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Original Scientific Paper

## ORGANIZATIONAL EMOTION CULTURE: A SOCIO-FUNCTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOURAL OUTCOMES OF EXPERIENCED EMOTIONS

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**Abstract.** *The research aimed to examine the moderating role of psychological safety in the relationship between employees' emotions and their behaviours, such as promotive and prohibitive voice, as well as engagement. The study was carried out on a sample of 279 respondents, employing a convenience sample of employees with at least one year of work experience. Instruments measuring psychological safety, employee voice, and work engagement were used. The results indicate that Positive emotions are strongly associated with employee behaviours, enhancing both promotive and prohibitive voice, as well as engagement. However, psychological safety emerged as a crucial moderating factor—among employees with high levels of psychological safety, Positive emotions enable the expression of opinions and active participation in organizational processes. Conversely, negative emotions generally inhibit proactive behaviour, although psychological safety can somewhat mitigate their negative impact. These findings highlight the importance of creating a safe working environment that allows employees to express their emotions freely and fosters a proactive approach. Organizations that promote psychological safety can harness the positive effects of emotions on employee productivity and engagement. Future research should focus on a deeper understanding of specific emotions, particularly negative emotions, to identify their constructive and destructive aspects within an organizational settings.*

**Key words:** *psychological safety, emotions, promotive voice, prohibitive voice, engagement.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Emotions play a pivotal role in shaping behaviour and interpersonal relationships in the workplace. Traditionally, Positive emotions have often been regarded as beneficial and desirable, while negative emotions were seen as obstacles to be minimised or eliminated. However, contemporary research increasingly highlights that negative emotions can also serve constructive functions in organisational contexts, particularly when they are appropriately expressed and managed (Riaz & Junaid 2013).

Emotions are an inevitable part of the work environment and play a crucial role in shaping employee behaviour, team dynamics, and the overall organisational climate. For example, emotional intelligence, which involves the ability to recognise and regulate one's own emotions as well as those of others, has been linked to improved team performance and higher levels of organisational commitment (Ashkanasy & Dorris 2017). Emotionally intelligent leaders are capable of creating a positive work environment that fosters creativity, collaboration, and high performance (Dasborough et al. 2022).

Positive emotions are often perceived as desirable because they promote connection, collaboration, and exploration. These emotions function as rewards that strengthen social bonds and encourage proactive behaviour (Diener et al. 2020). Studies have shown that Positive emotions can enhance work engagement, reduce absenteeism, and improve overall job performance (Bakker & Demerouti 2007).

In contrast, negative emotions such as anger, envy, and shame are frequently perceived as harmful and undesirable. Nevertheless, recent research suggests that these emotions may serve important social functions when properly managed. For instance, anger can signal injustices or irregularities, motivating individuals to take action that leads to positive changes within the organisation (Gibson & Callister 2010). Similarly, envy may inspire individuals to enhance their skills and achieve greater professional success (Duffy et al. 2012).

### 1.1. The Social Functional Theory of Emotions (SFT)

The Social Functional Theory of Emotions (SFT) posits that emotions play a crucial role in coordinating social behaviour and communication within social groups. According to this theory, emotions are not merely internal states but also social signals that shape the behaviour of others and help maintain social bonds and structures (Fridlund 1994; Scherer 2022).

Fridlund (1994) suggests that emotions such as anger, sadness, and joy function as signals that convey information about our internal state to others, allowing us to influence their behaviour. For example, expressing anger can signal unacceptable behaviour and prompt changes that lead to a fairer environment. Keltner and Haidt (1999) further argue that each emotion has a specific function that may be adaptive in particular social contexts. Whether it is anger signalling the need for change or shame helping regulate social norms, emotions play a key role in maintaining social hierarchies and cooperation within groups.

Additionally, SFT explains how emotions serve as mechanisms for maintaining social cohesion. Emotions like gratitude and sympathy foster positive interactions and strengthen social bonds, while negative emotions such as anger and shame help regulate behaviour within the group (Morris & Keltner 2000).

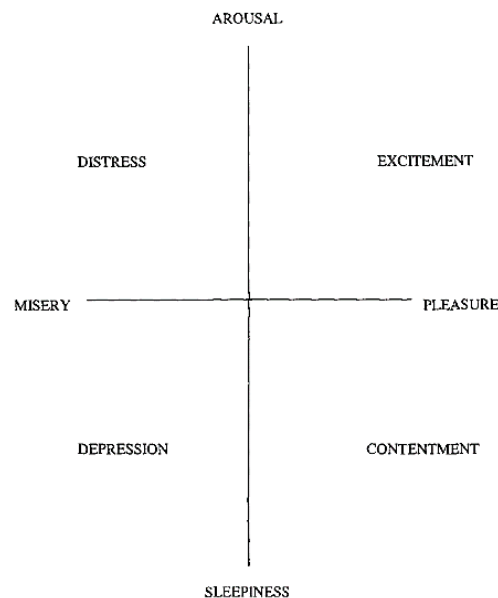
Recent research by Menges and Kilduff (2015) shows that organisations with a strong culture that recognises and values emotions tend to have better performance and higher employee satisfaction. This is because such organisations facilitate open communication and more effective conflict resolution. An emotional culture can enhance team coordination and

improve interpersonal relationships, which is vital for the efficient functioning of an organisation (Meyer & Allen 1991).

## 1.2. Understanding Emotional Experience at Work

### 1.2.1. Warr's Model of Affective Well-being

Warr (1987) developed a model of affective well-being at work, which is based on the experience of various specific emotional states. His model draws inspiration from Russell's (1980) two-dimensional model of affect, which views emotions not as discrete or independent, but as interconnected within a two-dimensional space defined by the axes of pleasure and arousal. This model has been empirically supported by research across different contexts and variations (Laguna et al. 2016; Mäkikangas et al. 2011), including the workplace. Russell (2003) describes affect as a neurophysiological state that is consciously accessible as the simplest raw feeling, represented along two dimensions: pleasantness and activation (Barrett & Russell 1999; Russell 2003).



**Fig. 1** The Two-Dimensional Model of Affective Well-being: Eight Affective Terms Arranged in a Circular Pattern. From "A Circumplex Model of Affect," J. A. Russell, 1980, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 45, p. 1164.

This model employs multidimensional scaling techniques to explore the cognitive structure of individuals' affective ratings. In the circumplex model, emotion terms are arranged on a continuous circle, with synonyms placed closer to each other, and antonyms positioned oppositely. The horizontal dimension represents pleasure-displeasure, while the vertical dimension represents arousal, ranging from low to high. This model allows for the representation of not only a wide range of emotions but also their interrelations based on the degree of similarity and continuous variation.

However, it is important to achieve consistency when considering the relationship between similar terms. Affect, emotion, mood, and feeling belong to the same semantic category and are often used interchangeably. However, moods are typically less intense than emotions and last longer, while emotions are shorter in duration and specifically directed towards other people or events (Frijda 1994; Ekman 1994; Warr et al. 2014). According to Russell's (2003) concept, affect is a neurophysiological state that is consciously accessible as a fundamental feeling present in both moods and emotions.

### *1.2.2. Contemporary Research and Applications*

Numerous studies support the two-dimensional model of affect and its significant extension to various contexts. For instance, research by Barrett (2006) demonstrated that affective responses in the workplace can be accurately categorised within this two-dimensional space, facilitating a more detailed understanding of emotional reactions to working conditions. In the context of the two-dimensional affect model, pleasant emotions, which are high on the pleasure axis, promote positive outcomes such as increased work engagement and job satisfaction. Conversely, unpleasant emotions, which are low on the pleasure axis and high on the arousal axis (e.g., stress and anxiety), can lead to negative outcomes such as increased interpersonal conflict and emotional exhaustion (Barrett & Russell 1999).

## **1.3. Behavioural Outcomes of Different Emotions in Organisational Settings**

### *1.3.1. Employee Voice Behaviour*

Employee voice behaviour refers to the actions employees take to express their opinions, concerns, or suggestions regarding workplace issues, often with the goal of improving organisational practices or addressing problems. This behaviour is significantly influenced by employees' emotional states, which can either facilitate or hinder their willingness to "speak up" (Du & Wang 2021). Prohibitive voice involves expressing concerns or pointing out problems and risks that may negatively impact the organisation. In contrast, promotive voice includes suggestions for improving existing processes and proactively sharing ideas that contribute to organisational enhancement (Liang et al. 2012).

Research indicates that Positive emotions, such as feelings of trust and support within the work environment, can enhance employee voice. For instance, prosocial emotions may motivate employees to engage in voice behaviour because they feel an obligation or desire to positively contribute to their organisation (Heaphy et al. 2021). Similarly, emotional labour performed by employees can also influence their willingness to voice concerns, as emotional exhaustion may reduce their capacity to express concerns or suggestions (Du & Wang 2021).

Conversely, negative emotions, such as job insecurity and emotional exhaustion, can significantly hinder employees from speaking up. For example, studies show that job insecurity leads to heightened negative emotions, which in turn reduce employees' willingness to engage in behaviours beyond their core roles, including employee voice (Yu et al. 2021). The study suggests that workplace friendships can mitigate these negative emotions, creating a supportive environment. Additionally, workplaces where employees feel ostracised show a tendency for reduced voice behaviour, as employees may fear further exclusion or negative repercussions (Takhsha et al. 2020). This is supported by findings

indicating that a toxic work environment can reduce employee engagement and voice expression due to the negative emotional impact on employees (Rasool et al. 2021).

In certain organisational settings, prohibitive voice may have a greater impact than promotive voice because the process of developing innovative ideas and solutions can require significant time and effort—luxuries that organisations operating in fast-paced environments may not afford. In comparison, prohibitive voice aims to halt damage, thereby preventing negative effects in a timely manner (Detert & Burris 2007). Additionally, the relationship between leaders' emotional reactions and employee voice is significant. Leaders who express Positive emotions can encourage their subordinates to speak up, whereas negative emotional expressions may have the opposite effect (Song et al. 2019). This dynamic underscores the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership, as it can significantly influence the emotional climate of the workplace and, consequently, employee voice (Ariga et al. 2020).

### *1.3.2. Work Engagement*

Work engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling mental state related to work, characterised by high energy, dedication, and deep concentration on work tasks (Schaufeli et al. 2002). Engaged employees display enthusiasm for their jobs, high energy levels, and immersion in their tasks, which motivates them to give their best and achieve high levels of performance. Work engagement is often associated with positive outcomes, such as increased productivity, lower absenteeism, and higher job satisfaction (Bakker & Demerouti 2007). The concept of work engagement has become central to research and practice since its introduction in 1990 (Bakker & Leiter 2017) and is considered critical for the competitiveness of modern organisations (Schaufeli & De Witte 2017). Work engagement is often measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), which assesses three key dimensions: vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al. 2002).

Positive emotional experiences in the workplace can enhance these dimensions, resulting in greater employee engagement and productivity (Bakker & Demerouti 2007). Positive emotions, such as satisfaction and enthusiasm, significantly contribute to higher work engagement (Fredrickson 2001). Studies show that employees who experience Positive emotions at work are more likely to be highly engaged, as evidenced by their energy, dedication, and absorption in work tasks (Schaufeli & Bakker 2004).

On the other hand, negative emotions can impair work engagement. Emotions such as anger, stress, and frustration are associated with reduced engagement, which can lead to lower productivity levels and increased absenteeism (Bakker et al. 2008). Research indicates that high job demands and a lack of resources can lead to negative emotional experiences, further resulting in burnout and diminished work engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker 2004).

## **1.4. Organisational Emotion Culture**

The culture of emotions in an organisation refers to how the organisation recognises, values, and manages the emotional expressions of its employees. This culture is part of the broader organisational culture but specifically focuses on the emotional aspects of the work environment. Organisations that promote a positive emotional culture tend to encourage open communication, emotional intelligence, and mutual support among employees (Ashkanasy & Dorris 2017). Research indicates that an emotional culture can significantly contribute to employee well-being and overall organisational effectiveness. For instance, organisations that

foster emotional intelligence and empathy among employees experience lower turnover rates and higher employee engagement (Gooty et al. 2014). This culture also facilitates better team coordination and improved interpersonal relationships, which are crucial for the efficient functioning of the organisation (Menges & Kilduff 2015).

### **1.5. Psychological Safety**

One of the key benefits of an emotional culture in the workplace is the enhancement of employees' psychological safety. Psychological safety is defined as the perception among employees that they can freely express their thoughts and feelings without fear of negative consequences (Edmondson & Lei 2014). Organisations that nurture psychological safety often see improved team performance and greater innovation, as employees feel free to share their ideas and constructively express dissatisfaction (Newman et al. 2017).

Psychological safety plays a crucial role in supporting the expression of emotions at work and moderating their effects. In work environments where psychological safety is present, employees feel empowered to openly share their feelings, including negative emotions such as anger, sadness, or frustration. This is particularly important as it enables constructive discussion and problem-solving in a transparent and effective manner (Newman et al. 2017).

Research shows that psychological safety can significantly moderate the negative effects of emotions in the workplace. For example, in environments where employees experience high psychological safety, negative emotions such as anger can be channelled in a constructive way, leading to process improvements and conflict resolution (Frazier et al. 2017). In such settings, expressing anger may signal the need for change or correction of unjust situations, ultimately enhancing the work environment and team dynamics (Liang et al. 2012). Conversely, in environments with low psychological safety, employees may be more likely to suppress their emotions, which can lead to the accumulation of stress and dissatisfaction, eventually reducing performance and increasing employee turnover (Edmondson & Lei 2014). Thus, psychological safety plays a key role in enabling employees to cope with their emotions in a healthy and productive manner, reducing negative outcomes and increasing the organisation's overall efficiency (Kahn 1990).

### **1.6. Problem Statement**

According to the two-dimensional model of affect (Russell 1980), emotions can be categorised as positive or negative. Positive emotions, such as satisfaction and enthusiasm, are associated with higher work engagement, lower absenteeism, and overall better job performance (Lyubomirsky et al. 2005). In contrast, negative emotions such as anger, frustration, and anxiety often lead to counterproductive work behaviours, including aggression, sabotage, and reduced productivity (Spector & Fox 2005; Fox et al. 2001). Contemporary research, much of which is grounded in the social functional theory of emotions, suggests that negative emotions can serve constructive functions in an organisational context when adequately managed (Geddes et al. 2020; Keltner & Haidt 1999).

This study focuses on the organisation as the key actor in directing the outcomes of emotions experienced within its environment, positing that the presence of an emotional culture determines whether the outcome of unpleasant emotions will be constructive. Psychological safety has been identified as a crucial moderator that can shape the conditions under which emotions impact behavioural outcomes in the workplace (Edmondson 1999). Psychological

safety encompasses dimensions such as mutual trust and respect, supportive leadership, and perceived team support (Edmondson & Lei 2014). In environments characterised by high psychological safety, employees feel free to express their emotions and opinions without fear of negative consequences, potentially resulting in constructive behaviour even when negative emotions are involved (Frazier et al. 2017).

We expect that Positive emotions may encourage employees to engage in promotive voice, whereby they offer constructive suggestions and ideas for improving organisational processes (Liang et al. 2012). In contrast, negative emotions may act as inhibitors of proactive behaviour within the organisation (Geddes et al. 2020), leading us to hypothesise a negative relationship between promotive voice and negative emotions. Psychological safety is presumed to play a positive role as a moderator—amplifying the positive effects of Positive emotions on promotive voice while increasing the likelihood that negative emotions can be channelled toward promotive work practices.

Conversely, prohibitive voice involves expressing concerns about harmful work practices, incidents, or employee behaviour that could negatively affect the organisation. We expect that employees who frequently experience unpleasant emotions may be more likely to engage in such behaviour as an expression of their dissatisfaction. Psychological safety is likely to amplify this effect, creating a work environment where employees feel secure in expressing their concerns without fear of team censure. Although negative emotions are often linked to expressing concerns and criticism in organisational contexts, there is evidence that Positive emotions can also motivate employees to use prohibitive voice out of a sense of responsibility towards the organisation, aiming to improve practices and prevent potential problems (Zhang et al. 2021). In this case, psychological safety further enhances employees' willingness to take risks and express concerns, even when they are experiencing Positive emotions.

Another assumption we aim to test in this study is whether employee engagement correlates with the frequency of experiencing Positive emotions, particularly when the culture supports the expression of certain emotions. In contrast, it is expected that the frequency of experiencing negative emotions is associated with lower engagement, but psychological safety may mitigate this negative effect.

Based on the aforementioned theoretical and empirical foundations, we formulate the following hypotheses:

*H1:* Psychological safety is expected to enhance the positive association between promotive voice and Positive emotions, while reducing the negative association between promotive voice and negative emotions. This means that employees in high-psychological-safety environments will experience more Positive emotions, such as satisfaction and enthusiasm, when using promotive voice, while negative emotions like stress and frustration will be diminished.

*H2:* Psychological safety is expected to strengthen the association between prohibitive voice and emotions, such that employees in high-psychological-safety environments will experience both more Positive emotions and more intense negative emotions when expressing prohibitive voice. In such environments, employees find it easier to cope with the negative aspects of voice behaviour, while Positive emotions are reflected through constructive feedback.

*H3:* Psychological safety is expected to enhance the positive association between employee engagement and Positive emotions, while reducing the negative association between employee engagement and negative emotions. In high-psychological-safety environments, more engaged employees will feel more Positive emotions, such as satisfaction and energy, while negative emotions, such as stress or fatigue, will be reduced.

## 2. THE METHOD

### 2.1. Sample

The initial sample for this study consisted of 312 respondents. Filters excluded respondents who had less than six months of work experience, those without a direct supervisor, and those who did not collaborate with colleagues. After applying these filters, the final sample comprised 299 respondents. Following the removal of multivariate outliers (based on critical values of Mahalanobis distances), a total of 279 respondents remained. This convenience sample included respondents with at least one year of work experience (Min = 1.0; Max = 34; M = 7.47), of which 61.3% were female, aged between 20 and 52 years (M = 35.28; SD = 7.66). The largest percentage of respondents held a university degree, either a bachelor's (24.7%) or master's (45.2%), while 17.2% had completed secondary vocational school or grammar school. A smaller percentage had completed higher vocational education (10.0%), and the lowest percentage held doctoral degrees (2.9%). Over 90% of the respondents currently live in urban areas. Of the respondents, 61.3% worked in private organisations, while 38.7% were employed in the public sector.

### 2.2. The measuring instrument

**The Psychological Safety Scale (Edmondson 1999; Serbian adaptation by Goljović 2023)** is a one-dimensional questionnaire consisting of 7 items (Example item: "It is safe to take a risk in this team."), with respondents providing answers on a five-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree; 5 – strongly agree). The scale is unidimensional and demonstrated good psychometric properties in a validation sample in Serbian, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of internal consistency of .80.

**The Job-Related Affective Well-being Scale (JAWS; Van Katwyk et al. 2000)** is a 20-item instrument in its short form, designed to assess employees' emotional reactions to their work. Each item represents a specific emotion, and respondents rate how frequently they experienced each emotion at work (Example item: "My job made me feel angry.") over the past 30 days using a five-point scale (never, rarely, sometimes, often, very often). The JAWS encompasses a wide range of emotional experiences, both positive and negative, which can be categorised into four categories along two dimensions: pleasure and arousal. The scale can be scored in three ways: the total score of all items, with reverse scoring of negative emotions, separate scores for positive and negative emotions without reverse scoring, and four scores corresponding to the pleasure-arousal categories. The instrument shows high reliability, with reliability coefficients for different dimensions ranging from .80 to .90 (Weziak-Bialowolska et al. 2021; Van Katwyk et al. 2000). For this study, the instrument was translated using the back-translation method. Results from the CFA did not confirm the four-factor structure of the instrument, but the two-factor model (positive and negative emotions) yielded results closest to acceptable indices ( $\chi^2(144) = 1584.50$ ,  $p = .000$ ; CFI = .89; TLI = .88; RMSEA = .18 (90% CI = .17, .19); SRMR = .13).

**The Employee Voice Behaviour Scale (Liang et al. 2012)** was developed to assess employees' expression of opinions in organisations. The scale consists of 10 items (Example item: "Proactively develop and make suggestions for issues that may influence the unit.") measuring two types of voice behaviour: promotive and prohibitive. Promotive voice refers to expressing constructive suggestions for improving organisational processes, while prohibitive voice involves expressing concerns about work practices or incidents that



could negatively impact the organisation. Each item is rated on a five-point Likert scale (1–5). The scale has high reliability, with reliability coefficients of .95 for promotive voice and .94 for prohibitive voice (Kakkar et al. 2016). For this study, the instrument was translated using the back-translation method. CFA showed a good fit for the model that assumes two factors, consistent with the original model ( $\chi^2(31) = 205.51$ ,  $p = .000$ ; CFI = .93; TLI = .90; RMSEA = .14 (90% CI = .12, .16); SRMR = .04).

**The Serbian version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9; Schaufeli & Bakker 2003; translation and adaptation by Popov 2013)** contains nine items measuring one dimension of engagement (Example item: “At my work, I feel bursting with energy.”). Respondents rate how often they experience each of these aspects using a seven-point Likert scale (from 0 – “never” to 6 – “always”). The UWES-9 assesses energy and mental resilience at work, involvement in work with a sense of significance and enthusiasm, and complete concentration and immersion in work tasks. The instrument demonstrates satisfactory reliability, with reliability coefficients for different dimensions ranging from .63 to .87 (Schaufeli et al. 2006).

### 2.3. Procedure

The research was conducted online via the Google Forms platform in August 2024. Respondents were recruited through social media, including direct contact and sponsored posts on Instagram. Before beginning the questionnaire, all respondents provided informed consent for their involvement in the study. Following an initial eligibility screening, respondents were offered the choice of a reward, which included an online or in-person training session in the field of psychology and human resources management. Approximately 50% of the respondents opted for this form of compensation.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

Data were analysed using the statistical software SPSS and AMOS, with AMOS employed to assess the psychometric properties of the instruments used. The analyses included descriptive statistics for the basic demographic characteristics of the sample, as well as regression analyses to draw conclusions about the relationships between the studied variables. For the purposes of moderation analysis and visualizing interaction effects, psychological safety was categorized into low and high levels based on the standard deviation method. Specifically, respondents whose scores were one standard deviation below the mean were classified as having low psychological safety, while those with scores one standard deviation above the mean were classified as having high psychological safety. Moderation analysis was conducted through regression analyses and GLM, which allowed for the examination of interaction effects between the variables. Figures were generated within SPSS.

## 3. RESULTS

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients ( $\alpha$ ) for the dimensions used in the study.

**Table 1** Descriptive statistics and reliability of dimensions

Dimensions	Min	Max	M	SD	Sk	Ku	$\alpha$
Psychological safety	1.29	4.86	3.64	.79	-.40	-.49	.80
Positive emotions	1.00	4.90	3.41	.88	-.54	-.10	.94
Negative emotions	1.30	5.00	2.43	.84	.73	.04	.91
Promotive voice	1.00	5.00	3.65	1.11	-.63	-.69	.95
Prohibitive voice	1.00	5.00	3.72	.92	-.52	-.21	.87
Employee engagement	1.00	5.00	3.61	.87	-.45	-.28	.91

Note: M – Mean; SD – Standard deviation; Sk – Skewness; Ku – Kurtosis;  $\alpha$  – Cronbach's alpha

The skewness and kurtosis coefficients indicate that the distribution of results does not deviate significantly from normality. The reliability coefficients are very good for all dimensions, ranging from .80 to .95, indicating moderate to high internal consistency of the scales used.

**Table 2** Correlations Between Psychological Safety, Emotions, Negative Emotions, Promotive and Prohibitive Voice, and Employee Engagement

Dimensions	1	2	2	4	5
1. Psychological safety	-				
2. Positive emotions	.58***	-			
3. Negative emotions	-.39***	-.66***	-		
4. Promotive voice	.32***	.43***	-.12*	-	
5. Prohibitive voice	.11	.43***	-.42***	.68***	-
6. Employee engagement	.42***	.91***	-.55***	.46***	.47***

Note: \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p < .01$

The results show a moderate positive correlation between psychological safety and Positive emotions, as well as a moderate positive correlation with promotive voice. Psychological safety has a weak negative relationship with negative emotions. Positive emotions are moderately positively correlated with promotive voice and strongly correlated with engagement. Negative emotions are moderately negatively correlated with engagement. Promotive voice demonstrates a moderate positive correlation with engagement, while prohibitive voice is moderately correlated with Positive emotions and engagement, but negatively correlated with negative emotions.

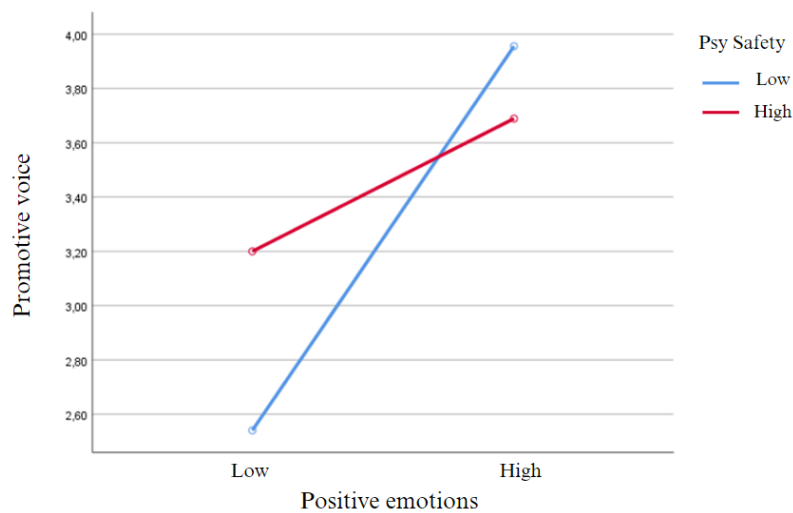
In the first model, demographic variables such as Engagement, age, and work tenure explain a small but significant portion of the variance in promotive voice ( $R^2 = .07$ ). Age shows a negative, while work tenure shows a positive correlation with promotive voice, whereas Engagement is not a statistically significant predictor in this model. The addition of psychological safety and Positive emotions in the second step significantly increases the explained variance ( $\Delta R^2 = .24$ ), with Positive emotions emerging as the strongest predictor of promotive voice, while psychological safety also shows a positive effect. In this model, work tenure remains significant, whereas age and Engagement lose significance. The third

model includes the interaction between Positive emotions and psychological safety. This interaction shows a negative effect on promotive voice, suggesting that higher levels of Positive emotions reduce the positive impact of psychological safety on promotive voice.

**Table 3** Engagement, Age, Work Tenure, Psychological Safety, Positive emotions, and Their Interaction as Predictors of Promotive Voice

Predictor	$\beta$	t	p	$r_0$	Model
Gender	.03	.51	.61	.10	R = .26
Age	-.30	-2.48	.01	.11	R <sup>2</sup> = .07
Tenure	.46	3.82	.00	.21	F (3. 275) = 6.96 p < .001
Gender	.10	1.87	.06	.10	R = .56
Age	-.12	-1.13	.26	.11	$\Delta R^2 = .24$
Tenure	.40	3.79	.00	.21	$\Delta F (2. 273) = 47.04$
Psychological safety	.21	3.49	.00	.33	p < .001
Positive emotions	.36	6.05	.00	.43	
Gender	.11	2.11	.04	.10	
Age	-.14	-1.36	.17	.11	R = .60
Tenure	.38	3.65	.00	.21	$\Delta R^2 = .05$
Psychological safety	.13	2.08	.04	.33	$\Delta F (1. 274) = 20.70$
Positive emotions	.29	4.85	.00	.43	p < .001
Positive emotions *					
Psychological safety	-.26	-4.55	.00	-.44	

Based on Fig. 2 below, we can observe that promotive voice increases with higher levels of Positive emotions, but the effect varies depending on the level of psychological safety.



**Fig. 2** Interaction of Positive emotions and Psychological Safety in Predicting Promotive Voice

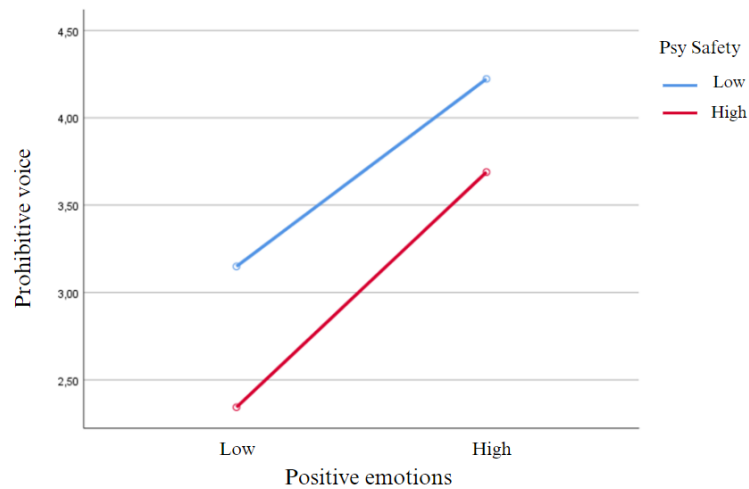
When psychological safety is low, the positive effect of Positive emotions on promotive voice is more pronounced, as indicated by the steeper slope of the line. Conversely, when psychological safety is high, the positive effect of Positive emotions on promotive voice is less pronounced, as shown by the gentler slope of the line.

**Table 4** Engagement, Age, Work Tenure, Psychological Safety, Positive emotions, and Their Interaction as Predictors of Prohibitive Voice

Predictor	$\beta$	t	p	$r_0$	Model
Gender	-.14	-2.27	.02	-.09	R = .19
Age	-.29	-2.35	.02	.02	R <sup>2</sup> = .04
Tenure	.36	2.87	.00	.08	F (3. 275) = 3.58 p = .015
Gender	-.08	-1.35	.18	-.09	R = .47
Age	-.14	-1.23	.22	.02	$\Delta R^2 = .19$
Tenure	.25	2.19	.03	.08	$\Delta F (2. 273) = 32.83$
Psychological safety	-.14	-2.13	.03	.11	p < .001
Positive emotions	.50	7.82	.00	.43	
Gender	-.07	-1.27	.21	-.09	
Age	-.15	-1.33	.18	.02	R = .49
Tenure	.23	2.07	.04	.08	$\Delta R^2 = .015$
Psychological safety	-.18	-2.75	.01	.11	$\Delta F (1. 274) = 32.827$
Positive emotions	.46	7.00	.00	.43	p < .001
Positive emotions *					
Psychological safety	-.14	-2.33	.02	-.27	

In the first model, demographic variables (Engagement, age, and work tenure) explain a small but significant portion of the variance in prohibitive voice ( $R^2 = .04$ ). Engagement and age have negative effects, while work tenure has a positive effect on prohibitive voice. In the second model, the addition of psychological safety and Positive emotions significantly increases the explained variance ( $\Delta R^2 = .19$ ). Positive emotions have a strong positive effect on prohibitive voice, while psychological safety shows a weak negative effect. In the third model, the interaction between Positive emotions and psychological safety shows a negative effect, indicating that higher levels of Positive emotions reduce the negative impact of psychological safety on prohibitive voice.

Based on Fig. 3, we observe a positive relationship between Positive emotions and prohibitive voice, indicating that as Positive emotions increase, employees are more likely to express concerns and highlight problems. However, the intensity of this effect depends on the level of psychological safety. In both cases, whether experiencing low or high Positive emotions, employees with low psychological safety exhibit higher levels of prohibitive voice compared to those with high psychological safety. While employees with high psychological safety express prohibitive voice when their Positive emotions are high, their expression of concerns is still less pronounced compared to employees with lower levels of safety.



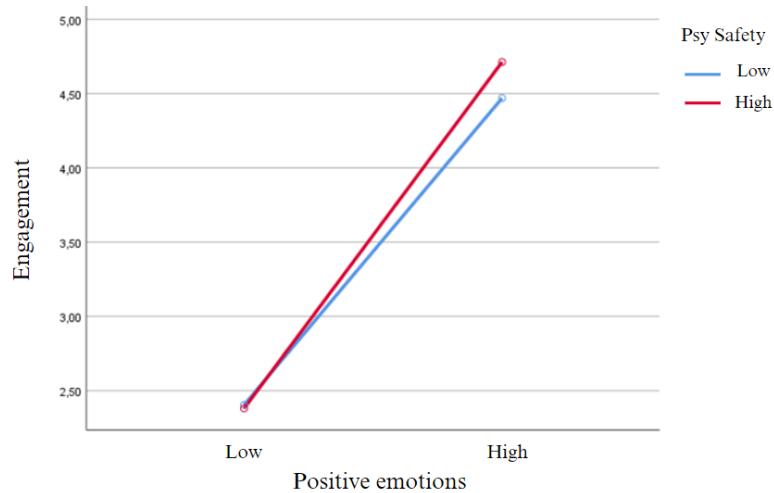
**Fig. 3** Interaction of Positive emotions and Psychological Safety in Predicting Prohibitive Voice

**Table 5** Engagement, Age, Work Tenure, Psychological Safety, Positive emotions, and Their Interaction as Predictors of Engagement

Predictor	$\beta$	t	p	$r_0$	Model
Gender	-.04	-.61	.54	-.04	R = .06
Age	-.07	-.58	.56	-.05	R <sup>2</sup> = .00
Tenure	.03	.20	.85	-.05	F (3, 275) = .38
					p = .767
Gender	.10	4.17	.00	-.04	R = .92
Age	.27	5.48	.00	-.05	$\Delta R^2 = .85$
Tenure	-.18	-3.60	.00	-.05	$\Delta F (2, 273) = 778.92$
Psychological safety	-.06	-2.11	.04	.42	p < .001
Positive emotions	.98	35.08	.00	.91	
Gender	.10	4.11	.00	-.04	
Age	.27	5.61	.00	-.05	R = .92
Tenure	-.17	-3.49	.00	-.05	$\Delta R^2 = .003$
Psychological safety	-.04	-1.34	.18	.42	$\Delta F (1, 274) = 5.22$
Positive emotions	.99	34.71	.00	.91	p = .023
Positive emotions *					
Psychological safety	.06	2.29	.02	-.34	

In the first model, demographic variables (Engagement, age, and work tenure) do not explain significant variance in employee engagement. In the second model, the addition of psychological safety and Positive emotions significantly increases the explained variance ( $\Delta R^2 = .85$ ), with Positive emotions emerging as a very strong and key predictor of engagement. Psychological safety has a slight negative effect on engagement, but it is much weaker compared to the effect of Positive emotions. Positive emotions almost entirely account for the variability in employee engagement, suggesting that employees who experience more Positive emotions tend to be significantly more engaged. In the third model, the interaction between Positive emotions and psychological safety shows a slight positive effect on engagement, indicating that when both variables are at higher levels, they

further contribute to employee engagement. However, the positive effect of psychological safety is much weaker compared to the dominant effect of Positive emotions.



**Fig. 4** Interaction of Positive Emotions and Psychological Safety in Predicting Employee Engagement

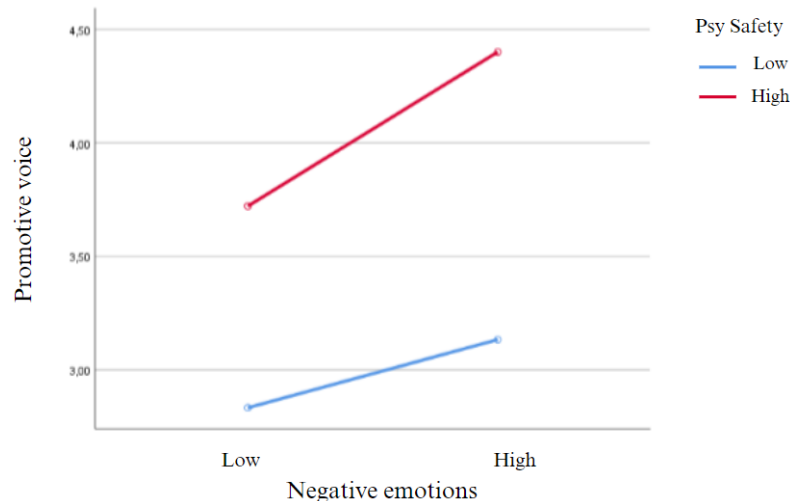
Based on Fig. 4, it is clear that Positive emotions have a very strong positive effect on employee engagement—as the frequency of experiencing Positive emotions increases, engagement significantly rises. The difference in psychological safety is present, but its effect is relatively small. When psychological safety is low, employees remain engaged if

**Table 6** Engagement, Age, Work Tenure, Psychological Safety, Negative Emotions, and Their Interaction as Predictors of Promotive Voice

Predictor	$\beta$	t	p	$r_o$	Model
Gender	.03	.51	.61	.10	R = .26
Age	-.30	-2.48	.01	.11	R <sup>2</sup> = .07
Tenure	.46	3.82	.00	.21	F (3, 275) = 6.96
					p < .001
Gender	.07	1.21	.23	.10	R = .46
Age	-.19	-1.66	.10	.11	$\Delta R^2 = .15$
Tenure	.48	4.25	.00	.21	$\Delta F (2, 273) = 25.87$
Psychological safety	.38	6.46	.00	.33	p < .001
Negative emotions	-.06	-.93	.35	-.12	
Gender	.07	1.30	.20	.10	
Age	-.18	-1.57	.12	.11	R = .48
Tenure	.45	4.04	.00	.21	$\Delta R^2 = .01$
Psychological safety	.37	6.35	.00	.33	$\Delta F (1, 274) = 4.11$
Negative emotions	.00	.06	.96	-.12	p = .044
Negative emotions *					
Psychological safety	.13	2.03	.04	.20	

they have high Positive emotions, although the slope of the line is slightly less steep. When psychological safety is high, the effect of Positive emotions on engagement is slightly more pronounced, suggesting that a combination of high Positive emotions and high psychological safety leads to even greater engagement, although the difference is not large.

In the first model, demographic variables (Engagement, age, and work tenure) explain a modest portion of the variance in promotive voice ( $R^2 = .07$ ). In the second model, the addition of psychological safety and negative emotions significantly increases the explained variance ( $\Delta R^2 = .15$ ). Psychological safety shows a strong positive effect on promotive voice, while negative emotions are not significantly related to promotive voice. In the third model, the interaction between negative emotions and psychological safety shows a slight positive effect on promotive voice. This suggests that in situations where both negative emotions and high psychological safety are present, employees are still inclined to express promotive voice. This effect may indicate that psychological safety somewhat mitigates the potential negative impact of negative emotions, allowing employees to continue offering suggestions despite negative feelings.



**Fig. 5** Interaction of Negative Emotions and Psychological Safety in Predicting Promotive Voice

Based on Fig. 5, it is clear that psychological safety has a significant positive effect on promotive voice, regardless of the level of negative emotions. When psychological safety is high, employees express more promotive voice, even when experiencing higher levels of negative emotions. Conversely, when psychological safety is low, promotive voice is significantly lower, but there is a slight increase as negative emotions rise.

In the first model, demographic variables (Engagement, age, and work tenure) explain a small portion of the variance in prohibitive voice ( $R^2 = .04$ ). In the second model, the addition of psychological safety and negative emotions significantly increases the explained variance ( $\Delta R^2 = .19$ ). Negative emotions show a strong negative effect on prohibitive voice, meaning that employees who experience more negative emotions are less likely to express concerns and point out problems. However, psychological safety does not have a significant effect in this model. In the third model, the interaction between negative emotions and psychological safety is not significant ( $p = .09$ ).

**Table 7** Engagement, Age, Work Tenure, Psychological Safety, Negative Emotions, and Their Interaction as Predictors of Prohibitive Voice

Predictor	$\beta$	t	p	$r_0$	Model
Gender	-.14	-2.27	.02	-.09	R = .19
Age	-.29	-2.35	.02	.02	R <sup>2</sup> = .04
Tenure	.36	2.87	.00	.08	F (3, 275) = 3.58 p = .015
Gender	-.04	-.66	.51	-.09	R = .47
Age	-.08	-.71	.48	.02	$\Delta R^2$ = .19
Tenure	.29	2.56	.01	.08	$\Delta F$ (2, 273) = 33.92
Psychological safety	-.03	-.52	.61	.11	p < .001
Negative emotions	-.48	-7.84	.00	-.42	
Gender	-.03	-.59	.55	-.09	
Age	-.07	-.63	.53	.02	R = .47
Tenure	.27	2.38	.02	.08	$\Delta R^2$ = .01
Psychological safety	-.04	-.63	.53	.11	$\Delta F$ (1, 274) = 2.84
Negative emotions	-.43	-6.31	.00	-.42	p = .094
Negative emotions *					
Psychological safety	.10	1.68	.09	.31	

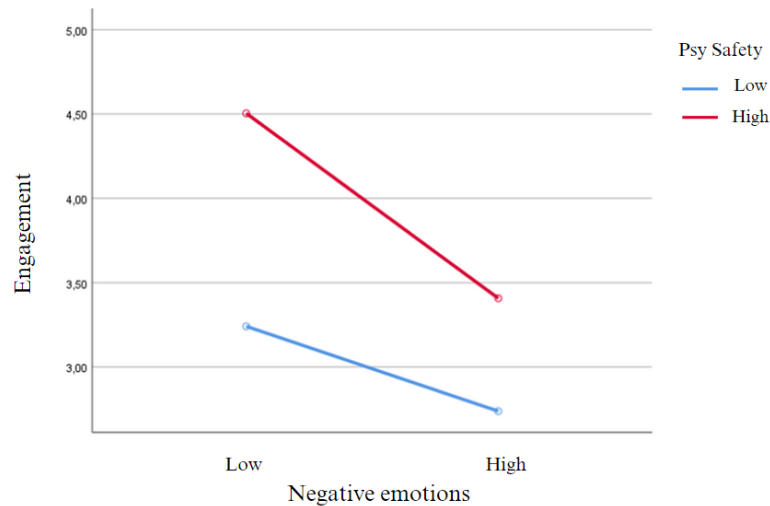
**Table 8** Engagement, Age, Work Tenure, Psychological Safety, Negative Emotions, and Their Interaction as Predictors of Engagement

Predictor	$\beta$	t	p	$r_0$	Model
Gender	-.04	-.61	.54	-.04	R = .06
Age	-.07	-.58	.56	-.05	R <sup>2</sup> = .00
Tenure	.03	.20	.85	-.05	F (3, 275) = .38 p = .767
Gender	.10	1.92	.06	-.04	R = .63
Age	.22	2.25	.03	-.05	$\Delta R^2$ = .39
Tenure	-.04	-.36	.72	-.05	$\Delta F$ (2, 273) = 89.09
Psychological safety	.28	5.33	.00	.42	p < .001
Negative emotions	-.53	-9.88	.00	-.55	
Gender	.09	1.83	.07	-.04	
Age	.21	2.15	.03	-.05	R = .64
Tenure	-.01	-.11	.92	-.05	$\Delta R^2$ = .02
Psychological safety	.28	5.55	.00	.42	$\Delta F$ (1, 274) = 6.63
Negative emotions	-.60	-1.09	.00	-.55	p = .011
Negative emotions *					
Psychological safety	-.14	-2.58	.01	.19	

In the first model, demographic variables (Engagement, age, and work tenure) do not explain significant variance in employee engagement ( $R^2 = .00$ ). In the second model, the addition of psychological safety and negative emotions significantly increases the explained variance ( $\Delta R^2 = .39$ ). Psychological safety has a positive effect on engagement, indicating that employees who feel safer at work also exhibit higher levels of engagement. Negative emotions show a strong negative effect, implying that employees who experience more negative emotions tend to have lower levels of engagement. In the third model, the



interaction between negative emotions and psychological safety shows a significant negative effect on engagement. In other words, high psychological safety somewhat mitigates the negative effect of negative emotions, but it does not completely eliminate it. When employees experience high levels of negative emotions, even high psychological safety is not strong enough to fully maintain their engagement at a high level.



**Fig. 6** Interaction of Negative Emotions and Psychological Safety in Predicting Engagement

Based on Fig. 6, we can see that there is a clear negative effect of negative emotions on employee engagement—as the level of negative emotions increases, engagement decreases. However, the effect of psychological safety varies depending on the level of negative emotions. When psychological safety is high, employees show higher levels of engagement, even when negative emotions are low. However, as the level of negative emotions increases, engagement significantly decreases, though it still does not fall below the level of those with low psychological safety. When psychological safety is low, the initial level of engagement is lower, regardless of the level of negative emotions. As negative emotions rise, engagement decreases, but it declines less drastically compared to when psychological safety is high.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The first hypothesis examined whether psychological safety moderates the relationship between promotive voice and emotions by amplifying the positive effect of Positive emotions while simultaneously reducing the negative effect of negative emotions on this behaviour. The assumptions drawn from psychological safety theory align with the results obtained, showing that employees who experience higher levels of psychological safety are more likely to express promotive voice, regardless of the intensity of positive or negative emotions, except in the case of Positive emotions where low psychological safety may further enhance this behaviour.

Research based on the social functional theory of emotions (Keltner & Haidt 1999) suggests that emotions, whether positive or negative, can have a constructive function when managed appropriately in an organisational context (Stephens & Carmeli 2016). In a high psychological safety environment, negative emotions, which would otherwise inhibit employees' proactive behaviour, can be channelled constructively, encouraging employees to express concerns, suggestions, or ideas for business improvement (Liu et al. 2021).

The findings of this study indicate that the role of Positive emotions is more pronounced in the context of low psychological safety. According to Fredrickson's Broaden-and-Build theory of Positive emotions (Fredrickson 2001), Positive emotions broaden employees' cognitive resources, increasing their capacity for proactive behaviour and creative thinking. These effects of Positive emotions become crucial when employees lack a sense of safety, as they help overcome the fear of negative consequences associated with expressing their opinions (Malik & Singh 2024). The results of this study suggest that in environments with low psychological safety, a positive emotional tone becomes a critical force driving promotive voice among employees. However, it is also important to note the increase observed in the group with high perceived safety, although it is not as dramatic.

Negative emotions are typically considered inhibitors of proactive behaviour (Spector & Fox 2005). However, the results of this study suggest that even in the presence of negative emotions, psychological safety can enable employees to use these emotions for constructive outcomes. This finding aligns with the social-functional theory of emotions, which posits that unpleasant emotions can have adaptive functions when there is an environment that encourages their appropriate expression and redirection towards constructive goals (Geddes et al. 2020).

The second hypothesis tested the moderating effect of psychological safety between prohibitive voice and emotions, proposing that it strengthens the positive association between prohibitive voice and both positive and negative emotions.

A crucial result of this study is that the effect of Positive emotions on prohibitive voice is stronger under conditions of low psychological safety. This finding suggests that employees who feel less secure within their team rely more on Positive emotions to express concerns. When psychological safety is not sufficiently high, it appears that Positive emotions can serve as a driver for expressing prohibitive voice, enabling employees to overcome potential fear of consequences. This finding aligns with previously discussed results, indicating that the role of low psychological safety is more pronounced when Positive emotions are frequently experienced in the context of promotive voice. The previously outlined Broaden-and-Build theory of Positive emotions (Fredrickson 2001) seems to be significantly supported by the results of this study. Considering the effect of Positive emotions on expanding cognitive resources and motivating employees to engage in preventive activities and identify potential risks, it becomes clearer how a positive work environment can contribute to organisational improvement (Liang et al. 2012).

An interesting result regarding this hypothesis is that psychological safety did not have a significant moderating effect in the relationship between negative emotions and prohibitive voice. Although negative emotions remain a strong predictor, indicating lower levels of expressed concern, psychological safety does not define the conditions under which this relationship changes. This finding suggests that negative emotions can be particularly harmful to proactive employee behaviour, as they discourage the expression of concerns and reduce the capacity to communicate openly about problems within the organisation. Despite the presence of psychological safety, negative emotions may dominate, preventing employees from taking

constructive steps. This result aligns with the literature, which shows that negative emotions, such as anxiety and frustration, often inhibit proactive behaviour, regardless of the organisational context (Spector & Fox 2005). Employees experiencing intense negative emotions often refrain from expressing concerns because these emotions intensify the fear of conflict or retaliation, even in environments with high psychological safety (Spector & Fox 2002).

The third hypothesis tested whether psychological safety moderates the relationship between employee engagement and emotions by amplifying the positive effect of Positive emotions on engagement while reducing the negative impact of negative emotions. The results show that Positive emotions have a significant positive effect on employee engagement, consistent with contemporary theoretical models emphasising the role of emotions in regulating proactive behaviour within organisations. According to the socio-functional theory of emotions (Keltner & Haidt 1999; Fischer & Manstead 2000), Positive emotions such as joy and satisfaction serve as adaptive mechanisms that promote social cohesion and motivate employees to take initiative and be more active in organisational processes.

The role of psychological safety remains important. In environments with high psychological safety, Positive emotions further enhance engagement, although the difference between low and high safety levels is not particularly large. This finding can be explained by the concept that psychological safety reduces the perceived risk in organisational behaviour, enabling employees to be more engaged as they feel safer in expressing their opinions and taking responsibility (Newman et al. 2017). In this sense, Positive emotions act as a “catalyst” for engagement, while psychological safety provides a stable foundation upon which that engagement can flourish.

Regarding negative emotions, the results confirm their inhibitory role in employee engagement, consistent with research showing that negative emotions, such as anxiety or frustration, can impair work performance and reduce motivation to participate in work tasks (Spector et al. 2010). According to socio-functional theory (Fischer & Manstead 2000), negative emotions signal threats and problems in the social environment, leading to withdrawal and lower engagement. However, psychological safety can mitigate these effects, as the results indicate—employees in safer environments, despite facing negative emotions, show higher levels of engagement than those in less secure environments. This finding aligns with research showing that psychological safety acts as a buffer against perceived workplace stress, allowing employees to better cope with negative emotions and remain engaged (Carmeli et al. 2014). Conversely, an insecure environment amplifies the negative effects of emotions on work outcomes, especially when there is insufficient support or space for free expression (Detert & Burris 2016).

#### **4.1. Limitations and Future Research**

This study faces several limitations, providing a basis for further research. First, the study broadly covered emotions without a deeper exploration of specific emotions and their distinct effects. Future studies should focus on particular emotions (e.g., joy, frustration, anger) to more precisely determine which types of emotions contribute the most to proactive behaviour and which inhibit employee engagement. The quality of emotions, including their intensity and duration, also warrants additional attention, as it could reveal which forms of positive and negative emotions most significantly affect employee behaviour in various organisational contexts.

A second limitation concerns the ambiguity regarding the utility of negative emotions. The study showed that negative emotions have a dual impact—although they often inhibit proactive behaviour, the results suggest potential benefits if they are properly managed in a safe environment. Future research could explore the distinction between the “constructive” and “destructive” aspects of negative emotions to better understand which elements of negative emotions can contribute positively to organisational outcomes, such as preventive problem-solving or initiating change, and which lead to withdrawal and reduced performance.

Third, the study also has some methodological limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. The sample size was relatively small, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to a broader employee population. Additionally, the presence of a large number of outliers could have affected the accuracy of the results, especially regarding extreme values of employees’ emotional reactions. The instruments used were newly translated for the purposes of this study, raising questions about the reliability and validity of the measurements without adequate cross-validation. Furthermore, the research was conducted in heterogeneous organisational settings, meaning that different organisational cultures and structures may have influenced the perception of psychological safety and emotional expression, making it difficult to directly compare respondents. These methodological limitations provide a basis for caution when interpreting the findings, but they also serve as guidelines for future research, which should focus on larger, more homogeneous samples and more stable instruments.

It is important to mention the theoretical contributions of this research to understanding the moderating role of psychological safety in the relationship between emotions and proactive employee behaviour, such as promotive and prohibitive voice, as well as engagement. The results support the assumptions of the socio-functional theory of emotions (Keltner & Haidt 1999; Fischer & Manstead 2000), showing that emotions, whether positive or negative, can have constructive or inhibitory functions depending on the organisational environment. In a high psychological safety environment, employees are better able to use their Positive emotions to improve organisational processes, and they can also channel negative emotions in a constructive way.

The practical contributions of this research are reflected in recommendations for managers and HR professionals to focus on developing psychological safety within organisations. The results show that the positive effects of emotions, particularly Positive emotions, are best manifested in secure environments. Organisations that successfully promote psychological safety can create conditions where employees feel free to express concerns (prohibitive voice) or suggestions for improvement (promotive voice), thereby increasing their engagement and motivation. By introducing support programs, trust-based leadership, and transparent communication, organisations can mitigate the negative effects of unpleasant emotions, contributing to sustainable employee performance.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the crucial role of psychological safety in moderating the relationship between emotions and proactive employee behaviour, such as promotive and prohibitive voice, as well as engagement. Positive emotions significantly encourage proactive behaviour, while negative emotions generally inhibit engagement. However, in the presence of psychological safety, employees manage to channel even unpleasant emotions in a constructive way.

Employees in insecure environments particularly rely on Positive emotions to express proactivity, while psychological safety allows for more stable expressions of concern and greater engagement, regardless of emotional state. These findings underscore the need for creating work environments that foster psychological safety, enabling employees to freely express emotions and leverage them to improve the organisation. The study also suggests that negative emotions, when properly managed, can yield positive outcomes, opening new avenues for further research on the role of emotions in organisational contexts.

Finally, organisations aiming to encourage proactive voice and engagement should focus on building an emotional culture that allows employees to openly express both positive and negative emotions without fear. Although the study's results face certain methodological limitations, they provide valuable insights into how emotions and psychological safety influence employee behaviour, opening up new possibilities for further research and practical applications in organisational settings.

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## **EMOCIONALNA KULTURA U ORGANIZACIJAMA: SOCIO-FUNKCIONALNI OKVIR ZA RAZUMEVANJE PONAŠAJNIH ISHODA EMOCIJA**

*Sprovedeno istraživanje imalo je za cilj da ispita ulogu psihološke bezbednosti kao moderirajućeg faktora u odnosu između emocija zaposlenih i njihovog ponašanja, poput promotivnog i inhibirajućeg izražavanja mišljenja, kao i radne angažovanosti. Istraživanje je realizovano na uzorku od 279 učesnika, prigodnim uzorkovanjem zaposlenih sa najmanje godinu dana radnog iskustva. Primljeni su instrumenti za merenje psihološke bezbednosti, izražavanja mišljenja na poslu i radne angažovanosti. Rezultati ukazuju na to da su pozitivne emocije snažno povezane sa ponašanjima zaposlenih—podstiču i promotivno i inhibirajuće izražavanje mišljenja, kao i veću angažovanost. Ipak, psihološka bezbednost se pokazala kao ključni moderirajući faktor—kod zaposlenih koji percipiraju visok nivo psihološke bezbednosti, pozitivne emocije omogućavaju otvoreno izražavanje stavova i aktivno učešće u organizacionim procesima. S druge strane, negativne emocije uglavnom sputavaju proaktivno ponašanje, iako psihološka bezbednost može ublažiti njihov negativni uticaj. Ovi nalazi naglašavaju značaj kreiranja radnog okruženja koje omogućava slobodno izražavanje emocija i podstiče proaktivan pristup. Organizacije koje neguju psihološku bezbednost mogu iskoristiti pozitivne efekte emocija na produktivnost i angažovanost zaposlenih. Buduća istraživanja treba da se fokusiraju na dublje razumevanje specifičnih emocija, naročito negativnih, kako bi se identifikovali njihovi konstruktivni i destruktivni aspekti u organizacionom kontekstu.*

**Ključne reči:** *psihološka bezbednost, emocije, promotivni glas, inhibirajući glas, angažovanost*