Research Paper

Psychological Safety and Affective Commitment among College Teachers

Sharu P John[1]*, Manikandan K[2]

ABSTRACT

Psychological safety is broadly defined as a climate in which people feel comfortable expressing and being themselves. The purpose of the present study is to understand the relationship between psychological safety and affective commitment among college teachers and also to find whether psychological safety is a predictor of affective commitment. A total of 344 college teachers from different districts of Kerala participated in this study. Data were analyzed using correlation and regression using SPSS software. Results indicated that psychological safety has a significant positive correlation between affective commitment and psychological safety is a significant predictor of affective commitment.

Psychological safety is the belief that the workplace is safe for interpersonal risk-taking (Edmondson,1999, Kahn,1990). In other words, psychological safety is broadly defined as a climate in which people feel comfortable expressing and being themselves. The concept of psychological safety was first introduced to the field of organizational science by Schein and Bennis (1965) as a critical part of the "unfreezing" process required for organizational learning and change. Amy Edmondson (1999) viewed psychological safety as a team-level shared belief whereas Kahn (1990) conceptualized psychological safety at the individual level. Many researchers have identified psychological safety as a cognitive state necessary for learning and change to take place (Schein & Bennis,1965., Edmondson 1999). Several studies have shown many positive work behavioural outcomes associated with psychological safety. For example, psychological safety has a direct impact on task performance (Baer & Frese,2003); psychological safety reduces the vital ramifications of making mistakes or taking initiatives (Edmondson,1999). Research has also found that psychological safety can stimulate innovation. For example, West and Anderson (1996) studied top management teams in British hospitals and found that organizational support for innovation enabled both "participative safety" and participation, which led to proposing more innovations. At the individual level, a number of studies have established a strong and positive link between psychological safety and the work attitudes of employees such as organizational commitment (Chen et al., 2014; De

---
[1]Research Scholar, Dept. of Psychology, University of Calicut, Malappuram, Kerala, India
[2]Professor, Dept. of Psychology, University of Calicut, Malappuram, Kerala, India
*[Corresponding Author](#)

Clercq & Rius, 2007; Rathert et al., 2009), work engagement (May et al., 2004; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006) and positive attitudes towards teamwork (Ulloa & Adams, 2004)

But in many organizations, employees perceive their work setting as psychologically unsafe. This may lead to many severe consequences. When a work setting is psychologically unsafe, individuals are less likely to share (Edmondson & Nembhard,2009). This situation is a highly stressful condition for the employees and is very common in organizational hierarchies. so, if an employee is provided with a psychologically safe environment, it will decrease the barriers to engagement and allow them to freely interact with the world around them without any fear.

The concept of organizational commitment consists of three components: affective, normative, and continuance commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Affective commitment refers to an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in an organization. Such employees continue employment with an organization because they want to do so. (Meyer and Allen, 1997). Affective commitment depends on what individuals experience and how they perceive the organization (Mowday et al., 1982). Out of the three commitments, affective commitment has been shown to provide the greatest benefit to the organization (Meyer et.al. 2002). Affective, or emotional and attitudinal attachment to the organization was demonstrably an important core essence of the organizational commitment construct. It was the most influential, enduring, indispensable, and central characteristic of organizational commitment that seems to serve as a historical and theoretical base for organizational commitment theories (Mercurio, 2015). Affective commitment is positively related to employee physical and psychological well-being and job satisfaction (Lovakov,2016).It also improves emotional, mental, and physical investment in the organization, attachment to the goals of the organization and its vision (Moon et al., 2014). Ayas and Ugurlu (2016) examined the mediating role of affective commitment and intrinsic motivation among 151 research assistants working full-time for universities. The results suggest that psychological safety is significantly associated with affective commitment whereas it does not significantly influence intrinsic motivation.

Rungraung (2012) conducted a study on antecedents of organizational commitment of academics in Thailand and found that the antecedents of affective commitment included relationships with co-workers, university support, relationship with students and management and system and professional attachment and significance.

Caihong and Lingyun, (2019) investigated the influence of union-management relations climate on employee's psychological safety and affective commitment, The results show that the union-management relations climate has a significant positive impact on employees' psychological safety and affective commitment.

Chugtai (2020) studied the mediating role of psychological safety and affective commitment in the relationship between trust propensity, in-role performance, and innovative work behaviour. Data for this study were collected from 238 primary and secondary school teachers who were drawn from three private sector schools based in Pakistan. Results showed that psychological safety and affective commitment fully mediated the link between trust propensity and in-role performance, while they partially mediated the effects of trust propensity on innovative work behavior.

A study by Li et.al (2022) explored how psychological safety influenced affective commitment through the mediating roles of job satisfaction and job burnout. The results showed that Job satisfaction and job burnout fully mediated the relationship between psychological safety and affective commitment among hospital staff. They concluded that psychological safety may enhance the affective commitment of hospital staff through improving job satisfaction or reducing job burnout. Perceived organizational support may counteract the deleterious effect of job burnout on affective commitment. Effective strategies to improve affective commitment among hospital staff may require consideration of job burnout and job satisfaction.

Nkhukhu-Orlando et. al (2019) conducted a study to assess affective commitment of of academics to the organization. They also investigated factors that are associated with affective commitment and those that predict affective commitment of academic employees. The study found that only 34.1% of academic employees sampled had affective commitment. Logistic regression analyses identified three predictors of affective commitment among academic employees. They are satisfaction with management, contribution to policy making, and responding to emails. While some researchers have found that associations between affective commitment and demographic variables were generally low or weak, this study found no significant associations between demographic factors and affective commitment.

Ulusoy et.al (2016) investigated the affective commitment of Turkish immigrant employees in Germany (TG) and their subsequent work engagement, mental health, and turnover intention. The results showed that the effect of immigration background on mental health, work engagement, and turnover through affective commitment depends on the level of perceived psychological safety at the workplace, specifically in terms of an open and inclusive work climate.

Existing works have reported that feelings of psychological safety in employees increase their levels of organizational commitment (Frazier et al., 2017; Singh & Winkel, 2012).

Teachers play a vital part in the formation of the future generation. Educational institutions prefer teachers who are committed. Unfortunately, in many educational institutions, teachers feel a lack of psychological safety. This may have a great impact on their job outcome and attitude towards their organization which can in turn affect the overall job satisfaction. Management used to offer many facilities to retain committed teachers.

This study is an attempt to get a better understanding of the role of psychological safety in predicting the affective commitment among college teachers. Due to the lack of studies on psychological safety and affective commitment among college teachers in Kerala, this study is aimed to study the role of psychological safety in affective commitment among college teachers in Kerala.

METHODOLOGY

Sample
The sample of the study included randomly chosen 344 college teachers from aided and unaided colleges in Kerala.

Instruments
Two measures were used in this study,

1. **Psychological safety scale**: Developed by **Edmondson** and Wooley (2003), which has a Reliability coefficient of 0.80
2. **Affective commitment scale**: Developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) which has a reliability of 0.87.

Procedure
The college teachers of the selected colleges were contacted by the investigator, and appointment was taken in advance. After explaining the details of the study and assuring confidentiality, the tools were distributed and gave necessary instructions. Then they were collected back after completion and entered to spreadsheet for further analysis.

RESULTS
Table No. 1 Correlations between mother's optimism and her symptom reporting
Based on the objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated.

H01. There is a significant relationship between psychological safety and affective commitment among college teachers
H02. Psychological safety will be a significant predictor of affective commitment

Table 1 Correlation between psychological safety and affective commitment

Variables	Affective commitment
Psychological safety	0.443**

**p<0.01

Table 1 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between psychological safety and affective commitment at 0.001 level. This indicates that H01 is accepted

Table 2. Multiple linear Regression summary

Predictor	beta ß	t	R^2	F
Psychological Safety	0.44	9.14**	0.196	83.53

**p<0.01

Table 2 indicates that psychological safety is a significant predictor of affective commitment, at 0.001 level which shows that H02 is accepted.

DISCUSSION
One of the more recent studies (Rathert et al., 2009) has found that psychological safety is significantly and positively related to affective commitment.

Results of this study also show that psychological safety is a significant predictor of affective commitment. Studies also show that feeling psychologically safe increases organizational commitment (Frazier et al., 2017; Singh & Winkel,2012). Ugurlu and Ayas (2016) also specifically identified that psychological safety is significantly related to affective commitment. That means, a psychologically safe working environment makes an employee feel valued and cared by their institution which will lead to a high level of employee job satisfaction (Detert & Burris, 2007; O'Neill & Arendt, 2008) together with a low level of anxiety (Frazier et al., 2017). All these may increase an employee's positive

attitude towards the organisation including a high level of organizational commitment (Cohen,1993; Mathieu & Zajac,1990).

REFERENCES

Ayas, S., & Yaşar Uğurlu, Ö. (2016). The Relationship between Psychological Safety and Employee Voice: The Mediation Role of Affective Commitment and Intrinsic Motivation. *Journal of Business Research- Turk*, *8*(1), 223–223. https://doi.org/10.20491/isader.2016.142

Ayas, S., & Yaşar Uğurlu, Ö. (2016). The Relationship between Psychological Safety and Employee Voice: The Mediation Role of Affective Commitment and Intrinsic Motivation. *Journal of Business Research - Turk*, *8*(1), 223–223. https://doi.org/10.20491/isader.2016.142

Caihong, H., & Lingyun, W. (2019). *International Journal of Social Science and Economic Research the Influence of Union-Management Relations Climate on Psychological Safety and Affective Commitment in China*. *03*, 1605–1614.

Charteris, J., Anderson, J., & Page, A. (2021). Psychological safety in innovative learning environments: planning for inclusive spaces. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *0*(0), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.1974108

Chen, C., Liao, J., & Wen, P. (2014). Why does formal mentoring matter? The mediating role of psychological safety and the moderating role of power distance orientation in the Chinese context. International Journal of Human Resource Management, 25, 1112–1130

Chen, G., & Tjosvold, D. (2012). Shared rewards and goal interdependence for psychological safety among departments in China. Asia Pacific Journal of Management, 29, 433–452.

Chikoko, G. L., Buitendach, J. H., & Kanengoni, H. (2014). The psychological conditions that predict work engagement among tertiary education employees. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, *24*(6), 469–474. https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2014.997026

Chughtai, A. A. (2020). Trust propensity and job performance: The mediating role of psychological safety and affective commitment. *Current Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-020-01157-6

Dollard, M. F., & Bakker, A. B. (2010). Psychosocial safety climate as a precursor to conducive work environments, psychological health problems, and employee engagement. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *83*(3), 579–599. https://doi.org/10.1348/096317909X470690

Dramanu, B. Y., Milledzi, E. Y., & Asamani, L. (2020). Psychological Safety and Work Engagement of Senior High School Teachers: Moderating Role of Psychological Flexibility. *The European Journal of Educational Sciences*, *07*(03), 17–35. https://doi.org/10.19044/ejes.v7no3a2

Edmondson, A. C., & Daley, G. (2020). How to Foster Psychological Safety in Virtual Meetings. *Harvard Business Review*. https://hbr.org/2020/08/how-to-foster-psychological-safety-in-virtual-meetings

Edmondson, A. C., Higgins, M., Singer, S., & Weiner, J. (2016). Understanding Psychological Safety in Health Care and Education Organizations: A Comparative Perspective. *Research in Human Development*, *13*(1), 65–83. https://doi.org/10.1080/15427609.2016.1141280 https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020914591

Frazier, M. L., Fainshmidt, S., Klinger, R. L., Pezeshkan, A., & Vracheva, V. (2017). Psychological safety: A meta-analytic review and extension. Personnel Psychology, 70(1), 113–165 https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12183

Huyghebaert, T., Gillet, N., Lahiani, F. J., Dubois-Fleury, A., & Fouquereau, E. (2018). Psychological Safety Climate as a Human Resource Development Target: Effects on Workers Functioning Through Need Satisfaction and Thwarting. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, *20*(2), 169–181. https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422318756955

Isabel, A., Serpa, D. De, & Moniz, A. (2015). *Silence In Organizations and Psychological Safety: A Literature Review Daniel Costa Pacheco, BSc*. *7881*(August), 293–308.

Jaros, S. J., Jermier, J. M., Koehler, J. W., & Sincich, T. (1993). Effects of continuance, affective, and moral commitment on the withdrawal process: An evaluation of eight structural equation models. *Academy of Management Journal*, 36, 951-995.

Joolideh, F., & Yeshodhara, K. (2009). Organizational commitment among high school teachers of India and Iran. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *47*(1), 127–136. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230910928115

Khalid, K. (2020). The Impact of Managerial Support on the Association Between Pay Satisfaction, Continuance, and Affective Commitment, and Employee Task Performance. *SAGE Open*, *10*(1).

Knight, C., Patterson, M., & Dawson, J. (2017). Building work engagement: A systematic review and meta-analysis investigating the effectiveness of work engagement interventions. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *38*(6), 792–812. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2167

Lee, H. (2021). Changes in workplace practices during the COVID-19 pandemic: the roles of emotion, psychological safety and organization support. *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness*, *8*(1), 97–128. https://doi.org/10.1108/JOEPP-06-2020-0104

Li, J., Li, S., Jing, T., Bai, M., Zhang, Z., & Liang, H. (2022). Psychological Safety and Affective Commitment Among Chinese Hospital Staff: The Mediating Roles of Job Satisfaction and Job Burnout. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, *Volume 15*(June), 1573–1585. https://doi.org/10.2147/prbm.s365311

Lyu, X. (2016). Effect of organizational justice on work engagement with psychological safety as a mediator: Evidence from China. *Social Behavior and Personality*, *44*(8), 1359–1370. https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2016.44.8.1359

Mathieu, J. E., & Zajac, D. M. (1990). A review and meta-analysis of the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of organizational commitment. *Psychological Bulletin,* 108, 171-194 https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.108.2.171

May, D. R., Gilson, R. L., & Harter, L. M. (2004). The psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability and the engagement of the human spirit at work. Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 77, 11–37.

Mercurio ZA (2015). Affective commitment as a core essence of organizational commitment: an integrative literature review. *Human Resource Development Review* 14(4):389-414 https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484315603612

Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (1984). Testing the "side-bet theory" of organizational commitment: Some methodological considerations. Journal of Applied Psychology, 69, 372-378.

Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (1991). A three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment. *Human Resource Management Review*, 1, 61-89. https://doi.org/10.1016/1053-4822(91)90011-Z

Meyer, J. P., & Herscovitch, L. (2001). Commitment in the workplace: Toward a general model. *Human Resource Management Review*, 11, 299-326.

Meyer, J. P., Stanley, D. J., Herscovitch, L., & Topolnytsky, L. (2002). Affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organization: A meta-analysis of

antecedents, correlates, and consequences. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 61, 20-52.

Mowday, R. T., Porter, L. W., & Steers, R. M. (1982). Employee-organization linkages: The psychology of commitment, absenteeism, and turnover. New York, NY: Academic Press.

Mowday, R. T., Steers, R. M., & Porter, L. W. (1979). The measurement of organizational commitment. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 14, 224-247. https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791(79)90072-1

Nembhard, I. M., & Edmondson, A. (2006). Making it safe: The effects of leader inclusiveness and professional status on psychological safety and improvement efforts in health care teams. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 27, 941–966 https://doi.org/10.1002/job.413

Newman, A., Donohue, R., & Eva, N. (2017). Psychological safety: A systematic review of the literature. *Human Resource Management Review*, *27*(3), 521–535. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2017.01.001

Nkhukhu-Orlando, Esther & Brown, Byron & Wilson, Debra Rose & Forcheh, Ntonghanwah & James, G. & Thabo, T. (2019). The affective commitment of academics in a university in Botswana. International Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies. 11. 12-19. DOI:10.5897/IJEAPS2019.0595.

Pacheco, D. C., Moniz, A. I. D. de S. A., & Calderia, S. N. (2015). Silence in organizations and psychological safety: A literature review. *European Scientific Journal*.

Rathert, C., Ishqaidef, G., May, D. R., (2009). Improving work environments in health care: Test of theoretical framework*, Health Care Management Review,* Vol: 34, No: 4, 334–343

Remtulla, R., Hagana, A., Houbby, N., Ruparell, K., Aojula, N., Menon, A., Thavarajasingam, S. G., & Meyer, E. (2021). Exploring the barriers and facilitators of psychological safety in primary care teams: a qualitative study. *BMC Health Services Research*, *21*(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-021-06232-7

Rungruang, Parisa. (2012). Antecedents of Organizational Commitment of Academics in Thailand: Qualitative Analysis. Research Journal of Business Management. 6. 40-51.DOI:10.3923/rjbm.2012.40.51

Siad, F. M., & Rabi, D. M. (2021). Harassment in the Field of Medicine: Cultural Barriers to Psychological Safety. *CJC Open*, *3*(12), S174–S179. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cjco.2021.08.018

Singh, B., & Winkel, D. E. (2012). Racial differences in helping behaviors: The role of respect, safety, and identification. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 106(4), 467–477. DOI 10.1007/s10551-011-1011

Siri, A., Supartha, I. W. G., Sukaatmadja, I. P. G., & Rahyuda, A. G. (2020). Does teacher competence and commitment improve teacher's professionalism. *Cogent Business and Management*, *7*(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2020.1781993

Soumyaja, D., & Kuriakose, J. (2020). Psychological Safety and Employee Voice in IT Sector: Parallel Mediation Effect of Affective Commitment and Intrinsic Motivation. *Ushus Journal of Business Management*, *19*(4), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.12725/ujbm.53.1

Turner, S., & Harder, N. (2018). Psychological Safe Environment: A Concept Analysis. *Clinical Simulation in Nursing*, *18*, 47–55. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecns.2018.02.004

Ulusoy, N., Mölders, C., Fischer, S., Bayur, H., Deveci, S., Demiral, Y., & Rössler, W. (2016). A Matter of Psychological Safety: Commitment and Mental Health in

Turkish Immigrant Employees in Germany. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *47*(4), 626–645. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022115626513

How to cite this article: John, S.P. & Manikandanm, K. (2023). Psychological Safety and Affective Commitment among College Teachers. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, *11(3),* 4799-4806. DIP:18.01.448.20231103, DOI:10.25215/1103.448