ASSOCIATION AMID INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT IN CREATIVITY: PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AS A MEDIATOR

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ABSTRACT

The present article examined the association amid inclusive leadership and employee creativity at work, as demonstrated by a leader's openness, accessibility, and availability. We looked examined how employee engagement in creative job tasks and PS were related using a sample of 300 respondents. According to the findings of structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis, inclusive leadership is positively associated to PS, which in turn encourages staff members to engage in creative work.

Keywords- Inclusive Leadership; Employee Involvement; Psychological Safety; Relational Leadership, Employee Creativity

Leadership studies has made a point of emphasising how crucial it is to comprehend leadership in the context of relationships with followers. Leader relationships with followers have been found to be important for a variety of work outcomes, going back to the Ohio State studies that identified two main behavioural patterns of deliberation (correlation) and initiating structure (task); Judge, et al., 2004. More recently, the LMX theory, which focuses on distinctions in relationships among ingroup and out-group participants and the manager (Gerstner & Day, 1997), has also been discovered to be crucial. Relationship building, also known as relational leadership (Fletcher, 2004, 2007, Uhl-Bien, 2006), has lately come to the attention of researchers as an important but understudied topic of leadership study. Various methods for the study of leadership have been brought together, according to some, by Relational Leadership (RL) Theory (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Two different types of theories can be specifically described as RL. The entity theories examine relationships from the viewpoint of the individual, paying close attention to that person's perceptions, cognition, feelings, and action. RL, according to Uhl-Bien (2006), is "a social influence process by which emergent coordination" (i.e., changing social order) and "change" (namely, new beliefs, perspectives, attitudes, behaviours, ideologies, etc.) are formed and produced." According to this methodology, leadership will be better understood when the process is examined rather than just the leader's style or interactions with followers. Leadership research is still in its infancy when it comes to RL. Little is known about certain aspects of RL that could shape employee views and promote productive outcomes. By emphasising inclusive leadership (IL) as a particular type of RL, we aim to further this line of inquiry in this essay. Here, IL refers to managers who communicate with employees in an open, accessible, and available manner. This idea was first introduced by Nembhard and Edmondson (2006), who concentrated on leader inclusivity to denote leader behaviours that invite and value feedback from others, so helping to shape their team members' ideas that "their voices are actually valued." Therefore, IL is the

cornerstone of RL and concentrates on whether supporters believe that leaders are accessible to them, yet if the leader listens, and whether the leader is attending to the needs of the followers. There have been little attempts to establish the relationship between leadership and PS, despite calls for more research on how leaders create psychologically safe work environments (Edmondson, 2004). (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006).

In this research, we answer this request by theorising about how IL promotes psychological safety (PS) and increases engagement in creative work tasks, as well as empirically evaluating these issues. A recent analysis of the theory and research on leadership and creativity specifically noted that "while an increasing compilation of empirical studies has explored leadership for creativity, to date, this area of inquiry is still in its fledgling stage." (2008) Tierney Research on the relationship between RL and creativity is also scarce, and it frequently ignores the possible mechanisms by which RL might affect employee creative activity. This is true despite rising attention in the social factors that support creativity at work.

We specifically suggest and evaluate a paradigm that emphasises inclusive leadership, PS, and EC (Figure 1). We contend that IL will foster PS and participation in creative work, which will increase EC. Therefore, we investigate whether (i) IL promotes PS, (ii) PS is positively linked to staff involvement in creative work tasks (EC), and (iii) PS mediates the relationship between IL and EC.
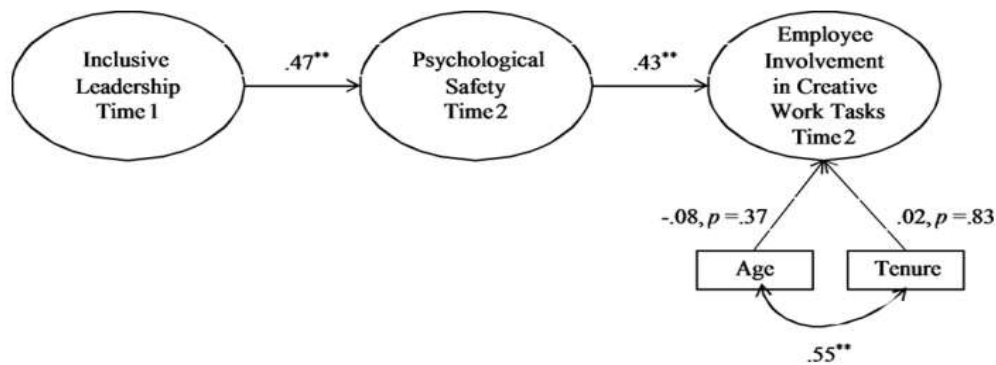

FIGURE 1   Results for the hypothesized mediation model. *$p < .05$. **$p < .10$. ***$p < .01$.

THEORY BASELINE AND HYPOTHESES
Leadership and Creativity

According to Mumford & Hunter (2005), and Shalley & Gilson (2004), leadership has been identified as a particularly significant component that affects creativity and innovation in businesses. Research on how leaders affect the creative performance of their teams suggests that leaders support employee creativity (EC) in a variety of ways. In the first place, leaders can serve as examples of creative behaviour (Jaussi & Dionne, 2003). Second, leaders can give the information, funds, and time needed for the creative project (Reiter-Palmon & Illies, 2004). Third, managers can inspire and motivate their staff members to be more imaginative (Atwater & Carmeli, 2009). Fourthly, leaders encourage innovative behaviour through fostering positive relationships with their subordinates (Arad, et al., 1997; Tierney, Farmer, & Graen, 1999). The

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culture of the team or organisation can also be shaped by leaders to affect EC (Amabile et al., 2004; Arad et al., 1997; Mumford & Hunter, 2005). The last three factors—motivation, assistance, and climate—are particularly pertinent to RL. There is a wealth of research on the connection between drive and creativity (Amabile, 1983). By establishing standards for creative performance (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2007; Redmond et al., 1993; Tierney & Farmer, 2004), boosting intrinsic motivation, and fostering resources for the creative task (Atwater & Carmeli, 2009; Shin & Zhou, 2003), leaders can affect their subordinates' motivation to engage in creative performance. Here, one's participation in creative endeavours is emphasised because this is a prerequisite to EC. Motivation is crucial for creative production since innovation requires time and effort.

The drive to carry out creative activities and exhibit creative behaviours has been demonstrated to be consistently correlated with leader support. (Atwater & Carmeli, 2009; George & Zhou, 2007; Tierney et al., 1999) Supportive behaviour that has been connected to creative performance contains high quality LMX relationships, assisting employee choices and actions, giving details, advising employees, and confidence in the leader.

Despite the significance of this, there is a paucity of knowledge regarding the exact leader behaviours that foster creative performance (Amabile et al., 2004; Mumford et al., 2002). Most research has concentrated on typical forms of leadership support (Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Tierney et al., 1999). Few studies, including the one by Amabile and her collaborators (2004), have examined the precise traits or behaviours of leader support that may boost creativity. In keeping with this line of inquiry, our study makes use of the relational leadership concept and explores how inclusive leadership affects creativity specifically through the growth of psychological safety perceptions and the connection to employee willingness to put forth effort and participate in behaviours that foster creative production.

Inclusive Leadership and Psychological Safety

PS relates to how people perceive the effects of taking personal risks in the workplace (Edmondson, 1999, 2004; Kahn, 1990). As a result, it speaks to the idea that "people are comfortable being themselves" (Edmondson, 1999) and "feel able to exhibit and employ oneself without fear of negative consequences to personality, position, or career" (Kahn, 1990,). Edmondson (2004), however, argued that PS and trust are two different things. PS places the emphasis on the self, whereas trust places the emphasis on the other. Another distinction is that whereas trust spans a broad temporal range, PS is concerned with a limited and brief time frame (Edmondson, 2004).

According to research, leader behaviours influence followers' perceptions of their PS (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). In particular, Edmondson (2004) argued that leaders are more likely to encourage the growth of PS among workers when they demonstrate openness, availability, and accessibility. By explaining the significance of such activities and assuring followers that negative repercussions will not follow, leaders can motivate followers to propose novel ideas and take calculated risks. Leaders are better equipped to express these expectations when they are open, accessible, and available.

Edmondson's (2004) theory about openness, accessibility, and availability in leadership is also in line with other studies that have shown, for instance, that behaviours that indicate leader benevolence (such as genuine care and concern for the follower) and leader assistance raise believe (Burke, Sims, et al., 2007). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that having healthy

interpersonal connections makes it easier for one to establish a sense of PS (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009). Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) discovered that when followers believed their leaders valued and invited their contribution, they generated a sense of PS, which allowed them to speak up and express themselves with confidence. Therefore, we recommend the following scenario:

Hypothesis 1 – Inclusive Leadership has a positive significant relationship amid Psychological Safety.

Psychological Safety and Employee Creativity

EC is defined as the creation of innovative or original ideas, products, or methods that have the potential to be helpful to the employing organisation, in line with Amabile's (1983) definition. As a result, creativity is the process of coming up with ideas, solving problems, and executing those ideas or solutions (Sternberg, 1988). Usually, being creative involves taking risks. By definition, creativity provides novelty and raises uncertainty. Proactive behaviour and initiative have been linked to creativity and invention in studies on individual creativity in workplace settings (Rank, et al., 2004). According to Binnewies et al. (2007), communication about initiatives and ideas raised employee creative engagement.

George (2008) claimed that indications for safety are one of the most significant contextual factors connected to creativity in a review of the research on organisational creativity. Individuals are more prone to adopt a defensive attitude and are less likely to exhibit creative and inventive behaviours at work when they are exposed to psychological threats and feel psychologically insecure, according to studies by West and Richter (2008) and Nicholson and West (1988). Burke, et al. (2006) discovered that the use of PS enhances the possibility that team members will feel comfortable to challenge ideas and judgments. We contend that high levels of involvement in creative activities—which are crucial for employee creative performance—are more likely to develop when staff members feel psychologically secure to speak up, ask for help, and convey themselves without worrying about unfavourable interpersonal repercussions. Consequently, it is recommended that:

Hypothesis 2 - Psychological safety has a positive significant relationship amid employee involvement in creative work task.

Inclusive Leadership, Psychological Safety, and Employee Involvement in Creative Tasks

According to earlier studies, leadership support is crucial for innovation and creativity (Hunter et al., 2007). Nevertheless, the majority of research on leader support has concentrated on overall leader support, considering elements like leader appreciation, support for new ideas and innovation, and leader support through resources, and has not made distinctions between the various aspects of support (George & Zhou, 2007). According to studies on the impact of supportive leadership, which concentrate more on the relationship between the leader and the follower, overall support is advantageous for creativity (George & Zhou, 2007; Oldham & Cummings, 1996).

Additionally, some studies have highlighted the influence that leadership has in creating environments that foster employee creativity. For instance, research by George and Zhou (2007) examined the mechanism through which support from leaders fosters innovation and creativity. According to the findings of their study, all three types of behavioural support promote higher creativity. Mumford et al., 2002 stated that leaders who encourage creativity are more successful at encouraging it because they can create and preserve work environments that are essential for inspiring people to engage in creative behaviours. Furthermore, in line with earlier research, we

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hypothesise that psychological safety is created through relational leadership and functions as a crucial social psychological mechanism by which people can express creativity without encountering interpersonal threats and forming defensive orientations (Carmeli et al., 2009). We propose that the connection between IL and creativity will be mediated through PS in accordance with this line of study (De Dreu & West, 2001). People feel empowered to speak and share novel ideas, which frequently go against the grain, in an environment that is fostered by inclusive leaders who are accessible, open, and available to staff members who have fresh ideas. In turn, PS is probably going to lead to a higher level of staff participation in creative activity. As a result, the following hypothesis is developed.

Hypothesis 3- Psychological safety significantly mediates the association amid inclusive leadership and employee involvement in creative work task.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants and Procedure

300 personnel who work in the information technology centre in Tricity (Chandigarh, Mohali, Panchkula) were chosen to take part in the study with application of convenience sampling. They worked in the Software Engineering and Mobile Applications Developer departments. The respondents were sent the questionnaire via email, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn. The respondents filled out the surveys online. It took an average of 10 minutes to complete this questionnaire.

The authorisation from the director of the human resources department was received before sending the questionnaire to their employees and explained the objectives and parameters of our investigation. We pledged to deliver the study's findings upon request in exchange for cooperation. The study's topic was briefly introduced at the work sites by one of the authors, hence the questionnaires were sent.

The questionnaires were completed by 300 employees, an 83% response rate. There were 162 female responders. 64 % of individuals were married. The respondents' median age was 32.27 years (SD: 7.11), and their median time spent working for the company was 3.69 years (SD: 5.07). 27% of the participants had completed high school or its equivalent, while 44.7% had earned a bachelor's degree, 25.3% had earned a master's degree, and the remaining participants had earned a PhD.

Instruments

The Appendix A contains a list of all measuring items.

IL - We developed a 9-item questionnaire to assess the openness, availability, and accessibility of inclusive leaders. First, we identified how much they thought it represented the construct it was intended to represent. Every item designated as reflecting more than 1 dimension or none of the dimensions was eliminated. The amount to which their leader demonstrates openness and is approachable to them at work was asked of the respondents on a five-point scale (range from 1 not at all to 5 to a great extent). A 1-factor solution with an eigenvalue of 6.18 and an explanation of 68.74% of the variation was produced through factor analysis. It had factor loadings amid .51 and .82. For this construct, Cronbach's alpha was .94.

PS - This measurement evaluates the degree to which a member of an organisation feels psychologically secure to take chances, speak up, and have open discussions about problems. We used five items from Edmondson's (1999) PS scale after doing a factor analysis. On a 5-point scale, opinions ranged from 1 (not at all) to 5. (to a large extent). For this measurement,

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Cronbach's alpha was.74.

EC - We used four of the items from the employee creativity scale created by Tierney et al. in 1999 and further used in other research that looked at the extent to which people engage in creative job tasks (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2007). The degree to which several behaviours indicative of involvement in creative work are displayed on a regular basis by respondents was asked for. Responses were given on a five-point scale, with 1 being the least helpful and 5 being the most helpful (to a large extent). For this construct, Cronbach's alpha was.89.

DATA ANALYSIS

The research model was estimated using SEM. We used a two-step method to SEM, as described by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), in which confirmatory factor analysis was used to evaluate construct validity, then a comparison of a series of nested structural models was made. When evaluating the fit of the research model, we used numerous goodness-of-fit indices in order to avoid issues with utilising a single goodness-of-fit index in SEM (Medsker et al., 1994). These fit indices recommended values are as following:

FIT INDICES	RECOMMENDED VALUES
	(Joreskog & Sorbom, 1993; Kline, 1998)
RMSEA	acceptable up to .08
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	greater than .90
Tucker-Lewis coefficient (TLI)	greater than .90
degrees of freedom (df)	less than 3

RESULTS

Table 1 lists the means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients, and correlations of the study's variables. The bivariate correlations show a favourable association between IL and both PS (r - .39, p .01) and EC (r - .25, p .01). Additionally, the findings demonstrate a positive correlation between psychological safety and staff members' participation in creative work (r - .34, p .01).

TABLE 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Respondent age	32.27	7.11	—				
2. Organizational tenure	3.70	5.08	.55**	—			
3. Inclusive leadership	3.84	0.86	−.06	−.16*	(.94)		
4. Psychological safety	3.31	0.68	.02	.01	.39**	(.74)	
5. Employee involvement in creative work	3.52	0.82	−.05	−.00	.25**	.34**	(.89)

Note. N=300, 2-tailed test. *p < .05; **p < .01

Preliminary Analysis

First, we used confirmatory factor analysis to demonstrate additional support for the concept validity of our latent components (CFA). The proposed three-factor measurement model was put to the test to determine whether each measurement item would significantly contribute to the scales with which it was related. The findings of the CFA overall demonstrated a good fit with the data (Figure 2). The range of the standardised coefficients from items to factors was 0.47 to

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0.98. Additionally, the CFA found that each indicator variable and its associated construct had a significant link (p .01), confirming the hypothesised associations between the indicators and constructs and proving the convergent validity of the study (Hair, et al., 1998).

Figure 2 Results of the overall CFA Model

FIT INDICES	VALUES
RMSEA	.08
CFI	.91
IFI	.91
TLI	.90
X^2 (135)	289.8

Our measurement model's fit was compared to a two-factor model with IL and PS items loaded onto one factor and EC put onto a second factor. In comparison to our suggested three-factor model, the fit of this model (Figure 3) was noticeably inferior.

Figure 3 Results of the 2-factor model CFA Model

FIT INDICES	VALUES
RMSEA	.11
CFI	.84
IFI	.84
TLI	.82
X^2 (136)	409.8

We also assessed a one-factor model, known as the Herman one-factor test for common method bias, in which all questions evaluating IL, PS, and EC were loaded onto a single factor. In comparison to our proposed three-factor model, this model's fit (Figure 4) was noticeably inferior.

Figure 4 Results of the 1-factor CFA Model

FIT INDICES	VALUES
RMSEA	.17
CFI	.62
IFI	.62
TLI	.58
X^2 (137)	781.8

In conclusion, the three-factor measurement model that was hypothesised fit the data more closely than the two- and one-factor models. In the section that follows, we test our proposed research paradigm and hypotheses. Additionally, using ANOVA, changes in the variables of interest between organisations were looked at. The research was carried out across all organisations because no major differences were discovered.

Comparison of Models and Hypothesis Testing

To recap, we put forth a mediated model in which PS acts as a mediator between IL and worker participation in creative projects. As Schneider, et al. (2005) advised, we investigated the putative mediating link through a series of nested model comparisons because conventional recommendations for testing mediation are not as applicable for SEM applications. SEM is a superior statistical method for examining latent variables with different measures (Holmbeck, 1997), accounting for measurement error to prevent underestimating the impact of mediation (Hoyle & Smith, 1994), analysing more complicated structures (Hoyle & Smith, 1994), and identifying all pertinent paths (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

We first investigated our hypothesised mediation model, defining PS's function as a mediator for the link between IL and EC (IL-PS-EC). Additional pathways from the control variables (respondent age and duration in the business) to EC were also provided in this model. The model successfully fit the data, as evidenced by the results in Table 2. In order to determine whether mediation actually occurred, we evaluated by comparing the fit and path coefficients of the proposed mediation model to those of a control model (Model 1) that was nearly identical to the one we had proposed—with the exception of the addition of a direct effect path from IL to EC—but not by much.

TABLE 2
Testing the Mediation Model: Comparisons and Path Coefficient of
Structural Equation Models

Hypothesized Model		Model 1	
IL → PS	.47**	IL → PS	.47**
PS → EC	.43***	PS → EC	.38**
Age → EC	−.08 ($p = .37$)	IL → EC	.08
Tenure → EC	.02 ($p = .83$)	Age → EC	−.09 ($p = .35$)
		Tenure → EC	.03 ($p = .73$)
χ^2	301.6		301
Df	167		166
$\Delta\chi^2$			.6, ns
RMSEA	.074		.074
CFI	.925		.924
TLI	.914		.913
IFI	.926		.925

Note. IL = Inclusive Leadership; PS = Psychological Safety; EC = Employee involvement in creative work. In all models the control variables (respondent age and tenure in the organization) were linked to employee involvement in creative work.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Thus, the findings confirm the research hypotheses as well as our proposed mediation model, which is shown in Figure 1. The outcomes of the proposed mediation model support hypothesis 1, which proposed a favourable correlation among IL and PS (.47, p .01). Also supported (.38, p .01) was hypothesis 2, which asserted that PS and EC would be positively correlated. Last but not least, the results are consistent with hypothesis 3, which proposed that PS would mediate the interaction between IL and EC, as the paths from IL and PS as well as from PS and EC remained significant, while the path from IL to EC was not statistically significant (see Table 2).

HYPOTHESIS	STATUS
Hypothesis 1 – Inclusive Leadership has a positive significant relationship amid Psychological Safety.	Accepted
Hypothesis 2 - Psychological safety has a positive significant relationship amid employee involvement in creative work task.	Accepted
Hypothesis 3- Psychological safety significantly mediates the association amid inclusive leadership and employee involvement in creative work task.	Accepted

DISCUSSION

The competitive advantage of enterprises frequently rests on workers who generate original and helpful ideas that help an organisation deal with growing difficulties, remain competitive, or change an industry, making research on the ways leaders may nurture EC essential. By examining the function of a particular type of RL, IL, and the manner in which it encourages EC in the workplace through an emphasis on EC, we aimed to add to the literatures on both leadership and creativity in this paper.

By putting forward and testing a mediation model that looks at the interaction between IL, PS, and EC, our study specifically aims to expand on earlier research on the function of leadership in facilitating EC. We looked into how IL, PS, and EC relate to one another using a sample of 300 workers. The SEM findings imply that PS mediates the interaction between IL and EC by acting as an intermediary since IL and EC were positively correlated with PS, and improved EC was the outcome. In doing so, this study adds to the body of knowledge regarding leadership and creativity theory and research in a number of ways.

Our study responds to the request for more research on the function of relational leadership in workplace settings (Fletcher, 2004, 2007; Uhl-Bien, 2006). We put up and researched a particular type of RL called IL that consists of the three reinforcing features openness, accessibility, and availability. By concentrating on an individual element of RL and leader support, inclusive leadership, rather than a general construct like leader support, this study deepens our understanding of RL. Additionally, it has been asserted that this style of leadership and its features may result in PS (Edmondson, 2004). The results of this study further demonstrate the significance of lL in the growth of PS (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006).

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

We acknowledged that other unobserved variables may be crucial for explaining EC in the workplace, even though our focus was on RL and PS. As a result, unobserved variables could restrict the application of our research. Future studies may incorporate EC at work explanations and ideas that complement one another. For example, even though we stress the significance of RL in supporting PS for improving EC, cognitive abilities and job qualities may also promote creative behaviours. Additionally, it's likely that a leader's inclusiveness will impact a good attitude toward them or their own creativity. Therefore, it is crucial to look for ways to create a more integrated knowledge of how IL fosters employee creativity. Second, self-reports were

employed in the study to evaluate the variables that might be influenced by common method bias; specifically, the variables assessed here all asked for employee perceptions. As a last test of their level of participation in creative production, we looked at how employees perceived their own inventiveness. Studying employees' self-perceived creativity has great theoretical worth, according to Zhou, Shin, and Cannella (2008). However, we recognise the necessity for different referents, such as direct supervisors, peers, and customers, to be used in future studies to evaluate EC.

CONCLUSION

This research is a significant step toward comprehending RL, a style of leadership that has received little attention, and its potential to support EC. This work advances our understanding in two areas while adding to the body of evidence that RL enhances EC. The first part of this research assesses a particular type of RL, IL. Second, this study looked into the processes via which RL, and particularly inclusive leadership, might promote EC. The study's findings that IL, which is characterised by openness, accessibility, and availability, raises PS and, in turn, raises EC provide evidence in favour of the significance of these dimensions in comprehending the relationship between leadership and creativity.

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APPENDIX A
Items Used to Measure the Study Variables

Items measuring Inclusive Leadership ($\alpha = .94$)
- The manager is open to hearing new ideas (openness)
- The manager is attentive to new opportunities to improve work processes (openness)
- The manager is open to discuss the desired goals and new ways to achieve them (openness)
- The manager is available for consultation on problems (availability)
- The manager is an ongoing 'presence' in this team—someone who is readily available (availability)
- The manager is available for professional questions I would like to consult with him/her (availability)
- The manager is ready to listen to my requests (availability)
- The manager encourages me to access him/her on emerging issues (accessibility)
- The manager is accessible for discussing emerging problems (accessibility)

Items measuring Psychological Safety ($\alpha = .76$)[a]
- I am able to bring up problems and tough issues
- People in this organization sometimes reject others for being different
- It is safe to take a risk in this organization
- It is easy for me to ask other members of this organization for help
- No one in this organization would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts

Items measuring Employee Involvement in Creative Work ($\alpha = .89$)[b]
- Demonstrate originality at my work
- Try out new ideas and approached to problems
- Identify opportunities for new products/processes
- Generate novel but operable work-related ideas

[a]*Source*: Edmonson, 1999. [b]*Source*: Tierney et al.