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Ingratiating bosses for favourable performance ratings: A serial mediation mechanism

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Ingratiating with bosses for favourable performance ratings: A serial mediation mechanism

Abstract

**Purpose:** This study examines how team-level mediating mechanisms (i.e., team psychological safety and team helping behaviour) facilitate the relationship between employees' ingratiation and performance ratings.

**Design/Methods:** The data were collected from 180 customer service teams working in Pakistan's hospitality industry through multiple sources using a paper and pencil questionnaire.

**Findings:** The multi-level structural equation modeling results showed that team psychological safety and helping behavior fully mediated the relationship between ingratiation and performance ratings.

**Originality:** This study showed that ingratiation might be a helpful impression management tool within a team context. Such an influence technique nurtures a psychologically safe climate and encourages peers to help each other perform mutual tasks within the hospitality context.

**Implications:** The study offers implications for theory and practice.

**Keywords:** Ingratiation, Psychological Safety, Helping, Performance Ratings, Hospitality Industry.

**Introduction**

Organisational scholars have been investigating social influence tactics for a long time (Segrest et al., 2020). Despite a plethora of existing research on the topic (e.g., Ferris, Judge, Rowland, & Fitzgibbons, 1994; Bolino, Varela, Bande, & Turnley, 2006; Asadullah et al., 2015), organisational scholars have called for further research on vertical influence behaviours (Segrest et al., 2020) to explain how, why, and when different social influence tactics succeed. Among social influence tactics, ingratiation is the vertical influence tactic (i.e., a tactic aimed at
Employees believe in the success of influence tactics for achieving their motives as they think that management's positive perceptions of their character and competence will increase (Judge & Bretz, 1994). However, research has also shown that ingratiation is a risky and assertive social influence tactic (Deng, Leung, Lam, & Huang, 2019). Since the employees ingratiate more when their task performance is uncertain (Edmondson, 2003), ingratiation's chances of success may be reduced. Further, others in a group perceive the people who ingratiate as unlikable and immoral (Kim, LePine, & Chun, 2018). Hence, the perceptions of other subordinates working under the same leader may challenge the success of ingratiation used by a specific subordinate (Kim et al., 2018)—in particular, the social image of the leader may be at stake, and the chances for the success of ingratiation may thus be reduced. Consequently, the ingratiating employee may need to consider the work environment for effective use of ingratiation.

Recently, Kim et al. (2018) called for research to go beyond the boundary of the actor–target dyad to determine the role of perceptions of individuals other than the ingratiator themselves in the success of ingratiating behaviour but few studies have addressed this call. This study addresses this call and moves beyond the actor–target dyad to explain when ingratiation may succeed from some crucial perspectives. It introduces the psychologically safe work environment as an organisational level outcome that may enforce group-level discretionary behaviours among the actors of ingratiation to achieve better performance ratings from their supervisors. In doing so, this study employs a serial mediation model to explain when
ingratiation enables employees to obtain higher performance ratings from their supervisors by shaping a psychologically safe work environment that induces greater helping behaviour. We consider that helping behaviour is helping displayed by the actor of ingratiation towards their co-workers rather than the target supervisor. Hence, this study is positioned at group-level helping behaviour, and team-level psychological safety and thus goes beyond the actor–target dyad by testing a serial mediation model to explain when ingratiation may succeed.

Apart from the serial mediation relationship, this study highlights the role of ingratiation in enforcing psychological safety in the workplace. Supervisors have a significant role in fostering a positive and psychologically safe work climate (e.g., Tu, Lu, Choi, & Guo, 2019; Miao, Eva, Newman, & Cooper, 2019; Anugerah, Abdillah, & Anita, 2019), and various theorists (e.g., Carmeli & Gittell, 2009; Garvin, Edmondson, & Gino, 2008; Deng et al., 2019) have stressed the importance of maintaining an appropriate level of psychological safety in the workplace to encourage discretionary behaviours (e.g., OCB, innovating, and creativity) as well as task-specific behaviours. This study tests this assumption to examine if employees' perceptions of psychological safety affect their helping behaviours towards their co-workers and supervisors.

Hypothetical Framework

Ingratiation and Psychological Safety

Ingratiation is a strategic and assertive impression management behaviour that is deliberately shown to 'influence a "particular other"' for evoking one's interpersonal attraction (Bande et al., 2019). It is an impression management process for controlling others' impressions of oneself (Goffman, 1959; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). It is neither a psychological disorder nor a disease, yet employees continue ingratiating their supervisors (Asadullah et al., 2016). The
Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and Reinforcement Theory (Skinner, 1963, 1971) demonstrate that individuals behave in a specific manner to achieve their desired consequences. This study considers psychological safety as a consequence of ingratiation behaviour. Since ingratiation is individually initiated and induced by organisational factors (Ralston, 1985), this study proposes that employees working in teams ingratiate with their supervisors to feel psychologically safe in the workplace.

How does an employee's ingratiating behaviour affect their perceptions of psychological safety? Notably, they might use such tactics to influence their supervisors. Supervisors expect a fair and consistent contribution from each team member in achieving team objectives (Li, Liao, Tangirala, & Firth, 2017). This study advocates that employees working in teams may use ingratiation to influence their supervisors, mainly to avoid an adverse reaction, when they find that their contribution towards accomplishing a team task was insufficient. A psychologically safe work environment reduces others' adverse reactions, particularly potentially embarrassing or threatening actions (Edmondson, 1999). It may also mitigate the negative consequences of taking interpersonal risks (e.g., embarrassment, punishment, or rejection in the workplace (Kahn, 1990) and induce innovative work behaviours among employees (Kim, Park, & Kim, 2019)). Psychological safety enables people to feel comfortable (Edmondson, 1999, p. 354) and feels less threatened about their actions' potential negative consequences (Kahn, 1990, p. 708).

Employees observe their leaders and try to shape their behaviours accordingly. Based on their experience with their immediate bosses, they may evaluate their supervisors' reactions towards ingratiation. Since they know that supervisors like ingratiation (Asadullah et al., 2015), they are more likely to ignore an underperforming or a free-rider employee who is ingratiating him. This complies with the principle of reciprocity (Whiting et al., 2008), i.e., people
reciprocate positively if they have received some sort of favour. If employees know that their supervisor favours ingratiating employees, they may feel psychologically safer to ingratiate. However, employees are less likely to ingratiate with their supervisors if they have experienced an adverse reaction towards ingratiation. We also propose a positive relationship between ingratiation and psychological safety for its compensation effect. The ingratiation may compensate the individuals by appearing friendly and affable under the circumstances they appear less competent (Bande et al., 2019). The team members may feel psychologically safe when their co-workers show friendly and sociable behaviour. Hence, we hypothesize that:

**Hypothesis 1:** Ingratiation is positively associated with employees' perceptions of team psychological safety.

**Psychological Safety and Helping Behaviour**

The existing research on psychological safety (e.g., Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998) has shown a positive relationship between psychological safety with citizenship behaviour and supportive work contexts, and voice behaviour. Psychological safety guarantees a highly supportive work context (Kahn, 1990) for employees to gain support from co-workers to perform their job according to organisational norms and required behaviours (Van Maanen & Schein, 1977; Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 2001). Since psychological safety encourages employees' risk-taking at the interpersonal level (Edmondson, 1999), employees feel safe raising their voices to criticise existing practices and suggest new ways of performing a job (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). Helping behaviour (Organ, 1988) is an essential dimension of citizenship behaviour examined as an outcome of psychological safety (Frazier, Fainshmidt, Klinger, Pezeshkan, & Vracheva, 2017). Thus, this study also hypothesizes helping behaviour as a positive outcome of psychological safety. Further, a supportive work context, an outcome of
psychological safety, also characterises helping behaviour. Likewise, voice behaviour, which is an outcome of psychological safety, as discussed above, also involves assisting the organisation and its members in performing tasks appropriately.

Studies have also shown that psychological safety is positively associated with work engagement, a motivational state that encourages employees to work to advance the organisations' interest (e.g., Kahn, 1992; May et al., 2004; Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Helping also appears as a characteristic of engaged employees who ignore the difference between OCB and task-related behaviours and deeply involve themselves in their work (Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010). When employees feel psychologically safe, they are more likely to reciprocate in the form of helping their co-workers, as explained by the principle of reciprocity (Whiting et al., 2008). Similarly, employees may feel more motivated to help their co-workers if they perceive a high level of psychological safety. Thus, this study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 2: Team psychological safety is positively associated with employees' perception of team helping behaviour.

Helping Behaviour and Supervisors' Ratings of Employee Task Performance

Helping is a voluntary behaviour that refers to 'helping others with, or preventing the occurrence of, work-related problems' (Podsakoff et al., 2000, p. 516). Helping positively influences employees' professional development (Hansen, Larson & Dworkin, 2003) and physical and psychological well-being (Brown, Nesse, Vinokur & Smith, 2003; Sonnentag & Grant, 2012; Glomb, Bhave, Miner & Wall, 2011). Various empirical studies (Asadullah et al., 2016; Whiting, Podsakoff, & Pierce, 2008) have reported a positive association between employees' helping behaviour and supervisor satisfaction with employees' task performance at the individual-level. This study hypothesizes a positive association between employees' helping
behaviour and an individual employee's task performance. Supervisors appreciate helping
behaviour among team members, as specific jobs (e.g., nursing, firefighting) include 'helping' as
a critical component of the job description, i.e., task performance (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998).
There are also various positive group or team-level outcomes of helping, including issues of
quality, quantity, customer satisfaction, unit-level profitability, and efficiency (Podsakoff &
MacKenzie, 1994; Podsakoff et al., 1997; Walz & Niehoff, 2000; Koys, 2001; Susskind, Kacmar
& Borchgrevink, 2007).

Helping may be reactive (to address others' needs), proactive (to regulate changes)
(Parker & Collins, 2010), or to satisfy self-serving motives, such as future expectations
(Spitzmuller & Van Dyne, 2013). Still, 'helping' is mandatory for performing interdependent jobs
in team settings (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Task interdependence (the extent of employees'
dependence on their co-workers for performing a job effectively (Van der Vegt & Janssen, 2003;
Brass, 1985; Kiggundu, 1983) requires team members to exchange time, energy, and personal
resources with each other (Costa, Passos, Bakker, Romana & Ferrao, 2017; Uddin, Mahmood, &
Fan, 2019). Hence, a high level of help is required for performing interdependent tasks
effectively. However, more experienced or highly motivated employees are more likely to offer
support to poorly motivated or less experienced co-workers to avoid adverse performance
outcomes and achieve organisational effectiveness (Cantor & Jin, 2019). Thus, supervisors will
rate the task performance of those employees who are more helpful to their co-workers and
supervisors more highly than they will rate the less valuable employees. The norm of reciprocity
view (Blau, 1964) also supports that people exchange favours with those who have helped them,
done them a favour, or treated them fairly (Whiting et al., 2008). In organisational settings,
supervisors receiving help from an employee may save time to emphasise other more critical
activities. Thus, the supervisor is more likely to reciprocate by giving more favourable performance ratings to employees who frequently help than the less helpful employees. Using the compensatory role of ingratiation (Bande et al., 2019), we propose the positive relationship between ingratiation and supervisors' employee performance ratings. Employee performance also involves extra-role behaviours apart from task-related behaviors. The supervisors may develop a positive impression of extra-role performance when an employee shows friendly and generous behavior towards the supervisor and co-workers. Hence, the supervisor may give higher performance ratings to the ingratiating employee. Based on these arguments, we hypothesize that:

**Hypothesis 3: There is a positive association between employees' perception of team helping behaviour and supervisors' rating of subordinates' performance**

[Insert Figure 1 here]

**Serial Mediation of Team Psychological Safety and Team Helping Behaviour between Ingratiation and Supervisor Ratings**

Manipulating theoretical relationships between the constructs used in hypotheses H1, H2, and H3, this study proposes a serial mediation of team psychological safety and the team helping behaviour between ingratiation and supervisors' ratings of employees' performance. This serial mediation mechanism (Figure 1) explains how ingratiation facilitates employees in obtaining psychological safety, which further enhances their helping behaviour and earns them higher ratings from their task performance supervisors. This chain relationship is also plausible in exchange theory. As a social influence tactic, ingratiation paves the way for employees to feel psychologically safe in the workplace by exchanging favours or flattering their supervisors. Further, psychological safety encourages a supportive work environment (Frazier et al., 2017;
Kahn, 1990), discretionary citizenship behaviour (Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998), the suggestion of new ways to perform a task (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009), work engagement (e.g., Kahn, 1992; May et al., 2004; Edmondson & Lei, 2014), and OCB and task-related behaviours (Rich, Lepine & Crawford (2010). Helping is also a discretionary behaviour (Organ, 1998). Since supervisors appreciate extra role-behaviours (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998), including 'helping', because it improves the image of an employee in front of the supervisor (Yun, Takeuchi & Liu, 2007; Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff & Blume, 2009; Asadullah et al. 2016), they are likely to positively rate the performances of those employees who are exhibiting a high level of helping behaviour. Thus, we hypothesize that:

**H4: Team psychological safety and team helping behaviour serially mediate the relationship between ingratiation and supervisors' ratings of employees' task performance.**

**Research Methodology**

**Sample and Procedure**

The data were collected from customer service teams working in the hospitality industry of Pakistan in autumn 2015. Our sample's 35 hotels were premium organisations that provide a range of premier services to business customers and general consumers. Typically, these hotels' essential hospitality services include food and dining services, room service, conference rooms, and laundry and fitness services. There was a strong focus on service differentiation by creating heartfelt customer experiences and providing a high-quality service.

We approached the service teams in each participating hotel through their respective Human Resources (H.R.) managers. H.R. managers provided us with a list of service teams working in their respective hotels, which included the names and designations of team members and the days and hours of shifts during the data collection period. Each team had one designated
team leader, often called a 'shift manager' or 'shift in-charge.' The designated shift manager was usually responsible for planning, communicating, and streamlining the service team's day-to-day operational activities. They were also responsible for assigning roles and responsibilities to each team member, sharing the working plan, providing direction, and ensuring high-quality service to customers throughout the shift. There were several tasks performed by each service team, such as greeting guests upon arrival on concierge, providing front desk services to guests, administering check-ins and check-outs, sorting and delivering mail and messages, handling complaints and negative feedback, and giving room service. The shift manager was primarily responsible for assessing and reporting the performance of each team member. The shift manager's performance evaluation determined each service team member's bonuses, benefits, rewards, and salary increments.

The data collection was accomplished using the self-administered survey questionnaires. The surveys were designed in English, one of the critical job requirements for customer service employees in Pakistan's hospitality industry. A cover letter was attached with each questionnaire addressing ethical concerns, i.e., participants' consent, the privacy of data, assurances of confidentiality, and the researchers' contact details. The survey participants were explicitly informed that they should contact the researchers directly by email or telephone if they had questions about the study or the questionnaire.

Data were collected from two different sources using two different questionnaires. The first questionnaire was distributed among team members who were asked to assess their ingratiation behaviour and psychological safety. The questionnaire also included participants' demographic information (gender, age, education, work experience) and job type (full-time, part-time, contractual). Shift managers also responded to their gender, education, work experience,
and team size. The second questionnaire was distributed among shift managers to obtain ratings of helping behaviour and employees' task performance under their supervision. We avoided terms such as 'ingratiation' and 'opinion conformity' to deal with potential biases. We developed a coding scheme to match team leaders' responses with their supervised team members to identify team members. Two hundred twenty-five customer service teams were requested to participate in the study at the team-level. Of 225 teams, 180 teams with 499 team members completed the data collection process. The response rate was 82.1%. Retained for the statistical analysis were only those teams where at least two members rated their ingratiation behaviour, team helping behaviour, and team psychological safety. The shift manager rated the performance of at least two team members.

The final sample is 86% male team members and 14% female team members. Nearly 34% of team members held a school matriculation qualification, 27% had an intermediate qualification, 19% of team members had a bachelor's degree, and 5% had a master's degree. Three percent of team members had more than ten years of experience in the hospitality industry: 9% had 6-10 years, 31% had 3-5 years, 29% had 1-2 years, and 27% had less than 1-year experience. Regarding job type, 87% of team members worked as full-time permanent employees, 5% worked as full-time contractual employees, and 7% as casual workers. Among team leaders, 82% were male, and 18% were female. Nearly 20% had more than ten years of managerial experience, 7% had 6-10 years, 30% had 3-5 years, 22% had 1-2 years, and 19% had less than one year of experience. Team size ranged from 2 to 6 team members, with an average team size of 2.77.

Measures
We used well-established scales to measure the study variables. All scales have strong content validity and high reliability, as demonstrated by previous literature.

**Ingratiation Behaviour.** We adapted the scale used by Park et al. (2011), who measured ingratiation behaviour using flattery and opinion conformity dimensions. Park et al. (2011) borrowed this scale from Kumar and Beyerlein (1991), Westphal (1998), Westphal and Stern (2007). The items were re-worded for the hospitality industry context. Team members rated their ingratiation behaviours on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very frequently). A sample item is: "Over the past six months, how often have you complimented the supervisor about his/her insight on a particular work-related issue?". The internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of the scale was 0.85.

**Psychological Safety.** Team members rated their team's psychological safety climate on the well-established nine-item scale developed by Edmondson (1999). Two sample items are: "If members make a mistake on this team, it is often held against them" (reverse-scored), and "No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that would undermine anyone else's work." The internal consistency of the scale was 0.83, and checks for aggregating individual responses to the team-level yielded acceptable values (ICC (1) = .46, ICC (2) = .72, p < .01).

**Helping Behaviour.** Team members rated helping behaviour on a seven-item scale developed by Van Dyne and LePine (1998). The items measured reflect the extent to which team members assisted each other and their shift manager in performing tasks. Sample items are: "Team members of my group volunteer to do things for the shift team," and "Team members of my group assist the supervisor with his/her work." The responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very frequently). The reliability of the scale was 0.90. The aggregation statistics revealed satisfactory results (ICC (1) = .63, ICC (2) = .84, p < .01).
Employee Task Performance. Shift managers' ratings of team members' task performance were measured using a 7-item scale developed by Williams and Anderson (1991). A sample item is: "This employee engages in activities that will directly affect his/her performance appraisal." The responses were obtained on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely). The reliability of the scale (Cronbach's alpha) was 0.67.

Control Variables. We used team members' demographic characteristics (gender, education, and work experience) as control variables because they often correlate with employees' task performance (Bowen, Swim & Jacobs, 2000). Further, we controlled for the effect of job type (full-time, part-time, casual) because the amount of time a team member spends with his/her supervisor may also affect the supervisor's perception of an employee's task performance (Treadway et al. 2007).

Analytical Strategy

The study variables were conceptualised at different levels of analysis. As the participating individuals were nested within customer service teams, the individual team members were referred to as the individual-level of analysis (Level 1). The customer service teams were referred to as the team-level of analysis (Level 2). In this study, we conceptualised the independent variable of ingratiation behaviour and the dependent variable of employee performance at the individual-level of analysis (Level 1). In contrast, the mediating variables of team psychological safety and team helping behaviour were conceptualised at the team-level of analysis (Level 2). Our proposed model presented the bottom-up relationship from the independent variable to mediating variables and top-down relationships from mediating variables to the dependent variable, making it a 1-2-2-1 design model.
The most advanced statistical approach used to such multi-level models is Multilevel Structural Equation Modelling (MSEM). MSEM combines the features of Multi-level Modelling (MLM) and Structural Equation Modelling (Krull & MacKinnon, 2001; Preacher, Zyphur, & Zhang, 2010; Zhang, Zyphur, & Preacher, 2009). The conventional MLM approach has the general limitation of the inability to test 'bottom-up' relationships, such as predicting team-level mediators and team-level dependent variables from individual-level independent variables (Croon & van Veldhoven, 2007; Preacher et al., 2010). However, MSEM offers the most robust technique to test such 'bottom-up' relationships and produce precise direct and indirect effects estimates by treating group means as latent variables (Lachowicz, Sterba, & Preacher, 2015). Such modelling decomposes latent variables into latent within-team and between-team components that may vary within and across teams. MSEM avoids the potential problems of conflated within- and between-level effects and can substantially reduce bias in between-team indirect effects compared with traditional MLM (Lachowicz et al., 2015; Preacher et al., 2010).

We adapted the MSEM procedure and syntax proposed by Lachowicz et al. (2015).

In this study, the direct and indirect relationships between independent, mediating, and dependent variables of the causal chain are represented by the structural relationship's coefficient at the team-level of analysis. The indirect effects were calculated using the product of the coefficients method (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002; MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007). The first coefficient was obtained by regressing the mediating variable on the independent variable at the team-level. The second coefficient was obtained by regressing the dependent variable on the mediating variable at the team-level.

The multi-level analyses were performed using Mplus version 8 (Muthén & Muthén, 2012). Mplus provides statistical significance tests and asymmetric confidence limits of the
direct and indirect effects. Asymmetric confidence limits offer 'the best balance regarding power and Type I error rates of the indirect impact (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004; Pituch, Stapleton, & Kang, 2006). If zero lies outside the 95% confidence limit, then there is a statistically significant presence of an indirect effect. The asymmetric confidence limits method does not assume normality and provides a more accurate and robust mediation test (MacKinnon et al., 2007).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows the summary statistics, including means, standard deviations, and correlations among the constructs. No control variable (gender, education, experience, and job nature) was significantly related to the employee's task performance. We dropped all control variables from the subsequent analysis to reduce the probability of biased estimates and gain maximum power (Becker, 2005).

[Insert Table 1 here]

Discriminant Validity of Constructs

We also determined the latent structure and validity of the construct by testing the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model in AMOS (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007; Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). We followed Brown (2006) in determining the model fit based on absolute fit indices: the root means residual (RMR), the root means square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the comparative fit indices (CFI). We ran two CFAs to assess the discriminant validity of the study constructs. First, we ran a two-factor model in which each item measuring ingratiation behaviour was loaded on its respective latent construct (Factor 1). In contrast, each item measuring psychological safety and helping behaviour was loaded on a single latent
construct (Factor 2). Second, we ran a three-factor CFA model. All the items were loaded on their respective constructs of ingratiation, psychological safety, and helping behaviour. The three-factor model showed a better fit with the data than the two-factor model, with the following fit indices: ($\chi^2/df = 3.59$; $RMR = 0.06$; $RMSEA = 0.05$; $CFI = 0.982$). Further, we applied four additional tools to assess our constructs' distinctive validity and reliability. These tools included composite reliability, average variance extracted, maximum shared variance, and McDonald construct reliability. The results are presented in Table 2. All study variables meet the minimum acceptable criterion of all four tools. We concluded that our independent and mediating variables represent distinct constructs. Therefore, we retained the three-factor model for hypothesis testing.

| Insert Table 2 here |

**Hypothesis Testing**

The results of hypothesis testing using MSEM are presented in Table 3. Hypothesis 1 predicted that individual-level ingratiation is positively related to team psychological safety in terms of direct effects. The results revealed that individual-level ingratiation behaviour was positively and significantly associated with psychological safety, as indicated by a significant unstandardised coefficient ($b = 0.59, p < .01$). Hypothesis 1 is accepted. Hypothesis 2 predicted a positive relationship between team psychological safety and the team helping behaviour. Results showed that team psychological safety positively and significantly predicted team helping behaviour, as demonstrated by a significant unstandardised coefficient ($b = 0.85, p < .01$), supporting Hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 3 proposed a positive and significant relationship between helping behaviour and individual-level employee performance. In support of Hypothesis 3, we found a positive and significant relationship between team helping behaviour and individual-
level employee performance, as indicated by a significant unstandardised coefficient (b = 0.33, \( p < .01 \)).

[Insert Table 3 here]

In terms of indirect effect, Hypothesis 4 suggested an indirect relationship between individual-level ingratiation behaviour and individual-level employee performance via team psychological safety and team helping behaviour. The results showed that the causal chain of the relationship between individual-level ingratiation and individual-level employee performance was statistically significant, as shown by (unstandardised estimate of the product of coefficients = 0.14, \( p < .01 \), 95% CI = .07, .22), accepting Hypothesis 4. To assess whether this is a partial or fully mediated relationship, we ran a second model with a direct path from individual ingratiation to individual-level employee performance at the within level. The model with a direct path from individual-level ingratiation to individual-level employee performance had a chi-square (\( \chi^2 \)) value of 47.22 with 8 degrees of freedom (d.f.), while the model without the direct paths, having 1 additional degree of freedom, showed a chi-square (\( \chi^2 \)) value of 47.54 and 9 degrees of freedom (d.f.). We followed Satorra and Bentler's (2010) two-step procedure by using a chi-square difference test to compare two alternative models within a multi-level context. The Satorra-Bentler scaled chi-square difference test (TRd) revealed that adding direct pathways from ingratiation to employees’ performance rating did not significantly improve the model as indicated by a non-significant chi-square difference test (difference in chi-square = 0.32, correction factor (cd) = 1.19, TRd = 0.26, d.f. = 1, \( p > .05 \)). We reported regression coefficients of the model without the direct path. Thus, we concluded that the relationship between individual-level ingratiation and individual-level employee performance was fully mediated.

**Discussion**
This study found statistical support for hypothesis H1, stating that ingratiation behaviour is positively associated with team psychological safety. Researchers have generally ignored the origin of psychological safety and viewed it as an organisation-level phenomenon only. However, the roots of psychological safety lie in employee-initiated behaviours. Hence, psychological safety also is an employee-initiated team phenomenon (Ralston, 1985). This study extends existing research in this direction to test when individual-level ingratiation behaviour shapes team-level psychological safety. By doing so, this study demonstrates that psychological safety is an individual-initiated organisational phenomenon. A good team psychological climate is an important context that affects task coordination, collective effort, and a comfortable work environment (Edmondson, 1999). Employees feel less threatened about negative consequences (Kahn, 1990). Psychological safety is an employee-desired outcome. Hence, employees ingratiate with their supervisors to reinforce a higher level of psychological safety. Similarly, this finding also implies that employees use ingratiation in a planned manner as a tool to achieve a psychologically safe work environment. Hence, this finding supports the shared view of the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and Reinforcement Theory (Skinner, 1963, 1971).

This study also supports the association between team psychological safety and team helping behaviour (H2). Previous studies have offered a variety of empirical evidence about the positive outcomes of psychological safety, such as a supportive work environment (Frazier et al., 2017), discretionary citizenship behaviour (Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998), suggestions of new ways of performing a task (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009), work engagement (Kahn, 1992; May et al., 2004; Edmondson & Lei, 2014), and OCB and task-related behaviours (Rich, Lepine and Crawford, 2010). Although helping behaviour is a sub-dimension...
of OCB, such empirical evidence did not specifically highlight the role of psychological safety in helping behaviour. In contrast, this study has demonstrated theoretical implications related to the specific relationship of psychological safety with group-level employee helping behaviour. This study has also added new evidence to the existing empirical studies that have demonstrated a positive association between helping behaviour and supervisor ratings of employee performance (H3). This perspective also conforms with the findings of some previous studies stating that supervisors appreciate extra role-behaviours (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998), and particularly helping, which improves the image of an employee in the eye of the supervisor (Yun, Takeuchi & Liu, 2007; Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff & Blume, 2009; Asadullah et al. 2016).

Finally, this study advances existing research on ingratiation from positive organisational psychology. The most significant objective of this study was to develop an understanding of the conditions when an employee's ingratiation may bring positive outcomes despite being a risky behaviour. This study proposed a mechanism for employees to receive favourable performance ratings from their immediate supervisors using ingratiation behaviour as a vertical social influence tactic. Using a multi-level approach, we found that an individual's ingratiation behaviour positively impacts teams' psychological safety, which then induces teams' discretionary behaviour that further leads to better performance ratings of the individual (H4). This finding implies that psychological safety and team-level helping behaviour mediate the relationship between ingratiation and supervisor rating of employee performance in the form of a chain. Previous research has overlooked such a chain mediation relationship of psychological safety and helping behaviour between ingratiation and favourable employee outcomes. The present study explains that employees use ingratiation to reinforce favourable performance ratings when they find that the work environment ensures psychological safety and encourages
helping behaviour. Similarly, this finding implies that favourable performance ratings are an employee-desired outcome. Employees achieve this outcome by ingratiating with their supervisors when they find psychological safety that encourages discretionary behaviours. Hence, this study's findings support the shared view of the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and Reinforcement Theory (Skinner, 1963, 1971). This chain relationship is also plausible because, as a social influence tactic, ingratiation facilitates employees in obtaining a psychologically safe environment where they can exhibit discretionary behaviours to receive higher ratings from their supervisors on their task performance.

Managerial implications

This study has offered two significant implications for practitioners in the hospitality industry. First, team-based organizations can find value in selecting applicants predisposed to create or perceive a safe work environment. Employees with higher perceptions of psychological safety have a more significant potential to engage in discretionary behaviors, as found in the current study. Since teamwork is one of the critical success factors for hospitality organizations (Köseoglu, Altin, Chan, & Aladag, 2020), managers can use screening devices to identify candidates who may positively contribute to a psychologically safe work environment. Second, the managers can also find value in identifying employee motives to ingratiate their supervisors for ensuring psychological safety in hospitality settings for two critical reasons. First, the managers in hospitality organizations may abstain from being an unnecessary target of employees' influence tactics by identifying their motives. Second, they may regulate ingratiation behavior to encourage extra-role behaviors (helping in this context). Third, the employees' important implication is that if they positively use ingratiation (e.g., being friendly and sociable
(Bande et al., 2019), they can enjoy psychologically safe work environments to exhibit extra-role behaviors. Hence, they may obtain higher performance ratings from their supervisors.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has limitations that may pave the way for future studies. First, the study was conducted in Pakistan, a high-power distance and collectivist culture. Employees within such cultures rely heavily on supervisors for guidance and performance evaluation due to unequal power distribution. Also, working in such an environment means focusing on group identity and social cohesion with peers (Erdogan & Liden, 2006). Previous research has shown that individuals in such cultures often modify their behaviors to fit the context (Chatman & Barsade, 1995). Hence, we note this as a limitation of our study and consider that cultural values may have played their role in our proposed model. To test the generalizability of our research, we encourage future researchers to examine the same model in Western countries and consider the impact of cultural values (Hofstede, 1984). Second, future studies could examine the effect of ingratiation behavior on other constructs related to employee motives, including promotion, reward distribution, promotions, and career growth. Similarly, employee voice behavior can be added to the serial chain of the mediation mechanism. This study focused on employee-related outcomes. However, another fascinating insight can be obtained by extending this chain to customer-oriented behaviors.

Third, future researchers may focus on the moderated mediation mechanisms that can be investigated by examining the effect of the employees' personality traits and political skills that may manipulate the overall situation. Fourth, this study focused on performance ratings but ignored if such ratings affect actual supervisory decisions. This could also be interesting to examine how ingratiation can affect supervisors' actual decisions about rewards distribution.
among the employees. Fifth, we obtained data from front-line employees of the hospitality industry. However, the study can be replicated by getting data from the management staff controlling different organizational resources. Similarly, the study can be replicated by replacing supervisor's ratings with team-level outcomes, including team performance.
References
Ingratiating with bosses for favourable ratings


Ingratiation Behaviour

Psychological Safety

Helping Behaviour

Performance Ratings

Team-level of analysis (Level 2)

Individual-level of analysis (Level 1)

Figure 1: Hypothesized Multilevel Serial Mediation Model
Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Gender*</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Educationb</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Work experiencec</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Job typed</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ingratiation behaviour</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Team psychological safety</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Team helping behaviour</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Employee performance</td>
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<td>.72</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.67</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 499 employees working with 180 shift managers. *p < .05, **p < .01, Cronbach’s alpha values are presented on the diagonal, a: 1 = Male, b = Female, b: 1= Matriculation, 2 = Intermediate, 3 = Bachelors, 4 = Masters, 4 = Other, c: 1 = < 12 months, 2 = 13-24 months, 3= 25-60 months, 4 = 61-120 months, 5 = >120 months, d: 1 = Full time, 2 = Part time, 3 = Contractual

Table 2
Validity estimates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>MSV</th>
<th>MaxR(H)</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Ingratiation behaviour</td>
<td>0.881</td>
<td>0.711</td>
<td>0.504</td>
<td>0.891</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team helping behaviour</td>
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<td>0.559</td>
<td>0.399</td>
<td>0.887</td>
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<td>Team psychological safety</td>
<td>0.757</td>
<td>0.509</td>
<td>0.504</td>
<td>0.757</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee performance</td>
<td>0.717</td>
<td>0.588</td>
<td>0.399</td>
<td>0.957</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Table 3
*Test of direct and indirect effects using MSEM*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Direct paths</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>95% CI limits</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Hypothesis 1</td>
<td><strong>Bottom-up effect</strong></td>
<td>Ingratiation (Level 1) → Team psychological safety (Level 2)</td>
<td>.50**</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>Hypothesis 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Team psychological safety (Level 2) → Team helping behaviour (Level 2)</td>
<td>.85**</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td>Hypothesis 3</td>
<td><strong>Top-down effect</strong></td>
<td>Team helping behaviour (Level 2) → Employee’s performance (Level 1)</td>
<td>.33**</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Indirect path | Model 4 | Hypothesis 4 | **Product of coefficient for mediating effect** | Ingratiation (Level 1) * Team psychological safety (Level 2) * Team helping behaviour (Level 2) * Employee’s performance (Level 1) | 0.14** | .03 | (.07,.22) |

*Notes.* N = 499 employees working with 180 shift managers, Unstandardised estimates are reported, CI = Confidence interval, S.E. = Standard errors, *p < .05, **p < .01