CONTEXTUAL FACTORS INFLUENCING EMPLOYEE PROMOTIVE VOICE IN PUBLIC SECTOR: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MANAGEMENT SERVICE OFFICERS ASSOCIATED WITH THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT.

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to investigate the contextual factors influencing the promotive voice of public sector employees, particularly those employed by the ministry of public administration and management. The most critical contextual factors for this study were identified through a literature review and validated further through a pre-study. As a result, the organizational culture and supervisor relationship were recognized as two contextual elements for the study. An exploratory study was undertaken on quantitative data, collected from 63 management service officers assigned to the ministry of public administration and management, through a standardized self-administered questionnaire. The descriptive statistics were measured using the SPSS software package, following which the partial least square structural equation modeling assessment was performed using the SmartPLS software. The results demonstrate that organizational culture and supervisor relationships both have a significant impact on employee promotive voice. Further, the results demonstrate that the supervisor-employee relationship is the most critical contextual component influencing employee promotive voice in the public sector.

Key Words: Employee promotive voice, Contextual factors, Organizational culture, Supervisor relationship.

Introduction

Speaking up with ideas is extremely crucial for any organization's growth and sustainability. In the extant literature, this manner of expressing ideas is regarded as promotive voice behaviour (Guzman & Espejo, 2019; Morrison, 2011). It is defined as "promotive behaviour that emphasizes the expression of constructive criticism with the intent of improving rather than criticizing. This entails proposing novel changes and recommending reforms to established procedures even when others disagree" (Dyne & LePine, 1998, p.109). The emerging research demonstrates that the promotive voice has a substantial impact on an organization's performance and survival (Morrison, 2011), since it allows for the free flow of useful information. Further, it has been demonstrated empirically that the promotive voice

results in increased performance in both the ordinary and extra job roles (Guzman & Espejo, 2019). Consequently, it is indispensable for organizations to place an emphasis on improving voice behaviour. However, the inadequacy of promotive voice behaviour is a grave concern, particularly among public sector employees.

Fundamental reasons for the lack of promotive voice are being identified as the organizational culture and supervisor relationship. Organization culture is "a shared way of being, thinking and acting in a collective and coordinated people with reciprocal expectations" (Serpa, 2016, p.51). The literature and previous studies have established the positive relationship between organizational culture and promotive voice (Morrison, 2011). Besides, the supervisors' relationship is also a vital driving force of the employees' promotive voice. This refers to a "relationship that reflects a dynamic process in which the supervisor and supervisee develop a unique manner of utilizing a power and involvement structure that accommodates the supervisee's learning progression" (Holloway, as cited in Beinart, 2014). It is established that the supervisor relationship is a driving force of employee promotive voice (Morrison, 2011). The study's context also identifies organizational culture and the supervisor relationship as causes of inadequate promotive voice among public sector personnel.

According to the Labour Force Survey, the public sector employed 14.9% of the country's residents (2019, p.18). Moreover, the public sector lacks a strong promotive voice. This is evidenced by the results of the pre-study, which revealed that 80% of respondents felt their ideas and proposals are not appreciated. Given the strong association between promotive voice and performance outcomes demonstrated by the voice behaviour model (Morrison, 2011, p.382), it is necessary to rethink the explanation for the absence of promotive voice. This is especially critical if the benefits of higher performance resulting from the flow of information are to be realized (Guzman & Espejo, 2019). Additionally, it may foster staff involvement and dedication, which may result in increased productivity, unless otherwise specified (Ahlam, 2018; Priyadarshani & Anjala, 2019). Thus, the public sector should investigate the contextual aspects that contribute to employee promotive voice.

Research Problem

Numerous theoretical endeavours demonstrate that scholars are intrigued with the antecedents of employee voice (Morrison, 2011). The majority of these studies have been undertaken outside of Sri Lanka. Further, previous related research undertaken in Sri Lanka also does not encompass the context of the proposed investigation (Gunawardana, 2014; Sawithri, Nishanthi & Amarasinghe, 2017). Consequently, to the best of researcher's knowledge the influence of contextual factors on employee voice is under explored.

Sri Lanka is among the less developed countries, requiring constructive proposals which will result in development. However, the serious lack of promotive voice can be observed, especially in public sector. Conversely, a severe dearth of promotive voices can be found witnessed especially in the public sector. Morrison (2011) emphasizes that employees seek clues about whether or not their work environment is conducive to speaking up and use these clues to guide their voice behaviour. As a result, contextual circumstances play a critical role in forecasting employee voice behaviour. Despite the fact that insufficient employee voice is

a crucial issue, academic research has been inattentive in exploring the antecedents of employee voice, particularly in the public sector. As a result of the paucity of research on this subject, there is a significant empirical vacuum in our understanding of the determinants of employee voice. The primary research objective of this study is to investigate from the perspective of management assistants the influence of the contextual antecedence in the employee voice, notably in the public sector.

Literature Review

Prevailing literature on employee voice can be seen mainly in three directions. First in defining voice and related constructs, second on investigating categories of voice and third exploring the antecedents. In essence, voice is defined as "an act of expression" (Morrison, 2011, p.375). This reflects the degree to which individuals share their opinions, ideas and issues to the upper echelon. This is determined by both individual and environment factors (Morrison, 2011). Furthermore, this act can be prohibitive or promotive. Among those, many organizations encourage the promotive voice as it is advantageous. The present study focuses on the employee's promotive voice behaviour, as there is a severe lack of promotive voice among public sector employees.

Promotive voice behaviour is defined as "promotive behaviour that emphasizes expression of constructive challenge intended to improve rather than merely criticize. This involves making innovative suggestions for change and recommending modifications to standard procedures even when others disagree" (Dyne & LePine, 1998, p.109). This proactive expression has a myriad of benefits, including increased innovation, improved information flow, enhanced engagement, and peak performance at the individual, team, and organizational levels (Guzman & Espejo, 2019). As a result, it could have enormous ramifications for organizational performance and survival. Therefore, the contextual components that influence the promotive voice of public sector employees should be reconfigured.

Contextual factors contribute to reform the extent of employees promotive voice. This is established by the evidence from prior empirical and theoretical attempts. The voice behaviour model articulates the contextual antecedence of voice behaviour (Morrison, 2011, p.382). They are organizational structure, organizational culture, workgroup related factors, collective level believes, supervisor openness, supervisor relationship, leadership style and more senior leaders are the contextual factors indicated by the voice behaviour model. Among such, organizational culture and supervision were the main precedents of the promotive voice behaviour of employees in the public sector.

Organizational culture has a tremendous impact on the promotive voice of an individual. This refers to "a shared style of being, thinking and acting in a collective and coordinated group with mutual expectations" (Serpa, 2016, p.51). The voice behaviour model articulates the relationship between organizational culture and promotive voice (Morrison, 2011, p.382). Furthermore, Kwon and Farndale (2020), contend that organizational norms (an indicator of organizational culture) impact employee voice. Besides that, earlier research has shown that organizational culture is a critical aspect in promoting or prohibiting employee voice. In

addition, employee voice is stimulated with supporting culture, according to two research conducted by Dutton et al. (as cited in Morrison, 2011). Furthermore, a recent study of primary school teachers in Korea discovered a positive (r=0.43) significant (p=0.05) association between organizational culture and employee voice (Gholampour, Pourshafaei & Ghasemian, 2019). It could therefore be argued that organizational culture has a significant influence on the promotive voice of employees of the public sector.

Supervisor relationship is another driving force of employee promotive voice. Since it is a multi-faceted term, theorists have characterized it in a variety of ways, such as work alliance (Bordin, as cited in Tangen & Borders, 2016; Fleming & Benedek, as cited in Tangen & Borders, 2016), interpersonal relationship (Holloway, as cited in Tangen & Borders, 2016), and as a tripartite relationship model (Watkins, as cited in Tangen & Borders, 2016). The supervisor relationship, according to Holloway, is "the relationship that represents a dynamic process in which the supervisor and supervisee create a personal style of using a structure of power and involvement that accommodates the supervisee's progression of learning" (as cited in Beinart, 2014). The voice behaviour model illustrates the association between the supervisor relationship and employee voice (Morrison, 2011, p.382). Furthermore, previous research has shown that supervisor relationship has an impact on employee voice. A study collecting responses from supervisors and subordinates in both Taichung, Taiwan confirmed that supervisor support encourages subordinates to engage extra-role voice behaviour (Ho, 2017). Similarly, few other research revealed that trust in supervisor had a significantly greater influence on employees' voice behaviour (Detert & Burris, as cited in Morrison, 2011; Gaines, as cited in Morrison, 2011; Miceli et al., as cited in Morrison, 2011; Son, 2019). Besides, results of another study demonstrates that perceived rapport with supervisor influences employee voice during the feedback sessions (Zhang, Zhang, Zheng, Cheng & Rahmadani, 2019). Therefore, one could infer that the supervisor relationship does have a considerable influence on public sector employees' promotive voice.

Research Methodology

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study. The study's most incredibly important contextual variables (independent variables) which influence the promotive voice (dependent variable), were discovered through a literature survey and then validated in a pre-study.
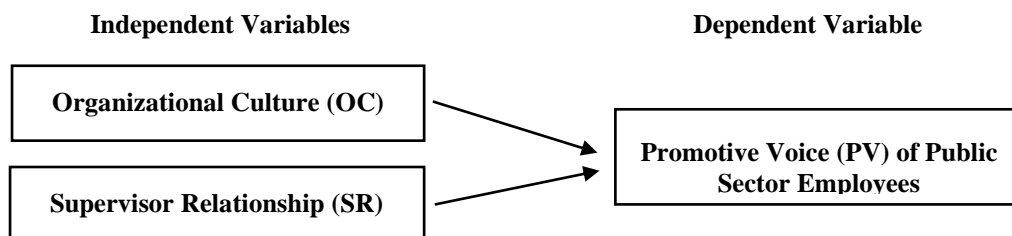

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study.

Statements of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses have been formulated for the existing investigations.

H_1: Organizational culture has a significant influence on promotive voice of public sector employees.

Organizational culture has a substantial impact on an individual's promotive voice. The model of voice behaviour elucidates the relationship between organizational culture and promotive voice (Morrison, 2011, p.382). Similarly, Kwon and Farndale (2020) argue that organizational norms (a proxy for corporate culture) have an effect on employee voice. Furthermore, there were also empirical studies demonstrating the crucial role of organizational culture in encouraging employee voice. A recent research of primary school teachers in South Korea revealed a favourable and statistically significant relationship between organizational culture and employee voice (Gholampour, Pourshafaei & Ghasemian, 2019). Likewise, two studies conducted by Dutton et al. (as cited in Morrison, 2011) indicate that fostering organizational culture stimulates employee voice. It could therefore be inferred that organizational culture has a significant influence on the promotive voice of employees of the public sector.

H_2: Supervisor relationship has a significant influence on promotive voice of public sector employees.

Supervisor relationship is a driving determinant of employee promotive voice. The voice behaviour model illustrates the association between the supervisor and the employee's voice (Morrison, 2011, p.382). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated empirically that supervisor relationships influence employee voice. A study conducted in Taichung and Taiwan established that supervisor support induces subordinates to engage in extra-role voice behaviour (Ho, 2017). Similarly, the findings of another study suggest that employee voice in supervisor developmental feedback sessions is determined by perceived relationship with the supervisor (Zhang, Zhang, Zheng, Cheng & Rahmadani, 2019). Besides that, a few more studies found that employees' voice behaviour was substantially influenced by supervisor trust (Detert & Burris, as cited in Morrison, 2011; Gaines, as cited in Morrison, 2011; Miceli et al., as cited in Morrison, 2011; Son, 2019). Consequently, one could infer that the supervisor relationship does have significant influence on public sector employees' promotive voice.

Sample and Data

This study adopted positivist philosophy and deductive approach, to investigate the influence of contextual factors on employee promotive voice. Quantitative design of study was therefore chosen. Moreover, hypotheses are derived from the deductions made. Upon that, the survey approach is determined, and a questionnaire is constructed in accordance with the validated measurement scales. Figure 1 depicts the study's variables: organizational culture, supervisor relationship, and employee promotive voice. These variables were quantifiable due to availability of pre-validated measurement scales. In order to measure,

promotive voice and organizational culture Dyne and LePines' (1998) promotive voice scale with six (06) items, and Wallachs' (1983) bureaucratic cultural scale with eight (08) items were taken into consideration. Further, Cliffe, Beinart, and Coopers' (2014) short version scale with eighteen (18) items was used to assess supervisor relationships. This scale measures three (03) indicators: safe basis, reflective education, and structure. A Likert's scale questionnaire was designed with aforementioned item as well as demographic information. This cross-sectional survey, administrated through online media, gathered data from a convenient sample of 66 management assistants employed at Sri Lanka's Ministry of Public Administration and Management. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and SmartPLS software packages were deployed to perform descriptive statistical analysis, and structural equation modelling, on data acquired from self-administrative structured questionnaire.

Findings and Discussion

Amongst the total response of 66, 63 were transmitted for analysis after removal of three (03) incomplete responses and establishment of non-missing values. The entire 63 were taken as no common outliers were detected.

Males made up 39.7% of the sample, while females made up 60.3%. Amongst them, 39.7% were single, while 60.3% were married. Furthermore, 12.7% of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 25, 73.0% were between the ages of 26 and 35, 12.7% were between the ages of 36 and 50, and 1.6% were beyond 50 years. In addition, the majority of responders (39.7%) have 4-6 years of experience, 30.2% have 1-3 years, 14.3% have 7-10 years and 15.9% have over 10 years of experience.

Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics for the constructs (Promotive Voice, Organizational Culture, and Supervisor Relationship) and the variables of Supervisor Relationship (Safe Base, Reflective Education and Structure). As indicated in Table 1, Promotive Voice and Supervisor Relationship (including Supervisor Relationship variables Safe Base, Reflective Education and Structure) had a Mean value greater than 4. Further, Organizational Culture recorded a Mean value of 1.7 on a scale of 0-3, which is higher than the Mean value. This demonstrates that both the Supervisor Relationship and Organizational Culture are extant in the context of the study. The researcher studied the distribution of responses and data points using descriptive statistics, taking into consideration the Mean value and Standard Deviation (SD) of each variable. Organizational Culture has a standard deviation less than one (SD<=1), indicating that all responses are closely clustered around respective individual Mean value. In comparison, the standard deviations of Supervisor Relationship (including the variables Safe Base, Reflective Education and Structure) and Promotive Voice are greater than one (SD >=1), showing that the data point distribution is not consistent. According to Haenlein & Kaplan (2004), partial least squares, a variance-based structural equation modelling can be employed for studies with small sample size. Further, Hair et al, 2019, acknowledges that partial least squares structural equation modelling is appropriate for

small sample size and does accommodate variance in the data. Hence, this study employed partial least squares, a variance-based structural equation modelling, to accommodate the data variance and the small sample size. As a consequence, SmartPLS software is used, which performs partial least square structural equation modelling.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Promotive Voice (PV)	06	4.513	1.543
Supervisor Relationship (SR)	18	4.621	1.468
- *Safe Base (SB)*	09	4.841	1.475
- *Reflective Education (RE)*	05	4.568	1.564
- *Structure (ST)*	04	4.452	1.592
Organizational Culture (OC)	08	1.744	0.543

The Measurement Model

Measurement model is assessed at the commencement of the analysis, in accordance with Garson's suggestions (2016). Figure 2 depicts the measurement model. Table 2 summarizes the validity and reliability results. The threshold value of Standardized Factor Loading (SFL) of indicators is above 0.7 (Hair et al., as cited by Garson, 2016) and Promotive Voice, Safe Base, Reflective Education and Structure had statistics that are above the threshold values. This establishes the convergent validity (Hair et al., 2014). However, one indicator (B1 with corresponding statistics of 0.563) of Organizational Culture with reduced SFL was retained, as removing it led to a reduction in composite reliability. According to the available literature, "an indicator with a measurement loading of.40 to.70 should be removed if removing it enhances composite reliability" (Hair et al., as cited in Garson, 2016). Besides that, the Composite Reliability (CR) value should be between 0.6 and 0.8 (Höck & Ringle, as cited by Garson, 2016), Cronbach's Alpha (CA) value should be greater than 0.8 (Garson, 2016, p.64), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value should be greater than 0.5 (Höck & Ringle, as cited by Garson, 2016). Table 2 shows statistical results for research variables that are above the threshold levels. The square root of the average variance extracted estimate of each scale was greater than the correlation of the relevant construct to all other constructs, indicating discriminant validity (Garson, 2016, p.67). Consequently, the above results indicate the reliability and validity of the data.

Table 2: Reliability and Validity Measures

Variable	N	SFL (Min-Max)	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha	Discriminant Validity				
						OC	PV	RE	SB	ST
OC	6	0.563-0.779	0.506	0.859	0.815	0.711				
PV	6	0.770-0.908	0.758	0.949	0.935	0.436	0.871			
RE	5	0.878-0.946	0.840	0.963	0.952	0.154	0.572	0.917		
SB	8	0.734-0.944	0.798	0.969	0.963	0.252	0.677	0.886	0.894	
ST	4	0.899-0.961	0.877	0.966	0.953	0.231	0.527	0.859	0.829	0.937

The Structural Model

Structural model, following the establishment of measurement model, was analysed to verify the direct paths and the path significance at the 5 percent confidence level. Figure 3 depicts the path diagram of the structural model. Table 4 shows the standard regression weights and p-values.
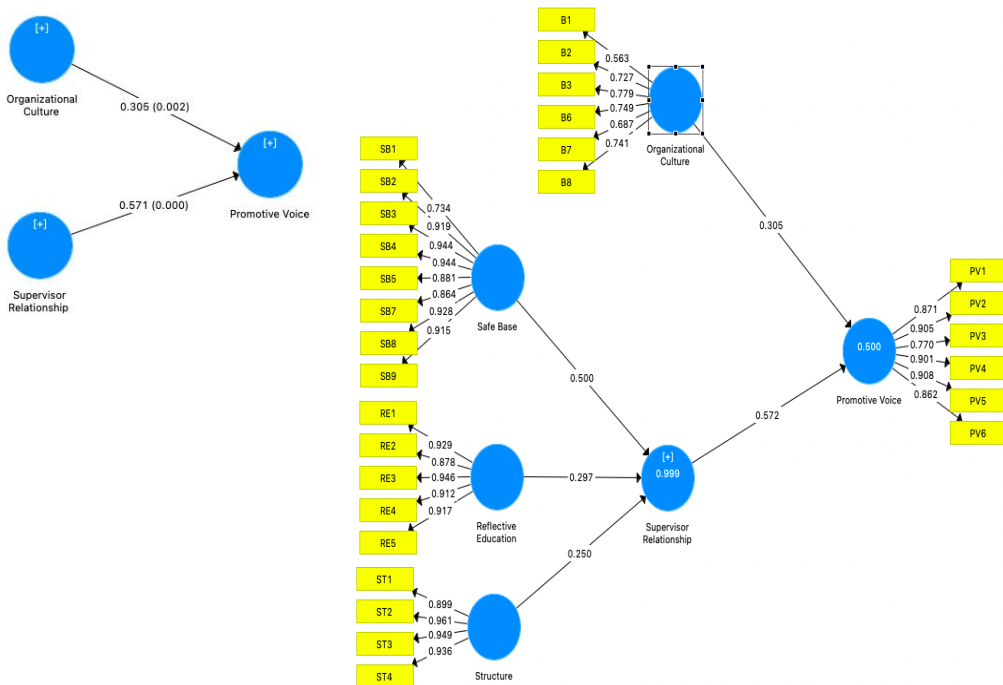

Figure 3: Structural Model of the Study.

Table 3: Model Fit of Structural Path Model of the Study

Measures	Statistical Results			
Predictive Relevance (Q^2)		SSO	SSE	Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)
	PV	63	34.704	0.449
Effect Size	OC -> PV			0.176 = Medium effect
(Values of F^2)	SR -> PV			0.618 = High effect
SRMR	Saturated Model - 0.000			Estimated Model - 0.000
NFI	Saturated Model - 1.000			Estimated Model- 1.000
R Square value (R^2)	R Square – 0.499			R Square Adjusted – 0.483

Source: Survey Data.

The model fit, of the model relevant to existing study, is evaluated through the observation of Q^2, F^2, SRMR, NFI and R^2 measures. Table 3 depicts the model fit indices. Accordingly, the Q^2 value, relevant to the path model ($Q^2 = 0.499$), is greater than zero. Hence, it shows that the quality of the model has been established under the predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2019). In addition, the value of Cohen's Indicator (f^2) proves that the OC accounts for medium effect ($f^2 > 0.15$) and SR accounts for high effect ($f^2 > 0.35$) (Garson, 2014; Hair et al., 2019). Moreover, the resulted SRMR value of 0.000 indicates a perfect fit (Henseler et al., 2015). Further, the NFI value (1.000) above 0.90 shows that the model for direct relationship entails acceptable model fit, specifically under the criterion of NFI (Hair et al., 2012). In addition, Adjusted R^2 value of 0.483 (which is closer to 0.5) shows that moderate explanation of variance explained by predictor variables in this direct path model (Hair et al., 2014; Hair et al., 2019). The result shows that the independent variables predicts the promotive voice only at 47%. Therefore, this reveals that the remainder of the variance is explained by variables not considered in this study. Consequently, it can be concluded that the model demonstrates satisfactory model fit.

Table 4: Results of Correlation and Regression Analysis

Hypotheses	Relationships	β co-efficient	P-value	Decision
H_1	OC ➔ PV	0.305	0.002	Supported
H_2	SR ➔ PV	0.571	0.000	Supported

The first hypothesis (H_1) claimed that organizational culture had a significant influence on public sector employees' promotive voice. At the 5% level of confidence, the results confirm the existence of a significant influence. Thus, the observed data supports the

hypothetical relationship (β=0.305, p<0.05) and reveals that organizational culture does have a considerable influence on public sector employees' promotive voices. As a result, H_1 is accepted. This study's findings confirm those of prior studies (Dutton et al., as cited in Morrison 2011; Further et al., 2018; Gholampour et al., 2019). Importantly, this finding validates the association indicated by the voice behaviour model (Morrison, 2011, p.382).

The second hypothesis (H_2) proposed that supervisor relationships had a significant impact on public sector employees' promotive voice. The resulting statistics indicate the presence of a substantial effect at the 5% level of confidence. Consequently, the observed results support the anticipated association (β =0.571, p<0.000) and demonstrate that the supervisor relationship has a profound impact on promotive voice. Thus, H_2 is accepted. The results of this investigation complement those of previous studies (Detert & Burris, as cited in Morrison, 2011; Gaines, as cited in Morrison, 2011; Ho, 2017; Miceli et al., as cited in Morrison, 2011; Son, 2019; Zhang et al., 2019) also verify the relationship shown in the model of voice behaviour (Morrison, 2011, p.382).

Current study contributes to the theoretical, empirical and management implications. First, the findings demonstrate empirically that organizational culture and supervisor relationships are critical determinants of promotive voice in public sector employees, particularly management assistants employed at the ministry of public administration and management. Second, it necessitates managerial implications for organizational culture and supervisor relationship. For instance, supportive norms and practices can be enforced to foster an open organizational culture conducive to enhancing promotive voice. Moreover, to enhance promotive voice, a favourable supervisor relationship can be nurtured by job profile design, which holds supervisors accountable for enhancing their subordinate's promotive voice or constructive idea expression. This can be further motivated by a reciprocal incentive scheme and linked performance appraisal. This can be further reinforced through the use of a reciprocal incentive plan and performance rating system. These elements can help foster the establishment of a positive organizational culture and supervisor relationship, hence strengthening promotive voice. Third, the study validates the associations indicated in the voice behaviour model (Morrison, 2011). Despite these implications, this study is not without flaws.

Scope and sample limitations of the existing study can be considered in future research. First, there are numerous predictors of promotive voice. It can be categorized into individual and contextual variables (Morrison, 2011) and just two contextual variables were addressed in the study. Second, the findings might have been influenced by the survey method's perceptual imperfections. Thirdly, Sri Lankan contextual factors, particularly the demographics (public administrative assistants) and sample characteristics, may have influenced the findings. As a result, this opens up the possibility of studying the effect of several other antecedents on promotive voice using alternative research methodologies and in alternative contexts.

Conclusion

In light of the lack of promotive voice among Sri Lankan public sector employees, the research sought to identify and investigate the critical contextual antecedents of promotive voice. In a preliminary analysis, it was discovered that organizational culture and the supervisory relationship were most significant determinants of the public sector employees' promotive voice. The findings have indicated that the organizational culture and supervisor relationship have a profound influence on an employee's promotive voice. Besides that, it was found that the supervisor relationship has a greater influence than the organizational culture. Despite its limited scope and context, this study confirms the causation of the voice behaviour model and substantiates earlier findings. Henceforward, it implies that focusing on a supportive culture and supervisor relationship may result in an increase in promotive voice.

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