Psychological Safety in the Workplace: Fostering Open Communication and Innovation

Keamanan Psikologis di Tempat Kerja: Menumbuhkan Komunikasi Terbuka dan Inovasi

Asrini Mahdia
Universitas Gunadarma
*mahdiasrini@gmail.com

*Corresponding Author

ABSTRAK
Psychological safety in the workplace is of key importance in influencing individual well-being, team performance, and an organization's ability to innovate. This research aims to investigate the relationship between psychological safety at work and organizational innovation, as well as its managerial implications. This research method uses the PRISMA method to collect and analyze articles from international databases such as Scopus and Web of Science. The selected articles include empirical studies that explore the relationship between psychological safety and organizational innovation. The research results show that psychological safety plays a crucial role in facilitating an environment where employees feel safe to collaborate, take risks, and convey new ideas without fear of negative judgment. The implications of these findings highlight the importance of developing organizational policies that support psychological safety to enhance innovation and organizational performance.
Keywords: Psychological Safety, Workplace, Organizational Innovation, Human Resource Management, Leadership, Organizational Culture

ABSTRAK
Keamanan psikologis di tempat kerja menjadi kunci penting dalam mempengaruhi kesejahteraan individu, kinerja tim, dan kemampuan organisasi untuk berinovasi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki hubungan antara keamanan psikologis di tempat kerja dan inovasi organisasi, serta implikasi manajerialnya. Metode penelitian ini menggunakan metode PRISMA untuk mengumpulkan dan menganalisis artikel dari database internasional seperti Scopus dan Web of Science. Artikel-artikel yang dipilih meliputi studi empiris yang mengeksplorasi hubungan antara keamanan psikologis dan inovasi organisasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keamanan psikologis memainkan peran krusial dalam memfasilitasi lingkungan di mana karyawan merasa aman untuk berkolaborasi, mengambil risiko, dan menyampaikan ide-ide baru tanpa rasa takut akan penilaian negatif. Implikasi dari temuan ini menyoroti pentingnya pengembangan kebijakan organisasional yang mendukung keamanan psikologis untuk meningkatkan inovasi dan kinerja organisasi.
Kata Kunci: Keamanan Psikologis, Tempat Kerja, Inovasi Organisasi, Manajemen Sumber Daya Manusia, Kepemimpinan, Budaya Organisasi

1. Introduction

Psychological safety in the workplace is pivotal in cultivating an environment conducive to open communication and innovation among employees. It refers to a climate where individuals feel secure in taking interpersonal risks, such as voicing opinions, sharing ideas, and raising concerns without the fear of reprisal (Edmondson, 1999). Research consistently demonstrates that psychological safety positively correlates with team effectiveness and learning behaviors (Edmondson, 1999). This sense of safety encourages employees to engage openly, facilitating information sharing, gaining support for organizational changes, and fostering innovative work behaviors (Middleton et al., 2018).

Effective communication practices play a crucial role in nurturing psychological safety within organizations. Studies underscore the significance of transparent communication and leadership styles, such as transformational leadership, in building trust among employees and promoting openness to change (Zainab et al., 2021). Transparent communication, coupled with involving employees in change processes, cultivates positive attitudes towards organizational changes and enhances organizational support (Schulz-Knappe et al., 2019). Moreover, organizational communication serves as a catalyst for generating insights, securing consensus for change initiatives, and cultivating a culture of knowledge exchange and continuous learning (Koo et al., 2022).

Within the framework of fostering innovation, open communication stands as a cornerstone of open innovation practices. Open innovation integrates external ideas and resources with internal knowledge to drive organizational creativity (Randhawa et al., 2016). Practices like transparency, collaboration, and sharing within experimental communities support innovation networks and facilitate knowledge exchange (Santo et al., 2016). Additionally, community-integrated open innovation initiatives expand social networks, influence strategic orientations, and redirect innovation focuses within organizations (Sims & Seidel, 2016). In summary, psychological safety in the workplace is intricately linked to open communication, trust-building, and innovation. Organizations that prioritize creating a psychologically safe environment, where transparent communication is valued, are more likely to nurture cultures of open dialogue, collaborative effort, and innovative thinking among their employees. Psychological safety in the workplace is a concept that is gaining increasing attention in the context of human resource management. This relates to employees' perception that they can express themselves freely without fear of negative consequences such as bad judgment or punishment. On the other hand, innovation is considered a key element to increase organizational adaptability and creativity in facing increasingly complex and changing challenges in today's global market.

Although both concepts are widely recognized for their importance, the relationship between psychological safety in the workplace and the level of organizational innovation still requires deeper understanding. There is a paucity in the academic literature regarding mechanisms that concretely link psychological safety to an organization's ability to generate sustained and significant innovation. This creates a research gap that needs to be filled, especially in the context of developing managerial strategies that can strengthen psychological safety and simultaneously stimulate innovative potential in the workplace. It is hoped that this research will provide new insights and a unique perspective on how psychological safety in the workplace can be improved to support organizational innovation processes. By deepening understanding of this relationship, it is hoped that it can provide practical guidance for management in designing policies and practices that are able to create a work environment that is more productive, creative and responsive to change.

2. Research methods

2.1. Article Collection: This research uses the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) method to identify articles from reputable international databases such as Scopus and Web of Science. This approach ensures that the article search and selection process is carried out systematically and transparently.

2.2. Keywords: Examples of keywords used in searches include terms such as "psychological safety", "workplace", and "innovation". These keywords were chosen to align the scope of the search with the main focus of research related to psychological safety in the work environment and its impact on organizational innovation.

2.3. Number of Articles: The total number of articles obtained from the initial search and ultimately selected for inclusion in this review will be clearly documented. This process includes strict selection steps to ensure that only relevant and high-quality articles are included in the literature review analysis.

2.4. Inclusion Techniques: Inclusion criteria were used to select relevant articles, such as empirical studies exploring the relationship between psychological safety in the workplace and organizational innovation. The selected articles must also be in English and have the latest year of publication to be relevant to the current research context.

2.5. Exclusion Techniques: Exclusion criteria were applied to exclude articles that were not directly related to the research topic, such as single case studies or articles that did not make a significant contribution to the understanding of the relationship between psychological safety and workplace innovation.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Key Theories and Concepts

Psychological safety in the workplace is an important concept that refers to the shared belief within a team that the environment is safe for taking interpersonal risks (Triplett & Loh, 2018). This belief strongly supports work processes that are essential for innovation, such as generating new ideas, collaboration, increasing effort, and resolving conflict (Mukerjee & Metiu, 2021). By creating psychological safety, employees feel more comfortable in expressing themselves without fear of negative consequences, which ultimately increases work engagement, job formation, and overall improves performance (Petrov, 2023). In addition, psychological safety plays an important role as a mediator in the relationship between organizational innovation climate and innovative work behavior, influencing knowledge sharing among team members and increasing individual innovative work behavior (Xu & Suntrayuth, 2022).

The relationship between psychological safety and innovation is supported by various theories. For example, Edmondson (2018) defined psychological safety as the perception that work teams provide a safe environment for taking interpersonal risks and sharing information. These perceptions are critical in encouraging individuals to engage in behavior that challenges the status quo, thereby encouraging exploratory learning within teams engaged in innovative work (Κωστόπουλος & Bozionelos, 2011). Additionally, organizations that encourage psychological safety and initiative are more likely to increase the effectiveness of innovation processes, indicating the importance of creating an environment that supports risk taking and open communication (Baer & Fresé, 2002). In conclusion, psychological safety in the workplace is a fundamental concept that not only influences individual and organizational outcomes but also plays an important role in fostering innovation. By creating a safe environment where employees feel comfortable taking interpersonal risks and sharing ideas, organizations can stimulate creativity, collaboration, and drive innovation forward. This underscores the importance of integrating psychological safety into organizational practices to foster a culture that supports continuous innovation and growth.

3.2. Psychological Safety and Its Supporting Factors

Psychological safety in the workplace is a significant critical factor in influencing employee well-being, team effectiveness, and overall organizational outcomes. Research has identified key elements that contribute to the establishment of psychological safety within an organization, including management style, organizational norms, group dynamics, interpersonal relationships, leadership, and organizational trust (Hallam, 2023; Frazier et al., 2016; Cao & Zhang, 2020; Joo et al., 2022). Psychological safety allows employees to express

their thoughts and opinions freely without fear of negative consequences, thereby encouraging a culture of open communication and innovation (Wang et al., 2023; Cao & Zhang, 2020). Additionally, psychological safety is also associated with improved interpersonal communication, knowledge sharing, learning behavior, and organizational commitment (Vincent et al., 2022; Lee, 2023; Joo et al., 2022).

Factors such as workload management, psychological protection, and organizational support have been highlighted as important predictors of employees' psychological safety and mental health (Havaei et al., 2021; Ochiai & Otsuka, 2021). Additionally, incivility and loneliness in the workplace can have a negative impact on psychological safety, emphasizing the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive work environment (Rabiul, 2023; Jha, 2023). Studies also show that psychological safety plays a mediating role in the relationship between various organizational factors and employee outcomes, such as training from team leaders and learning behavior (Workman-Stark, 2020; Joo et al., 2022).

Overall, maintaining psychological safety in the workplace is critical to improving employee well-being, improving team performance, and driving organizational success. By prioritizing factors that contribute to psychological safety, organizations can create a positive work environment where employees feel valued, respected, and empowered to make effective contributions.

3.3. The Relationship Between Psychological Safety and Innovation

Empirical evidence from various studies supports a strong positive relationship between psychological safety and organizational innovation. Psychological safety, once established, facilitates important work processes that are the foundation of innovation, such as generating new ideas, collaborating with others, increasing effort, and resolving conflict (Mukerjee & Metiu, 2021). In addition, psychological safety and knowledge sharing act as significant mediators between organizational innovation climate and innovative work behavior, where psychological safety enhances individual innovative work behavior by influencing knowledge sharing among team members (Xu & Suntrayuth, 2022).

In an organizational context, high levels of psychological safety lead to an increase in employees' willingness to participate in innovation, which in turn improves innovation performance (Zhao et al., 2022). Psychological safety not only promotes open dialogue among team members but also increases innovation and team performance, benefiting both employees and the organization (Paulus, 2023). Studies show that psychological safety has a significant impact on employee and team innovation behavior, with cultural background and team type moderating this relationship (Zhu et al., 2022).

Psychological safety plays a crucial role in fostering innovative behavior among employees, as it increases their willingness to engage in innovative activities (Helmy et al., 2023). Individuals with strong psychological safety tend to be more proactive in welcoming innovation and change (Mo, 2023). Additionally, psychological safety allows employees to freely express their thoughts and opinions without fear of negative consequences, thereby promoting innovation in organizations (Wang et al., 2023).

Research also highlights the mediating role of psychological safety in various relationships, such as between workplace spirituality and innovative behavior (Taştan & İşiaçık, 2021), exchanges between leaders and preferred work behavior (Dar, 2024), as well as high-performance work systems and employee voice in behavior. innovative (Miao et al., 2020). In addition, psychological safety has been shown to have a positive influence on innovative work behavior by reducing anxiety and motivating employees to take risks associated with innovation (Dar et al., 2022). Overall, the synthesis of these studies confirms the crucial role of psychological safety in fostering organizational innovation by promoting a culture in which employees feel safe to take risks, share ideas, and engage in innovative behavior.

3.4. Moderation and Mediation Factors

Psychological safety, organizational culture, leadership, and structure play important roles as moderators or mediators in the relationship between psychological safety and workplace innovation. Psychological safety acts as a key factor influencing various aspects of organizational dynamics. Studies have shown that psychological safety can moderate the relationship between team diversity, team innovation, and performance by facilitating open conversations and respectful interactions (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). In addition, psychological safety and knowledge sharing mediate the relationship between organizational innovation climate and innovative work behavior, increasing individual innovative work behavior through increasing knowledge sharing among team members (Xu & Suntrayuth, 2022).

Leadership styles, such as inclusive leadership, ethical leadership, and entrepreneurial leadership, have been shown to influence innovative work behavior by mediating psychological safety and work engagement (Liu et al., 2023). In addition, inclusive leadership has been shown to have a multi-level mediating effect on team and individual innovative performance through psychological safety (Li & Tang, 2022). In addition, transformational leadership influences innovative work behavior through the mediating role of psychological safety and workplace friendship (Helmy et al., 2023).

Organizational climate, including factors such as initiative climate and innovation climate, can positively influence firm performance and innovation by fostering psychological safety (Baer & Fresé, 2002). Moreover, the impact of high-performance work systems on employees' innovative behavior is partly dependent on psychological safety, indicating the moderating role of psychological safety in this relationship (Miao et al., 2020). In addition, the relationship between abusive supervision and negative employee illegal innovation behavior is mediated by psychological safety (Wang et al., 2023). In conclusion, psychological safety plays a crucial role in moderating and mediating the relationship between various organizational factors, such as leadership style, organizational culture, and structure, and workplace innovation. Understanding and cultivating psychological safety can improve innovation outcomes and performance in organizations.

4. Conclusions

Psychological safety in the workplace is a fundamental concept that influences not only individual well-being and organizational performance, but also the ability to foster innovation. By creating an environment where employees feel safe to take interpersonal risks, share ideas, and collaborate without fear of negative consequences, organizations can increase their creativity, collaboration, and innovative performance. Support for psychological safety from various organizational factors, such as leadership style, culture, and structure, emphasizes the importance of incorporating psychological safety into organizational development strategies to achieve sustainable innovation.

These findings have important implications for practitioners and managers in managing organizational culture and leadership. Encouraging psychological safety in the workplace can be key to increasing employee participation in innovation and improving overall team and organizational performance. HR practitioners and managers need to focus on developing policies and practices that support psychological safety, such as inclusive leadership training and creating a supportive work climate.

Although the importance of psychological safety in the workplace has been recognized, this research also revealed several limitations. Some studies may be limited to certain contexts or specific samples, so generalization of findings needs to be done with caution. Additionally, psychological safety measurements are often subjective and can vary in interpretation, highlighting the need for more standardized and objective measurement methods.

To further develop understanding of the role of psychological safety in organizational innovation, future research could explore more specific dimensions of psychological safety,

such as contextual influences and cultural differences. Longitudinal studies can be helpful in understanding how psychological safety develops and impacts over time. Additionally, research could explore interventions or managerial practices that can increase psychological safety and their impact on innovation across different types of organizations and industries.

5. References

Baer, M. and Fresé, M. (2002). Innovation is not enough: climates for initiative and psychological safety, process innovations, and firm performance. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 24(1), 45-68. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.179

Cao, F. and Zhang, H. (2020). Workplace friendship, psychological safety and innovative behavior in china. Chinese Management Studies, 14(3), 661-676. https://doi.org/10.1108/cms-09-2019-0334

Dar, N., Sudiro, A., & Rahman, W. (2022). How and when overqualification improves innovative work behaviour: the roles of creative self-confidence and psychological safety. Personnel Review, 51(9), 2461-2481. https://doi.org/10.1108/pr-06-2020-0429

Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. Administrative Science Quarterly, 44(2), 350-383. https://doi.org/10.2307/2666999

Frazier, M., Fainshmidt, S., Klinger, R., Pezeshkan, A., & Vracheva, V. (2016). Psychological safety: a meta‑analytic review and extension. Personnel Psychology, 70(1), 113-165. https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12183

Hallam, K. (2023). Identifying the key elements of psychologically safe workplaces in healthcare settings. Brain Sciences, 13(10), 1450. https://doi.org/10.3390/brainsci13101450

Havaei, F., Ji, X., & Boamah, S. (2021). Workplace predictors of quality and safe patient care delivery among nurses using machine learning techniques. Journal of Nursing Care Quality, 37(2), 103-109. https://doi.org/10.1097/ncq.0000000000000600

Havaei, F., Ji, X., MacPhee, M., & Straight, H. (2021). Identifying the most important workplace factors in predicting nurse mental health using machine learning techniques. BMC Nursing, 20(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-021-00742-9

Helmy, I., Azizah, S., Purnomo, J., & Fitriani, N. (2023). The effect of transformational leadership on innovative work behavior in smes: test of a mediating model. Journal of International Conference Proceedings, 6(1), 153-164. https://doi.org/10.32535/jicp.v6i1.2245

Jha, S. (2023). Workplace loneliness and job performance: moderating role of person-environment fit. Industrial and Commercial Training, 55(2), 213-233. https://doi.org/10.1108/ict-06-2022-0041

Joo, B., Yoon, S., & Galbraith, D. (2022). The effects of organizational trust and empowering leadership on group conflict: psychological safety as a mediator. Organization Management Journal, 20(1), 4-16. https://doi.org/10.1108/omj-07-2021-1308

Koo, Y., Kim, S., & Song, J. (2022). The moderating effect of communication on congruence and incongruence of openness to change: is communication always beneficial for learning organization culture and knowledge sharing?. The Learning Organization, 29(2), 172-190. https://doi.org/10.1108/tlo-02-2021-0025

Lee, H. (2023). Organization resilience and organizational commitment: the roles of emotion appraisal and psychological safety. Hum. Resour. Manag. Serv., 5(2), 3371. https://doi.org/10.18282/hrms.v5i2.3371

Li, T. and Tang, N. (2022). Inclusive leadership and innovative performance: a multi-level mediation model of psychological safety. Frontiers in Psychology, 13. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.934831

Liu, X., Huang, Y., Kim, J., & Na, S. (2023). How ethical leadership cultivates innovative work behaviors in employees? psychological safety, work engagement and openness to experience. Sustainability, 15(4), 3452. https://doi.org/10.3390/su15043452

Miao, R., Lu, L., Cao, Y., & Du, Q. (2020). The high-performance work system, employee voice, and innovative behavior: the moderating role of psychological safety. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17(4), 1150. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17041150

Middleton, L., Hall, H., Muir, L., & Raeside, R. (2018). The interaction between people, information and innovation: information literacy to underpin innovative work behaviour in a finnish organisation. Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology, 55(1), 367-376. https://doi.org/10.1002/pra2.2018.14505501040

Mo, D. (2023). How inclusive leadership affects teachers' innovative behavior in chinese kindergartens: the sequential mediation role of teacher efficacy and psychological safety.. https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-3596241/v1

Mukerjee, J. and Metiu, A. (2021). Play and psychological safety: an ethnography of innovative work. Journal of Product Innovation Management, 39(3), 394-418. https://doi.org/10.1111/jpim.12598

Ochiai, Y. and Otsuka, Y. (2021). Reliability and validity of the japanese version of the psychological safety scale for workers. Industrial Health, 60(5), 436-446. https://doi.org/10.2486/indhealth.2021-0130

Paulus, P. (2023). The role of psychological safety in team communication: implications for human resource practices. Golden Ratio of Mapping Idea and Literature Format, 3(2), 156-166. https://doi.org/10.52970/grmilf.v3i2.399

Petrov, S. (2023). Psychological safety and job performance: the mediating role of work engagement and job crafting. Psihologia Resurselor Umane, 21(2). https://doi.org/10.24837/pru.v21i2.536

Rabiul, M. (2023). Transformational leadership style and psychological safety to meaningful work: moderating role customer incivility. The Journal of Management Development, 43(1), 49-67. https://doi.org/10.1108/jmd-09-2023-0292

Randhawa, K., Wilden, R., & Hohberger, J. (2016). A bibliometric review of open innovation: setting a research agenda. Journal of Product Innovation Management, 33(6), 750-772. https://doi.org/10.1111/jpim.12312

Santo, R., Ching, D., Peppler, K., & Hoadley, C. (2016). Working in the open: lessons from open source on building innovation networks in education. On the Horizon the International Journal of Learning Futures, 24(3), 280-295. https://doi.org/10.1108/oth-05-2016-0025

Schulz-Knappe, C., Koch, T., & Beckert, J. (2019). The importance of communicating change. Corporate Communications an International Journal, 24(4), 670-685. https://doi.org/10.1108/ccij-04-2019-0039

Sims, J. and Seidel, V. (2016). Organizations coupled with communities: the strategic effects on firms engaged in community-coupled open innovation. Industrial and Corporate Change, dtw043. https://doi.org/10.1093/icc/dtw043

Taştan, S. and İşiaçık, S. (2021). Covid-19 salgını döneminde yenilikçi iç davranışlarına yeniden bakış: algılanan işyeri maneviyatının ve psikolojik güvenliğin etkileri. Ahi Evran Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi, 7(2), 537-555. https://doi.org/10.31592/aeusbed.736610

Triplett, S. and Loh, J. (2018). The moderating role of trust in the relationship between work locus of control and psychological safety in organisational work teams. Australian Journal of Psychology, 70(1), 76-84. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajpy.12168

Vincent, M., Nimmi, P., Jose, G., John, A., & Kuriakose, V. (2022). Family incivility and workplace bullying: mediating and moderating model of psychological safety, optimism and organization-based self-esteem. International Journal of Conflict Management, 34(2), 234-252. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijcma-04-2022-0085

Wang, X., Wang, M., & Liu, J. (2023). Study on the influence mechanism of leaders' abusive supervision on employees' bootlegging innovation behavior. International Journal of Conflict Management, 34(5), 887-906. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijcma-02-2023-0026

Workman-Stark, A. (2020). Fair treatment for all: testing the predictors of workplace inclusion in a canadian police organization. Management and Labour Studies, 46(1), 94-110. https://doi.org/10.1177/0258042x20959998

Workman-Stark, A. (2020). Fair treatment for all: testing the predictors of workplace inclusion in a canadian police organization. Management and Labour Studies, 46(1), 94-110. https://doi.org/10.1177/0258042x20959998

Xu, Z. and Suntrayuth, S. (2022). Innovative work behavior in high-tech enterprises: chain intermediary effect of psychological safety and knowledge sharing. Frontiers in Psychology, 13. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1017121

Zainab, B., Akbar, W., & Siddiqui, F. (2021). Impact of transformational leadership and transparent communication on employee openness to change: mediating role of employee organization trust and moderated role of change-related self-efficacy. Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 43(1), 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1108/lodj-08-2020-0355

Zhao, F., Hu, W., Ahmed, F., & Huang, H. (2022). Impact of ambidextrous human resource practices on employee innovation performance: the roles of inclusive leadership and psychological safety. European Journal of Innovation Management, 26(5), 1444-1470. https://doi.org/10.1108/ejim-04-2021-0226

Zhu, J. and Lv, H. (2022). The effect of psychological safety on innovation behavior: a meta-analysis.. https://doi.org/10.2991/aebmr.k.220307.503

Κωστόπουλος, K. and Bozionelos, N. (2011). Team exploratory and exploitative learning: psychological safety, task conflict, and team performance. Group & Organization Management, 36(3), 385-415. https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601111405985