

Psychological safety and turnover intentions in public organisations in Hanoi, Vietnam: The indirect role of employee voice

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Abstract:

This study aims to empirically investigate the relationships between psychological safety, employee voice, and turnover intention based on social exchange and voice-exit theories. Additionally, the study identified the fully mediating mechanism of employee voice in the link between psychological safety and turnover intention. The study employed self-reported survey techniques to collect individual-level data from public organisations in education, healthcare, and public administration in Vietnam. Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 4.0 was used to test the proposed hypotheses with a sample of 227 observations from public employees. Findings revealed a direct positive effect of psychological safety on employee voice and a negative effect on turnover intention. Moreover, the results confirm that employee voice fully mediates the relationship between psychological safety and turnover intention. This study not only provides empirical evidence but also sheds light on how psychological safety influences the process of turnover intention in the public sector. Additionally, this study highlighted several intriguing data points that should provide managers with worthwhile options to improve psychological safety for public employees and offer them a voice to mitigate turnover intention.

Keywords: employee voice, psychological safety, public organisations, turnover intention.

Classification numbers: 1.4, 2.2, 7

1. Introduction

One recent problem, which has sparked the interest of researchers, particularly in public organisations, is employee job turnover. In Vietnam, the departure of skilled and talented workers in the public sector is becoming increasingly apparent [1]. It is noted that the majority of public servants leave government agencies to work for private enterprises [2]. According to Q.D. Ngo (2023), public employees who quit their jobs were mainly education and training officials (54.2%) and health workers (26.5%). The statistics in this study also showed that the proportion of university and master's graduates leaving the organisation accounted for 48.65 and 15.7%, respectively [3]. Any organisation's performance, development, and sustainability may be seriously threatened by employee turnover [1]. In addition to creating chaos and disrupting service delivery, turnover entails significant costs, including severance pay and replacement expenses, which include recruiting, onboarding, and training new staff [2]. Even though employee mobility in the labour market is unavoidable, the loss of many public civil servants

can have serious repercussions, including decreased performance and a scarcity of trained workers in the public sector [3]. This can have a significant impact on the public's quality of service delivery. This issue requires further investigation, and the development of effective interventions.

Most studies focus on identifying the reasons or causes of turnover of public employees in Vietnam [4–6]. However, it is more important to figure out how to reduce employees' intention to leave in the public sector, thereby decreasing actual turnover. For the nation's administrative and economic reforms to be effective, it is imperative that turnover intention be recognised and addressed. The long process of rehiring and retraining staff, as well as its detrimental effects on public sector organisations, makes high turnover intention a serious problem for organisations [7]. Retaining experienced staff and maintaining the continuity of public service delivery requires addressing turnover intention.

Moreover, previous studies on how to mitigate employee turnover intention in the public sector in Vietnam focused on two main factors, including

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personal factors (work motivation, personality) [2, 8, 9] and organisational factors (organisational support, organisational justice, talent management practices, perceived person-environment fit, ethical leadership) [1, 2, 8, 9]. The determinants of mitigating employee turnover intention have been examined in public organisations thus far; however, psychological safety has been overlooked as a possible organisational predictor of employee turnover intention in previous studies. In essence, establishing a psychologically safe workplace may reduce perceived and actual interpersonal risks to prevent public servants from developing turnover intention [10].

Psychological safety refers to a mental condition in which workers feel comfortable expressing their inner selves without fear of unfavourable reactions or jeopardising their reputation, status, or employment [11]. The ability of an organisation to involve its employees in meaningful and ongoing learning to improve practices and lower turnover intentions is directly related to these perceptions.

Furthermore, this study explores how psychological safety serves as a predictor of turnover intention, considering the mediating role of employee voice in explaining this relationship. The results of this study could expand existing empirical literature by providing a better understanding of the role that psychological safety may play in employee turnover intention. Psychological safety in the workplace has been associated with communication outcomes, such as increased error reporting and interpersonal communication [12], as well as enhanced information sharing among team members [13]. It has also been demonstrated that psychological safety in dyadic interactions increases employee voice behaviour [14]. Employee voice refers to the extent to which people are willing to communicate concerns, issues, worries, and grievances, take a problem-solving approach, and offer input about the workplace's decision-making process is known as employee voice [14].

Most studies show positive individual-level outcomes of employee voice, such as improving employee commitment [15], employee satisfaction [16], and employee well-being [17]. However, fewer studies demonstrate that employee voice can help to limit consequences, such as conflict [18], workplace bullying [16], and turnover intention [19]. Furthermore, Y. Song, et al. (2022) [20] suggested that further research is necessary to clarify the relationship between employee voice and its ability to prevent negative consequences, such as turnover intention, and to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underlying employee voice behaviour. Therefore, this study

aims to investigate the direct and indirect effects of employee voice behaviour in the association between psychological safety and employees' intention to leave in public organisations in Vietnam.

This study significantly makes several theoretical contributions. Firstly, it addresses a knowledge gap by investigating the relationship between psychological safety and public employees' intention to leave. While previous studies have focused on organisational factors (organisational support, organisational justice, talent management practices, perceived person-environment fit, ethical leadership), the specific link between psychological safety in the work environment and intention to leave remains understudied in the context of the public sector in Vietnam [1, 2, 8, 9]. Therefore, the study examines how turnover intention and psychological safety may be directly related. We hypothesise that workers with higher levels of psychological safety are less likely to experience unfavourable outcomes, such as intention to leave. Secondly, there is a significant gap in the research, as few studies have examined the relationship between employee voice behaviour, psychological safety, and intention to leave public organisations. This study suggests that fostering psychological safety in the workplace will successfully foster employees' voice, building on social exchange theory and voice-exit theory [21, 22]. Employees who have a greater desire to stay with the organisation are less likely to intend to leave and more inclined to participate in discretionary activities, such as voicing their thoughts [22]. Previous studies indicate that employees use cognitive processing to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of using their voice when deciding whether to engage in speech behaviour in any given circumstance [16, 23]. We suggest that employee voice behaviour could be a key factor in bridging the gap between turnover intention and psychological safety. Thus, we propose that employee voice mediates the relationship between psychological safety and intention to leave. Finally, there are clear theoretical and practical implications for understanding the relationship between psychological safety and turnover intention, as well as explaining the mechanism underlying these relationships by investigating the mediating function of employee voice. To effectively manage the high cost of employee turnover in public organisations, this study aids in identifying predictors to mitigate turnover intention among public workers. This study adds to the existing body of knowledge by investigating these dimensions and their interactions in an Asian context, thereby making the findings more applicable to non-Western contexts by increasing their generalisability beyond Western settings.

2. Theoretical framework and hypothesis development

2.1. Social exchange theory

Social exchange theory, proposed by P. Blau (1964) [21], suggests that relationships evolve over time and are predicated on individuals weighing the advantages and disadvantages of any social interactions before deciding whether to maintain them. Individuals must obtain a positive cost-benefit analysis to sustain any social relationship. The norm of reciprocity has received considerable attention from researchers in retaining any social relationship [24, 25]. When an individual receives a benefit from a social interaction, they are generally expected to provide another benefit in return to continue the relationship. If this is not achieved, the disadvantaged person may take action to reduce adverse effects and restore a favourable cost-benefit balance. For instance, workers may decide to leave the organisation to acquire a positive cost-benefit balance if they are dissatisfied with their jobs. Employees will then emotionally commit to their employers if they feel psychologically safe in their workplace. Therefore, social exchange theory explains the association between psychological safety and employee turnover intention in public organisations.

Over time, the norm of reciprocity leads social exchange to be characterised by trust and emotional engagement [26]. Based on this norm of reciprocity, social exchange theorists have claimed that employees who feel comfortable at work are more likely to make constructive, change-oriented proposals in return for the favourable treatment they have received in their work interactions [26]. Additionally, the reciprocity norm of social exchange serves as a foundation for the conceptualisation of employee voice. When employees are in exchange relationships marked by trust, respect, and satisfaction, they are more inclined to speak up about their concerns and make constructive statements [27]. By and large, social exchange theory suggests that the use of voice is largely other-directed. In other words, one acts in a way that benefits the other party since doing so benefits them in return [24]. Thus, social exchange theory supports investigating the relationship between psychological safety and employee voice, as well as the underlying mechanism through which psychological safety influences employee turnover intention via the role of employee voice.

2.2. Voice-exit theory

A.O. Hirschman (1974) [22] developed the voice-exit theory, which provides a framework for understanding how people react to problems or dissatisfaction within an organisation. People usually

have two basic options when they encounter problems, namely “voice” and “exit”. Resigning from a position or ceasing the use of a product or service are examples of the “exit” option, which entails physically leaving the organisation. On the other hand, using the “voice” option means speaking up within the organisation about issues, complaints, or viewpoints in the hope of bringing about constructive changes through comments, recommendations, or active involvement in organisational procedures. People use a strategic decision-making process in which they balance the perceived value of exercising their “voice” within the organisation against the possibility of “exit”. Recent research found that employees who are likely to voice concerns are more loyal to the organisation and less likely to exit or leave [19, 26]. Thus, the voice-exit theory is applied in this study to explain the impact mechanism underlying the relationship between employee voice and turnover intention in public organisations in the Vietnamese context.

2.3. Hypothesis development

2.3.1. Psychological safety and turnover intention

The concept of psychological safety was proposed fifty years ago, and since the early 1990s, psychology researchers have renewed their interest in it [11]. The term refers to an individual's belief that the workplace is safe for taking interpersonal risks, speaking up with ideas, sharing opinions, and acting independently on key decisions. Accordingly, reducing real and perceived interpersonal risks requires establishing a psychologically secure workplace. T.D. Nguyen, et al. (2023) [1] found that psychological safety significantly impacted turnover intention, alongside the influence of other established predictors. The significance of organisational factors that affect employee well-being is highlighted by research examining the connection between psychological safety and turnover intention in the public sector. Motivated by a sense of public service, public employees might value a psychologically comfortable workplace that supports their dedication to organisational objectives. Psychological safety promotes commitment and trust and may serve as a deterrent to turnover intention in public sector organisations [28]. There is a correlation between a supportive organisational culture that includes psychological safety and a decreased intention to leave [29]. Psychological safety and the apparent job security that comes with working in the public sector may interact to affect the intention to leave. Psychological safety might act as a protective barrier against the detrimental consequences of job uncertainty, which may ultimately lead to a decreased

intention to leave the public sector [1]. The impact of policies and regulations must be considered when examining the relationship between psychological safety and turnover intention in the public sector. The policies that govern how the public sector functions may influence employee perceptions and the workplace. Exploring how these policies interact with psychological safety to shape turnover intention is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the underlying dynamics. This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Psychological safety is negatively associated with turnover intention.

2.3.2. Psychological safety and employee voice

This cost-benefit analysis is significantly shaped by psychological safety. A. Edmondson (1999) [30] described psychological safety as a person's confidence and self-protection, ensuring that they will not be humiliated, rejected, or punished for speaking up. Employees who are afraid or insecure may adopt a defensive posture and refrain from sharing their thoughts and concerns because doing so is perceived as risky and unpredictable. On the other hand, a sense of security motivates workers to overcome these reservations and express their opinions. Workers tend to express their thoughts when they believe doing so will be safe and likely to have a beneficial effect [14]. Employee voice - a set of individual discretionary behaviours to articulate their ideas, opinions, and suggestions in the workplace - can stimulate organisational innovation by challenging the status quo and improving organisational processes [31].

Most research on voice behaviour has been grounded in Social Exchange theory [21] in general and the norm of reciprocity in particular [24]. This perspective suggests that individuals who experience their work environments as positive are likely to reciprocate by using voice more frequently or intensely. Employees are still likely to reciprocate with it for at least two reasons. First, voice behaviour is self-initiated; the employee does not need to wait to be asked to perform it, and they can readily engage in it when their felt obligations to reciprocate increase. Second, because voice is easily "heard" by others, it can quickly gratify employees' needs to reciprocate.

M.M. Elsaied (2019) [32] discovered that when participants believed their leaders were open to their suggestions and fostered an inspiring atmosphere, they felt psychologically comfortable and were more likely to voice their opinions. Therefore, the study hypothesises:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Psychological safety is positively associated with employee voice.

2.3.3. Employee voice and turnover intention

When given the opportunity to voice their opinions, workers are less likely to quit their jobs. E.W. Morrison (2023) [33] noted that employees feel like valued contributors when they can express their thoughts in an organisation because their opinions are considered in decision-making processes. Employees are more inclined to reciprocate when they feel that their organisations value them, which lowers their intention to leave [15]. Employees who understand that their voice may drive organisational improvements, such as resolving conflict and offering solutions, are less likely to leave [19]. As a result, workers' expression of voice may reduce their desire to quit. Additionally, voice gives workers a greater sense of control over their immediate surroundings and cultivates the idea that they have the power to influence occurrences at work [34]. By speaking up, workers feel that their opinions are valued and that they have the power to affect organisational outcomes. Conversely, experts suggest that workers may experience collective indifference and disengagement when they believe they have little control over the destiny of their organisation, which could increase their intention to quit. As anticipated, C. Schuster, et al. (2022) [35] concluded that appropriate use of voice methods lowers job search activities and desire to quit among public employees, and Y. Choi, et al. (2016) [36] indicated a negative link between speech mechanisms and teacher turnover. The following hypothesis results from these arguments:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Employee voice is negatively related to turnover intention.

2.3.4. Mediating role of employee voice: Psychological safety and turnover intention

This study clarifies the psychological processes involved in the connection between organisational success, employee voice, and psychological safety. Psychological safety increases workers' sense of control over their immediate workplace [34]. Employees feel more in control and less apprehensive, which frequently leads to turnover intention when they are empowered to express their ideas and influence their workplace. This study sheds light on how employees' perceptions of control are influenced by the psychological safety-voice dynamic, which in turn affects their intentions to leave. Additionally, it supports the notion that voice processes may counteract turnover intentions. Individuals are less inclined to consider quitting an organisation if they believe they can influence decisions through available

voice channels. In order to reduce turnover intentions, this study emphasises the importance of employee voice as a tool for giving people a sense of control and influence over their workplace.

Studies tailored to the public sector setting can enhance the mediation process [1, 36]. The connection between psychological safety, employee voice, and turnover intention may be considerably more complex in public service organisations, where the mission and sense of purpose are crucial. The degree to which psychological safety permits employee voice may impact public service motivation, a motivating factor for those working in the public sector [36]. In light of the social exchange theory, when workers feel free to express their views in a way that aligns with the organisation's mission, they believe that doing so can result in improvements or positive changes, which can lead to internal discussions and possible organisational adjustments [19]. This motivation might serve as a deterrent to plans to leave. The current study might be viewed as an attempt to use employee voice in the public sector to examine the indirect relationship between psychological safety and turnover intention. Employee voice is anticipated to play a mediating role in the relationship between employee voice and intention to leave in this study. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Employee voice mediates the relationship between psychological safety and turnover intention.

2.3.5. Proposed research model

The aim of this proposed study is to develop a research model that examines the complex connections between employee voice, psychological safety, and turnover intentions in the Vietnamese public sector. Fig. 1 depicts the proposed research model.

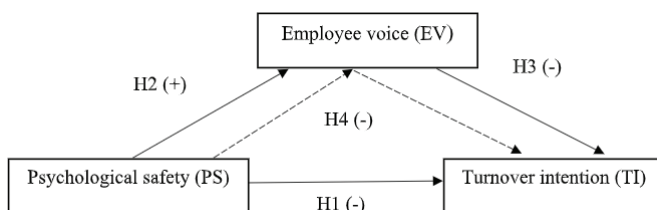


Fig. 1. Proposed research model. Source: Authors' construction.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Sampling and data collection

The study adopted survey techniques to gather individual-level data from a diverse range of public organisations in Vietnam. According to statistics from the Ministry of Home Affairs, the public sectors

with the highest rate of job turnover are education, healthcare, and public administration [3]. Thus, public organisations in the study come from education, healthcare, and public administration sectors located in Hanoi, Vietnam, which were strategically chosen to ensure representativeness of the sample size and reflect the research problem. The study's focus on employee perspectives, particularly examining employee voice, psychological safety, and turnover intention within these public organisations, underscores its significance in understanding organisational behaviour in the Vietnamese public sector.

To test the model, self-reported survey questionnaires were utilised to gather data through purposive sampling. The research team contacted representatives of the human resource departments of public organisations to explain the purpose of the study and solicit their support. The questionnaires were sent to emails of employees in public organisations through a list provided by the human resource department. To avoid bias in the research, all questionnaires were anonymised, and the confidentiality of information was ensured. The survey questionnaire was divided into two primary sections. The first part involved descriptive statistics on demographic factors (including gender, educational level, tenure with the current organisation, and departments). The second part focused on employee perspectives, particularly examining employee voice, psychological safety, and turnover intention within these public organisations, underscoring its significance in understanding organisational behaviour in the Vietnamese public sector. Because the scales in the study were based on English-written studies, the survey questionnaire was translated into Vietnamese with the advice of human resource experts to send to Vietnamese participants. After two months of survey data collection, a total of 280 responses were collected, of which 227 valid samples were retained following preliminary screening.

An analysis of the demographic factors of the collected samples (Table 1) suggested a balanced distribution across genders, with 52.4% female respondents, 45.4% male, and a minimal proportion identifying with other genders. Moreover, the educational background of the respondents predominantly comprised individuals with university degrees (93.4%), highlighting the importance of higher education in key organisational roles. Regarding tenure within the current organisation, a significant proportion (42.7%) reported affiliations ranging from one to three years, emphasising the stability and commitment levels among employees. In terms of fields, respondents worked in the education sector (45.8%), followed

Table 1. Participants' demographic statistics.

Category		Percent
Gender	Female	52.4%
	Male	45.4%
	Other	2.2%
Education level	College	6.6%
	University	93.4%
Tenure with current organisation	<1 year	26%
	1-3 years	42.7%
	3-7 years	31.3%
Organisations	Education	45.8%
	Healthcare	22.0%
	Public administration	32.2%
Departments	Human resources	7.5%
	Accounting-Finance	8.8%
	Administrative-Secretariat	13.2%
	Organisation-Administration	7.5%
	Project management	6.6%
	Law	7.9%
	Communication	17.2%
	Information technology	8.8%
	Foreign affairs-International	9.3%
	Others	13.2%

by public administration (32.2%) and healthcare (22.0%). Further examination of working departments revealed the distribution of employees across various functional areas, with Communication (17.2%) and Administrative-Secretariat (13.2%) emerging as prominent areas of employment (Table 1). These findings shed light on the organisational structure and workforce composition within the sampled public sector organisations, providing valuable insights for future research and policy-making endeavours.

3.2. Measurements

A five-point Likert scale response format, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), was used to measure each construct. *Psychological safety* (PS) was measured using a scale of seven items, adapted from A. Edmondson (1999) [30]. Next, the scale to measure *Employee voice* (EV) was developed by J. Liang, et al. (2012) [37]. It was modelled as a reflective-reflective construct made up of 10 lower-order reflective constructs, including five items for promotive voice (PMV) and five items for prohibitive voice (PBV). Finally, *Turnover intention* (TI) of employees in the organisation was measured using a scale adapted from J. Kim (2015) [38], which contained three items.

3.3. Data analysis

This study utilised PLS path modelling with the support of SmartPLS 4.0 based on the sample and model's properties, particularly mediation analysis. PLS path modelling is widely used in management and human resource management studies [39]. Moreover, the dependent variable in this study was predicted using the partial least squares structural equation model (PLS-SEM) for various reasons. Initially, the research framework was intricate, encompassing numerous higher-order constructs. This method simultaneously identifies a set of the generated model's equations and establishes the association between the constructs. This study employed a two-step analytic approach, which involves an initial evaluation of the measurement model and, subsequently, an assessment of the structural model to test the proposed hypotheses [40]. Additionally, G. Dash, et al. (2021) suggested that for a composite-based model, PLS-SEM should be considered for developing and analysing the structural relationship [41].

3.4. Common method variance

This study employed two methods to investigate common method bias (CMB). Firstly, Harman's single-factor test was used, indicating that a single factor only explained 38.5% of the variation (below the 50% threshold) [42]. The second technique to check for CMB is to test the variance inflation factor (VIF), which has been proposed and extensively utilised in previous literature as a comprehensive collinearity test [40]. The inner VIF values of all studied constructs, ranging from 2.018 (EV) to 2.712 (PS), fell below the threshold of 3 (Table 3), indicating no significant multicollinearity issues in this study. These results demonstrated that the data are free from CMB.

4. Empirical findings

4.1. Measurement model assessment

The research model included one higher-order reflective construct (employee voice). Accordingly, the first-order (lower-order) measurement model was evaluated first, followed by the second-order (higher-order) constructs.

4.1.1. First-order measurement model assessment

This study utilised assessment criteria to examine the measurement model of first-order constructs, which were measured reflectively. The first-order measurement model displays the results of evaluating internal consistency, construct reliability, and validity. Reflective indicator loadings exceeding 0.7 were retained to ensure sufficient convergent validity in the PLS model. Any item with a factor loading ≤ 0.7 was

deleted [40]. Two items of Promotive voice (PMV), namely PMV1 and PMV2, two items of Prohibitive voice (PBV), namely PBV1 and PBV2, and two items of Psychological Safety (PS), namely PS1 and PS2, were deleted due to low factor loading (see Table 2).

Table 2. First-order construct validity and reliability (round 1).

Code	Construct (Items)	Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
EV	Employee voice				
PMV	Promotive voice		0.748	0.827	0.500
PMV1		0.570*			
PMV2		0.482*			
PMV3		0.848			
PMV4		0.783			
PMV5		0.779			
PBV	Prohibitive voice		0.752	0.834	0.510
PBV1		0.562*			
PBV2		0.514*			
PBV3		0.798			
PBV4		0.834			
PBV5		0.800			
PS	Psychological safety		0.841	0.881	0.526
PS1		0.483*			
PS2		0.444*			
PS3		0.775			
PS4		0.855			
PS5		0.785			
PS6		0.826			
PS7		0.790			
TI	Turnover intention		0.860	0.915	0.782
TI1		0.912			
TI2		0.877			
TI3		0.863			

*: Deleted (outer loading <0.7). Source: Authors' own work.

After removing items with a low factor loading less than 0.7, the factor loadings of the remaining items ranged from 0.777 to 0.911, which exceeded the cut-off point of 0.70 [40] (see Table 3). Convergent validity was further supported by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, which show the proportion of variance accounted for by factors. All latent variables in the assessed model showed acceptable convergent reliability, with AVE values greater than 0.5 [43]. All Cronbach's Alpha values of first-order constructs were greater than 0.7, ranging from 0.806 (PV) to 0.880 (PS) (Table 3). Indicator reliability was evaluated using composite reliability (CR), where a value greater than 0.7 denotes sufficient internal consistency of constructs [40].

Table 3. First-order construct validity and reliability (round 2).

Code	Construct (Items)	Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
EV	Employee voice				
PMV	Promotive voice		0.806	0.886	0.721
PMV3		0.878			
PMV4		0.846			
PMV5		0.822			
PBV	Prohibitive voice		0.828	0.897	0.745
PBV3		0.854			
PBV4		0.890			
PBV5		0.844			
PS	Psychological safety		0.880	0.913	0.677
PS3		0.798			
PS4		0.882			
PS5		0.803			
PS6		0.849			
PS7		0.777			
TI	Turnover intention		0.860	0.915	0.782
TI1		0.911			
TI2		0.877			
TI3		0.864			

Source: Authors' own work.

4.1.2. Second-order measurement model assessment

The second-order measurement model was created using a two-step procedure. Latent variable scores were first calculated using the first-order model, which were then used to construct a subsequent

Table 4. Final measurement - model reliability and validity.

	Outer loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Inner VIF
Turnover intention (TI)		0.860	0.915	0.782	N/A
TI1	0.911				
TI2	0.877				
TI3	0.864				
Psychological safety (PS)		0.880	0.913	0.677	2.712
PS3	0.798				
PS4	0.882				
PS5	0.803				
PS6	0.849				
PS7	0.777				
Employee voice (EV)		0.904	0.954	0.913	2.018
Promotive voice (PMV)	0.954				
Prohibitive voice (PBV)	0.956				

Source: Authors' own work.

model. The scores for these latent variables were then applied as weights to the corresponding single items of the second-order constructs. Table 4 shows that all constructs achieved CR values exceeding 0.7, AVE values surpassing the threshold of 0.5, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients greater than 0.7. Furthermore, all item factor loadings exceeded the suggested cut-off point of 0.7 [40]. Convergent validity was therefore verified for the entire sample.

The discriminant validity was tested by analysing the AVE's square root [40]. To assess the discriminant validity for second-order constructs, it is attained if the exogenous variance is higher than the average value with other variables [40, 43]. The square root of the AVEs is shown by the diagonal values in bold font in Table 5 below, while the correlations of the research variables are represented by the off-diagonals. The square root of the AVE of the constructs is higher than the correlations of every other construct.

Table 5. Discriminant validity of the second-order constructs - Fornell-Larcker criterion.

	EV	PS	TI
Employee voice (EV)	0.955		
Psychological safety (PS)	0.951	0.823	
Turnover intention (TI)	-0.666	-0.697	0.884

Source: Authors' own work.

4.2. Structural model assessment and hypothesis testing

4.2.1. Measuring Coefficients (R^2 , f^2 , Q^2)

The importance of significant correlations and the predictive power of measurements - which establish the goodness-of-fit in PLS - were also evaluated using a variety of measures. As shown in Table 5, adjusted R^2 values range from 0.482 to 0.904, which means that 90.4% of the variance in employee voice (EV) and 48.2% in turnover intention (TI) is explained by the independent variables (psychological safety - PS). Q^2 values generated through the blindfolding procedure range from 0.374 to 0.6, well above zero, and therefore confirm the predictive relevance of all path models. The results validated the predictive significance of the model, with Q^2 values of both EV ($Q^2=0.6$) and TI ($Q^2=0.374$) exceeding zero. Additionally, the effect size (f^2) is categorised as weak (0.02), moderate (0.15), and substantial (0.35). If the f^2 value is <0.02 , there is no significant effect. The effect sizes of PS in relation to EV ($f^2=9.430$) were significant and substantial, while the effect size of PS in relation to TI was very weak ($f^2=0.000$). The effect size of EV on TI was small ($f^2=0.083$) (Table 6).

Table 6. Measuring Coefficients (R^2 , f^2 , Q^2).

	R^2	R^2 adjusted	f^2	Remark	Q^2	Remark
Employee voice (EV)	0.904	0.904	PS → EV 9.430	Substantial	EV 0.600	High predictive accuracy
Turnover intention (TI)	0.486	0.482	PS → TI 0.000	Weak	TI 0.374	Moderate predictive accuracy
			EV → TI 0.083	Small		

Source: Authors' own work.

4.2.2. Hypothesis testing

This study employed the technique with 5,000 bootstrap resamples to test the proposed hypotheses. The first hypothesis (H1) concerned the direct relationship between PS and TI. The findings indicated that PS has a significant negative relationship with TI ($\beta = -0.666$; $p < 0.001$; 95% CI (-0.732, -0.588)), thereby supporting H1. The findings (Table 7) reveal that the path coefficient from PS to EV is also significant and positive ($\beta = 0.951$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI (0.935, 0.964)). Thus, H2 is empirically supported. Additionally, EV was shown to be a significant predictor of TI, negatively related to TI, supporting H3 ($\beta = -0.668$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI (-0.958, -0.365)) (Table 7).

Next, the indirect effect was analysed to test the mediating effect of EV in the negative relationship between PS and TI. The results presented in Table 6 confirmed that the indirect negative effect of PS ($\beta = -0.635$; $p < 0.001$; 95% CI (-0.913, -0.348)) was significant. Moreover, when EV was added simultaneously with PS as a predictor of TI, the direct effect from PS to TI ($\beta = -0.030$; $p = 0.844 > 0.05$) was not significant, indicating that full mediation of EV occurred. Therefore, H4 was supported. Fig. 2 summarised our findings of tested hypotheses.

Table 7. Results of structural model.

Hypothesis		Path	SD	T	P	95% CI		Remark
		Coeff.		-value	-values	LLCI	ULCI	
Total effect								
H1	c. PS → TI	-0.666	0.036	18.267	<0.001	-0.732	-0.588	Accepted
H2	a. PS→ EV	0.951	0.007	130.923	<0.001	0.935	0.964	Accepted
H3	b. EV→ TI	-0.668	0.152	4.402	<0.001	-0.958	-0.365	Accepted
Direct effect								
H4	c'. PS→ TI	-0.030	0.154	0.197	0.844	-0.331	0.266	Accepted, fully mediating
Indirect effect								
	PS→EV→ TI	-0.635	0.145	4.395	<0.001	-0.913	-0.348	

Source: Authors' own work.

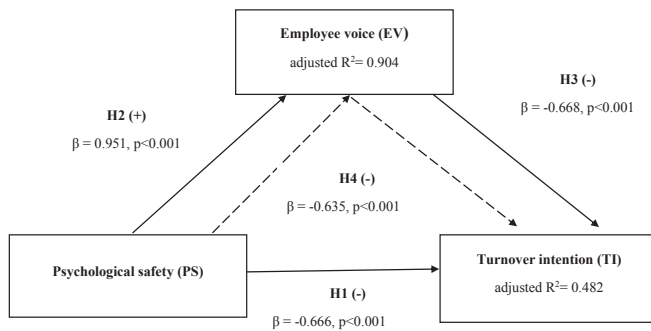


Fig. 2. Results of structural model test. Mediation model of psychological safety on turnover intention. Source: Authors' own work.

5. Discussion

5.1. Psychological safety and turnover intention

Psychological safety negatively impacts public employees' intention to leave (H1). The findings confirmed Social Exchange theory and earlier research, as expected. Employees who work in a psychologically safe environment believe that their colleagues will not reject them for being who they are or what they think, respect each other's abilities, care about each other as individuals, have good intentions towards one another, can engage in constructive conflict or confrontation, and feel comfortable trying new things and taking chances [30]. In terms of behaviour, psychological safety encourages workers to express their problems, communicate honestly, and seek more feedback, all of which reduce the likelihood that they will resign [11, 17]. Therefore, psychological safety may be seen as a mechanism that reduces stress in workers, which in turn mitigates job discontent and, ultimately, turnover intentions [1].

5.2. Psychological safety and employee voice

The results of the study also support the second research hypothesis (H2), which posits that psychological safety enhances employees' voices. The outcome was anticipated as employees expressed their confidence, sense of security, and fearless trust [30]. Psychological safety is becoming increasingly important to organisational success in a public environment, given the requirements for employees to share information and exchange ideas with other team and organisational members in the attainment of shared goals [11].

When employees are in exchange relationships marked by happiness, respect, and trust, they are more likely to use voice behaviour [27]. This finding confirms the norm of reciprocity in social exchange theory. Individuals are more likely to act in pro-organisational ways that align with such perceptions when they have positive social interactions with their employers. Employees then primarily utilise voice to control the quality of their social interactions with others.

5.3. Employee voice and turnover intention

The third hypothesis that employee voice has a detrimental effect on employees' intention to leave is supported by the results of the current study. Employee voice has the capacity to reduce the intention to leave among public workers. Employee voice is a positive behaviour that is advantageous for the growth and advancement of the organisation [26]. Employees feel valued, equitable, and part of the organisation when they have a voice [19], because they can participate in the decision-making process that resolves an issue [44]. Conversely, employees who lack a voice experience feelings of alienation, discontent, and abandonment from the organisation. This indicates that when workers feel safe, encouraged, and are given opportunities to grow, they are more likely to desire to remain with the organisation.

5.4. Mediating role of employee voice: psychological safety and turnover intention

Examining the mediating role of employee voice in the relationship between psychological safety and turnover intention in the public sector was one of the primary goals and inquiries of this study. Interestingly, the results demonstrated that employee voice had a full mediating role in the association between psychological safety and intention to leave. Thus, the relationship between psychological safety and intention to leave can be explained through employee voice. The results demonstrated that the level of employee voice among public employees could regulate the relationship between psychological safety and intention to leave.

Employee voice can help reduce unfavourable consequences for employers. Based on social exchange theory, psychological safety encourages employees to speak up, which leads to employees adopting favourable views and deciding to remain with the organisation [10]. The ability of employee voice to open the "black box" between psychological safety and work outcomes, including turnover intention, is noteworthy. Lower turnover intention is ensured by the presence of employee voice. This is a significant discovery because it demonstrates that employee voice serves as a means for employees to stay attached to and loyal to the organisation, in addition to being a behaviour that benefits the firm. This finding builds upon and enhances earlier research by Y. Ge (2020) [14], M.M. Elsaied (2019) [32], and J. Liang, et al. (2012) [37]. This finding underscores the importance of fostering a safe work environment that encourages open communication and employee voice in policymaking processes. Overall, this study fills a gap in the existing

literature by exploring the influence of psychological safety on employees' intention to leave, with employee voice as a mediating role.

6. Contribution and implications

6.1. Theoretical contribution

This study adds significantly to the theoretical body of public literature, particularly regarding the critical role psychological safety plays in reducing public employees' intentions to leave. Furthermore, this finding extends the comprehensive understanding of the mechanism of psychological safety on turnover intention related to employee voice through the lens of social exchange theory and voice-exit theory. Available empirical evidence supports the theoretical viewpoints. The study provides complex insights into the role of employee voice in organisational behaviour by analysing the intricate dynamics within the Vietnamese public sector. The voice-exit theory states that when employees believe their workplace is becoming less beneficial to them or of lower quality, they have two options: they can leave the relationship, or they can speak up to improve the situation by communicating their grievance, complaint, or change proposal. Disagreements can be resolved, and a culture of voice in the workplace is substantially associated with lower turnover intentions. Our study employed psychological safety as a predictor to promote employee voice. These employees are therefore more inclined to stay, which increases the likelihood that organisations will avoid unfavourable outcomes. Understanding the dynamics of psychological safety and employee voice and their relationship to turnover intention through the lens of social exchange and voice-exit theory is particularly crucial in the context of Vietnam's public sector, which is undergoing administrative, cultural, and economic changes. Advancing theoretical knowledge of psychological safety, our review of the literature has important practical implications for organisations.

6.2. Practical implications

The findings of the current study significantly advance practical development by offering recommendations and direction to public managers on how to create suitable working conditions for their employees. Psychological safety is advantageous since it encourages employees to share ideas to be innovative and provide feedback for ongoing development. This might therefore be translated into establishing a setting that improves psychological safety and reduces employees' perceptions of their intention to leave. Public organisation leaders ought to explicitly prioritise psychological safety. They must successfully provide psychologically safe environments for their personnel.

This can be achieved by fostering an atmosphere in which employees feel free to voice their opinions and raise concerns without worrying about facing repercussions. Leaders should also respect their employees' opinions and use them to make the workplace a positive environment. They must set standards for dealing with failure. These procedures provide their organisations' employees with a safe working environment. Managers will be able to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public sector organisations and businesses in a context of rapid and competitive change by doing this, which will foster a positive organisational culture that promotes employee participation and contribution and reduces talent departure.

Our analyses show that the indirect effect of psychological safety on turnover intention through employee voice is fully mediated. Thus, our study clarified the psychological mechanisms by showing that promoting employee voice can also reduce employees' intention to leave. Implementing a variety of formal and informal voice procedures to resolve conflicts and, more generally, to encourage individual decision-making in public organisations can help create a healthy culture. We conclude that when organisations give workers a voice in resolving issues at work, they are less likely to desire to leave. As a result, these employees are more likely to stay, and the organisation will avoid the negative effects of unresolved disagreement. To improve understanding, trust, and cooperation, as well as the organisation's ability to make better decisions and innovate, leaders in public organisations must establish channels of communication, feedback, and dialogue between managers and staff, as well as between departments and units.

7. Limitations and future research

It is important to consider the study's limitations. Firstly, the study only examined the Vietnamese public sector, so the results might not be highly generalisable. It is necessary to extrapolate these findings to other industries or global contexts. Secondly, the study's cross-sectional design makes it more difficult to determine the causal links between psychological safety, employee voice, and intention to leave. Another potential drawback is social desirability bias, which could compromise the reliability of self-reported data by influencing participants' responses. Additionally, relying solely on employee self-reports could lead to common method bias, which might compromise the study's validity.

This domain can be better understood in several ways for future research. Comparative studies could examine how different industries in Vietnam or other nations differ in how employee voice affects psychological safety and intention to leave. The drawbacks of the cross-sectional

design are addressed by longitudinal research, which allows for tracking changes over time in employee voice, psychological safety, and turnover intention. A further understanding of the mechanism might be obtained by examining the moderating or mediating factors that might influence these interactions. Furthermore, the conclusions might be strengthened by incorporating data from multiple sources, such as organisational records or supervisor ratings. Overall, a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon could be achieved by addressing these constraints and adhering to these suggested research directions.

8. Conclusions

The findings of the current study have significantly contributed to the use of voice-exit and social exchange theories as a strategy to reduce employees' intentions to leave public organisations. More specifically, this study examined how employee voice mediated the relationship between psychological safety and the inclination to leave in a public setting. Turnover intention is negatively impacted by psychological safety. The results of the study also show that employee voice has a negative correlation with turnover intention. Conversely, employee voice fully mediates the relationship between turnover intention and psychological safety. This indicates that the presence of employee voice ensures a reduction in the intention to leave. This implies that employee voice has the power to modify the influence of the relationship between psychological safety and turnover intention. Staff voice must therefore be given greater consideration to help ensure staff retention. All employees can be supported, inspired, cared for, treated fairly, and engaged by employee voice, which ultimately reduces employees' desire to quit by fostering a psychologically safe workplace. Additionally, the study advanced the theory by deepening our understanding of the importance of psychological safety and employee voice in organisational contexts. The authors made recommendations for ways to increase psychological safety, encourage employee input, and reduce the intention to leave.

CRedit author statement

Thi Hoai Nhung Duong: Conceptualisation, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing - Reviewing and Editing; Hai Yen Le: Investigation, Writing - Original draft preparation, Validation.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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