

# Mental Well-being of Sales Managers in Private Banks: Evaluating the Impact of Perceived Psychologically Safe Environment

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## Abstract

The present research is an attempt to study the mental well-being of sales managers in private-sector banks in India. The researcher has tried to measure the perceived psychological safety and how it impacts the mental wellness of bank managers. The instrument used to study the psychologically safe environment was PSC-12 and WESWBM is used to measure mental well-being. The data has been analyzed using SPSS. The data was collected through an online survey. This research focuses on both, qualitative and quantitative analysis. The findings validate the correlation between the two factors of study and statistically significant validation has been established.

**Keywords:** Psychological Safety, Mental Well-being, Sales Managers, Private Banks.

## 1. Introduction

One of the most talked about concepts in human resource management in post COVID-19 pandemic era is the mental well-being of employees. As per the update by World Health Organization, 'the mental health of an employee can affect her/his performance, engagement, confidence, and identity. It can also have lasting effects on her/his family if the organization is not paying attention to the mental well-being of its employee.' Various studies emphasized the importance of the holistic well-being of employees. Mental well-being precedes the list and is at the center of the dimensions. Organizations are taking up specialized wellness programs for employees in India and all over the globe. Employees at Indian banks are no exception. Sales managers, in particular, in banks are handling a lot of stress about intensive competition along with the pressure of achieving targets. Therefore, these managers' mental well-being is of utmost importance to the organizations. 'A healthy population is economically productive, and it is to the benefit of companies to safeguard public health. Given the heavy contributions of the private sector to the economy, employee wellness programs are a strategic priority for India and an economic imperative for corporations.' (Gaveling RA 2008).

As far as the mental well-being of an employee at work is concerned, there are multiple ways that organizations can look at it. However, the researcher in the present study focuses on the impact created by employees' perception of a psychologically safe environment at work. The purpose of the present study is to establish a link between perceived psychological safety and improved mental well-being of sales managers in private banks, in India. The study aims to providing pieces of evidence for practitioners and academicians on how important it is for organizations to provide psychological safety to the employees; thus, mental well-being can be improved. As 'Mental health is one of the key contributors to productivity, and employers should do more to ensure the mental well-being of their staff.' (Haddon 2018).

## 2. Objectives

The objectives of the present study are 1. To measure the perceived psychological safety climate of the sales manager in private banks. 2. To measure the mental well-being of the sales manager in private banks. 3. To evaluate the impact of perceived psychological safety on the mental well-being of the sales manager in private banks, across India.

## 3. Literature Review

### 3.1 Sales Managers at Private Sector Banks in India

The banking sector is considered to be one of the most important sectors in the development of a country. In India, the banking sector has gone through a paradigm shift, and private sector banks are crucial in the growth of the country, due to their fast-paced nature and competitive environment' as suggested by the Department of Indian Finance Services. Therefore, understanding the role of managers, especially, sales managers in private sector banks is of utmost value. Managers play an important role in the banking industry. 'Managerial effectiveness has a huge impact on the success of an organization. The managerial performance is positively related to the outcomes achieved by the banks.' (Kulkarni S. 2014; Kulkarni, S. & Narkhede, S. 2013). A study conducted by the researcher earlier illustrates the 'complexity and significance of the role of managers in the banking industry.' (Johnson, E.M.1983) Thus, it is important to provide a psychologically safe environment to sales managers in private sector banks to be able to achieve improved mental well-

being and perform well in the organization. However, there is no substantial research that has been conducted to evaluate the aspects of psychological safety and mental well-being of sales managers in private sector banks.

### 3.2 Psychological Safety of Sales Managers in Private Banks

'Although several definitions of psychological safety have been proposed, the majority of studies have followed Edmondson (1999) by defining it as a shared belief amongst individuals as to whether it is safe to engage in interpersonal risk-taking in the workplace (Edmondson et al., 2007, Edmondson and Lei, 2014). 'In a psychologically safe work environment, employees feel that their colleagues will not reject people for being themselves or saying what they think, respect each other's competence, are interested in each other as people, have positive intentions for one another, can engage in constructive conflict or confrontation, and feel that it is safe to experiment and take risks.' (Edmondson, 1999; Newman, A. 2017).

As per the previous research, 'psychological safety for bank managers is extremely important as the stress is influencing the organizational development extensively because employees are not able to focus on their work if they are stressful, they tend to make mistakes.' (Kulkarni S. 2015) As suggested by the previous researcher, 'in private banks, psychological safety of the people is the utmost priority along with the continuity of business, in the post-pandemic era. (Perwej A. 2020) 'Providing employees with a safe environment at work can nurture intrinsic motivation that will help them to achieve personal and organizational goals.' (Vansteenkiste et al., 2007) A recent survey of employees across the world revealed that only 47% characterized their workplace as "a psychologically safe and healthy environment to work in" (Ipsos, 2012, Frazier, M. at. al 2017). Therefore, the researcher in the present study would like to contribute to the literature by emphasizing the need of creating and fostering a psychologically safe environment for sales managers in private sector banks.

### 3.3 Mental Well-being of Sales Managers in Private Banks

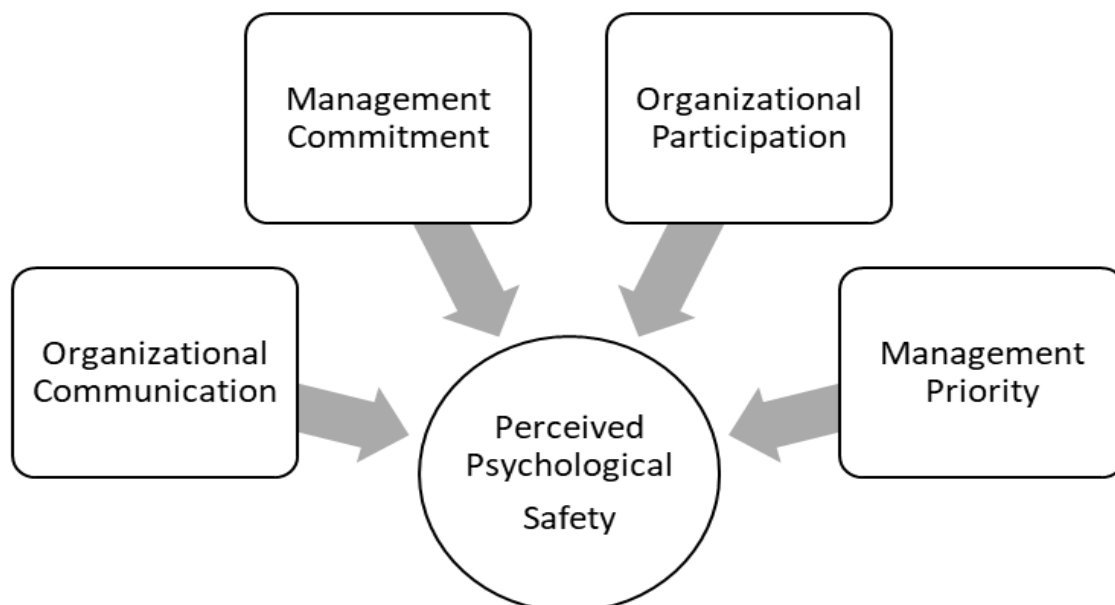
According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can make a contribution to his or her community" Though the mental well-being of employees has received huge attention post-COVID-19 pandemic in organizations, there are minimal research pieces of evidence available to validate the impact of perceived psychological safety on the mental well-being of employees. Having said that, there are no two ways on the significance of psychological safety as one of the important elements of well-being.

## 4. Conceptual Framework

As depicted in Figure 4.1, psychological safety can be measured using four parameters consisting of management commitment, organizational communication, management priority, and organizational participation (Hall, Dollard, & Coward, 2010).

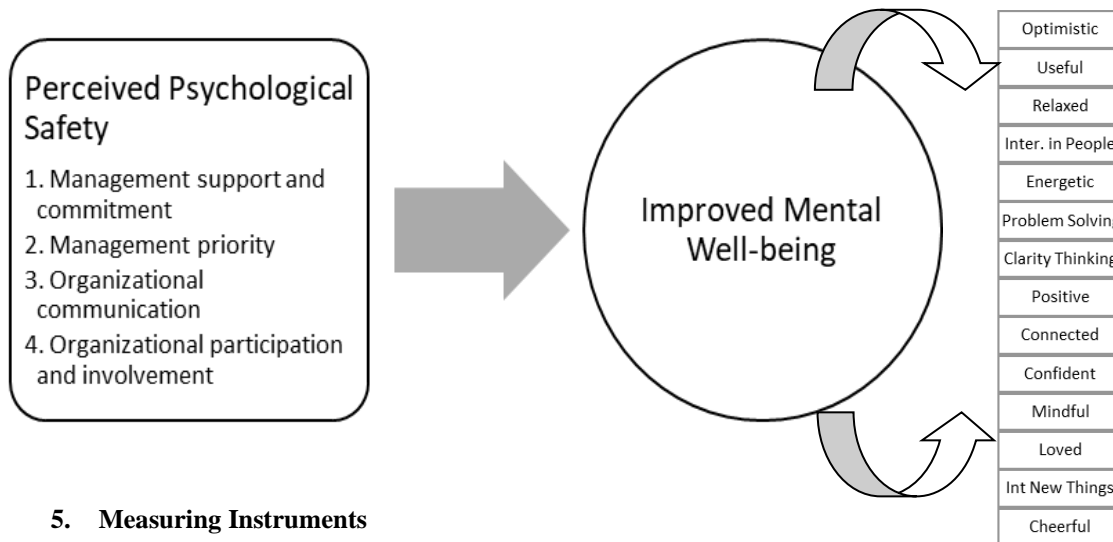
**Figure 4.1 The Framework for Psychosocial Safety Climate**

This conceptual framework is adapted from Psychosocial Safety Climate Survey (Dollard & Kang, 2007)



After evaluating the perception of sales managers in private banks on psychological safety, the researcher intends to evaluate the impact of perceived psychological safety on the mental well-being of the employees using the Warwick-Edinburg Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS).

**Figure 4.2. The relation between Perceived Psychological Safety and Improved Mental Health of Sales managers in private banks**



**5. Measuring Instruments**

Following is the scale used for evaluating the perceived psychological safety of sales managers in private banks:

This Psychological Safety Climate Scale (PSC-12) is an adaption of Hall et al. 2010. This scale has been developed on the foundation of the 26-Item Scale by Dollard & Kang, 2007. The 26-item scale uses items from multiple safety climate scales such as Clarke, 2006; Cox & Cheyne, 2000; Gershon et al., 2000; Pronovost et al., 2003. The PSC-12 scale has been modified as per the need of the study according to the banking industry. The measurement uses Likert's 5-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Psychological safety has been measured based on subscales consisting of management commitment, organizational communication, management priority, and organizational participation. This scale has acceptable reliability and validity stating alpha value as 0.81 to 0.89 as concluded by the earlier researchers. (Hall et al., 2010, Idris, Dollard, & Winefield, 2011).

Following is the scale used for evaluating the mental well-being of sales managers in private banks:

Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) is an adaption from NHS Health Scotland, University of Warwick, and University of Edinburgh, 2006. WEMWBS has been used to examine the status of the mental well-being of the sales managers in private banks selected for this study. It measured the positive approach, happiness, and perceived mental well-being of the managers within 2 weeks (13<sup>th</sup> February 2023 to 25<sup>th</sup> February 2023). This scale consists of 14 items and uses Likert's 5-point scale with responses ranging from never to all the time. The responses have been evaluated to generate the final score for each of the respondents. WEMWBS scale has high internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.94) among the study samples. (Puig-Ribera, A., Martínez-Lemos, I., Giné-Garriga, M. et al.)

**6. Research Hypothesis**

H1: Perceived psychological safety is correlated significantly with the mental well-being of sales managers in private banks.

H0: Perceived psychological safety is not correlated significantly with the mental well-being of the sales managers in private banks.

**7. Research Methodology**

The researcher in this study used both qualitative and quantitative approaches. In phase one of the study, the researcher conducted interviews with a small number of sample managers using an unstructured method for understanding the sentiments of the managers towards mental well-being, to clarify the understanding of psychological safety, and to understand the need of this study in principle. In the second phase, the researcher conducted a questionnaire survey. The study focused on examining the relationship between perceived psychological safety and the mental well-being of sales managers in private banks. The study population consists of sales managers working with private sector banks with a

minimum of five years of experience at the managerial level, in sales function. The sample size is 300 managers. The nonprobability judgmental sampling technique is used due to the design and requirements of the study. The data has been collected from 300 sales managers from different parts of India, using an online questionnaire survey method. The instruments used were the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) and the Psychological Safety Climate Scale (PSC-12). The data has been analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 15). Descriptive analysis has been performed to observe the demographic characteristics of the present study. The hypothesis has been tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient test. The significance between the two measured variables has been tested at the confidence level of 95 percent.

### 8. Analysis and Result

To test the hypothesis, the data collected through the survey has been analyzed using SPSS. The researcher has also conducted certain descriptive analyses to validate the results. Pearson Correlation coefficient test (two-tailed) was conducted to measure the relationship between perceived psychological safety and mental well-being of the sales managers in private banks. The confidence of significance has been calculated at a 95 percent interval. Each of the 14 items from WESWBM has been measured with the four sub-scales of PSC-12.

**Table 7.1 Demographic Characteristics**

Variables	Numbers	%
<b>Age</b>		
25-40	201	67%
41-55	99	33%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	159	53%
Female	141	47%
<b>Qualification</b>		
Graduate	101	34%
Postgraduate	199	66%
<b>Level</b>		
Middle Level	243	81%
Senior Level	57	19%

Table 7.1 demonstrates the demographic characteristics of the study sample. In all, 300 sales managers from private banks in India have participated in the present study, and their age, gender, qualification, and managerial level have been mentioned in Table 7.1

**Table 7.2 Descriptive Statistics for 14 Items of WESWBM**

	Mean	STD. Deviation	N
Optimistic	17.5	5.104	300
Useful	12.8	6.333	300
Relaxed	14.7	2.67	300
Interested in people	27.9	5.231	300
Energetic	29.4	3.59	300
Problem-Solving	12.6	6.319	300
Clarity in Thinking	21.6	5.396	300

Positive	26.6	4.507	300
Connected to others	14.8	2.497	300
Confident	22.4	5.32	300
Mindful	19.2	6.107	300
Loved	21.8	3.21	300
Interested in New Things	17.3	7.21	300
Cheerful	21.3	3.243	300

p<0.01 r = 1-1

As demonstrated in Table 7.2, the descriptive statistics calculated for all 14 items from WESWBM are as follows: The means range from 29.4 as the highest to 12.6 as the lowest. The mean values are lowest for problem-solving at 12.6 and usefulness at 12.8. Thus, it can be concluded that all the 14 items from WESWBM influence the mental well-being of sales managers, however, perception about being useful and problem-solving attitude have a lesser influence.

**Table 7.3 Descriptive Statistics for PSC-12**

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD. Deviation</b>	<b>N</b>
Management Commitment	16.01	5.32	300
Organizational Communication	12.83	7.201	300
Management Priority	11.11	7.909	300
Organizational Participation	17.02	3.973	300

p<0.01 r = 1-1

As demonstrated in Table 7.3, the descriptive statistics calculated for all 4 subscales from PSC-12 are as follows: The mean values range from 17.02 as the highest to 11.11 as the lowest. The mean value is lowest for management giving priority to mental well-being. Thus, it can be concluded that all 4 subscales from PSC-12 influence the perceived psychological safety of sales managers, however, the perception of management giving priority to mental well-being has a lesser influence.

**Table 7.4 Results of Pearson Correlation Coefficient Analysis (2-tailed) for Perceived Psychological Safety and Mental Well-being of Sales Managers**

	Management Commitment	Organizational Communication,	Management Priority	Organizational Participation
Optimistic	0.254	0.21	0.222	1

Useful	0.297	0.308	0.298	0.01
Relaxed	0.222	0.342	0.367	0.453
Interested in people	0.381	0.296	0.279	0.233
Energetic	0.69	0.566	1	0.709
Problem-Solving	0.088	0.103	1	0.922
Clarity in Thinking	1	0.631	0.564	0.442
Positive	0.234	0.47	0.765	0.622
Connected to others	0.679	0.432	0.216	0.116
Confident	0.505	0.231	0.459	1
Mindful	0.407	0.429	0.231	0.278
Loved	0.401	0.088	0.257	0.33
Interested in New Things	0.721	1	0.233	0.65
Cheerful	0.453	0.397	0.209	1

N – 300 p<0.01 r = 1-1

As depicted in table 7.4, the outcome of Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis is as follows: the result depicts that all the 14 items including Optimistic, Useful, Relaxed, Interested in People, Energetic, Problem Solving, Clarity in Thinking, Positive, Connected to Others, Confident, Mindful, Loved, Interested in New things, Cheerful of the mental well-being measurement scale have a significantly positive relationship with the four subscales including Management Commitment, Organizational Communication, Management Priority, Organizational Participation of psychological safety scale, as the significance of the correlation is above 0.01 level and 95% in all the items studied.

## 9. Conclusion

The present study indicates a strong impact of perceived psychological safety on the mental well-being of sales managers in private banks in India. The analysis provides validation to the primary understanding of the researcher through the directive interviews with the managers on how important it is for the sales managers to have psychological safety at work and how it impacts mental well-being. Thus, the null hypothesis has been rejected and the alternate hypothesis has been accepted in the present study. To stay energetic, motivated, positive, and engaged, sales managers need commitment from management towards psychological safety, proper communication revolving around psychological safety, consideration of management prioritizing psychological safety, and making managers participate in the decisions related to psychological safety.

The unstructured interviews with the managers in phase one of the study have also been very useful for understanding the sentiments of managers on how important it is for them to have a psychologically safe environment for work. According to the managers, mental well-being is extremely important to handle constant pressure for performance, to retain the productivity of themselves and the team members throughout the year, and to ensure quality service for the customers due to heavy competition. The managers expressed the need for a psychologically safe environment not only for them but also for their team members at every level and their peers working in various functions. These managers are of the view that they can only give their best when they see that the organization is concerned about their well-being and provides a psychologically safe environment where they can express their resentments, disagreements, and views on decisions freely without any fear of being judged. They also expressed that being able to participate in the decision-making process and

getting heard also matters for them as they can provide valuable inputs as an outcome of being a link between customers and management.

## **10. Recommendations**

The statistical inferences of this study will add value to the existing researchers' and practitioners' understanding of the importance of psychological safety and eventually emphasize the mental well-being of employees. Along with engaging in various initiatives towards other aspects of well-being, organizations can look at mental well-being as a strategy to achieve better productivity, engagement, and branding of the organization. As stated by several managers during unstructured interviews, a safe place for work matters more than a place with high salaries as it ultimately affects the mental peace and well-being of the employees.' 'Private banks in India, now looking at business process management to increase returns on investment, improve customer relationship management and employee productivity.' (Parthasarathy, Swetha & Dr. R. Reena 2018) Therefore, it is imperative for banks to actively plan and focus on the psychological safety of sales managers as they play an important role in the success of banks. 'People working in banks act as a bridge between the bank and the customer. They are the people who face customers directly and are the first ones to know what customer needs. As a service provider, their role becomes very important in shaping the bank's perception in the customer's mind.' (Nirmaljeet Virk, Prabhjot Kaur Mahal 2012). This states the importance and complexity of the role of sales managers. It also indicates the kind of mental pressure they are handling in day-to-day life. Thus, the organizations need to provide them with a quality work life and a safe environment for work including psychological safety.

## **11. Limitations and Scope for Future**

The present study included sales managers across the private banking sector and the population as a whole. Therefore, the research conclusions may not apply to a particular bank. In the future, the researchers may explore individual banks by using the case study method to validate the findings of the present study. This study further can also be conducted with demographic variances or geographical differences or hierarchical levels of sales managers. These kinds of studies will help in designing a specific strategy for focusing on psychological safety to increase the mental well-being of sales managers in private banks.

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