some research evidences have examined the consequences of psychological safety and its aligned styles in leadership (Zhao et al., 2023). As Walters & Diab (2016) discuss, certain characteristics such as humility in leaders have consequences for psychological safety and followers' participation. Therefore, by accepting

limitations and mistakes, recognizing followers' strengths and contributions, and modeling teach ability, leaders can create an environment in which followers can act without fear of negative consequences. Based on this, leaders with special characteristics can play a decisive role in psychological safety (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). Despite all the efforts, the category of leaders' cultural competences in team psychological safety has been less addressed, and researches have less highlighted multicultural contexts.

3. Research Methodology

The sampling method in this research was non-probability and criterion-related purposeful. Sampling continued until theoretical data saturation. In this case, based on the experience and also the expertise of cases as famous in the field of leadership in the requested groups, introduce Interviewees who fit the research objectives. These Interviewees were selected in fields related to psychological security, leadership of work groups, cultural diversity and management of organizations and work groups. The demographic characteristics of the study sample are presented in Table (1).

Table 1. Frequency distribution of the sample of the qualitative section

Code	Sex	Education Level	Work Experience (Year)	Field of Study	Level
1	Male	Master	11	Management	Mid-level manager
2	Male	PhD	18	Management	Excellent manager
3	Male	PhD	15	Management	Excellent manager
4	Male	PhD	10	Management	Excellent manager
5	Male	Master	22	Leadership	Excellent manager
6	Male	PhD	13	Leadership	Mid-level manager
7	Female	PhD	15	Leadership and policy making	Excellent manager
8	Male	Master	14	Psychology	Excellent manager
9	Male	PhD	11	Cultural Management	Mid-level manager
10	Male	PhD	15	Cultural Management	Excellent manager
11	Female	PhD	20	Psychology	Excellent manager
12	Male	Master	13	Psychology	Excellent manager
13	Female	PhD	15	Educational Science	Mid-level manager
14	Male	PhD	19	Cultural Management	Excellent manager
15	Male	Master	20	Psychology	Excellent manager
16	Female	PhD	19	Cultural Management	Excellent manager
17	Male	PhD	21	Cultural Management	Excellent manager
18	Female	PhD	17	Psychology	Excellent manager
19	Male	PhD	15	Cultural Management	Excellent manager
20	Female	Master	18	Cultural Management	Mid-level manager
21	Male	PhD	19	Psychology	Excellent manager
22	Female	PhD	12	Leadership	Excellent manager

In this study, semi structured interviews to collect data were used. In this type of interview, all interviewees are asked the same questions. The interview questions were approved based on the protocol and research objectives through the research literature and expert review.

Interviews were conducted until theoretical data saturation. Validity and reliability of qualitative research was done through "external auditors" and "member checking". The data or results are returned to the participants to check for accuracy and consistency with their experiences. In order to check the verifiability of the interview texts and the results of analysis and coding, it was given to several interviewees and they were asked about the accuracy of the data. Data analysis was done using the content analysis method based on three-stage open, axial and selective coding; the data obtained from the interviews are analyzed using thematic (inductive) analysis of allusions, terms and the relationship between them; each interview was carefully and repeatedly listened to immediately after the recording, and by assigning a code, it was implemented and written by the researcher, then using MAXQDA software, by reading and immersing in the data several times, basic and essential statements were made.

4. Findings

In response to research questions, tables (2) to (4) show the components and sub-components of leadership cultural competencies in the psychological safety of teams work.

Table (2) Sub-components of leadership cultural competencies (Team safety competencies)

Competencies	Main Competencies/ Percentage	Subcomponents	Frequency of subcomponents	Summary of oral evidence
Team safety competencies	Controlling group fear (52%)	Expressing opinion without fear	4	Employees should be able to express their opinions without fear
		Avoiding personal judgment	5	Avoid judging others in groups
		Controlling negative thoughts	4	Negative attitudes about others should be reduced
		Sharing negative experiences	3	People should be able to share their negative experiences without fear
		Controlling cognitive dissonance	5	Attitudinal differences and cognitive differences between people can be controlled
		Team confidence	3	The team's confidence in itself must be strengthened
		Positive team atmosphere	5	The atmosphere of the team should be positive and strengthened
		Avoid stigmatization	4	Stigmatizing others in the group should be controlled
		The sense of group achievement	3	Group members should feel successful
		Collective positive self-image	5	Employees form a positive image of themselves

		Controlling mass communication anxiety	3	People's anxiety to communicate with others will decrease
		Be proud to be a team member	4	People feel proud of their membership in the team
		Acceptance by others after failure	4	After people experience failure, they are accepted by colleagues
	Team Voice (13%)	Open communication skills	3	Team members should be able to communicate with each other freely, without fear and easily
		Share concerns	5	Team members should be able to share their concerns
		Allowing inner feelings to emerge	2	Employees who express their inner feelings are more psychologically secure
		Equality and justice in the conversation	3	The team members feel that there will be a fair space for free discussion for everyone
	Interpersonal communication skills (35%)	Active listening	4	Team members can listen actively and effectively
		Conflict resolution skills	2	Resolve conflicts between themselves easily
		Strengthening the tolerance threshold	3	Improve your tolerance and sensitivity level
		Group dynamics	3	The members of the group have been upgraded in the level of psychological safety
		Creating empathy among members	6	Empathy among team members is a sign of improved psychological safety
		Strengthen interpersonal trust	5	Group members experience a high level of trust among themselves
		Strengthen emotion management skills	4	Expression of emotions and how to express them requires skill
		Increasing the threshold of interpersonal sensitivity	4	Group members increase interpersonal sensitivity to better understand each other
		Continuous learning	4	Lifelong learning from communication between group members is of great benefit to people's safety.
Source(s): Authors' own creation				

As table (2) shows, team safety competencies consist of elements of interpersonal communication skills, controlling group fear, and team voice.

Table (3) Sub-components of leadership cultural competencies (Safe leadership competence)

Competencies	Main Competencies/ Percentage	Subcomponents	Frequency of subcomponents	Summary of oral evidence
Safe leadership competence	Leadership qualities (49 %)	Forgiveness of mistakes	5	Leaders who demonstrate safety overlook the faults of others.
		Open and honest feedback	8	Feedback given to group members is transparent and honest
		Tolerance	7	The leader is tolerant of problems and ambiguity and difficulties of group work
		Trustworthy	8	The leader creates a high level of interpersonal trust for group members.
		Inspiring	6	The positive feeling from the Trans material experience and the inspiration to the members is repeated for the safe leaders
		Self-monitoring ability	8	Leaders who have high safety can monitor their behavior and characteristics and evaluate it continuously.
		Good manners	7	A high level of good morals and moral attractions are displayed in leaders
	Leadership values (33%)	Leader sacrifice	7	Leaders adhere to the values of sacrifice and selflessness.
		Social learning	8	They try to create a model for people to learn from group aspects
		Spiritual values of work	6	Safe leaders strive to promote spiritual values in the workplace
		Motivational goal setting	5	In a safe environment, employee motivation is created through leaders' goals
		Flexibility capacity	7	Flexibility is a valuable principle for leaders
	Leadership attitude (18 %)	Optimism about the team	5	Leaders have an optimistic attitude towards all team members
		Appreciation and foresight	6	They are forward-looking and try to appreciate team members.
		Attention to others	7	Leaders care about others
Source(s): Authors' own creation				

As table (3) shows, safe leadership competence consist of elements of leadership qualities, leadership values, and leadership attitude.

Table (4) Sub-components of leadership cultural competencies (Safety cultural competence)

Competencies	Main Competencies/ Percentage	Subcomponents	Frequency of subcomponents	Summary of oral evidence
Safety cultural competence	Safe work values (41 %)	Hypocritical behavior at work	12	Hypocritical and hypocritical behaviors should be reduced for psychological safety
		Privacy protection	9	People's privacy should be respected so that a high level of safety is perceived in them
		Challenging	10	The work environment should be challenging so that people can be attracted to work
		Deepening work emotions	10	Emotions will become institutionalized when they become deep
	Psychological safety culture (59 %)	Emotional agreement on the group perspective	9	A vision that is acceptable to group members will also have emotional agreement
		Acceptance of cultural differences	10	Acknowledging cultural differences among group members will promote safety
		Collaborative decision making	11	Democracy in the organization will increase the level of collaborative decision-making and improve psychological safety
		Strengthening group self-efficacy	10	The feeling of self-efficacy and the ability of people to interact with each other develop psychological safety
		Development of friendship circles	10	Meetings and circles of friends can improve the level of psychological safety
		Caring for others	9	Taking care of others means taking care of them and taking care of the group
Source(s): Authors' own creation				

As table (4) shows, safety cultural competence consist of elements of psychological safety culture and safe work values

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Competence of leaders plays an important role in developing psychological safety; Due to environmental diversity and integration of cultural borders with the presence of ethnically diverse populations and increasing cultural diversity in work environments, we can expect the competence of leaders to expand beyond technical and managerial aspects to cultural areas.

Safe leadership competencies allow leaders to develop different attitudes and values as distinctive leadership capabilities to increase and improve psychological safety in the team. Values such as self-sacrifice, loyalty to the team and optimistic attitudes to appreciate the team and the strategic importance of aspects of team behavior are improved through these skills.

As organizations today are characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, one of the most important responsibilities of leadership is to secure a culture for open communication about challenges, concerns, and

opportunities. Psychological safety exists when employees feel they can speak up, suggest ideas, and ask questions at work.

When leaders' behaviors show greater openness, accessibility, and availability, employees' psychological safety improves significantly. When employees perceive an overall organizational climate of internal trust based on the trust, honesty, and benevolence of senior leadership, employees will have higher psychological security, which in turn leads to less group conflict.

The cultural competence of leaders in the garment industry is significant in several ways; First, the wide diversity in the design, production and distribution of clothing in this industry is an important factor in the need to pay attention to this competence; Another thing is that psychological safety in culturally diverse groups is significant due to the necessity of interpersonal communication and the importance of group cohesion.

Additional in-service courses and personal development programs are recommended to develop leaders' knowledge and cultural awareness. Targeted interventions are suggested through getting to know the organizational intangible heritage and creating common cultural components for employees' desire for common attractions and increasing psychological safety. Leaders in Iraqi organizations should review the lived experiences of interpersonal behavior models based on diversity in multicultural countries for more experience.

Transparency

All authors declare no conflicts of interest. No artificial intelligence assisted technologies were used in this research or the creation of this article. All qualitative data will be available for further review. Also, the authors declare that there is no financial interest for this research.

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شایستگی های فرهنگی رهبری: ایمنی روان‌شناختی تیم در بازار پوشاک عراق

هدف: بهبود ایمنی روانشناختی تیم در موقعیت‌های چندفرهنگی نیازمند توجه به شایستگی فرهنگی رهبران است. این در حالی است که در عراق صنایع و مشاغل پر رونق مرتبط با حوزه پوشاک که محیط‌های چندفرهنگی و متنوعی را از نظر تنوع نیروی انسانی تجربه می‌کند، کمتر به این موضوع پرداخته اند. بر این اساس، هدف پژوهش حاضر شناخت شایستگی فرهنگی رهبران برای ایمنی روانی است.

روش پژوهش: پژوهش از نوع اکتشافی و تحلیل محتوای کیفی است. جامعه پژوهش کارشناسان و صاحبان صنایع پوشاک در سطوح بالا و متوسط از بین شرکت‌ها و کارخانجات تولید پوشاک عراق بودند که به روش نمونه‌گیری هدفمند وابسته به معیار با ۲۲ نفر به سطح اشباع داده‌ها رسید. ابزار گردآوری داده‌ها مصاحبه نیمه ساختار یافته بود. کدگذاری باز و محوری داده‌ها از طریق نرم‌افزار **MAXQDA** انجام شد. اعتبار سنجی داده‌ها از طریق ممیزی بیرونی و بررسی اعضا صورت گرفت.

یافته‌ها: شایستگی‌های فرهنگی رهبران برای توسعه ایمنی روان‌شناختی در تیم‌های کاری شامل شایستگی‌های ایمنی تیم، شایستگی‌های رهبری ایمن و شایستگی‌های فرهنگی ایمنی است.

نتیجه گیری

شایستگی های رهبری ایمن به رهبران اجازه می‌دهد تا نگرش‌ها و ارزش‌های متفاوتی را به عنوان قابلیت‌های رهبری متمایز برای افزایش و بهبود ایمنی روانی در تیم توسعه دهند.

واژگان کلیدی: رهبری، شایستگی‌های فرهنگی، ایمنی روان‌شناختی، بازار پوشاک.