

The Relationship Between Psychological Safety and Moral Courage in Speaking Up Among Employees of Company X in Bekasi

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the relationship between psychological safety and moral courage in speaking up among employees at a company in Bekasi. This research used a quantitative correlational approach with 200 employees as respondents, selected through convenience sampling using the Slovin formula from a population of 1,100 employees. Psychological safety was measured using the Psychological Safety Inventory (PSI) developed by Plouffe et al. (2023), and moral courage was measured using the Professional Moral Courage (PMC) scale developed by Sekerka et al. (2009). Because the data were not normally distributed, the Rank Spearman correlation was used for analysis. The results showed a significant positive relationship between psychological safety and moral courage ($r_s = 0.220$, $p = 0.002$), with a weak correlation strength. No significant differences were found based on gender, but moral courage differed significantly across age groups.

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INTRODUCTION

The work environment in this decade faces challenges in creating conditions that encourage employees to voice their opinions. In organizations, the ability of employees to express ideas, provide critical input, or raise concerns is an important aspect for the development of innovation, organizational effectiveness, and a healthy work culture. However, the reality shows that not all employees feel safe or confident enough to speak up, especially when their opinion may create interpersonal risks or be seen as opposing the organizational hierarchy (Salsabila et al., 2023). National regulations affirm that workers have

the freedom to express their opinions and form unions. The provisions regarding legal protection for workers in exercising freedom of association in the workplace are stated in Law Number 21 of 2000 on Labor Unions, which provides rights and guarantees for workers to form and join labor unions as a means of building harmonious working relationships between workers and employers (Ginting, 2019).

Workers can express opinions, initiate ideas, and formulate collective actions to meet their needs and interests through official bodies such as labor unions (Siswanto, 2022). However, the existence of formal regulations does not always guarantee the creation of psychological safety in the workplace. The phenomenon related to the difficulty of voicing opinions in the workplace can be seen from surveys that have been conducted. A report by The Workforce Institute (2021), involving a global survey across 11 countries, found that 86% of employees felt that not all voices were heard fairly and equally, especially from underrepresented groups, where 47% of them stated that the views of those groups did not receive adequate attention in the work environment. This condition is further clarified by a national-level survey. Based on a survey conducted on 1,412 formal workers in Indonesia, it was found that the majority of respondents had experienced unpleasant treatment in the workplace in various forms: 73% of workers admitted to having experienced unpleasant treatment, with 76% experiencing verbal violence such as insults or belittling remarks; 63% reported experiencing discrimination in the workplace; 61% admitted to being forced to work beyond their limits; 41% had experienced sexual harassment; and 25% admitted to being victims of physical violence (Rizaty, 2024).

Wang et al. (2023) explain that to encourage employee voice behavior, moral courage plays an important role. This explains that the act of voicing opinions is not only related to communication skills, but also to the strength of values held by individuals in weighing personal risks in order to maintain their moral integrity. Individuals who remain true to themselves and are connected to their personal values can make it easier for someone to demonstrate moral courage (Saxena et al., 2019). Moral courage, according to Sekerka & Bagozzi (2007), can be understood as the ability of individuals to act in accordance with moral and ethical values even though such actions risk causing negative consequences to themselves. Moral courage means acting in accordance with ethical values despite facing difficulties and risks when confronted with challenges and moral dilemmas (Mohammadi et al., 2022). Kazemi et al. (2025) explain that moral courage acts as a regulatory mechanism that helps maintain ethical behavior when a person is under pressure. The presence of moral courage encourages exemplary individuals to engage in supportive actions toward others, and honesty accompanied by wisdom helps them consider the best way to do so (Warren & Warren, 2023). Organizational members who strive to uphold justice, protect the rights of others, and prevent violations need to be equipped with the ability to face possible rejection, resistance, or retaliation that may arise as consequences of their actions based on courage (Comer & Sekerka, 2018). In short, individuals with a high level of moral courage belong to the group of positive actors, while those with low moral courage are classified as negative actors (Hong et al., 2023).

According to Plouffe et al. (2023), psychological safety is understood as the view that someone in a team or organization feels supported and safe when facing various new challenges that arise. Psychological safety makes individuals feel confident that their work

environment supports openness without fear of negative consequences that may arise from expressing ideas or mistakes (A. C. Edmondson & Lei, 2014). A psychologically safe environment is a place where individuals are encouraged and expected to engage in open discussions, question existing processes, and raise concerns about possible errors or risks (Ip et al., 2025). On teams with high levels of psychological safety, members can feel safe to take risks, thus encouraging the emergence of moral risk-taking behavior (Shang & Yang, 2022). Conversely, when psychological safety is absent, employees who witness unethical behavior in the workplace but feel less psychologically safe tend to be reluctant to report violations through official organizational channels (Edmondson et al., 2022).

Psychological safety rests on a moral foundation that requires seeing others with respect and giving them room to feel accepted and to play a role in the environment where they are (Clark, 2020). The work environment that fosters moral courage usually applies practices that support psychological safety, provide healthy challenges, and provide opportunities to contribute, so that individuals are still able to act ethically and maintain their moral principles despite facing obstacles, rejection, or risk (James et al., 2025). When a leader actively interacts with employees who have low moral courage, the humility and honesty shown in the communication process can reduce subordinates' concerns about the risks of voicing opinions, and increase their perception of psychological safety (Wang et al., 2023). Based on the overall phenomena described above, the researcher is interested in examining the positive relationship between psychological safety and moral courage in speaking up among employees at company X in Bekasi.

METHODS

This research used a quantitative method with a correlational study design. Correlational research is used to determine the form of relationship between the independent and dependent variables through the correlation coefficient value, which then becomes the basis for assessing whether or not there is a relationship between the two (Hutahaean & Perdini, 2023). This study positions psychological safety as the independent variable and moral courage as the dependent variable.

The population in this study was employees of the company X in Bekasi, totaling 1,100 people. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a margin of error of 6.4%, resulting in 200 respondents. The sampling technique used was convenience sampling, which depends on the willingness and motivation of individuals who are willing to participate in the research process (Stratton, 2021). This technique was chosen based on the researcher's limitations in reaching research subjects who were willing to fill out the questionnaire, and the ease of distributing the questionnaire through WhatsApp groups.

Moral courage was measured using the Professional Moral Courage (PMC) scale developed by Sekerka et al. (2009), consisting of 15 items covering five dimensions: moral agency, multiple values, endures threat, going beyond compliance, and moral goal. Psychological safety was measured using the Psychological Safety Inventory (PSI) developed by Plouffe et al. (2023), consisting of 30 items across five domains: interpersonal risk-taking, mutual trust/respect, organizational/structural support, identity and clarity in the context of the team, and supportive leadership. Both instruments used a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Results

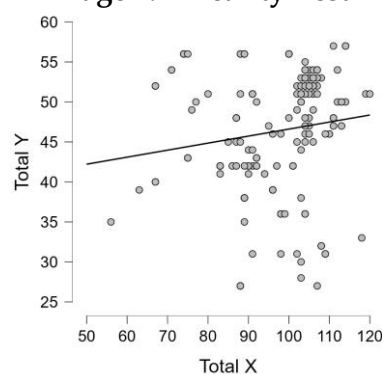
Validity testing was conducted through item-total correlation analysis. For the moral courage scale, the item-rest correlation values ranged from 0.391 to 0.719, with all 15 items declared valid (above the 0.300). For the psychological safety scale, item-rest correlation values ranged from 0.390 to 0.690, with all 30 items declared valid. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha showed excellent results for both scales: the PMC scale obtained a reliability score of 0.940 and the PSI scale obtained 0.911.

Table 1. Normality Test

Kolmogorov-Smirnov	p
Total X	< .001
Total Y	< .001

The normality test used the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method. The results showed that both variables had a significance value of 0.01 ($p < 0.05$), meaning the data were not normally distributed.

Image 1. Linearity Test



Linearity was assessed through a scatter plot, which showed that the data tended to follow a straight-line direction, indicating that the linearity assumption was met. Because the data were not normally distributed, the Rank Spearman correlation was used for hypothesis testing. Score categorization used a confidence interval formula appropriate for non-normal data. All analyses were conducted using JASP Version 0.95.4 for Windows.

Table 2. Rank Spearman Correlation Results

Variable	Spearman's rho	p-value
Psychological Safety – Moral Courage	0.220	.002

Based on the Rank Spearman correlation test, a significance value (p-value) of 0.002 ($p < 0.05$) was obtained. This result indicates that there is a positive relationship between psychological safety and moral courage. The correlation coefficient of 0.220 shows that the relationship between the two variables is in the weak category with a positive direction. Thus, the research hypothesis is accepted.

Table 3. Differences in Variables Based on Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	MC Mean	MC SD	MC Sig.	PS Mean	PS SD	PS Sig.
Male	45.48	8.142	0.088	97.15	13.00	0.833
Female	47.34	7.121		97.52	11.48	
Age 22–25	47.17	7.974	0.005	100.28	13.22	0.066
Age 26–29	48.43	6.361		97.75	12.90	
Age 30–33	46.08	9.213		96.42	9.91	
Age ≥34	43.25	6.657		94.00	12.58	

Note: MC = Moral Courage; PS = Psychological Safety

Based on the gender characteristic, the significance value for moral courage was 0.088 and for psychological safety was 0.833, meaning there was no significant difference in either variable based on gender. Based on the age characteristic, moral courage showed a significance value of 0.005 ($p < 0.05$), meaning there was a significant difference in moral courage based on age. Meanwhile, psychological safety did not show a significant difference based on age with a significance value of 0.066.

2. Discussion

The hypothesis testing in this study used the Rank Spearman non-parametric test, given that the research data did not meet the assumption of normal distribution even though it met the linearity assumption. The analysis results showed a correlation coefficient of 0.220 with a significance value of 0.002 ($p < 0.05$), meaning there is a relationship between psychological safety and moral courage in the 200 respondents. The positive relationship found in this study means that the higher the level of psychological safety felt by employees, the higher their tendency to demonstrate moral courage. This finding is in line with the view of James et al. (2025), who stated that the work environment that fosters moral courage usually applies practices that support psychological safety, provides healthy challenges, and provides opportunities to contribute, so that individuals are still able to act ethically and maintain their moral principles despite facing obstacles, rejection, or risk.

The weak correlation strength ($r = 0.220$) indicates that psychological safety is not the only factor influencing moral courage. Sekerka & Bagozzi (2007) explain that the drive to act with moral courage is also shaped by various other social forces, such as organizational rules, prevailing norms, perceptions of positive or negative consequences, social pressure, and situational conditions. Osswald et al. (2010) also add that factors such as prosocial norms, emotional responses to injustice, and individual personality traits such as self-confidence,

empathy, and the ability to resist group pressure also contribute to shaping a person's moral courage.

CONCLUSION

Based on the hypothesis testing using the Rank Spearman correlation test, a correlation coefficient of 0.220 with a significance value of 0.002 ($p < 0.05$) was obtained. These results indicate that the research hypothesis is accepted: there is a positive relationship between psychological safety and moral courage with a weak correlation strength. No significant differences were found based on gender for either variable, indicating that psychological safety and moral courage are evenly distributed regardless of gender.

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