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The Psychological Safety Nexus: “Unravelling Its Impact On Employee Engagement Through Perceived Organizational Support Of Generation Y (Millennials) Employees”

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Abstract

Employees display full work engagement when they feel free to express their thoughts and worries at work. Employee perceived organizational support increases the strength between psychological safety and workplace benefits. Employees who experience high POS develop stronger trust and commitment which strengthens psychological safety and leads them to increase their work effort. The study investigates the relationship between psychological safety and employee engagement, its effect on perceived organizational support, and the mediating role of organizational support. The study examines the relationship between psychological safety and employee engagement among Millennials in India's health sectors in Hyderabad City. A 200-person sample was analyzed using purposive sampling and regression analysis to assess the impact of psychological safety on engagement and perceived organizational support. The study found that Employee engagement together with perceived organizational support stem from the organizational practice of psychological safety. Psychological safety enables employees to express ideas without fear so they view their organization more positively which strengthens their employee engagement. Organizational support perceptions by employees lead to enhanced workplace engagement because they feel more motivated to participate in organizational activities.

Keywords: Psychological Safety, Perceived Organizational Support, Employee Engagement

INTRODUCTION

Psychological safety correlates with learning behavior; but, team efficacy does not, when accounting for team psychological safety. As anticipated, learning behavior serves as a mediator between team psychological safety and team performance. An integrated viewpoint wherein both team structures, including contextual support and team leader coaching, as well as collective beliefs, influence team outcomes (Edmondson, 1999). Psychological safety addresses how people perceive the effects of interpersonal risks in a job. Psychological safety, first studied by organizational researchers in the 1960s, has enjoyed a rebirth since the 1990s. Organizational research has shown that psychological safety is essential to understanding voice, teamwork, team learning, and organizational learning. A growing collection of conceptual and empirical research has examined psychological safety, its causes, and its effects on individuals, teams, and organizations (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). The employees' perception of psychological safety is strongly correlated with their sense of

vitality, which subsequently leads to engagement in creative endeavours (Kark & Carmeli, 2009). A significant cognitive state that has arisen as a crucial element in promoting learning, organizational transformation, and employee engagement is psychological safety—the conviction that the workplace is secure for interpersonal risk-taking (Edmondson, 1999; Kahn, 1990). Psychological safety was introduced to organizational sciences fifty years ago by Schein and Bennis (1965), however empirical research has only recently proliferated. This study has shown that psychological safety enables individuals to feel secure in the workplace, facilitating their growth, learning, contribution, and successful performance in a continuously evolving environment (Edmondson & Lei, 2014).

Notwithstanding the increasing scientific evidence supporting the significance of psychological safety in contemporary workplaces, numerous critical problems persist. To address these inquiries and further research on psychological safety, we performed a thorough meta-analysis of its antecedents and effects (Frazier et al., 2017). Psychological safety pertains to individuals' views of the overall social and occupational environment and their expectations regarding the reactions of colleagues to risk-taking behaviors (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009). Psychological empowerment, work engagement, and psychological safety are all positive motivational states related to work; however, psychological empowerment and work engagement specifically pertain to an individual's cognitions regarding their particular occupations or activities (Spreitzer, 1995). Psychological empowerment, work engagement, and psychological safety are positive motivational states related to work; however, they are distinct concepts. Psychological empowerment and work engagement specifically pertain to individuals' cognitions regarding their particular jobs or tasks (Spreitzer, 1996). Psychological safety pertains to individuals' perceptions of the overall social and work environment, specifically regarding anticipated responses from colleagues to risk-taking behaviors (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009). Therefore, it reflects the perceptions individuals have regarding the environment in which they operate, rather than their specific roles or responsibilities.

Employee engagement can be characterized in various manners. An engaged employee is characterized by consistent performance, low job turnover, and serves as a representative of the company at all times. The performance of an engaged employee, as defined by the Hay Group, is characterized as a result attained by fostering an employee's enthusiasm for work and aligning it with organizational success (Chandani et al., 2016). Kahn (1990) defines employee engagement as the alignment of organizational members' identities with their work roles; in this state of engagement, individuals utilize and articulate individuals physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. The cognitive dimension of employee engagement pertains to employees' perceptions regarding the organization, its leadership, and the working environment. The emotional aspect pertains to employees' feelings regarding each of the three factors and their resultant positive or negative attitudes toward the organization and its leaders. The physical dimension of employee engagement pertains to the physical energies expended by individuals to fulfil their roles. Employee engagement is frequently characterized as the emotional and intellectual commitment to the organization (Baumruk 2004; Richman 2006; Shaw 2005) or the level of discretionary effort demonstrated by employees in their roles (Frank et al. 2004).

According to organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986), three primary elements of perceived positive treatment from the organization—fairness, supervisor support, and organizational rewards and employment conditions—are expected to enhance perceived organizational support (POS). To prevent redundancy, we often exclude the term perceived when addressing the perceptions of favorable treatment that contribute to POS. While the majority of studies have focused on the correlation between employees' perceptions of favorable treatment and perceived organizational support (POS), a limited number of studies reviewed have investigated the relationship between personality traits and POS. Demographic variables are also examined as potential third-variable explanations for the relationships between antecedents and POS (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the impact of psychological safety on employee engagement.
2. To investigate the effect of psychological safety on perceived organizational support.
3. To explore the mediating role of perceived organizational support in the relationship between psychological safety and employee engagement.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESIS

Psychological safety and Employee Engagement

At PT Bio Farma, psychological safety accounts for 65% of the effect on employee engagement, which is a substantial increase. In order to achieve corporate goals, employees must be committed and motivated, and a supportive environment allows them to express themselves freely in this regard (Prihartati et al., 2023). Psychological safety substantially influences employee engagement factors, particularly Vigor and dedication, hence improving safety compliance. It also impacts all three characteristics of engagement—Vigor, devotion, and absorption—affecting safety involvement and underscoring its essential role in promoting employee engagement in mining settings (Quansah et al., 2023). The study evaluated several forms of employee quiet among educators and analyzed their correlation with job burnout, job engagement, and psychological safety. Psychological safety mediated the association between burnout and employee quiet, specifically among the three fundamental components of burnout and both acquiescent and quiescent silence, excluding prosocial silence. The indirect link of vigor/dedication and both quiet and acquiescent silence was significant for engagement (Kassandrinou et al., 2023). Mecek & M., (2023) in their research indicates a weak positive correlation between psychological safety and work engagement scores. A weak negative correlation exists between psychological safety and academic fatigue. A substantial link between academic burnout and occupational engagement characteristics was not identified.

H1: Psychological safety has a positive and significant impact on employee engagement.

Psychological Safety and Perceived Organization Support

Goodrich et al, (2024) The study assessed psychological safety and perceived organizational support within the CLE across several disciplines. Expanding upon this research, we investigated and assessed psychological safety and perceived organizational support throughout various diverse emergency medicine (EM) residencies to discern trends and factors influencing views of the clinical learning environment (CLE). Waseem et al., (2024) in their study highlights the role of psychological safety and perceived organizational support as mediators, demonstrating the positive impact of inclusive leadership on organizational commitment within Pakistan's telecom sector. This influence fosters employee engagement and loyalty by creating supportive work environments.

Perceived organizational support is a significant positive predictor of psychological safety among secondary school staff. This suggests that an increase in organizational support enhances psychological safety, whereas variations in participation in decision-making do not contribute to psychological safety (Joe-Akunne et al., 2022). Psychological safety serves as a positive moderator in the relationship between perceived organizational support and constructive deviance, thereby amplifying the influence of perceived support on employee behavior. Conversely, organizational identification does not have a significant impact on this relationship, underscoring the necessity of a supportive environment (Edosomwan et al., 2023)

H2: Psychological safety positively influences perceived organizational support.

Perceived Organization Support and Employee Engagement

Wowor & Dewi (2022) in their study explores the influence of psychological safety on employee engagement with organization support as an intervening variable. Sihag, (2021) in his investigated whether perceived organizational support helps in mediating the effect of psychological capital on employee engagement the results confirmed the full mediating effect of perceived organizational support on the psychological capital - employee engagement relationship and demonstrated that employees with a higher level of psychological capital, contribute more positively to the perceived organizational support level which further enhances the employee's level of engagement at the workplace. The study sought to examine the influence of factors including organizational support, opportunities for advancement, meaningful work, and psychological safety

on employee engagement among engineers in a petrochemical company, emphasizing the vital importance of work engagement for sustainable performance (Boikanyo & Naidoo, 2023).

H3: Perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between psychological safety and employee engagement.

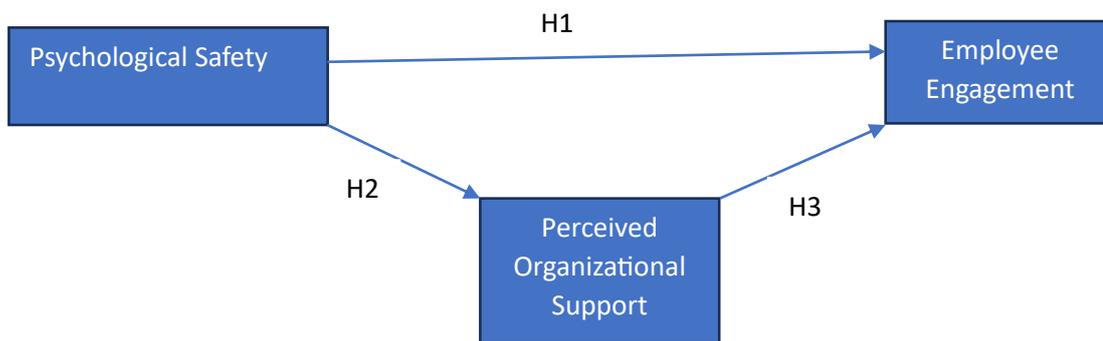


Figure -1 Conceptual Model

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study is quantitative and investigates the relationship between psychological safety and employee engagement, mediated by perceived organizational support (POS), among Generation Y (Millennials).

Population and Sample

Population: Employees born between 1981 and 1996 (Millennials) now working in India's health sectors in Hyderabad City.

Sampling Technique: Purposive sampling was employed to purvey millennial employees working in health sectors.

Sample Size: A 200-person sample was analyzed

Data Collection Method

The Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire, sent through Google Forms.

Analysis

Regression Analysis to assess the impact of psychological safety on engagement and perceived organization support and engagement.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Table-1 Reliability Analysis

Variables	No of Items	Cronbach Alpha value
Psychological Safety	5	0.941
Employee Engagement	5	0.947
Perceived Organizational Support	5	0.948

Psychological Safety ($\alpha = 0.941$) the scale has excellent internal consistency, meaning all 5 items reliably measure the same construct. Employee Engagement ($\alpha = 0.947$) the scale demonstrates near-perfect reliability, confirming that the 5 items cohesively measure employee engagement. Perceived Organizational Support ($\alpha = 0.948$) the scale also shows excellent reliability, indicating that respondents interpret the items in a uniform way.

Table -2 Hypothesis Testing Using Regression

Hypothesis	Variables	Beta Coefficient	R ²	P-Value	Result
H1	Psychological Safety & Employee Engagement	0.914	0.836	0.00	Significant
H2	Psychological Safety & Perceived Organizational Support	0.895	0.801	0.00	Significant
H3	Perceived Organizational Support & Employee Engagement	0.878	0.771	0.00	Significant

H1: Psychological Safety → Employee Engagement ($\beta = 0.914$, $R^2 = 0.836$, $p < 0.01$) The beta coefficient (0.914) indicates that Psychological Safety has a very strong positive impact on Employee Engagement. The R^2 is 0.836, meaning Psychological Safety accounts for 83.6% of the variation in Employee Engagement; a very predictive relationship. It's statistically significant at the 99% confidence level ($p = 0.00$).

H2: Psychological Safety → Perceived Organizational Support ($\beta = 0.895$, $R^2 = 0.801$, $p < 0.01$) Psychological Safety has a strong positive effect ($\beta = 0.895$) on Perceived Organizational Support. The R^2 (0.801) shows that PS accounts for 80.1% of the variance in POS. The p-value (0.00) indicates statistical significance.

H3: Perceived Organizational Support (POS) → Employee Engagement ($\beta = 0.878$, $R^2 = 0.771$, $p < 0.01$) POS has a strong positive impact ($\beta = 0.878$) on Employee Engagement. The R^2 (0.771) suggests that POS explains 77.1% of EE's variance. The p-value (0.00) confirms significance.

DISCUSSION

Employee engagement together with perceived organizational support stem from the organizational practice of psychological safety. Psychological safety enables employees to express ideas without fear so they view their organization more positively which strengthens their employee engagement. Organizational support perceptions by employees lead to enhanced workplace engagement because they feel more motivated to participate in organizational activities.

CONCLUSION

The findings confirmed that Employee Engagement is strongly tied to Psychological Safety and Perceived Organizational Support. To enhance engagement, organizations should foster Psychological Safety through open communication, trust, and non-punitive feedback. Make employees feel valued through recognition, fair treatment, and provision of resources, to boost perceived organizational support. The results are consistent with previous studies (Kahn, 1990; Eisenberger et al., 1986) and indicate that to have an engaged workforce, businesses need to foster both psychological safety and a sense of organizational support. Further studies might identify mediators or moderators (such as leadership style, culture of the organization) to better understand.

SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The mediation analysis would help identify Perceived organizational support (POS) as a connecting factor between psychological safety and employee engagement to establish the full sequence of causes. Other mediators such as trust, job autonomy, intrinsic motivation should be investigated to establish how psychological safety creates employee engagement. A research should study the influence of workplace toxicity and burnout and fear-based leadership on the association between psychological safety and employee engagement.

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