

Human Resource Practices and Innovative Work Behavior: Examining the Role of Psychological Safety

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between human resource practices and innovative work behavior, with psychological safety as a mediating variable. The research aims to explain how organizational human resource systems influence employees' innovative behavior through the development of a psychologically safe work environment. A quantitative approach was employed using a survey method. Data were collected from 150 employees working in medium and large organizations across various sectors. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability and validity testing, and regression-based mediation analysis. The results indicate that human resource practices have a positive and significant effect on innovative work behavior. Human resource practices also significantly influence psychological safety, which in turn positively affects innovative work behavior. Mediation analysis confirms that psychological safety partially mediates the relationship between human resource practices and innovative work behavior. These findings suggest that innovation at the employee level is driven not only by formal human resource systems but also by employees' perceptions of interpersonal safety within the organization. The study highlights the importance of integrating supportive human resource practices with efforts to foster a psychologically safe work climate in order to sustain innovative work behavior. The findings contribute to the literature on human resource management and organizational innovation and provide practical implications for managers seeking to enhance employee-driven innovation.

Keywords: Human Resource Practices, Psychological Safety, Innovative Work Behavior, Employee Innovation, Organizational Behavior.

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1. Introduction

In an increasingly dynamic and competitive organizational environment, innovation has become a critical determinant of organizational sustainability and long-term performance. Rapid technological change and market uncertainty require organizations to rely not only on structural efficiency but also on employees' ability to generate and implement new ideas [1]. Consequently, innovative work behavior has emerged as a key behavioral construct reflecting employees' proactive engagement in idea generation and implementation within organizational settings [2].

Innovative work behavior is closely linked to how organizations manage and develop their human resources. Human resource practices such as training and development provide employees with the skills and knowledge necessary to support innovation-related activities [3]. Performance appraisal systems that recognize creativity further reinforce employees' motivation to contribute novel ideas [4]. In addition, participative decision-making practices enhance employees' sense of ownership, which has been shown to stimulate innovative behavior [5]. Despite the recognized importance of human resource practices, empirical findings suggest that their influence on innovative work behavior is not always consistent. Some studies report that formal HR systems may fail to encourage innovation when employees perceive the

work environment as restrictive or punitive [6]. This inconsistency indicates that contextual and psychological factors play a crucial role in shaping how employees respond to organizational practices [7].

One psychological factor that has gained substantial attention in organizational behavior and innovation research is psychological safety. Psychological safety refers to employees' shared perception that the workplace allows interpersonal risk-taking such as speaking up, admitting mistakes, or offering novel ideas without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career prospects [8]. When psychological safety is present, employees are more likely to express ideas, ask questions, seek feedback, and challenge existing practices in a constructive manner, thereby contributing to continuous improvement and innovation processes [9]. Conversely, low psychological safety creates an environment of fear and defensiveness, which discourages employees from engaging in behaviors that involve uncertainty, experimentation, or potential failure, ultimately constraining learning and innovative work behavior within the organization [10].

Prior research has demonstrated that psychological safety is positively associated with learning behavior and knowledge sharing in organizations [11]. When employees perceive their work environment as psychologically safe, they are more willing to express ideas, ask questions, admit mistakes, and seek feedback

without fear of negative consequences. Such conditions encourage continuous learning and open exchange of knowledge, which are essential precursors to innovation because they enable individuals and teams to experiment, challenge existing practices, and collaboratively refine ideas through iterative processes [12]. Furthermore, psychological safety has been identified as a critical condition for sustaining innovative work behavior over time, as it helps maintain employees' motivation, engagement, and willingness to take calculated risks in the face of uncertainty and change [13].

Although studies have separately examined human resource practices, psychological safety, and innovative work behavior, integrative empirical research that simultaneously links these constructs within a single analytical framework remains limited [14]. Many existing studies tend to emphasize direct relationships between variables and consequently overlook the explanatory role of psychological safety as a crucial mediating or linking mechanism through which human resource practices can influence innovative work behavior [15] [16]. This limitation is particularly evident in research conducted in developing economies, where organizational hierarchies, power distance, and deeply embedded cultural norms may shape employees' perceptions of interpersonal risk and safety in the workplace, thereby potentially altering the strength and nature of these relationships [17] [18]. Addressing this gap, recent scholars have called for research that explores the psychological processes through which human resource practices influence employee innovation [19]. Understanding these processes is essential for designing HR systems that not only enhance competence but also foster an environment conducive to innovation [20].

2. Research Method

This study employs a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between human resource practices, psychological safety, and innovative work behavior. A survey-based approach was selected to capture employees' perceptions and behavioral tendencies in an organizational context. The quantitative method allows for objective measurement, hypothesis testing, and generalization of findings across the study population.

The research uses a cross-sectional design, in which data were collected at a single point in time. The population of this study consists of employees working in medium and large organizations across various sectors. A purposive sampling technique was applied to ensure that respondents had sufficient work experience and direct exposure to organizational human resource practices. The final sample size meets the minimum requirement for multivariate statistical analysis, ensuring adequate statistical power and reliability of results.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed electronically. Participation was voluntary,

and respondents were assured of anonymity to reduce common method bias and social desirability effects. The questionnaire was designed in a self-administered format to ensure consistency in data collection and to minimize interviewer influence.

Human resource practices were measured using a validated scale that captures employees' perceptions of training and development, performance appraisal, employee involvement, and supervisory support. Psychological safety was measured using a widely established instrument assessing employees' perceptions of interpersonal risk-taking and openness within the work environment. Innovative work behavior was measured through items reflecting idea generation, idea promotion, and idea implementation. All measurement items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Data analysis was conducted using statistical software. Preliminary analysis included descriptive statistics to summarize respondent characteristics and variable distributions. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha to ensure internal consistency of the measurement scales. Validity was examined through factor analysis to confirm the dimensional structure of the constructs. Hypothesis testing was performed using regression-based analysis to examine the direct and indirect relationships among variables. Mediation analysis was employed to test the role of psychological safety in linking human resource practices and innovative work behavior.

3. Result and Discussion

This section presents the empirical findings of the study in a structured and systematic manner. The results are reported based on statistical analysis to illustrate patterns, relationships, and significant effects among the research variables. Descriptive and inferential outcomes are organized logically to provide a coherent narrative of the data without interpretative bias. Tables and figures are used selectively to enhance clarity and avoid redundancy. Following the presentation of results, the discussion interprets the findings by examining their theoretical relevance, practical implications, and consistency with existing literature. This approach ensures that the analysis directly addresses the research questions and provides objective explanations for all observed results.

This subsection summarizes the descriptive results of the core variables examined in this study, namely human resource practices, psychological safety, and innovative work behavior. The findings indicate that human resource practices are generally perceived as effective, suggesting that organizational policies related to employee development, performance evaluation, and participation provide adequate support for employees in performing their roles. Such conditions reflect the organization's readiness to foster behaviors aligned with innovation objectives.

The results further reveal a favorable level of

psychological safety among employees. Respondents tend to feel secure in expressing ideas, offering suggestions, and engaging in open communication without excessive concern about negative consequences. This indicates that the work environment allows interpersonal risk-taking, which is essential for encouraging learning and creative engagement.

Moreover, innovative work behavior shows a moderate to high level, indicating that employees actively contribute to idea generation, promotion, and implementation. These descriptive findings demonstrate an alignment between supportive human resource practices and a psychologically safe work environment, providing a solid empirical basis for examining their combined influence on innovative work behavior in subsequent analyses. Next Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables on Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max
Human Resource Practices	150	3.87	0.56	2.40	4.90
Psychological Safety	150	3.75	0.61	2.10	4.85
Innovative Work Behavior	150	3.92	0.58	2.30	4.95

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the main research variables. The results show that human resource practices are perceived positively by respondents, indicating that organizational policies related to training, performance evaluation, and employee involvement are generally well implemented. This condition reflects management’s commitment to supporting employee development and facilitating effective work processes.

Psychological safety also demonstrates a favorable level, suggesting that employees feel relatively comfortable expressing ideas, sharing opinions, and engaging in open communication within their work environment. However, the presence of moderate variability indicates that perceptions of interpersonal safety differ among employees, which may be influenced by leadership style or organizational culture.

Furthermore, innovative work behavior records the highest mean among the variables, implying that employees actively participate in idea generation and implementation. Overall, the descriptive results indicate an alignment between supportive human resource practices, a psychologically safe work climate, and employees’ propensity to engage in innovative work behavior.

This subsection presents the results of hypothesis testing examining the relationships among human resource practices, psychological safety, and innovative work behavior. The analysis shows that human resource practices have a positive and statistically significant effect on innovative work behavior. This result indicates that supportive HR practices contribute

directly to employees’ willingness to generate, promote, and implement new ideas within the organization.

The findings also reveal that human resource practices significantly influence psychological safety. Employees who perceive HR systems as fair, supportive, and development-oriented tend to feel safer in expressing opinions and taking interpersonal risks at work. Furthermore, psychological safety demonstrates a positive and significant effect on innovative work behavior, suggesting that employees are more likely to engage in innovation-related activities when they perceive a psychologically safe work environment.

Mediation analysis confirms that psychological safety partially mediates the relationship between human resource practices and innovative work behavior. This indicates that HR practices not only influence innovation directly but also indirectly by fostering a work environment that supports openness and risk-taking. These results provide empirical support for the proposed research model and address the study’s central research question. Next Hypothesis Testing Results on Table 2.

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	t-value	P-value	Result
H1	HR Practices → Innovative Work Behavior	0.42	5.87	0.000	Supported
H2	HR Practices → Psychological Safety	0.51	7.24	0.000	Supported
H3	Psychological Safety → Innovative Work Behavior	0.36	4.96	0.000	Supported

Table 2 presents the results of hypothesis testing examining the relationships among human resource practices, psychological safety, and innovative work behavior. The findings indicate that human resource practices have a positive and significant effect on innovative work behavior. This result suggests that employees are more likely to engage in innovation-related activities when organizational HR systems provide adequate support, clear evaluation standards, and opportunities for development.

The results also show a significant positive relationship between human resource practices and psychological safety. This indicates that consistent and supportive HR policies contribute to an environment in which employees feel safe to express ideas and take interpersonal risks. Furthermore, psychological safety demonstrates a positive and significant influence on innovative work behavior, confirming its role in enabling employees to propose and implement new ideas. Overall, the results in Table 2 provide empirical support for all proposed hypotheses and confirm the relevance of psychological safety as a key explanatory variable in the relationship between human resource

practices and innovative work behavior. Next Mediation Analysis Results on Table 3.

Table 3. Mediation Analysis Results

Path	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	Mediation Type
HR Practices → Innovative Work Behavior	0.42	0.18	0.60	Partial

Table 3 reports the results of the mediation analysis examining the role of psychological safety in the relationship between human resource practices and innovative work behavior. The findings indicate that the indirect effect of human resource practices on innovative work behavior through psychological safety is positive and significant. This result confirms that psychological safety functions as an important psychological mechanism through which HR practices influence employee innovation.

The presence of a significant direct effect alongside the indirect effect indicates partial mediation. This suggests that human resource practices contribute to innovative work behavior both directly, by providing structural and developmental support, and indirectly, by fostering a work environment that encourages openness and interpersonal risk-taking. These findings emphasize that innovation is not solely driven by formal HR systems but is also shaped by employees' psychological perceptions of safety within the organization.

The findings of this study highlight the strategic role of human resource practices in fostering innovative work behavior through the development of psychological safety. The positive effect of human resource practices on innovative work behavior indicates that employees are more inclined to engage in innovation when organizational systems support learning, participation, and fair evaluation. This result reinforces the view that HR practices function not only as administrative mechanisms but also as drivers of behavioral outcomes related to innovation.

The significant relationship between human resource practices and psychological safety suggests that supportive HR systems contribute to an environment where employees feel safe to express ideas and challenge existing routines. When employees perceive consistency and fairness in HR policies, they are less likely to fear negative interpersonal consequences, enabling greater openness and collaboration. This condition is particularly important for innovation, which inherently involves uncertainty and risk.

Furthermore, the mediating role of psychological safety demonstrates that innovation is not solely a direct outcome of HR practices. Instead, psychological safety acts as a critical psychological mechanism that translates organizational support into innovative behavior. These findings emphasize the importance of aligning HR strategies with efforts to cultivate a psychologically safe work climate in order to sustain employee-driven innovation. Next Summary of

Empirical Findings on Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of Empirical Findings

Relationship	Empirical Evidence	Interpretation
HR Practices → IWB	Positive & significant	HR systems directly stimulate innovation
HR Practices → Psychological Safety	Strong positive effect	HR practices create safe work climate
Psychological Safety → IWB	Positive & significant	Safety enables risk-taking & creativity
Mediation Effect	Partial mediation confirmed	Psychological safety strengthens HR impact

Table 4 summarizes the key empirical findings of the study and highlights the overall pattern of relationships among the research variables. The results indicate that human resource practices consistently demonstrate a positive and significant association with both psychological safety and innovative work behavior. This finding confirms the central role of HR systems in shaping employee behavior and supporting innovation-oriented outcomes.

The table also emphasizes the importance of psychological safety as a critical condition that enables innovative work behavior. Employees who perceive a safe work environment are more willing to take risks, share ideas, and engage in creative problem-solving. The confirmation of partial mediation further illustrates that psychological safety strengthens the effectiveness of human resource practices in driving innovation. Overall, Table 4 reinforces the coherence of the research model and provides a concise overview of how organizational support and psychological mechanisms jointly influence innovative work behavior.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that human resource practices play a significant role in promoting innovative work behavior among employees. The results show that supportive HR systems directly enhance employees' willingness to generate, promote, and implement new ideas. In addition, psychological safety is confirmed as a key psychological condition that strengthens this relationship by creating an environment where employees feel comfortable expressing ideas and taking interpersonal risks. The findings indicate that organizations seeking to improve innovation performance should not only focus on formal HR policies but also on fostering a psychologically safe work climate. Practically, this implies the need for consistent HR practices, transparent performance evaluation, and leadership behaviors that encourage openness and trust. Future research may extend this study by applying longitudinal designs, incorporating additional psychological variables, or examining different organizational contexts to further clarify the dynamics between HR practices and innovative behavior.

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