

The Role of Organizational Trust and Psychological Safety in Promoting Employee Advocacy in Hybrid Workplaces

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Abstract

The transformation of conventional workplaces into hybrid work environments has changed the nature of employee–organization relationships. Hybrid workplaces provide employees with flexibility and autonomy, but they also create challenges related to communication, managerial visibility, interpersonal relationships, inclusion, and organizational identification. In such an environment, organizational trust and psychological safety can play an important role in shaping employees’ attitudes and behaviours toward their organizations. The present study examines the role of organizational trust and psychological safety in promoting employee advocacy in hybrid workplaces. Organizational trust refers to employees’ confidence in organizational leadership, managerial fairness, communication, reliability, and organizational support. Psychological safety refers to employees’ perception that they can express ideas, ask questions, report mistakes, and raise concerns without fear of negative interpersonal or professional consequences. Employee advocacy represents employees’ willingness to recommend their organization, speak positively about it, and communicate favourable organizational experiences to others. The study proposes a conceptual framework in which organizational trust and psychological safety are treated as important predictors of employee advocacy. A quantitative research design is proposed, using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. Data may be analyzed through descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis. Existing research provides support for a positive relationship between psychological safety and employee advocacy, while research on hybrid work emphasizes the importance of trust and psychological safety for effective workplace relationships. The study is expected to contribute to human resource management and organizational behaviour literature by explaining how organizations can develop employee advocacy through trust-based management and psychologically safe hybrid work practices.

Keywords: Organizational Trust, Psychological Safety, Employee Advocacy, Hybrid Workplace, Employee Behaviour, Human Resource Management, Organizational Culture

1. Introduction

The workplace has undergone a major transformation as organizations increasingly adopt flexible, remote, and hybrid working arrangements. Hybrid work represents a combination of office-based and remote work in which employees perform their responsibilities from both organizational premises and other locations. Although hybrid work provides greater flexibility and may support employee autonomy and work-life balance, it also changes the traditional patterns of interaction between employees, managers, and colleagues.

In a conventional office environment, employees have frequent opportunities for face-to-face interaction, informal communication, immediate feedback, and social relationship development. Hybrid workplaces reduce the frequency of some of these interactions and increase dependence on digital communication. Consequently, organizations need to develop alternative mechanisms for maintaining employee connection, trust, participation, and organizational commitment.

Organizational trust becomes particularly important in hybrid workplaces. When employees are physically separated from managers for part of the working week, organizations cannot rely entirely on direct supervision. Managers must instead depend on employee responsibility and performance, while employees need confidence that organizational decisions, performance assessments, communication, and career opportunities will be handled fairly. Trust therefore becomes an important foundation of effective hybrid working relationships.

Psychological safety is another important element of the hybrid workplace. Psychological safety refers to an environment in which employees feel comfortable expressing opinions, raising concerns, asking questions, acknowledging mistakes, and offering alternative viewpoints. Research has established psychological safety as an important organizational phenomenon related to learning, communication, team effectiveness, and employee behaviour. Employee advocacy is also becoming increasingly relevant for organizations. Employees are not merely internal members of an organization; they can also act as informal representatives of the organization. Employees may recommend their organization as a workplace, speak positively about organizational practices, recommend its products or services, and defend its reputation when necessary. Research has directly examined psychological conditions and employee advocacy, including evidence from both the United States and India.

2. Background of the Study

Hybrid work has created a workplace structure in which employees may experience different levels of interaction with their organizations depending on whether they are working remotely or from the office. The effectiveness of such arrangements is not determined solely by technology. It also depends on communication quality, leadership behaviour, trust, inclusion, and psychological conditions.

Hybrid work can potentially create uncertainty concerning employee visibility, performance evaluation, communication, and career opportunities. Employees may question whether remote work will negatively affect recognition or promotion. Managers may also face concerns about monitoring performance and maintaining team cohesion.

These conditions make organizational trust particularly important. Trust can reduce uncertainty by creating confidence that employees and managers will fulfil their responsibilities fairly and reliably.

Similarly, psychological safety can help employees communicate effectively despite the physical separation associated with hybrid work. Recent discussion of hybrid workplaces emphasizes that psychological safety needs to be deliberately maintained when employees have different levels of physical presence and participation.

3. Review of Literature

3.1 Organizational Trust

Organizational trust refers to employees' confidence in the intentions, competence, fairness, and reliability of organizational leaders and systems. Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) conceptualized trust as a willingness to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations about another party's intentions or behaviour.

Within organizations, trust influences how employees interpret managerial decisions and organizational practices. High levels of trust can facilitate cooperation, information sharing, commitment, and positive employee behaviour.

Trust is particularly important when employees face uncertainty. Hybrid work creates situations in which managers cannot continuously observe employees and employees may not always have direct access to managerial support. Consequently, trust can function as an important social mechanism for maintaining effective working relationships.

Recent research also suggests that trust in top management can be an important factor associated with employees' perceptions of psychological safety across different national contexts.

3.2 Psychological Safety

Psychological safety was systematically developed within organizational research by Edmondson (1999). It describes employees' perception that a team or workplace is safe for interpersonal risk-taking.

Psychologically safe employees can:

- express opinions;

- ask questions;
- admit mistakes;
- raise concerns;
- challenge existing ideas;
- seek assistance; and
- suggest improvements.

Psychological safety is therefore particularly important in organizations that depend on knowledge sharing and collaboration.

Edmondson and Bransby's review of psychological safety literature highlights the continuing importance of the construct for organizational research and workplace relationships.

3.3 Employee Advocacy

Employee advocacy refers to employees' voluntary communication of positive opinions about their organization. It can include recommending the organization as an employer, recommending its products or services, speaking positively about organizational practices, and defending the organization against unfair criticism.

Employee advocacy can benefit organizations by supporting employer branding, organizational reputation, recruitment, customer relationships, and internal morale.

Recent empirical research has specifically examined psychological safety and employee advocacy. A cross-national study involving employees from the United States and India found that psychological safety was examined as a psychological condition associated with advocacy behaviours.

3.4 Organizational Trust and Employee Advocacy

Trust can influence employee advocacy because employees are more likely to communicate positively about an organization when they believe that the organization is fair, reliable, and supportive.

An employee who trusts organizational leadership may be more willing to recommend the organization to friends, professional contacts, and potential employees. Trust may therefore contribute to positive word-of-mouth and organizational representation.

3.5 Psychological Safety and Employee Advocacy

Psychological safety can contribute to employee advocacy by creating a workplace environment in which employees feel respected and valued.

Research by Thelen, Yue, and Verghese found evidence of a positive relationship between psychological safety and employee advocacy in their study of employees in the United States and India, although the strength of the relationship varied across the two national samples.

This finding is particularly relevant for the present research because it demonstrates that employee advocacy can be connected with employees' psychological experiences rather than being solely a consequence of formal organizational communication strategies.

3.6 Trust, Psychological Safety and Hybrid Work

Trust and psychological safety may become even more important in hybrid workplaces because physical separation can reduce informal interaction and create uncertainty.

Hybrid employees need to believe that:

1. Managers trust them to perform their work;
2. Their performance will be evaluated fairly;
3. Remote employees will not be disadvantaged;
4. Their opinions will be respected; and
5. Mistakes can be discussed constructively.

4. Research Gap

The existing literature provides substantial evidence concerning organizational trust, psychological safety, employee engagement, organizational commitment, and employee

behaviour. However, the combination of these variables in the specific context of hybrid workplaces remains comparatively underexplored.

First, much of the literature on organizational trust was developed in conventional organizational settings.

Second, psychological safety research has primarily focused on team learning, employee voice, innovation, knowledge sharing, and performance rather than employee advocacy.

Third, although recent research has established a relationship between psychological safety and employee advocacy, there is scope for examining the role of psychological safety together with organizational trust in the increasingly important context of hybrid work.

Fourth, hybrid work introduces additional dimensions such as physical distance, digital communication, employee visibility, autonomy, and flexible scheduling. These factors may influence trust and psychological safety differently from conventional workplaces.

5. Objectives of the Study

The study has the following objectives:

1. To examine the level of organizational trust among employees working in hybrid workplaces.
2. To assess the level of psychological safety experienced by employees in hybrid work environments.
3. To examine the level of employee advocacy among hybrid employees.
4. To analyse the relationship between organizational trust and employee advocacy.
5. To examine the relationship between psychological safety and employee advocacy.

6. Research Hypotheses

H₀₁

There is no significant relationship between organizational trust and employee advocacy in hybrid workplaces.

H₁₁

There is a significant relationship between organizational trust and employee advocacy in hybrid workplaces.

H₀₂

There is no significant relationship between psychological safety and employee advocacy in hybrid workplaces.

H₁₂

There is a significant relationship between psychological safety and employee advocacy in hybrid workplaces.

7. Research Methodology

7.1 Research Design

The study may employ a descriptive and analytical research design. A quantitative approach is appropriate because the research aims to measure the relationships among organizational trust, psychological safety, and employee advocacy.

7.2 Population

The population of the study may consist of employees working in organizations that have formally adopted hybrid work arrangements.

7.3 Sample Size

A sample of 300–500 employees may be selected depending on the accessibility of respondents and research requirements. A sample size of 400 respondents would provide a practical basis for correlation and regression analysis.

7.4 Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling may be used to ensure that respondents have actual experience of hybrid working. Convenience sampling may subsequently be used to reach eligible respondents.

7.5 Data Collection

Primary data may be collected through a structured questionnaire.

A five-point Likert scale can be used:

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

Secondary data may be collected from books, academic journals, research reports, and scholarly databases.

8. Variables and Measurement**8.1 Organizational Trust**

Organizational trust may be measured using statements relating to:

1. Confidence in senior management.
2. Management reliability.
3. Fairness of organizational decisions.
4. Transparency of organizational communication.
5. Management's concern for employee welfare.
6. Confidence in organizational policies.
7. Fulfilment of organizational commitments.

8.2 Psychological Safety

Psychological safety may be measured through:

1. Freedom to express opinions.
2. Ability to raise workplace concerns.
3. Comfort in asking questions.
4. Freedom to acknowledge mistakes.
5. Acceptance of alternative viewpoints.
6. Freedom to disagree respectfully.
7. Confidence that speaking up will not lead to negative consequences.

The measurement approach is consistent with established psychological-safety research.

8.3 Employee Advocacy

Employee advocacy may be measured through:

1. Willingness to recommend the organization as a workplace.
2. Speaking positively about the organization.
3. Recommending organizational products/services.
4. Sharing positive workplace experiences.
5. Defending the organization's reputation.
6. Feeling proud to represent the organization.
7. Encouraging others to associate with the organization.

9. Statistical Techniques

The following statistical techniques can be used:

9.1 Frequency and Percentage

Demographic characteristics can be analyzed using frequency and percentage.

9.2 Mean and Standard Deviation

Mean and standard deviation can be calculated for organizational trust, psychological safety, and employee advocacy.

9.3 Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha can be used to determine the internal consistency of the scales.

9.4 Pearson Correlation

Pearson's correlation coefficient can be used to examine the direction and strength of relationships between:

- Organizational Trust and Employee Advocacy
- Psychological Safety and Employee Advocacy
- Organizational Trust and Psychological Safety

9.5 Multiple Regression

Multiple regression can determine the combined influence of organizational trust and psychological safety on employee advocacy.

The regression equation can be represented as:

$$EA = a + b_1OT + b_2PS + e$$

Where:

- EA = Employee Advocacy
- OT = Organizational Trust
- PS = Psychological Safety
- a = Constant
- b₁ and b₂ = Regression coefficients
- e = Error term

10. Proposed Data Analysis

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic profile may include:

- Gender
- Age
- Educational qualification
- Work experience
- Organizational position
- Industry
- Frequency of remote work
- Duration of hybrid work experience

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Organizational Trust	—	—
Psychological Safety	—	—
Employee Advocacy	—	—

Table 3: Reliability Analysis

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Organizational Trust	—	—
Psychological Safety	—	—
Employee Advocacy	—	—

Table 4: Correlation Matrix

Variables	Organizational Trust	Psychological Safety	Employee Advocacy
Organizational Trust	1.000	—	—
Psychological Safety	—	1.000	—
Employee Advocacy	—	—	1.000

Table 5: Regression Analysis

Predictor	β	t-value	p-value
Organizational Trust	—	—	—
Psychological Safety	—	—	—

Dependent Variable: Employee Advocacy

The model should additionally report R^2 , Adjusted R^2 , F-value, and significance level.

11. Discussion

The proposed study expects organizational trust to have a positive association with employee advocacy. Employees who perceive their managers and organizations as reliable, fair, transparent, and supportive are likely to develop more favourable organizational attitudes.

Psychological safety is also expected to positively contribute to employee advocacy. Employees who can speak openly, raise concerns, and express alternative opinions without fear may experience greater inclusion and organizational belonging.

Existing empirical research provides support for this proposed relationship. Thelen, Yue, and Verghese found a positive relationship between psychological safety and employee advocacy in their cross-national study involving U.S. and Indian employees, although the relationship differed between the two samples.

The hybrid workplace adds an important dimension to this relationship. Employees may work remotely for substantial periods and therefore have fewer opportunities for informal interaction with managers and colleagues. Edmondson and Mortensen have argued that hybrid work requires organizations to rethink how psychological safety is maintained when employees have different physical and virtual work experiences.

Organizational trust may therefore act as a foundation for hybrid collaboration, while psychological safety may determine whether employees feel comfortable participating and communicating within that environment.

12. Limitations of the Study

The proposed study may have several limitations. First, a cross-sectional design may limit the ability to establish causal relationships. Second, self-reported responses may be affected by social desirability or respondent bias. Third, purposive or convenience sampling may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Fourth, hybrid work practices vary across industries and organizations, which may influence employee experiences. Finally, variables such as leadership style, employee engagement, organizational identification, perceived organizational support, and work-life balance may also influence employee advocacy but are not included in the basic model.

13. Scope for Future Research

Future researchers can expand the model by incorporating:

- Employee engagement
- Organizational commitment
- Organizational identification
- Perceived organizational support
- Leadership style
- Work-life balance
- Employee voice
- Job satisfaction
- Digital communication quality
- Remote-work autonomy

Future studies may also compare fully remote, hybrid, and fully office-based employees. Longitudinal research could further examine whether changes in organizational trust and psychological safety produce corresponding changes in employee advocacy.

Cross-cultural research would also be valuable because existing evidence indicates that relationships between psychological safety and advocacy may vary across national contexts.

14. Conclusion

Hybrid work has fundamentally changed the relationship between employees and organizations. While technology enables employees to work across different locations, sustainable hybrid work requires strong interpersonal and organizational foundations. Organizational trust and psychological safety are two important conditions that can support such foundations.

The present study proposes that organizational trust and psychological safety play significant roles in promoting employee advocacy in hybrid workplaces. Trust provides employees with confidence in organizational leadership, policies, and managerial decisions, whereas psychological safety allows employees to communicate openly and participate without fear of negative consequences.

When these conditions are present, employees may be more willing to recommend their organization, speak positively about it, share favourable experiences, and support its reputation. Thus, employee advocacy should be understood not simply as an external communication outcome but as an extension of the internal employee experience.

For organizations adopting hybrid work, the development of trust-based leadership, transparent communication, psychological safety, employee voice, and equitable treatment of remote and office-based employees can provide an important foundation for stronger employee advocacy.

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