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SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION

PUBLIC RELATIONS & STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

**The Relationship between Communication Climate and Psychological Safety:
A study of the World Vision in Addis Ababa**

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**A Thesis Submitted to Addis Ababa University, School of Journalism and Communication,
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Public
Relation and Strategic Communication**

June 2021

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION

Department of Public Relation and Strategic Communication

This is to Certify that the Thesis Prepared by Fikru Tsegaye Entitled – The Relationship Between Communication Climate And Psychological Safety: A Study of the World Vision in Addis Ababa is Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of Master of Arts Degree In Public Relation and Strategic Communication, Complies With the Regulation Of University and Meets the Accepted Standards With Respect to Originality And Quality.

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Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not presented for a degree in any other university or any other award.

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Abstract

The research paper attempted to explore bi-variate associations between communication climate and psychological safety on sample size of 194 collected from World Vision Ethiopia, Addis Ababa from professional employees who amounts to 347. Gibb's (1961) conceptualization of communication climate and Costigan & Schmeidler (1984) operationalization of it was employed. Edmondson (1999) defined and operationalized psychological safety. The Likert scale data analysis reveals a positive monotonic relationship with communication climate and psychological safety. A Spearman correlation for the data revealed a significant relationship between communication climate and state of psychological safety, $r = +.504$, $n = 194$, $p < .01$, two tails. A Spearman Correlation Coefficient of $p=0.504$ is large in terms of magnitude of effect size and represents a large associations (Cohen, 1988). The corresponding coefficient of determination (r^2) is 25.4, indicating that 25.4% of the variability of the communication climate can be predicted from the relationship with psychological safety. Moreover, variable-to-variable correlations shows that appreciation is positively related with all variables of supportive communication behavior while mutual trust is negatively associated with all variables of defensive communication behavior. Overall, the majority of respondents (79.9%) perceptions reveal that there is open, supportive and respectful communication in the organization. The feeling of psychological safety also found out to be high. Most of the Employees (62.9%) feel confident and safe to speak up with the concerns they have without being afraid of negatives consequences. Nevertheless, the research study determined behaviors of defensive communication climate: Superiority, neutrality, control, and psychological safety team norms: reaction to mistakes and accepting diversity for priority intervention. The research study suggested some measures to counter these behaviors, boost the supportive communication behaviors, and team psychological safety.

Key words: Communication climate, psychological safety, supportive communication behaviors, defensive communication behaviors, monotonic relationship, Correlation, Spearman,

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Acknowledgments

My special and heart felt gratitude goes to my advisor, Dr. Amanuel for his valuable comments, guidance, encouragement and support all along the way. I am inspired not only by insightful comments but also by his kindness, care and patience.

I would like to extend my appreciation also to my colleagues at World Vision Ethiopia. I have to mention Hellina Woldetensae, World Vision Ethiopia, People and Culture Director, for her relentless follow up with the National director, to secure permission for data collection.

The research participants who actively completed the questionnaire and who gave me comments deserve special recognition. Here I have to set aside Frezer Alem for a special recognition. He has given me an invaluable comment on the organization and sequencing of the questionnaires. He was like an informal advisor to me.

Above all, I owe immense gratitude to my Lord and savior Jesus Christ, without whom I cannot conceive life.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Communication is the grease, which makes relationships in organizations run smoothly and directly affects the effectiveness of the organization itself. Communication climate, a metaphor for the quality of the relationships within an organization, is one of the key drivers of effective employee communication. A communication climate where employees feel both valued and listened to delivers real benefits for an organization's credibility, image and reputation. It refers to the how of communications with in a workplace environment (Arif, 2012, p.66). Moreover, it contributes to communication effectiveness and regulation of communication behavior of employees (Ruliana et al., 2018, p.237).

Regarding the use of the term 'climate' with communication, Shockley-Zalabak (2015, p.48) remarks that just as people subjectively react to geographic climate it is the same with communication climate. Accordingly, climate is a subjective reaction. Moreover, it is a unique experience as observed and analogized by Adler, Rosenberg & Proctor II (2018, p.354) "Just as physical locations have characteristic weather patterns, interpersonal relationships have unique climates." Ahsanul(2013, p.155) observes that the communication climate of an organization affects every aspect of organizational life "in a similar fashion to the physical climate" affects a geographic area. Thus, communication climate is analogous to geographic climate.

Communication climate is the atmosphere of organizations. Nordin et al. (2013, p. 1047) notes that the communication climate "sets the atmosphere in the organization that either encourages or discourages communication." Specifically, communication climate is the atmosphere of supportiveness or defensiveness that employees feel within organizations. It is a "subjective experience" of how safe, valued, protected and appreciated employees feel. It develops by the degree to which employees see themselves as valued. Employees look for respect, attention and recognition. Employees strive for appreciation; they want their opinion sought in decisions pertaining to their responsibility, and to be taken seriously.

According to Adler, Rosenberg and Proctor II (2018, p.354) communication climate refers to the "social tone or emotional tone of a relationship" among individuals who interact with one another on a regular basis. It is the network of personal relationships within organizations. It

influences our interpersonal interactions. It defines the tone of the relationship as expressed by the verbal and non-verbal messages between people. It is created by the way people feel about each other. It exists among people in all kinds of settings (at home, school, and work, for example). It is how people interact with each other within their relationships.

Every workplace relationship has its own communication climate, which can be either supportive or defensive. Since Communication climates can be altered, it is important to understand them. A knowledge of the prevailing communication climate of an organization offers us window into “what impels organization members to behave in a particular ways.” Ahsanul (2013, pp. 155). Gibb (1961) coined the phrase communication climate, categorized it in to supportive and defensive climates, identified six paired, and opposing behavioral characteristics for the categories.

Table 1: Categories of Behavioral Characteristics of Supportive and Defensive Climates in Small Groups (Adapted from Gibb, 1961)

Defensive climates	Supportive climates
1. Evaluation (EVL)	1. Description (DES)
2. Control (CON)	2. Problem Orientation (PRB)
3. Strategy (STR)	3. Spontaneity (SPO)
4. Neutrality (NEU)	4. Empathy (EMP)
5. Superiority (SUP)	5. Equality (EQU)
6. Certainty (CER)	6. Provisionalism (PRV)

Al Kahtani (2013, p.502) mentions that Gibb’s conceptualization of the communications climate is established and commended by many researchers as “a significant contribution in the understanding of defensive and supportive interpersonal communication climate.” For Instance, Forward, Czech & Lee, 2010, p.12) deemed Gibb’s notion of supportive and defensive communication as a powerful and a useful one. Besides, it is noted by other researchers of its potential for building effective communications model for organizations.

The perception or the anticipation of threat is important to the understanding of defensiveness or defensive behavior, which Gibbs (1961, p.141) defined as “behavior which occurs when an individual perceives threat or anticipates threat in the group.” Defensiveness is often a reaction to a feeling of anxiety, insecurity, and sensitivity, and often occurs in workplaces where people feel negatively evaluated, controlled, manipulated, or persuaded by others. As the National Communication Association states in its Credo for Ethical Communication that understanding and respecting others should come first before evaluating and responding to incoming messages. (NCA, 2011, p.1). Responding to messages without first trying to understand and lack of civility spoils and degrades workplace interactions. Defensiveness violates mutual respect and erodes communication practices that reflect concern for the dignity, feelings, and humanity of others.

Becker, Ellevold & Stamp (2008, p.180) phrases Gibb’s theory of defensive communication as “a response to threat-evoking communication which attacks and identifies a flaw with in the other.” Whereas Baker (1980, p.33) defined defensiveness as a unreceptive emotional state which brings about communications breakdowns as message senders reject other’s point of view. Lane (2008, p.85) conceptualized it as dimensional response to threats involving physical, affective and cognitive domains.

Becker, Ellevold & Stamp (2008, p.3) state that defensiveness is destructive, sparks conflict, provokes reciprocity, degrades relational quality, and reduces satisfaction. Given the grave consequences, it implies to relationships, they call on the communication theorists and practitioners to look into it further.

One of the strongest variables that inoculate defensiveness and positively affects communication in organizations is psychological safety. Psychological safety is the “shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking” (Edmondson, 1999, p. 5). Khan (1990, p.708) defined the quality of psychological safety as “being able to show and employ one’s self without fear of negative consequences of self-image, status or career.” A psychologically safe environment is one where people expect others to respond positively when one exposes one’s thoughts, such as by asking a question, seeking feedback, reporting a mistake, or proposing a new idea. Therefore, employees who feel that their environment is

psychologically safe are less likely to withhold communication, feel threatened and react defensively out of anxiety since the team is not perceived as likely to embarrass or reject them.

The existence of emotional safety or knowing that one will not be seen as a fool, ignorant, or face ridicule or punishment when asking for help, challenging assumptions, expressing dissenting views makes defensiveness unnecessary. Defensiveness arises out of the need to protect self. If the self feels safe from threats like these, communications flow smoothly and freely. Employees express themselves freely and that is key to effective communication in the workplace. Workplaces where employees feel safe, valued and, respected meets employees needs according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. NCA (2011, p.2) credo advocates "communication climates of caring and mutual understanding that respect the unique needs and characteristics of individual communicators."

Leaders who are open and interested in subordinates' thoughts create a culture that encourages communication while hostile bosses who blame subordinates for problems discourage communication. The behavior of leaders in an organization sets the culture and affects communication. Culture is often said to come from the top, and leaders certainly have an important role to play in the creation of a culture that is safe for communication. In bureaucratic, repressive and authoritarian organizations, employees are afraid to question or disagree with their superiors. However, in an organization where the leaders are committed to fostering an open and supportive communication climate, dissent is welcomed and rewarded. Employees are encouraged to think, question and form independent judgments, and take responsibility for changing the way business is run. Being able to express unique ideas allows the employee to feel that they are contributing to the organization in a positive way.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

World Vision Ethiopia, the head office alone houses about three hundred fifty employees of different social, cultural, and professional backgrounds. Communication plays immense role in getting together these mixes to work together for the same goal. Roughly employees spend two third of their time communicating and collaborating (meetings, conversations, discussions, presentations, performance evaluation, online trainings, etc. Hence, effectiveness in communication is crucial to success and productivity in the workplace. Nordin et al. (2013,

p.1047) asserts the importance of effective communication for establishing a collaborative communication climate. Roberts (2013) argues that a positive communication climate promotes employee engagement, productivity, and workers motivation and hence stimulates workers to meet organizational goals.

Effective communication in the workplace is not always straightforward and various kinds of barriers can easily get in the way. They cause messages to become distorted, subsequently leading to confusion, misunderstanding and even offense in some cases. This incurs costs to organizations. In one notable study surveying 400 corporations in the US and UK with 100,000 employees, Grossman (2016) reported in 'The Cost of Poor Communications' estimated that communications barriers cost the average organization \$62.4 million per year in lost productivity. Defensiveness is one of the key communication barriers that plagues communications in organizations. It proliferates in organizations where judgmental, manipulative and inflexible attitudes prevail. Critical and judgmental attitudes, inflexibility, dogmatism arouses defensiveness, which fuels inefficiency in communication.

Defensiveness manifests when a message is perceived as a threat or attack. Among many other workplace phenomenon, reaction to negative performance appraisal showcases how defensiveness ruins workplace communications and risks the squander of invaluable feedback. Negative performance appraisals are prone to defensiveness. The feedback is likely to be interpreted as an attack or threat, provoking defensive responses. The trigger of defensiveness limits the effectiveness of negative feedback. It increases the chances of unimplemented feedback essential to organizational learning, creativity and innovation (Crommelinck, 2013; Heirn et al., 2006; Fischer & Rohde, 2013; Oeij et al., 2016).

Gnepp et al. (2020, p.2) observes how recipients normally cope up with negative feedback. "...by disputing it, lowering their goals, reducing commitment, misremembering or reinterpreting the feedback to be more positive, and engaging in self-esteem repair." All of these responses originate from framing negative feedback as attack and responding defensively thereof. O'Malley & Gregory (2012) notes the value of negative feedback in guiding performance improvement though employees commonly perceive it as a threat and argue for using positive psychology to enhance its value.

Grenny (2015) mentions the psychological factor and the real culprit to blame for turning on defensiveness. He maintains that it is rather a lack of psychological safety and how psychologically unsafe recipients interpret the feedback. They frame it as an attack and a sense of threat triggers defensiveness. He retorts "...if you feel psychologically safe you'll be able to hear it, absorb it, reflect up on it." To feedback givers and receipts he crisply puts, "You can say almost anything if they feel safe. Likewise, you can hear almost anything, if you feel safe."(Grenny, 2015, p.3). Hardavella et al. (2017, p.10) reminds, "In order for feedback to be effective, it has to be received well. How a recipient interprets and reacts to feedback is very important to the outcome..."

Edmondson and Lei (2014, pp.24) mentioning Schien (1993) asserts that "psychological safety is essential for making people feel secure" and "helps people to overcome defensiveness, or learning anxiety" Thus, in addition to excellent communication behaviors and skills, effectiveness of negative feedback depends on psychological safety (Hardavella et al, 2017, p.5; Grenny, 2015). Gibbs (1961) identified six behaviors of a defensive communication climate and six behaviors of a supportive communication climate. Gibb's theory of supportive and defensive communication is popular among textbook writers, enduring, ubiquitous, conceptually appealing and iconic. Yet, it received scant elaboration and empirical support Eadie (2009, p. 164; Winer & Majors, 2009, p.167; Forward et al. 2011, p.4).

Decades after his formulation of the famous six categories of supportive and defensive communication behaviors, research on communication climates started to appear. Some research studies touched its relationship with organizational management (Nordin et al., 2014), with organizational goals (Nwagbara & Uduma, 2016), organizational performances (Mohammed & Hussein, n.d), with communication satisfaction (Ayundhaasurya & Kurniawan, 2018), with innovative work behavior (Arif, Zubair & Manzoor, nd), with job satisfaction (Kamasak & Bulutlar, 2008), with employee engagement (Biswakarma, 2017), and on determination of communication climate (Raman, 2017).

However, research on communication climate and its relationship with psychological safety is hardly available. This research study will attempt to explore the relationship between Gibbs behaviors of supportive and defensive communication climates and psychological safety in

organizational setting. Seeing that psychological safety counters defensiveness and bolsters supportive communication climate, inverse relationship is assumed with behaviors of defensive communication climate and positive relationship is to be expected with behaviors of supportive climate.

Generally, communication climate is assumed to have monotonic relationships with psychological safety. Specifically, direct or positive monotonic relationship is expected where these constructs either increase or decrease together. These constructs are studied taking World Vision Ethiopia as the organization of interest. The organization is selected purposively because it has a workforce that is suitable for a survey and its characteristics make suitable for an organizational study. Studying the organization from the prism of communication climate and psychological safety would generate important insights to study other organizations.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Exploring the relationship between communication climate and psychological safety in world vision Ethiopia, Addis Ababa is the major objective of the research paper.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives

1. Finding out the employee's perception of communication climate
2. Finding out the state of psychological safety in World Vision Ethiopia, Addis Ababa
3. Identifying communication behaviors and psychological safety team norms if any, which should be prioritized for intervention by the concerned in the organization to boost supportive communication climate and the feeling of psychological safety.

1.3.2 Research Questions

The research questions are composed of descriptive and relational questions. The descriptive questions are designed to assess the perception of communication climate and state of psychological safety. Whereas the relational questions are designed to explore associations between them. The research paper will attempt to address the following questions based on data obtained from workplace teams in World Vision Ethiopia Head Office, Addis Ababa.

1. Is there a relationship between communication climate and psychological safety? If yes, what is the magnitude of the relationship?
2. How do employees perceive or characterize the communication climate and psychological safety in the organization?
3. What are the communication behaviors and psychological safety team norms if any that should be prioritized for intervention by the concerned in the organization?

1.4 Significance and Scope

The research paper is expected to have relevance for the organization in which this research is undertaken. The findings from this research is expected to indicate the employee's perception of the communication climate and psychological safety.

The communication climate and psychological safety questionnaires measures the organization's communication and emotional environment respectively. The research study will determine whether the communication environment and emotional safety issues are causing problems. The findings can be used to plan needed changes in the communication and emotional environment or to indicate which behaviors and team norms should be encouraged.

Based on the findings intervention could be planned by the department of People and Culture or other relevant departments to improve the communication climate and emotional safety. Communication climate and psychology safety is key to workplace productivity and organizational effectiveness. Thus, an endeavor to measure these and plan accordingly for remedies will surely pay to the organization.

If the communication climate of an organization appears to be supportive and non-defensive, then probably no changes need to be made. However, if the communication climate is defensive and non-supportive, an intervention will be needed to improve the climate. Organizations will benefit a lot from a supportive communication climate and a high psychological safety where open and respectful communication prevails. In such a workplace, employees feel confident to speak up their concerns without fear of negative consequences. This in turn contributes to employee engagement, workplace productivity, innovation and learning.

The research study will be conducted to investigate how Gibb's conceptualization of the behaviors of communication climate is associated with psychological safety on a data collected from World Vision Ethiopia, Head office. If an association exists, the investigation goes further to learn about the strength and pattern of the association. For this effect, data will be collected on behaviors of communication climate and psychological safety from professional employees in world vision Ethiopia at head office, which houses around three hundred forty seven employees excluding security guards and cleaners.

Thus, the research study is limited to samples of employees of world vision Ethiopia head office, Addis Ababa. The sample selected for this study was specifically employees of World vision Ethiopia at head office in the year 2021. The findings from this study could be implied to establish a relationship between these concepts in any potential organization.

1.5. Limitation of the Study

The research study is limited in terms of the research problems it attempts to address, subjects from which the data is collected and findings and conclusions to which the populations it refers to.

The research study does not consider employees of outside of World Vision Ethiopia. The results obtained in this study may not be applicable to employees outside of World vision Ethiopia head office and other organizations, especially the assessment results of communication climate and psychological safety naturally varies from organization to organization. Nevertheless, theoretical relationships between them could be argued irrespective of the organization.

The research's findings are dependent on the employee's perceived atmosphere of communication climate and emotional safety in the organization. Thus, inaccuracies of the perception of the respondents may be a significant limitation to the research findings and conclusion. Individuals could read communication climate and psychological safety in organizations somewhat differently. In accurate and wrong perceptions could significantly alter the findings of the research study.

A low response rate will be a limiting factor of the study possibly due to reluctance to share personal information and fatigue as employees frequently take part in many online surveys conducted by the organization and individual researchers. This may affect the authenticity of the data given careless respondents Furthermore online data collection also presents another set of

challenges. While online surveys may reach a large number of participants, the researcher will not be able to offer clarifying questions of the respondents in person.

Correlational method, the main statistical method employed for this research, has inherent limitations. While the method is considered appropriate to discover the nature of the relationship between variables, the method does not show causation. Correlation simply describes a relationship between two variables. It does not explain why the two variables are related. Particularly, it cannot be taken as proof of a cause and effect relationship between the two variables. Nevertheless, Gravetter & Wallnau (2019, p.495) claims, “If two variables are known to be related in some systematic way, it is possible to use one of the variables to make accurate predictions about the other.” Moreover, it is used for theory verification. Gibb’s(1961) assertion that reducing defensiveness improves interpersonal relationships, which in turn communication can be verified.

1.6. Thesis Outline

This research paper is organized into five chapters.

Chapter one presents the introduction of the research paper. It provides background information to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, research design, significance of the study, scope of the study, and organization of the study.

Chapter two provides the theoretical framework based on a brief investigation of the most recent and appropriate literature related with the research topic. It attempts to encompass literatures containing scholarly opinions underpinning the study.

Chapter three presents research design employed to answer the research questions. It will be dedicated to the methodology of the study, which presents the rationale behind selecting the research method including the methods of data collection and analysis.

Chapter four offers research’s findings and its discussion. It covers presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data. Finally, chapter five presents summary, conclusion and recommendation of the study.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

The theoretical framework attempts to uncover the two broad concepts of communication climate and psychological safety. Provided that the research is about the relationship between these two concepts this chapter is devoted to presenting the definitions, conceptualizations, and the constructs. The readings come from widely known free journals and free books sites. Some of the most commonly used are ResearchGate, JSTOR, SpringerLink, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, Taylor and Francis Online, SAGE Publishing, and Zlibrary.

Social psychologist, Jack Gibb observed the communicative behavior of people in small groups and identified the two categories of behaviors that either belong to supportive or defensive climates. Beebe & Masterson (2016, p.130) remarks, “Often, the key to building a supportive climate lies not only in what we communicate but also in how we communicate it.” A message can be delivered in ways that evoke support or defense.

Communications climate in organizations refers to the social tone of relationships existing among employees. Precisely, it is employee’s perception of the quality of relationships and communication in the organization. It could be warm or cold, safe or anxious, comfortable or awkward, accepting or rejecting, open or guarded, defensive or supportive. It is analogous to the geographic climate. As the geography climate affects a certain area, communication climate in organizations affects every aspect of organizational life (Wood, 2010; Shockley-Zalabak, 2015).

The section on psychological safety touches on the factors that make up a psychological safety. Psychological safety is mainly a workplace phenomenon in which employees dare to take interpersonal risks or feel safe to be vulnerable in front of their colleagues because they assume that they will not be embarrassed or ridiculed by them.

Psychologically safe workplace cultures encourage communication whereas organizations that are more bureaucratic, hierarchical and autocratic discourage communication. Brown & Starkey (2007, p.811) mentions the determinative influence of culture on communication “Culture conditions attitudes towards communication and communication processes and systems.” They also note that communication is a manifestation of culture. “In short, information and

communication phenomena are surface manifestation of complex configurations of deeply felt beliefs, values and attitudes.” (p.808). De Vito (2013, p.276) states that workplace is “influenced by culture—both by the wider culture and by the particular culture of a given workplace. Like all cultures, workplace cultures have their own rituals, norms, and rules for communicating.”

2.2. Gibb’s Behaviors of Supportive and Defensive Communication Climates

Gibb (1961) developed a conceptual framework for categorizing communication into defensive and supportive behaviors. The defensive behaviors are evaluation, control, strategy, neutrality, superiority, and certainty. The supportive behaviors, in contrast, are description, problem orientation, spontaneity, empathy, equality, and Provisionalism(flexibility). The categories of supportive and defensive communication climates are paired opposites. For instance, when we describe behaviors and others it refers to a supportive communication behavior called ‘Description’ Its opposite defensive behavior is called ‘Evaluation’. It refers to judging or evaluating others. In the upcoming sections, the communication behaviors with their conceptual opposites are presented with a sufficient detail

2.2.1 Description and Evaluation

Evaluation messages judge the other person, usually in a negative way. They judge what another person is feeling, rather than explaining their own thoughts, feelings, and wishes. Further, they are often ‘you’ statements, which can trigger defensiveness. In contrast, descriptive messages offer thoughts, feelings, and wishes without judging the other person. They make specific, concrete observations, and focus on behavior that can be changed rather than personal characteristics that cannot. They tend to be ‘I’ statements, which are less likely to provoke defensiveness than ‘you’ language. Beebe & Masterson (2016, p.126) states “ In a nutshell, evaluation is “you” language; it directs itself to the worth of the other person or of that person’s ideas, it can promote defensiveness.”

Descriptions in interpersonal communications are neutral statements describing behavior, giving it context and reporting its impact on somebody. Whereas evaluation refers to judgmental statements indicating a lack of regard for the other. The likely responses are counter attack, justification, or abandoning communication. Use of “you” language calls into question the worth

of another person. “I” language describes one’s own feelings and ideas. Descriptive communications describe situations fairly and present perceptions without implying the need for change.

2.2.2 Problem Orientation and Control

Control communications occur when someone seeks to control another or when the sender seems to impose a decision with little consideration for the receiver's needs or interests. When people act in controlling ways, defensive communication climates tend to result. Problem orientation in interpersonal communications refers to using communication to find ways of satisfying everyone involved in the interaction. Control refers to a behavior that try to control, triumph over, or manipulate others, what they think, and what they do. Gibb (1961, p. 145) shows how a problem orientation positively influences the listener “when the sender communicates a desire to collaborate in defining a mutual problem and in seeking its solution, he tends to create the same problem orientation in the listener.”

In a Problem orientation, the focus is to find a solution that satisfies both party’s needs. The goal in this communication is not to win at the expense of the other, but rather to work out some arrangement in which everybody feels like a winner. Problem orientation refers to collaboration on a solution that is satisfactory to both parties. It is win win and employs supportive language.

In communication, maintaining a problem orientation is a more effective approach. If message receivers perceive message senders as striving for a solution that benefits all, the perception will contribute to a supportive climate. Communication that defines problems rather than giving solutions, is open to discussion about mutual problems, and does not insist on employee agreement.

2.2.3 Spontaneity and Strategy

Strategy is a defensive communication behavior, which occurs when one’s communication feels manipulative, premeditated, and strategic. Strategy is a communication behavior that implies hidden motives and deceit. In strategy communication, speakers hide their ulterior motives. It involves dishonesty and manipulation. Spontaneity communication means being honest with the others rather than attempting to manipulate them. It is a direct communication with no

underlying agenda. Forward et al. (2011, p.3) states, “spontaneity is defined as straightforwardness, directness, and honesty.” Spontaneous is when one’s communication feels open, honest, and spontaneous.

Like controlling behavior, strategy suggests manipulation because it implies pre planned communication. This sort of behavior places the self before the group and does not lead to the most effective solutions to group problems. Gibb (1961p.145) observes, “When the sender is perceived as engaged in a stratagem involving ambiguous and multiple motivations, the receiver becomes defensive.” Spontaneous communication behaviors is free from hidden motivations and agendas. Communicators who act spontaneously, not from hidden motives and agendas, responding immediately and honestly to the present situations produce a supportive climate.

2.2.4 Empathy and Neutrality

Demonstrating empathy or care about the other person in a communication is value adding. Understanding others and putting one in other’s shoes makes communication effective. Beebe & Masterson (2016, p.316) connects empathy, emotions, logic and understanding. “Empathy is the ability to connect to the emotions of others, to sense what others are emotionally experiencing. They contend that “Empathy does not replace logic; it connects to logic so that we can better understand the thoughts of others.” Empathy in interpersonal communication refers to involvement and concern for the group task and for other group members. Emotional involvement and nonverbal behavior is important.

Neutrality refers to acting in a neutral, detached, or indifferent way. The worthiness and regard for others is a key element. The essence of neutrality is indifference. It communicates a lack of concern for the wellbeing of another, and there in suggests the other person is not very important. Its opposite and confirming behavior is empathy, which shows care and concern for the feeling of another. It is accepting another’s feelings, and putting oneself in another’s position. Empathy is verbal and nonverbal display of support. It involves supporting language, reflective listening, and paraphrases among others.

Neutrality express a lack of concern for the welfare of another. Empathy express respect for the worth of the listener and identify with one’s problems, share feelings and accept emotional

values at face value. Individuals desire to be treated as valued personas of special worth and as objects of concern and affection. In workplace communication, neutrality refers to communications, which offers minimal support for and remains aloof from employee's personal problems and conflicts. Whereas empathy attempts to understand and listen to employee problems and respects employee feelings and values. According to Forward et al. (2011, p.4) "Communication that exhibits low affect and little warmth or caring is often seen as rejection."

2.2.5 Equality and Superiority

Superiority in interpersonal communication refers to using communication to indicate that not all parties are equal and using communication to indicate that one person is superior to another. Forward et al. (2011, p.4) notes "When a person communicates to another that they feel superior by virtue of a position, power, wealth, intellectual ability, or physical characteristics, they arouse defensiveness." Messages of superiority are patronizing. They say, "I am better than you," "I know more than you", and, as such are very likely to engender defensive responses.

Equality recognizes that the other people have just as well worth themselves, regardless of their amount of knowledge or talent in a particular area. Speaker may have greater talents, but Equality means communicating that one sees the other as having equal worth as a person. It is communication based on mutual respect. It refers to communication does not make employees feel inferior, does not use status to control situations, and respects the position of others.

In a superiority communication, the speaker reminds you frequently of their position, prestige and greater status. It refers to communication that reminds message receivers who is in charge, closely oversees the work of subordinates and makes them feel inadequate. It is kind of communication that tends to arouse a feeling of inadequacy. It is an attitude or behavior that someone is better than the other person.

2.2.6 Provisionalism (flexibility) and Certainty

Provisionalism refers to communicating openness to a variety of points of view. Openness is a basic ingredient for employees in the organization. Employees who are straightforward and willing to discuss delicate issues is a great asset to an organization. Certainty is using language that indicates there is only one way to view a situation i.e. my way or the highway. Employees

who are not open to new ideas and who participate less are perceived as less valuable to the organization. In the words of Baker (1980, p.42) Provisionalism is “to investigate issues rather than taking sides on them.” whereas certainty is “to regard self as a teacher rather than as co-worker; wanting to win an argument rather than solve a problem, seeing one’s ideas as truths to be defended.”

In a certainty orientation, people think that they are always right; they know their way is the only way of doing something, and they insist they have all the facts and need no additional information. This way of communication disregards the idea of others and demonstrates a general lack of regard for other people. Taking dogmatic and rigid positions does not have room for debates and the possibility that the other might be right. These characteristics are used by people who are solely focused in winning on argument than in solving a problem. Forward et al. (2011, p.4) states, “Certainty is defined as dogmatic, single-minded behavior combined with unwillingness to compromise.” In contrast, Provisionalism permits people to have strong opinions, while they acknowledge they do not know everything and are willing to change their position, if another seems reasonable. It displays openness to receiving new information; showing some flexibility in the position one takes.

Communicators, who always seem to have all the answers, whose ideas are truths to be defended, who are intolerant of those with different attitudes are highly dogmatic people. Communicators benefit if their attitude appears to be provisional, if they are flexible and genuinely committed to solving problems rather than to simply taking sides on issues.

2.3 What is Psychological Safety?

Clark (2020, p.1) defines psychological safety as “a condition in which human beings feel (1) included, (2) safe to learn, (3) safe to contribute, and (4) safe to challenge the status quo—all without fear of being embarrassed, marginalized, or punished in some way.” Edmondson’s (1999) definitions are rather brief. It refers to “a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking.” Accordingly, it refers to an individual's perception of the consequences of taking an interpersonal risk or a belief that a team is safe for risk taking in the face of being seen as ignorant, incompetent, negative or disruptive. It implies that the team members feel safe to take risks and be vulnerable in front of each other.

Elstgeest (2016, p.9) states employee's needs in the workplace. "Employees have needs for approval, affiliation and appreciation from their organization or employers. Moreover, the bulk of previous research on psychological safety center on a work environment and describes it as a workplace phenomenon. Baer & Frese (2003, p.50) support this, "A climate for psychological safety to an organization refers to formal and informal organizational practices and procedures guiding and supporting open and trustful interactions within the work environment." Moreover, they viewed it as a "work environment where employees are safe to speak up without being rejected or punished."

Chen et al. (2015) in a literature review on psychological safety, psychological safety is viewed in individual, group and organizational levels. The influencing factors come from these levels and interpersonal, leadership features, and organizational contexts. Workplace features, practices and interactions involving knowledge sharing, voice, innovation, job involvement, and job performance are outcomes of psychological safety. Edmondson & Lei (2014, p.24) maintains "Organizational research has identified psychological safety as a critical factor in understanding phenomena such as voice, team work, team learning, and organizational learning." Thus, psychological safety is important to the wellbeing and well-functioning of organizations.

2.4 Psychological Safety team norms

Edmondson (1999) came up with seven distinct team norms psychological safety, designed questions for measurement, validated them statistically and henceforth used by several researchers. The psychological safety team norms are reaction to mistakes, dealing with issues, accepting diversity, taking risk, asking for help, mutual support and appreciation.

2.4.1 Reaction to Mistakes

Psychological safety determines reactions to mistakes in the work environment. Mistakes offer rare opportunities for learning and they are inputs to learning if viewed as such. A psychologically safe workplace allows employees to overcome the anxiety and fear of failure that is often necessary for learning to occur (Schein, 1993), enabling employees to focus on improvement rather than being concerned about how others will react to their actions.

In a psychologically safe work environment reaction to errors, mistakes, everyday problems, niggles, near misses, critical incidents and failures are not just lost opportunities. Framing mistakes as opportunities for learning paves the way to eventually tackle their recurrence and prevent failures that are more consequential. Thus, discussing them frankly and candidly is necessary. The team takes the time and effort to engage in ‘second order problem solving. Second order problem solving involves identifying the root causes of problems and taking action to address them rather than their signs and symptoms. First order problem solving is the quick fixing of issues, as they appear to stop them from disrupting normal workflow. Tucker & Edmondson (2003,p.60) deems First order problem solving as counterproductive and states “It keeps communication of problems isolated so that they do not surface as learning opportunities.”

Furthermore, psychological safety empowers teams to take ownership of mistakes instead of blaming, accusing or scapegoating individual team members. The team proactively seeks to identify errors and problems it may have missed in its process or outputs by seeking feedback and asking for help from external stakeholders. The feedback could come from colleagues in other teams, customers, and by engaging in frequent experimentation and testing. In a psychologically safe environment, the team saves a portion of its working time against work pressure to engage in open, thoughtful, insightful, and inclusive debate. Contributions are invited, encouraged and appreciated from all team members irrespective of rank or job title.

Edmondson (1999) investigated the differences between two teams in a hospital and initially proposed that ‘better teams make fewer mistakes. To her wonder, she found out that better teams made more mistakes than the other teams. Later she discovered that better teams were not making more mistakes but that they felt safe to report them and learn from them. She then observed how team psychological safety determines mistakes reporting culture. This led to the assertion that psychological safety is an important condition for team learning and team performance.

Psychological safety facilitates team-learning behavior, mediates organizational learning, and team performance (Edmondson (1999). Different forms of learning behavior include feedback seeking, asking for help, information sharing and talking about errors. Carmeli & Gittell (2009) argued that underpinnings of high quality relationships such as shared goals, shared knowledge

and mutual respect, lead to psychological safety and learning from failures. Lee et al. (2020, p.4) observes, “Organizational theory and research suggests that psychological safety significantly predicts the construct of learning from failures. (Edmondson et al., 2001, p.688) argues that psychological safety counters interpersonal risks that could be a hindrance to team learning in organizations. They note, “Thus, psychological safety, by allowing interpersonal risks to be taken without fear of material or reputational harm, should facilitate collective learning during technology implementation.”

Harvey et al. (2019) found out psychological safety mediates the relationship between team learning orientation and team learning. In a study of field sales and service teams in South Korea, Kim et al. (2020) observed that psychological safety mediated learning behavior and efficacy, which contributed to team effectiveness. In a team of diverse experts, Edmondson & Harvey (2017, p. 75) weigh that diversity counts nothing without psychological safety that enables a learning environment. They contend, “Diverse expertise, however, would have been to no use without a learning environment in which people felt able to share knowledge, experiment with new ideas, seek feedback, and talk about mistakes.” Tucker & Nembhard (2007, p.903) adds “ In sum , we suggest that psychological safety, learn-how, and evidence-based practices are vital to enabling project teams to help their organizations learn-that is, to modify and improve how the organization’s work is done.

2.4.2 Dealing with Issues

In talk given at TED Talks (2015), Edmondson remarked, “Making the environment safe for open communication about challenges, concerns, and opportunities is one of the most important leadership responsibilities of the 21st century. Organizations should be safe enough for their employees that they can freely and safely raise their concerns and speak up with questions they have and boldly speak truth to power.

Psychological safety improves team communication by enabling team members to speak up with their concerns and present dissenting views without fear of negative consequences. In teams where psychological safety is higher, team members can bring tough issues and different opinions. In most cases, supervisor’s behavior may inhibit this. Hence, Xu et al. (2019, p.9) remind that “Organizations that seek to increase employee voice behavior should implement

mechanisms to ensure that employees feel safe speaking up, regardless of their supervisors characteristics.

A psychologically safe climate encourages employees to speak up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes, without fear of punishment or humiliation for doing so. In a team with high psychological safety, teammates feel safe to take risks around their team members. They feel confident that no one on the team will embarrass or punish anyone for admitting mistakes, asking a question, or offering a new idea. Psychologically safe teams practice free and open questioning in the sense of challenging current or established ways of working and of not accepting things as given or as being beyond careful, considered examination or critical enquiry.

Teams are commonplace and have become fashions in organizations. Given the complexity of the work and interconnectedness, teamwork skills and communications are more important than ever. O'Leary (2016,) observes that for interactions within inter professional team to be effective, communication, shared decision making and knowledge sharing is essential, which is enhanced by team psychological safety. Besides, O'Leary (2016,p.30) hints that “team members can also facilitate team psychological development by listening actively, by showing respect, by encouraging others to speak up, by speaking up when needed and by attending regularly.”

Edmondson & Lei (2014) noted that team psychological safety facilitates for those with different aims and working practices to find a way to communicate well and work together successfully. Furthermore, they contend that team psychological safety aids productive discussions through asking questions, seeking feedback, highlighting failure and sharing information. There is a tradeoff between self-protection and being open to others. Good team communication relies on psychological safety and quality of relationship among team members. It can be generally argued that building a psychological safe environment improves team communication and team performance.

Without psychological safety, no matter how motivated team are at work and have idea for improving performance, they frequently do not speak up because they fear that they will be harshly judged. Pacheco et al. (2015) contend that psychological safety is one of the common factors that affects employee voice and silence in organizations in addition to other personal and organizational factors. Kish-Gephart et al. (2009) mentioned that employees often choose to be

silent wary of personal and professional consequences. There is a growing consensus among organizational researchers that fear is the key drive of silence in organizations. Organizational researches including Kish-Gephart et al. (2009, 179) widely asserted that fear silences employees and routine experience of employees.

2.4.3 Accepting Diversity

Roberson (2019, p.2) mentioned that workplace diversity is coined in the 1990s and describes the differences that exist between people at work. According to Patrick & Kumar (2012, p.1) diversity encompasses “race, gender, ethnic group, age, personality, cognitive style, tenure, organizational function, education, background, and more.” Cletus et al. (2018, p.37) categorizes diversity as “physical, sociological or psychological attributes that define an individual or group.”

Academics indicates that the concept of diversity is much more than these differences. It denotes acceptance, respect and understanding. In the words of Patrick & Kumar (2012, p.1) “The concept of diversity includes acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences.” Other researchers also share this. For instance, Cletus et al. (2018, p.37) thought of diversity as a concept that encompasses acceptance and respect. According to them, it “denotes a mutual understanding of the unique attributes inherent in individuals.”

Workplace diversity can be both a blessing and a curse. Workplace diversity can pose challenges. Cletus et al. (2018, p.38) mentions that challenges associated with recruitment of people with diverse backgrounds, cultures and characteristics. They also mention the prospects and benefits of workplace diversity such as critical thinking and problem solving skills, employee growth and development, unification of diverse strengths, promotes corporate attractiveness, fosters innovation. Organizational problems today are far too complex to be tackled by for any one person. That is why organizations turn to teams, where diversity offers both opportunities and challenges. Literature reveals that bringing together a team with a diverse set of backgrounds and perspectives naturally lends itself to innovative thinking.

Diverse teams can achieve greatness, but they need to exist in an inclusive environment that promotes psychological safety. Psychological safety rests on the assurance that a team member will not be ridiculed or punished for making a mistake or speaking up with an idea. Diversity in business has many benefits, but it is not as simple as assembling a group of diverse people. The pathway to diversity is found in the act of inclusion. An inclusive environment includes growing self-confidence, taking a genuine interest in others, becoming aware of cultural differences, and developing the cultural competencies necessary to sustain these changes.

Studies have shown that diverse teams perform better, are more innovative, and experience better general health and happiness than non-diverse teams. To create a diverse team that can provide these results, each team member must feel psychologically safe. Developing an environment that fosters inclusion requires this key element. In a research study, Singh et al. (2013) highlighted the importance of a psychologically safe work environment where employees feel confident in expressing their true selves without fear of being judged as inferior or incompetent. The study establishes psychological safety as a principal motivation of employee performance behavior in a racially diverse work setting.

2.4.4 Taking Risks

The concept of the perception of safety and interpersonal risk is important to the concept of psychological safety. Edmondson & Lei (2014) points out, “psychological safety describes people's perception of the consequences of taking interpersonal risks in a particular context such as a workplace.” Frazier et al. (2017, p.116) mentions that psychological safety “represents perceptions one holds of the environment in which they work rather than about their specific jobs or tasks.” Besides, they assert that “the importance of creating a workplace in which perceptions of interpersonal risk are minimized” is the single and unifying principle around which the “conceptualizations of the psychological construct converge.”

Edmondson (2003, p.1420) observed that power differences in teams intensify the interpersonal risk faced by members who wish to speak up with ideas, questions, or concerns. Leader actions thus may affect whether or not people are willing to speak up.

Newman et al. (2017, p.2) mentions that asking feedback, voicing concerns, constructive conflict resolution and open communication are interpersonal or socially risky behaviors. Edmondson (1996) reminds that not taking risky behaviors is a safe route though it neglects learning and harm the team.

Interpersonal or social threats are things like being branded negatively, e.g. as ignorant, incompetent, or disruptive; being responded to with ridicule, rejection, blame, disrespect, anger, intimidation, disregard; or, being punished e.g. with negative performance appraisals, unfavorable work assignments or reduced promotion prospects. Newman et al. (2017) heeds that the continuous improvement of organizational processes and practices requires employee contribution and employees voice. Nevertheless, employees often prefer silence given the risks. Psychological safety is essential dealing with these risks and enabling the otherwise forgone benefits from

Tucker & Edmondson (2003, p.67) asserts that learning from failure requires talking about them in emotionally safe way, without fear of ridicule or punishment. Managers have a key role in this. Tucker and Edmondson points that workplace environments should be so safe that employees take interpersonal risks needed to engage in second-order-problem solving. Research has shown that the absence of threats is strongly associated with team members bringing their whole self to work, expressing their creativity, talents and skills without self-censoring, self-silencing, and learning actively on the job developing their capabilities and those of their team.

2.4.5 Asking For Help

Asking for help in the workplace is common and useful as a learning behavior. Rijt et al. (2013, p.261) mentioned that help seeking is used interchangeably with information seeking and feedback seeking and that “These concepts all stress the proactive search to gain specific resources.” They noted that help seeking behavior is vital for problem solving and learning in organizations. They also asserted that relational perspectives of help seeking like accessibility, trust, awareness of expertise, and hierarchy influence help seeking behavior.

Hierarchy is very important among other perspectives of help seeking behavior because it shows the role of psychological safety. Given that employees do not want to look ignorant and

incompetent before their supervisors or colleagues, they tend to seek help from socially proximate others. The presence of psychological safety enables employees to seek help upward, downward, their equals and lower status employees. Thus, a psychological safety in the workplace is essential.

Ortega et al.(2014, p.312) lists what team learning entails. It includes questions, seeking feedback, experimenting, and reflecting. The fear of looking incompetent compels employees to hold back questions. It is unnerving to feel like one is in an environment where everything one does is under microscope. A different setting would be a situation in which everything is safe to take risks, voice their opinions, and ask judgment-free questions. This happens in a culture where managers provide air cover and create safe zones so that employees can let down their guard.

Frezier et al. (2017, p.120) claims that psychological safety facilitates learning, organizational change, and employee engagement. Psychological safety at work means that employees feel comfortable making themselves vulnerable in front of the people they see every day. Vulnerability for most people is terrifying. Vulnerability at work can take many different forms, including asking silly questions or asking for help countering the inner urge not to do these to protect one's image. Psychological safety implies that team members will not be exposed to interpersonal risks when engaging in a learning behavior including asking for help and seeking feedback

2.4.6 Mutual Support

Mutual support is the provision of task assistance, social support, and feedback to one or more team members, as needed. In other words, mutual support is back-up behavior that benefits the individual and, thereby, the greater good of the team. Mutual support contributes to important team outcomes. Teams who engage in mutual support are more effective. That is, they make fewer errors, help each other out, can correct their own issues, can redistribute tasks so work is completed effectively and efficiently, and are more resilient.

Torre-Ruiz & Arago'n-Correa(2013) found positive relationship between best member performance and team performance that increases as the rest of the team members' performance improves. This shows how one best team performer impacts other team members when team

members mutually support each other. Psychological safety aids mutual support. Lee et al. (2020, p.12) found out high intercorrelations between high quality interpersonal relationships, psychological safety, learning from failures, creative self-efficacy and creative work environment.

In psychological safe teams, team members express mutual respect, trust and interest in each other as people. Team members do not attack each other's knowledge, competence, motivation, personality or character. Opinions and arguments are decoupled from the personality of the person expressing them. Leung et al. (2015) states that psychological safety promotes prosocial behavior through cooperative goal interdependence.

Teng & Luo(2015, p.2) observes that "Members of positive social interdependence groups trust each other, acknowledge common values, and are more likely to develop explicit group norms that dictate individual responsibilities and obligations." Trust, common values and explicit group norms are important for mutually supporting one another in a team setting.

There are also shortcomings of mutual support in a team context. Beebe & Masterson (2016, p.15) mentioned that social loafing occurs when "Some group members hold back on their contributions (loaf), assuming others will do the work." Social loafing ignores accountability and does not represent mutual support. In social loafing team, members do not fully work up to their potential and forms dependency on others. In mutual support, team members do their part fully and help each other out in problems they commonly face.

2.4.7 Appreciation

Employee recognition and appreciation is commonly known by researchers as low cost and yet high impact factor. It is high impact because appreciation of employees stirs determination, better work relationships, improved personal standing and engagement. In fact, employees who receive frequent appreciation in the workplace are much more likely to generate innovations and increased efficiency. In many human resource studies, employees report that recognition is more effective at increasing their engagement, performance, and innovation than financial rewards.

Findings from a journal study by White (2017, 199) entitled 'How do employees want to be shown appreciation? Results from 100,000 employees' shows that "Communicating appreciation

to employees in ways that they prefer to receive it is one of the core components to help them feel truly valued for their contributions.” Published in a well-known book, ‘The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace’ by Chapman and White (2011) the five languages of appreciation are: words of affirmation, quality time, acts of service, tangible gifts and physical touch.” Employee appreciation is low cost because the languages of appreciations are not costly to implement to organizations. Surprisingly, employees prefer more non-tangible appreciation languages than the tangible ones.

The five languages of appreciation boosts psychological safety. They make employees feel valued, respected and esteemed. Innate in a human behavior there is this need of appreciation, acknowledgement and esteem from others. This need is indicated in Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1. Research Design

The research study solely focuses on the bivariate associations between communications climate and psychological safety. Thus, Spearman correlation, a measure of monotonic association was used.

3.2. Data Sources

The research study relies on quantitative and qualitative primary data on Communication and psychological safety gathered from World vision Ethiopia head office, Bole Sub city. The data was collected from professional staffs, who are members of workplace teams. It excludes nonprofessional staffs like cleaners and security guards.

3.3. Data Collection Instrument

Standardized survey instruments was used to gauge the perception of communication climate and psychological safety in the organization. The questionnaire has two parts: communication climate and psychological safety. Previous researchers confirmed the reliability, consistency and validity of these instruments (Forward et al., 2011; Edmondson, 1999). Besides, a pilot study was conducted to get a glimpse of employees' reaction and potential interpretation issues.

Gibbs (1961) conceptualized communication climate and Costigan & Schmeidler (1984) operationalized it. Edmondson (1999) defined and operationalized psychological safety. The Communication Climate Inventory (CCI) operationalizes Gibb's (1961) 12 factors assessing supportive and defensive communication behaviors with in organizational work groups (Larsen & Folgero, 1993). The questionnaire is prepared in a Likert-type format scaled from 1(Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree). According to SPSS version 24, the internal reliability measure, Cronbach's Alpha is 0.864 and 0.739 for supportive and defensive climates respectively.

The Psychological Safety Survey is a 7-item measure. Team psychological safety, defined as the extent to which the team views the social climate as conducive to interpersonal risk was assessed. The researcher adopted a five-term scale developed by Edmondson (1999) to measure team

psychological safety (Chen et al., 2015, p.436 & Newman et al., 2017, p.5). SPSS reliability analysis test shows 0.743 Cronbach Alpha.

Google Forms, a free online survey tool, was used to distribute the surveys and collect the responses. All employees received an email invitation to complete the online survey. Respondent's identity kept anonymous. Email reminders sent after the initial email invitation until the desired numbers of responses was secured. The survey closed in about after four weeks, which means that the 'Google Form' no longer accepts responses.

3.4 Sample Size

Literatures on sample size determination for Spearman's correlation reveal that sample size depends on the required effect size, the type of test and variety of population (homogeneity or heterogeneity), margin of error and confidence interval chosen. (Bujang & Baharum, 2016; Schönbrodt & Perugini, 2013; Bonett & Wright, 2000; May & Looney, 2020). One general rule is that with increasing sample sizes, sample correlations approach the population value. More essentially, Bujang & Baharum (2016, p.38) asserts that sample size determination heavily relies on study objectives.

In 2000, Bonett & Wright indicated that sample size formulas to determine the sample size required for interval estimation of Spearman were not available. After twenty years (May & Looney, 2020, p.6) came up with tools to determine sample size, hypothesis testing and confidence intervals and made it easy for researchers. Accordingly, the required sample size for this study is 194. The table is based on a two-tailed test of $H_0: \rho_s=0$ with significance level 0.05. Sample sizes needed to detect at least 0.2 value of the Spearman rank correlation coefficient using a two-tailed test of $H_0: \rho_s=0$ with significance level 0.05 is 194. Thus, 194 individuals was randomly selected from 347 professional employees. The formula for sample size calculation is given by (May & Looney, 2020, p.6) is

$$n = b + c^2 \left[\frac{(z_{\alpha/2} + z_{1-\beta})}{z(\xi_1) - z(\xi_0)} \right]^2$$

Where ξ denotes the sample estimate,

ξ_0 denotes the hypothesized value,

n denotes the sample size,

$z(\bullet)$ denotes the Fisher z -transform, and

b and c_2 are obtained after applying Fisher z -Transform to Measures of Association

Φ stands for power

3.5 Pilot report

A brief and mini-scale pilot study was conducted for both the questionnaires. Here under are the procedures, the lessons and adjustments following the pilot study.

The Questionnaires were designed in ‘Google Forms’ and sending, storing and analyzing of the survey data is assisted by this research tool. The questionnaires were sent as ‘Forms’, which would be filled and submitted online. Then, Google Forms notifies the receipt of the response, stores and analyzes the data updating the results as each respondent clicks ‘submit’ of the questionnaires sent as ‘Forms’. Moreover, ‘Google Forms’ allowed the export of the data to ‘Microsoft Excel’ for further analysis using SPSS and other desired tools. Responses to short answer questions also collected and stored by ‘Google Forms’ and was exported for analysis.

The questionnaires were emailed to twenty-five individuals before mass emailing to about 347 respondents. The pilot study provided opportunity for important and critical adjustments that otherwise would be a huge setback. ‘Microsoft Outlook’ is used for work related emails and sending questionnaires using ‘Google Forms’ needed adjustment as the respondents were not able to reply using the link sent from Google Forms.

Another lesson from the pilot study is that respondents had difficulty understanding some of the questionnaires and understood them differently. The researcher had to move and offer brief explanations. For instance, one question on psychological safety, ‘it is safe to take a risk on my team’. There was ambiguity and questions such as, what kind of risk? There are acceptable risks and unacceptable risks. The researcher had to explain the interpersonal or social risks that employees routinely face. Though the instruments are standard, some questions are hard to grasp in our culture, as the origins of the questionnaires are foreign. Similar comments and concerns was received from the respondents via email. Considering this, the researcher had to move from

department to department to address such issues personally. Another foresight from the pilot study is that it showed a lower response rate. The response rate was exceptionally low and this led to the anticipation of lower response rates and devising mechanisms to secure the desired sample size. Weekly reminders had to be sent via email.

3.6 Data Analysis

This research study employed correlational research methods with the goal to explore relationships between behaviors of communication climates and state of psychological safety. Statistical analysis was based on SPSS 24.0 and Google spread sheets. Descriptive and inferential tests was used to analyze the data. Exporting of the survey result from ‘Google Forms’ to Google spreadsheet was automatic. Spearman’s correlation test was completed using with the significance level set at $\alpha=.05$.

Correlation is a bivariate analysis that measures the strength and direction of association between two variables. Spearman rank correlation is a non-parametric test that is used to measure the degree of monotonic association between two variables. The spearman rank correlation test does not carry any assumption about the distribution of the data and is the appropriate correlation analysis when the variables are measured on a scale that is at least ordinal. The assumptions of the Spearman correlation are that data must be at least ordinal and the scores on one variable must be monotonically related to the other variable. It is often used to test hypothesis on whether the ranks of two variables are linearly related or not. (Tokunaga, 2016; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2019).

Monotonicity test was run in SPSS. To check whether the data meet this assumption or not, the relationship between the two variables was viewed in a scatter plot to see if spearman’s correlation can be used as a measure of association.

Cohen’s (1988, p.77-81) widely used standard or guideline is used to evaluate the strength of the relationship, or the effect size. Hemphill (2003, p.78) refers Cohen, “correlation coefficients in the order of .10 are “small,” those of .30 are “medium,” and those of .50 are “large” in terms of magnitude of effect sizes. Cohen’s standard is well known and extensively quoted by other

academics as well (Funder & Ozer, 2019; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2019; Howell, 2014; Privitera, 2019).

It should be noted however, that Cohen’s standard, which was presented in his book ‘Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences’ is contested by other academics, especially those in the field of medical science. For instance, Schober et al.(2018, p.1765) recent and land mark special article published in a journal ‘Anesthesia & Analgesia’ entitled ‘Correlation Coefficients: Appropriate Use and Interpretation’ provides the below interpretation for magnitudes and effect sizes, which is markedly different from Cohen’s widely known guideline for interpreting the magnitude of correlation coefficients for the behavioral sciences.

Table 2 Correlation Coefficients (adapted from Schober et al. (2018, p.1765)

Absolute Magnitude of the Observed Correlation Coefficient	Interpretation
0.00-0.10	Negligible correlation
0.10-0.39	Weak Correlations
0.4-0.69	Moderate Correlations
0.7-0.89	Strong Correlations
0.9-1.0	Very Strong Correlations

Nevertheless, Hemphill (2003, p.79) comments on the empirical guidelines for interpreting the magnitude of correlation coefficients is worth noting. In light of the large and substantive review of psychological literature, he advocated “a different set of empirical guidelines for different types of studies (e.g., concurrent validity, predictive validity).”

Spearman’s correlation is not very sensitive to outliers unlike Pearson’s correlation (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2019, Schober et al., 2018, p.1765). This makes it appealing to the research study assuming that outliers often appear in data and could easily swing the findings. As indicated in the limitation of the research paper section, employees fatigue and inaccuracies in perception may result in rampant outliers. Thus, selecting appropriate statistical methods that best fits those realities is of paramount importance.

3.7 Reporting Correlations

A standard APA format (American Psychological Association, 2020, p.218) was used to report the correlations. The report included the sample size, the calculated value for the correlations, whether it is statistically significant, the probability level, and the type of test used (one-or two-tailed).

Given that the study looks at several variables, correlations between all possible pairing was computed. With six behaviors of two conceptually opposing categories of communication climate and seven factors of emotional safety, there are forty-two different possible pairings leading to forty-two different correlations. The results from multiple correlations are most easily reported in a table called a correlation matrix, using footnotes to indicate which correlations are significant.

3.8 Ethics and Procedures of Data Collection

The research study adhered to ethical procedures of data collection. Akaranga & Makau (2016, p.6) considers voluntary and informed consent as “major ethical issues” when undertaking a research. Ethical data collection procedures are voluntary, informed, safe, and confidential. Ethical data collection procedures will be followed to all participants in a research. Hence, the research strictly follows ethical guidelines, respects individual’s rights to privacy, seeks consent and does not infringe on the privacy of the employees. Nor does it use employee data in an unprotected manner.

The relevant leaders of the organization was informed of the research beforehand and their permission was sought. A memo was submitted to the people and culture department notifying the confidentiality of data and respondents identity. Up on securing permission, the questionnaires was sent to potential participants via email using a google free tool called ‘Google Forms’. In the ‘Google Forms’ there is a short notice on the identity of the sender(researcher), invitation to the employees to participate and how the data was to be used. If the employees were not willing to respond, they could simply ignore the email.

The researcher recognizes that assessment of communication climate and psychological safety could be a soft or private domain for the employees. Besides, bio questions such as age,

education level, marital status, and years of work experience may make some of the respondents uneasy and sensitive. The questionnaire was limited to assess their perception of the communication climate and state of psychological safety. Lawrence (2019, p.7) empathically warns “Humans involved in research deserve to be treated as humans, no matter the life they come from, whether they have a disability, are underserved or impoverished.”

CHAPTER 4: RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Respondents Profile

The respondents were profiled on age, gender, work experience with the organization, educational level. Some of these characteristics may have an impact on the research objectives the research study is attempting to address. A majority of the respondents, 48.5% are in the age range of 35-44. The percentage of male's respondents (78.9%) is more than three times higher than the female respondents (21.1%). This indicates that gender balance is tilted towards males in the organization. Most respondents (45.4%) have above 10 years of experience with the organization and have MA/MS degrees (63.9%).

Figure 1: Respondents profile age and gender

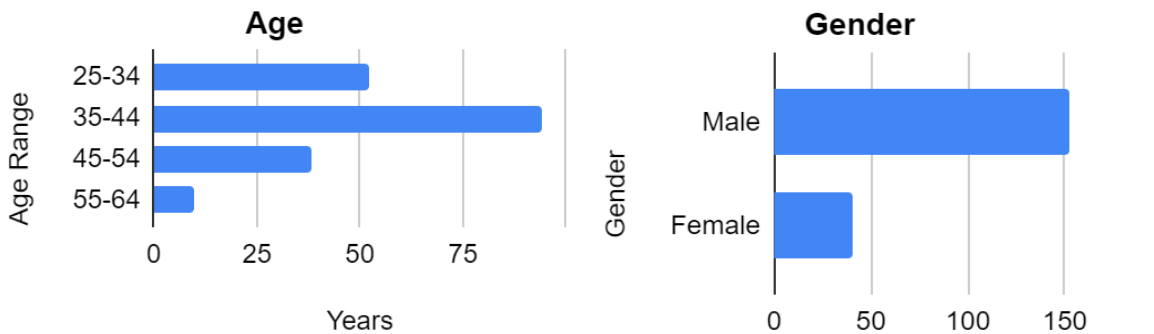
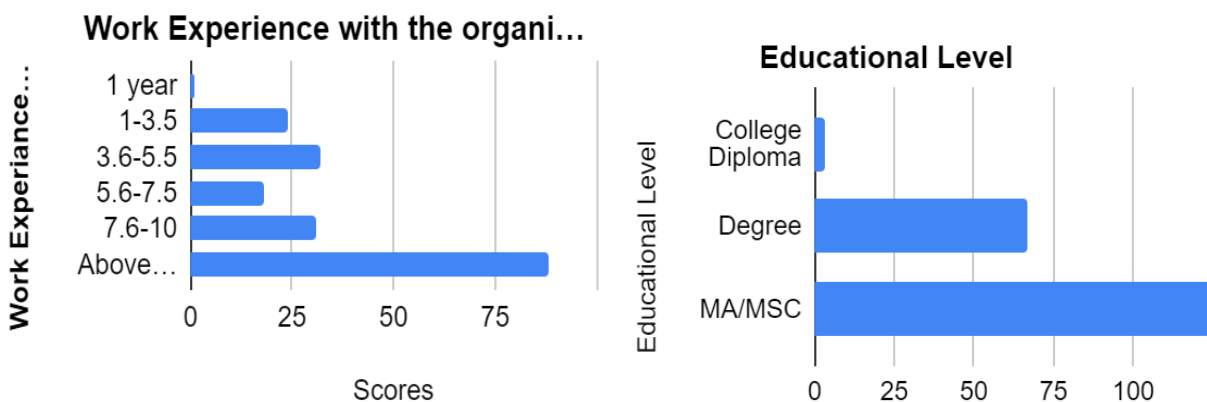


Figure 2: Respondents profile-experience with the Organization and educational level

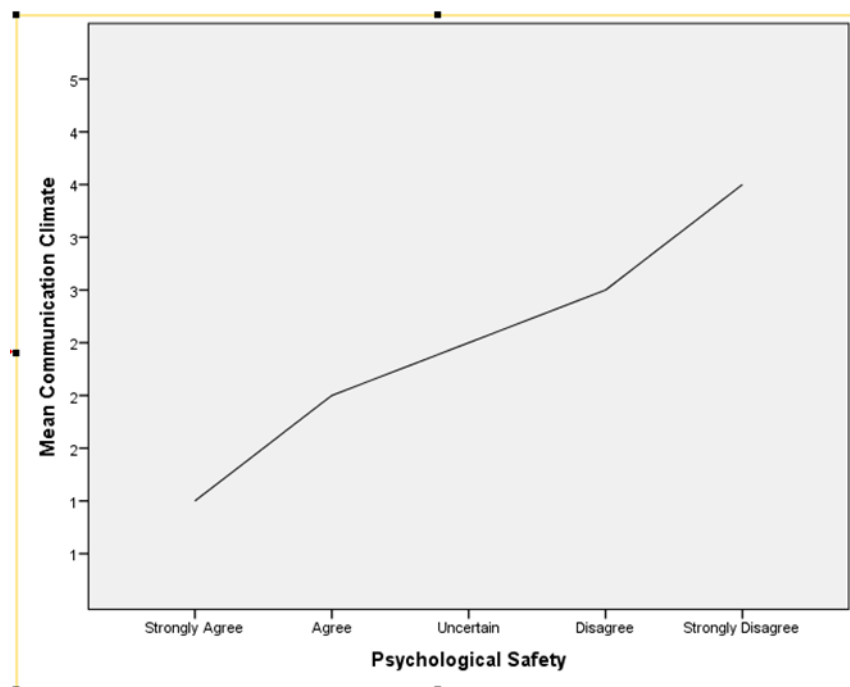


4.2 Research Question 1-Correlations between Communication Climate and Psychological Safety

The first research question enquires if there is significant relationship between Communication Climate and psychological safety. If an association does exist, the research question goes further to enquire the strength and direction of the association.

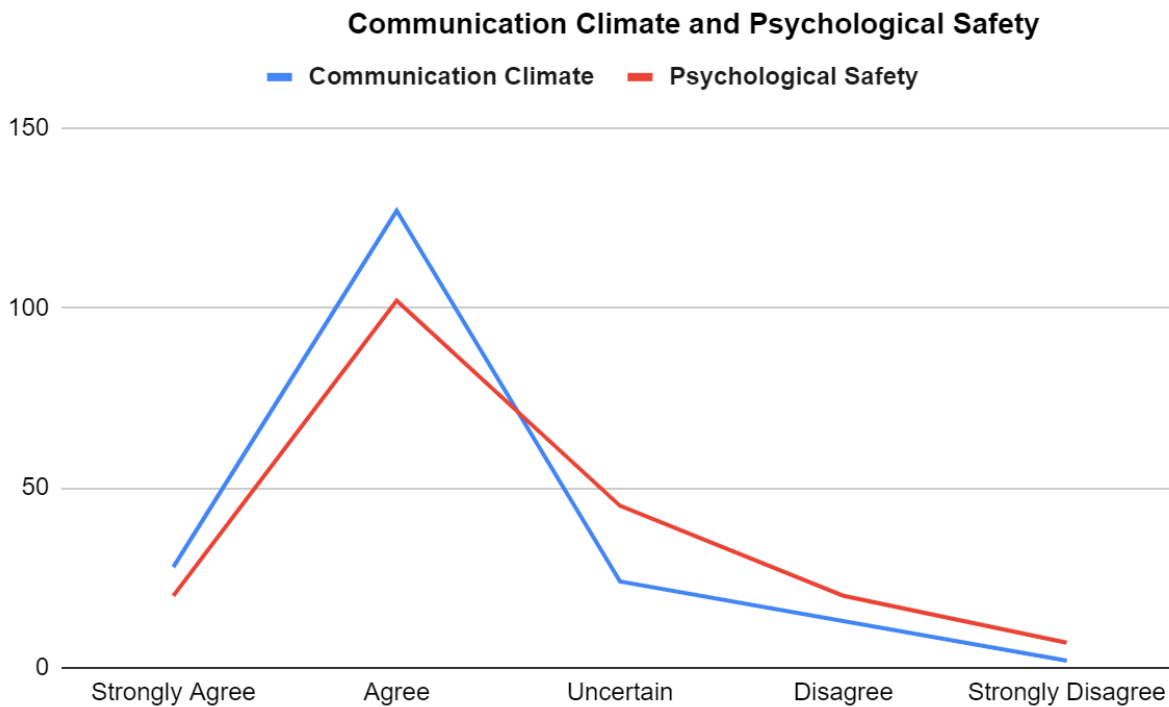
Spearman rank correlation was run on SPSS 24 to see the association between communication climate and psychological safety. Beforehand, the assumption of Spearman rank correlation, monotonicity is checked in SPSS and the below scatter plot shows a linear and monotonic relationship between the two. A monotonic relationship is a statistical definition that is used to describe a scenario in which the size of one variable increases as the other variables also increases, or where the size of one variable increases as the other variable also decreases

Figure 3: Scatter Plot- Communication Climate and Psychological Safety



The below graph illustrates that the relationship between the two concepts is direct, positive monotonic relationship. It is not linear seeing that they do not increase and decrease at a constant rate.

Figure 4: Communication Climate and Psychological Safety



The scatter plots and graph shows that the data conforms to monotonicity. Having passed the assumptions, correlations between the two concepts are tested. A Spearman correlation for the data revealed a significant relationship between communication climate and state of psychological safety, $r = +.504$, $n = 194$, $p < .01$, two tails.

According to Cohen (1988, p.79) Correlation coefficients in the order of .50 are “large” in terms of magnitude of effect sizes and represents large associations. Thus, a Spearman Correlation Coefficient of $r = +.504$ is large in terms of magnitude of effect size and represents a large associations. Thus, communication climate and psychological safety has a large association. The corresponding coefficient of determination (r^2) is 25.4, indicating that 25.4% of the variability of the communication climate can be predicted from the relationship with psychological safety.

Good communications and good relationships go hand in hand. Psychology safety is arguably a decisive test of the quality workplace relationships and communication climate is reflection of this relationships. Communication climate gets bad when relationships go wrong and improves as relationships improves. This is in line with the literature. Gibbs (1961) argued that communication is not just a ‘language processes. It is also a ‘people processes’. He contend that in order to improve the communication climate, relationship between people has to improve. Psychological safety indicates of the quality of relationships. The quality of relationships people have in the workplace or anywhere else demonstrated in the way they communicate and vice versa. The way they communicate has a lot to say about the quality of their relationships.

Table 3: Spearman’s rho Correlations between Communication Climate & Psychological Safety

Correlations			Communicati on Climate	Psychological Safety
Spearman's rho	Communication Climate	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.504**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	194	194
	Psychological Safety	Correlation Coefficient	.504**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	194	194

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In addition, Spearman rho correlations between variables of supportive communication behaviors and psychological safety factors was also tested. The SPSS output shows that Spearman rho between appreciation and description is 0.378**, 0.462 between appreciation and empathy, 0.516 between appreciation and equality, 0.348 between risk taking and problem orientation and 0.346 between appreciation and Provisionalism. All significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed). The magnitude is medium except for appreciation and empathy, which shows a high association. It can be seen that appreciation among all other variables of psychological safety has significant correlations. This could be due to the positive tone it produces and the positive energy it unleashes as appreciation is routinely applied in the team.

Table 4: Correlations between psychological safety and supportive communication behaviors

Correlations N:194												
Description	Spearman's rho											
	Empathy		Equality		Spontaneity		Problem Oreintation		Provisionalism			
	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Reaction to Mistakes	-0.006	0.936	0.023	0.749	0.012	0.864	-0.063	0.382	-0.037	0.607	-0.092	0.202
Dealing with Issues	.233**	0.001	.236**	0.001	0.136	0.06	0.062	0.388	.249**	0	.177*	0.013
Accepting Diversity	-.250**	0	-.241**	0.001	-.244**	0.001	-.190**	0.008	-0.064	0.376	-.247**	0.001
Risk Taking	.257**	0	.281**	0	.239**	0.001	.269**	0	.348**	0	.252**	0
Asking for Help	-.210**	0.003	-.197**	0.006	-.147*	0.041	-.273**	0	0.007	0.925	-.164*	0.022
Appreciation	.378**	0	.462**	0	.516**	0	.408**	0	.224**	0.002	.346**	0
Mutual Support	.231**	0.001	.301**	0	.306**	0	0.131	0.069	0.122	0.09	.281**	0

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
 ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Moreover, correlations between psychological safety and variables of defensive communication climate was examined. In the literature, there is a strong claim that psychological safety counters defensiveness and hence it was assumed that it has a negative correlation with behaviors of defensive communication climate. The SPSS output uncovers that among all variables of psychological safety, mutual support is negatively correlated with all variables of defensive communication climate. A correlation coefficient of -0.351 with evaluation, -0.207 with control, -0.263 with strategy, -0.147 with neutrality, and -0.212 with superiority and -0.194 with certainty all significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed) except Neutrality, which is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed). The magnitude of the associations are small except for mutual support and evaluation, which shows a medium level of associations. Diversity has negative correlations with all behaviours of supportive communication climate contradicting the assumptions and suggested for future research recommendations. The magnitude is small with all behaviors.

Table 5: Correlations between psychological safety and defensive communication behaviors

Correlations N:194												
Description	Spearman's rho											
	Evaluation		Control		Strategy		Neutrality		Superiority		Certainty	
	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)
Reaction to Mistakes	.236**	0.001	.288**	0.000	.201**	0.005	0.116	0.108	.224**	0.002	0.099	0.171
Dealing with Issues	0.009	0.897	0.068	0.347	-0.116	0.107	-.182*	0.011	0.001	0.986	-0.033	0.649
Accepting Diversity	.187**	0.009	.151*	0.036	.149*	0.038	0.024	0.736	0.113	0.116	0.135	0.061
Risk Taking	0.013	0.862	0.000	0.996	-0.080	0.269	-0.104	0.149	.144*	0.046	-0.083	0.250
Asking for Help	.322**	0.000	.182*	0.011	.182*	0.011	0.008	0.915	0.133	0.065	0.052	0.474
Appreciation	-.200**	0.005	-0.140	0.052	-.198**	0.006	-0.047	0.513	-0.034	0.637	-.240**	0.001
Mutual Support	-.351**	0.000	-.207**	0.004	-.263**	0.000	-.147*	0.040	-.212**	0.003	-.194**	0.007

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
 **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

It can be seen that there is a significant and positive relationship between communication climate and psychological safety. Specifically, there is a significant positive relationship between appreciation, one of the variables of psychological safety and supportive communication behaviors and significant negative relationship between mutual support and all variables of defensive communication behaviors. Appreciation and mutual support captures the assumptions stated in the problem statement. Negative associations were assumed with defensive communication behaviors and psychological safety. Positive associations were with supportive communication behaviors and psychological safety. However, this is not confirmed by all variables of psychological safety.

Usually appreciation means speaking in positive terms, words of encouragement and all sort of expressions that uplifts emotions. Mutual support is helping one another to achieve a shared goal. Appreciation and mutual support requires good relationships and supportive communications among others.

4.3 Research Question 2 – Perception of Communication Climate

Respondent's perception of the communication climate is presented below. Their perception is gauged in both supportive and defensive communication behaviors.

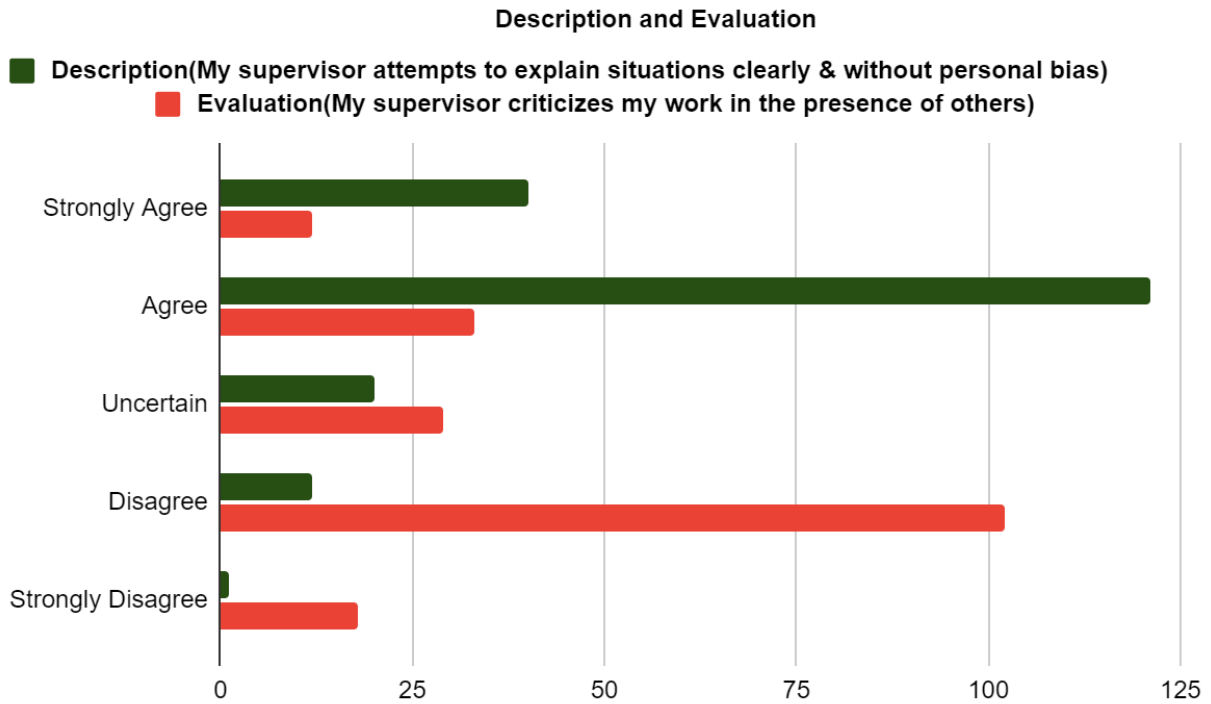
4.3.1 Description and Evaluation

Describing or explaining situations excluding judgment and evaluation characterizes description, one of the behaviors of supportive communication climate. This helps to check bias in listeners. 161(83%) of the respondents think that their supervisor attempts to explain situations clearly and without personal bias. A description of events or situations in the workplace avoiding personal judgments, bias, prejudice and views helps to counter the defensiveness because listeners could perceive such as evaluation. The respondents' perception reveal that this is commonplace in the organization.

Criticizing employees in the presence of others can be humiliating. Even if the criticism can be justified, it should be private. Otherwise, employees often react unfavorably to public criticism. 45(23.2%) of respondents perceive that their supervisors publicly criticize them. Private criticism and public praise are essential skills for supervisors to master. It could significantly alter the

communication climate. Employees often respond violently or at least negatively to public criticism. What is important is not just the validity of the criticism at this point. Employees do not like to see their reputation vanish in public or bear embarrassment in front of their colleagues.

Figure 5: Description and Evaluation

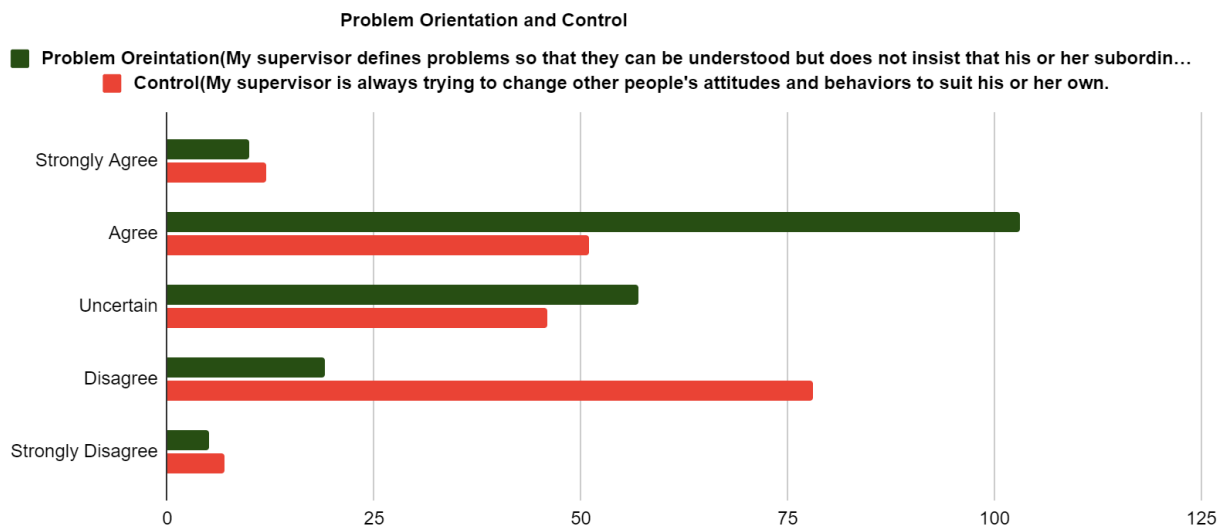


4.3.2 Problem Orientation and Control

Problem solving is common in the workplace. It is a routine in most organizations. How communication runs in the course of problem solving is important. Supervisors can enhance problem solving by defining problems and not insisting others to buy their definition or conceptualization of a problem. This leaves the room for others to maintain their own definition and to agree or disagree with their supervisors. 113(58.2%) of the respondents perceive that when their supervisors define problems, they do not insist subordinates to agree. The quality of problem orientation is a key communication behavior that helps to develop long lasting solutions to emerging problems in a team setting.

Control is a communication behavior that refers to how message sender's attempts to control message receivers to their own advantage. Research participants are presented with a question whether their supervisor try to change other's behavior to suit him or her, 63 of them (32.5%) confirmed that this was the case with their supervisors. Control is identified as one of the defensive communication behavior, which is prioritized for intervention.

Figure 6: Problem Orientation and Control



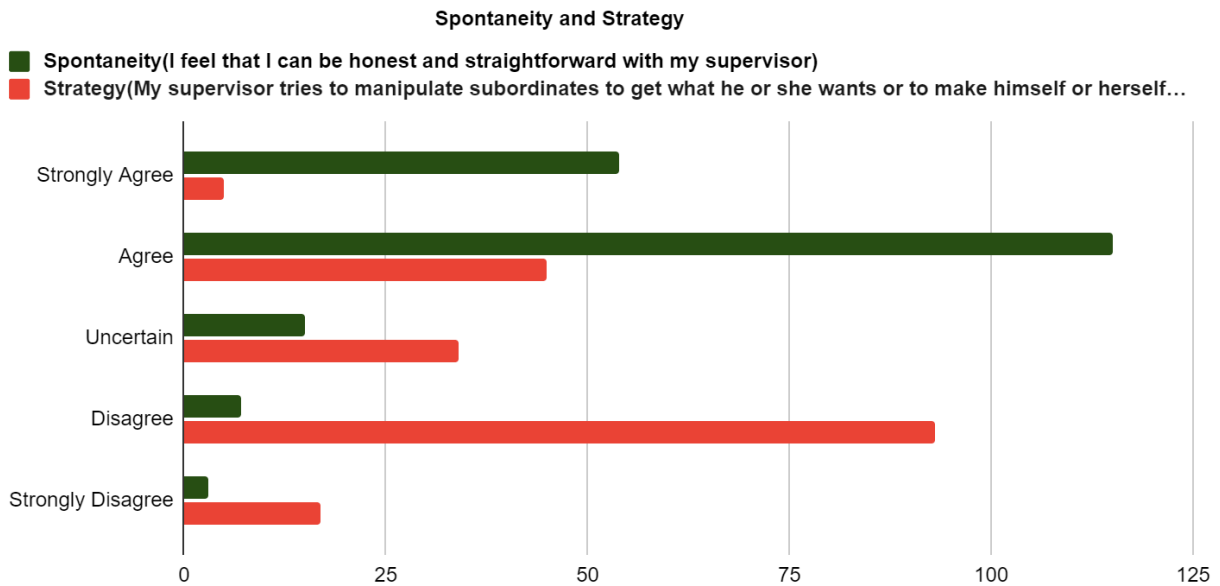
4.3.3 Spontaneity and Strategy

As explained in the literature review, spontaneity refers to communicating straightforwardly without having hidden agenda or motives. Here in the survey it is measured with questionnaire item that whether employees can be honest and straightforward with their supervisors. Accordingly, 113(87.1%) of respondents believe that they can be honest and straightforward with their supervisors. Honest and straightforward communications enhance communication effectiveness and satisfaction from communication.

An attempt to manipulate subordinates and maximize self-gain in the workplace communication ends up hurting the relationships and the team spirit. Manipulating subordinates is bad behavior that emanates from selfish and self-seeking supervisors. Making self-look good at the expense of others spoils the communication atmosphere. Supervisors should promote the team, further team

identity and share the credit with the team. 50(25.8%) of the respondents think that their supervisor manipulates subordinates to make himself or herself look good.

Figure 7: Spontaneity and Strategy

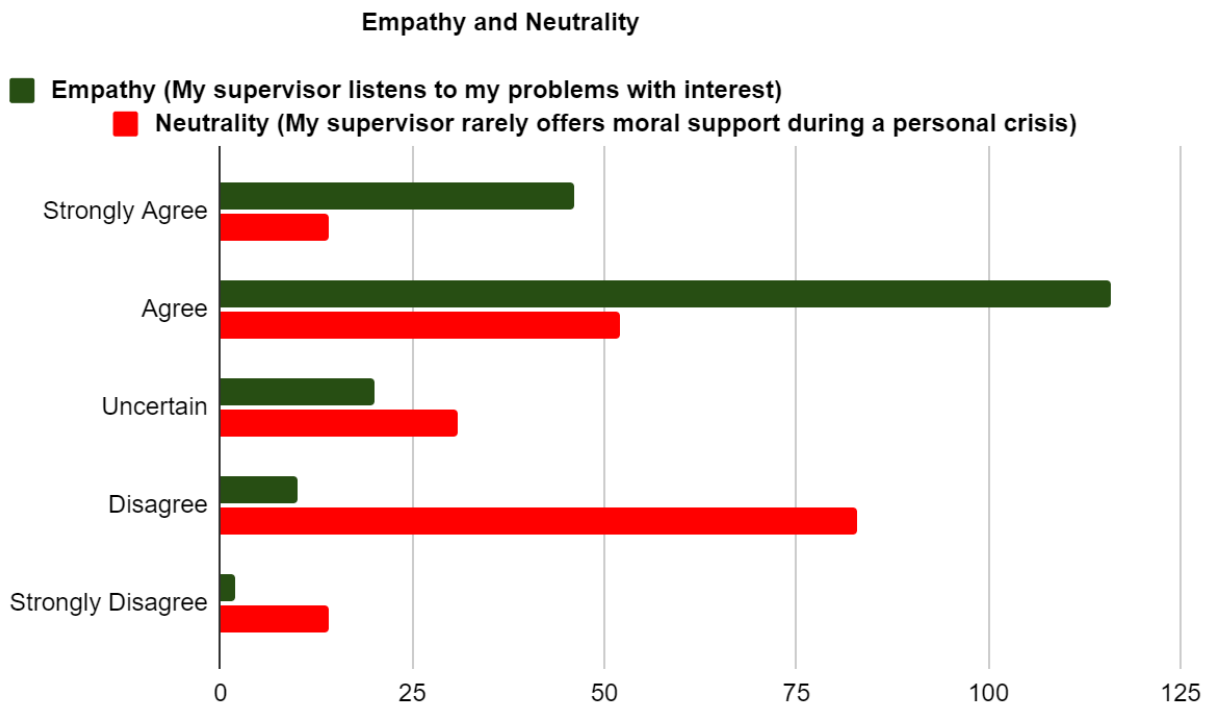


4.3.4 Empathy and Neutrality

Empathy is one of the key ingredients that make teams and organizations an exciting place to work. Employees want to see this quality from their supervisors and vice versa. Here in the survey question, empathy is measured by listening to employees' problems with interest, giving them attention and letting employees feel valued and matter. 162(83.5%) of the respondents perceive their supervisors as one who listens to their problems with interest thereby showing empathy. This positively affects the communication climate. Listening to employees with interest is a great asset and critical managerial communication skill.

Neutrality implies not feeling concerned with what concerns others in a relationship. It is staying focused on self-interests and is the opposite of empathy. 66 of the respondents (34%) perceive that their supervisors rarely offer them moral support during a crisis. Neutrality is another defensive communication behavior prioritized for potential intervention. Only 50% of the respondents think their supervisors offers them moral support during a personal crisis.

Figure 8: Empathy and Neutrality



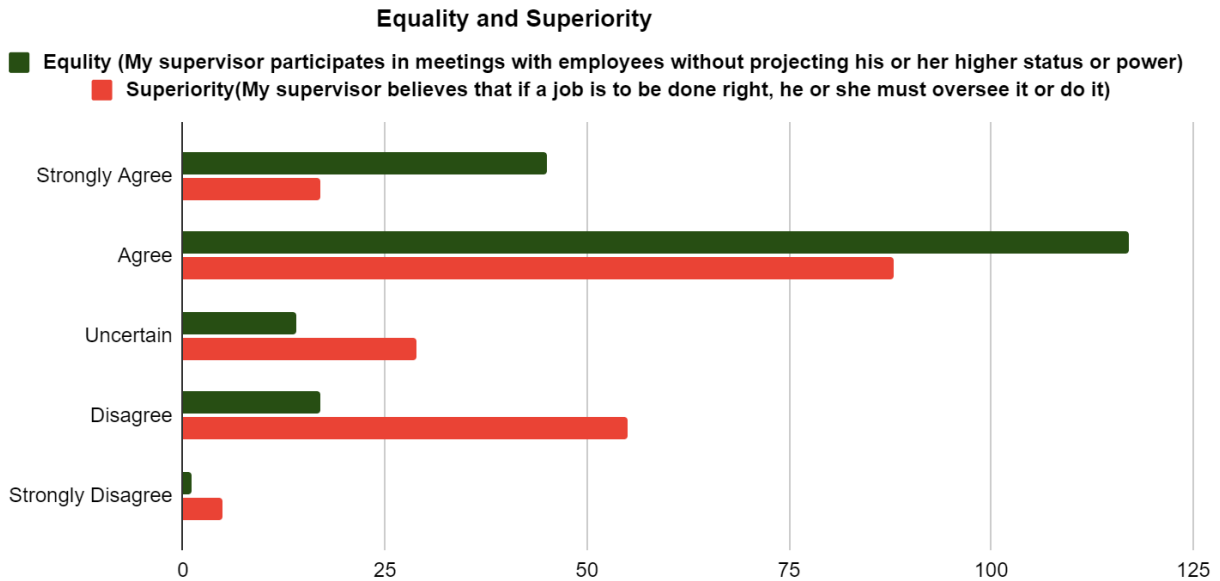
4.3.5 Equality and Superiority

When the supervisor projects his or her high status or power, it sends the communication climate to a negative one. It communicates to employees they are less worthy and they do not matter as much as the supervisor does. 162(83.5%) of respondents think that their supervisor participates in meetings with employees without projecting high status or power. Meeting is one of the common settings to display one's high status or show equality.

The feeling of superiority could appear in communication in different situations. One of the way it appears is by micro-managing. Moreover, individuals should be empowered to take responsibility for their particular tasks. Supervisors should help employees feel a sense of autonomy and empowerment in their particular assignments. Behaving or communicating in a way that makes employees feel inadequate hurts communication and workplace productivity. In the survey, employees are asked whether their supervisors believe that a job can be done right without his or her oversight. A significant 105 of the respondents (54.2%) think that their

supervisors must oversee or do the job themselves if the job has to be done right. Only 60(30.9 % of the respondents contest this notion.

Figure 9: Equality and Superiority

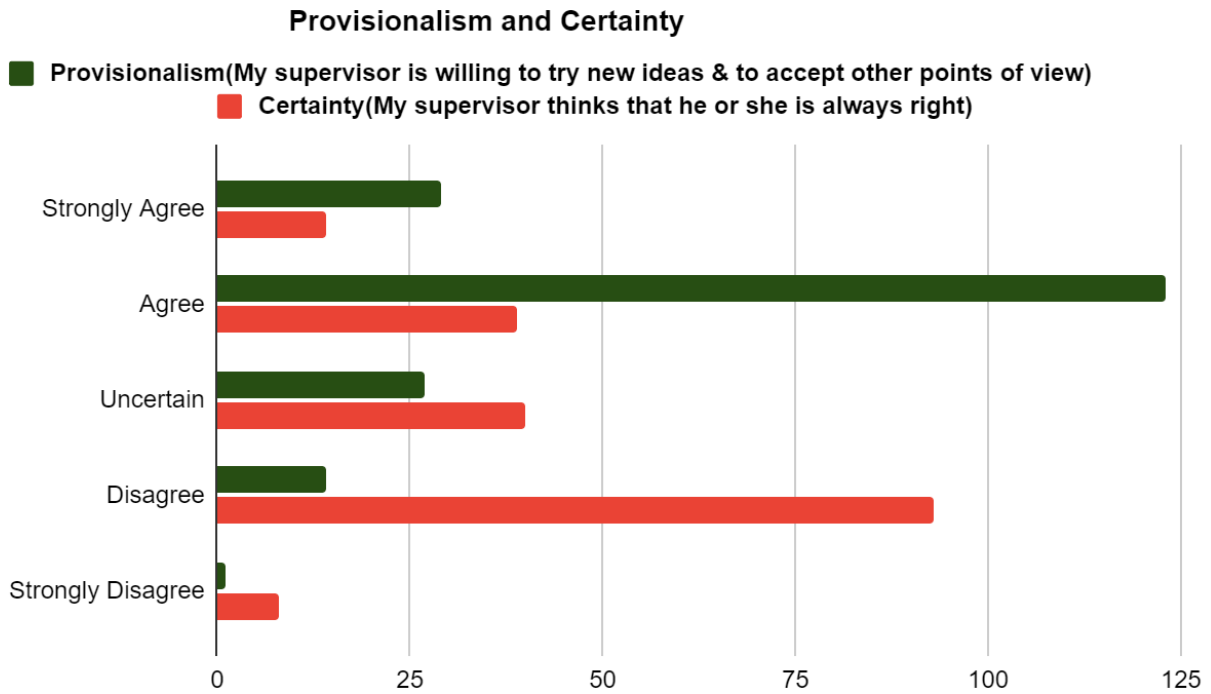


4.3.6 Provisionalism and Certainty

Trying new ideas and accepting other points of view is a vital communication behavior for supervisors. Dogmatism and ‘I am always right’ mentality hampers communication effectiveness. Here the survey result shows that 152(78.3%) of the respondents think that their supervisors welcome new ideas and other points of view.

Acting as if somebody is certain of everything in every situation could damage workplace interactions. Inflexibility inhibits communication. Flexibility invites others to present their views and assumes that one can be wrong and ready to change views or assumptions when necessary. 101(52.1%) of the respondents do not perceive that their supervisors think he or she is always right. 53(27.3%) of them believes the opposite; they think that their supervisor is dogmatic.

Figure 10: Provisionalism and Certainty



4.3.7 Perception of Communication Climate Summary

While going variable by available helps to see where the organization is doing good or bad exactly in terms of communication behavior and by implication enables to determine particular communication behavior for improvement, it could arguably be troublesome to generalize the communication climate of an organizations and it should be done cautiously. However, a summary question is presented to the respondents in the survey to see how employees generally characterize the communication climate in the organization. 155(79.9%) of the respondents believed that the communication in the organization is open, supportive and respectful. 24(12.4%) of them are uncertain. 15(7.7%) do not believe that communication is open, supportive and respectful in the organization.

According to the respondent’s perception, the supportive communication behaviors has an overwhelming affirmation. Except Provisionalism, which has 78.4% affirmation, all other supportive communications behaviors description, problem orientation, spontaneity, empathy,

and equality have more than 80% affirmations. Above all, the supportive communication behaviour, spontaneity has 87.1% affirmations. The descriptive statistics table also confirms the same. All behavior of the supportive communication climate except spontaneity has at least a mean value of 2.00 whereas all defensive communication behaviors except superiority has a mean above 3.00.

Figure 11: Communication Climate Summary

1. Overall, workplace communication in our organization is open, supportive and respectful
194 responses

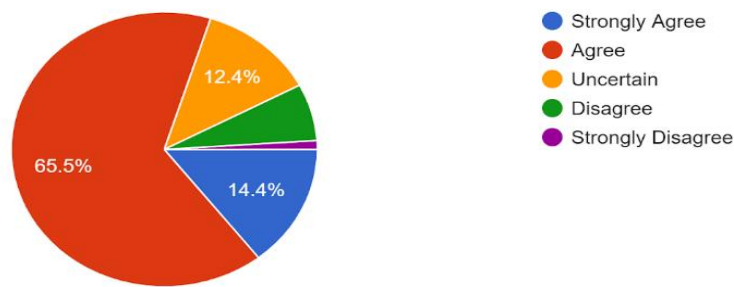


Figure 12: Supportive Communication Behaviors scores summary

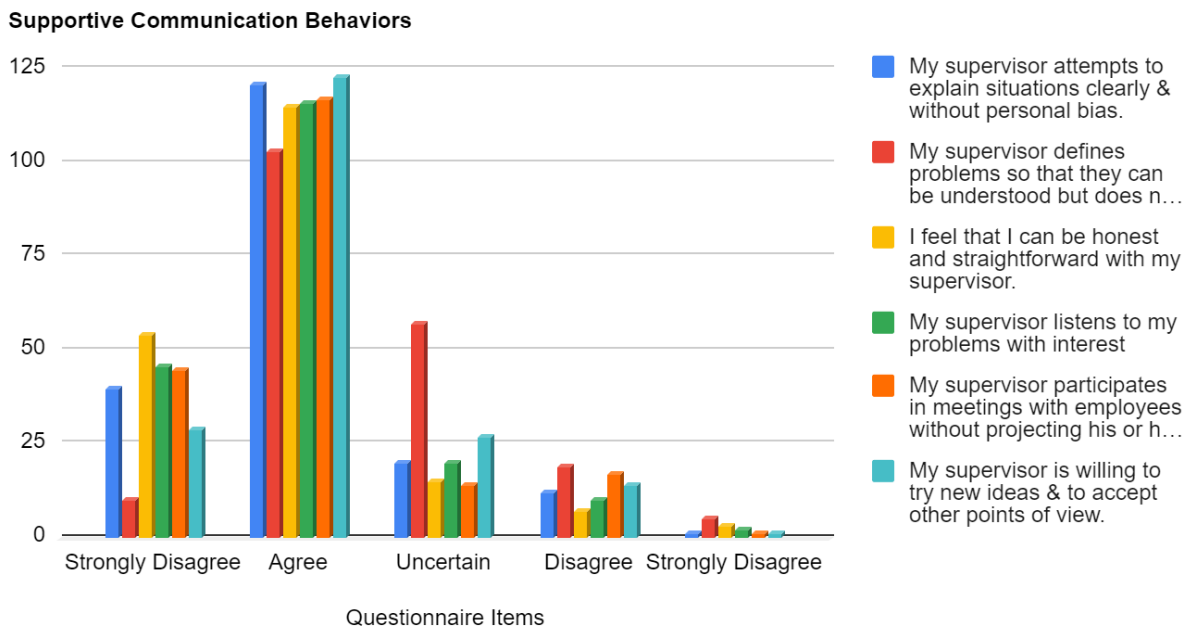
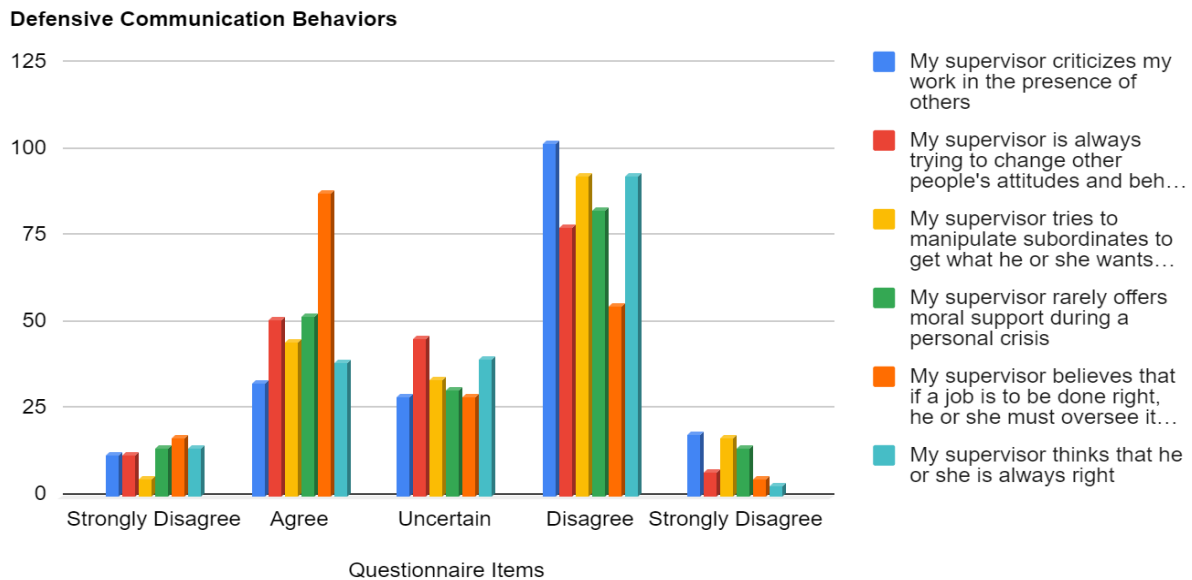


Figure 13: Defensive Communication Behaviors scores summary



4.4 Research Question 2 –State of Psychological Safety

In this section respondent’s perception of psychological safety as seen through the psychological safety factors or team norms is presented. They are reaction to mistakes, dealing with issues, accepting diversity, asking for help, taking risks, mutual support and appreciation

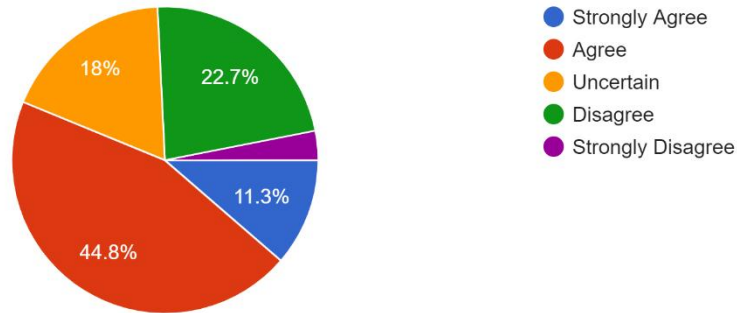
4.4.1 Reaction to Mistakes

Reaction to mistakes is reflection of the framing of mistakes. They can be taken as opportunities for learning and the focus can become on the lessons that could be learned and devising mechanism to prevent the recurring of particular mistakes. Investing why some particular mistakes happen and preventing their recurrence ever again characterizes this approach. Alternatively, destructive approaches to mistakes often surface in organizations where the focus is on who made them and blaming the employees who made them repeatedly. This approach ignores the lessons that could be learned and does little to avoid their recurrence. 108 respondents (55.7%) believe that mistakes were often held at them. This slows organizational learning and squanders the opportunities created by mistakes for learning, creativity and second order problem solving. Reaction to mistakes is one variable of psychological safety identified for priority intervention.

Figure 14: Reaction to Mistakes

1. If you make a mistake on your team, it is often held against you.

194 responses



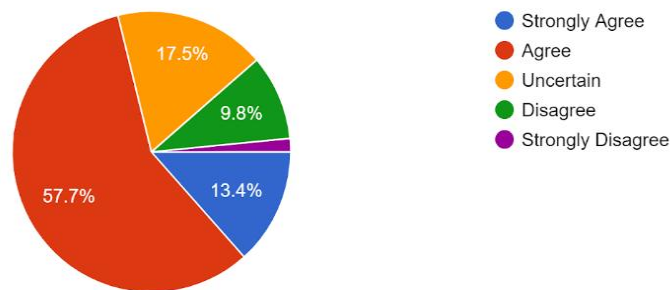
4.4.2 Dealing with Issues

The survey indicates that 138(71.1%) respondents were able to bring up problems and tough issues. Having the confidence to bring up problems and tough issues at the workplace is a vital input to learning and productivity.

Figure 15: Dealing with Issues

2. Members of my team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.

194 responses



4.4.3 Accepting Diversity

World vision is an international organization where people from various professional and cultural, ethnic, language backgrounds join. Diversity is important to the organization. To the question whether respondents feel rejected for being different 54 of the respondents (27.8%)

positively replied. This is an area where further effort should be made to ensure employees feel accepted for who they are and for what opinions and attitudes they might have. 96(49.5%) respondents do not feel being rejected for being different. Accepting diversity is identified for priority intervention in the assessment of psychological safety perception of the respondents.

3. People on my team sometimes reject others for being different.

194 responses

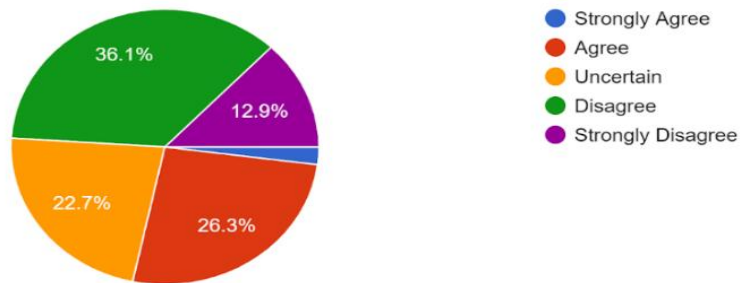


Figure 16: Accepting Diversity

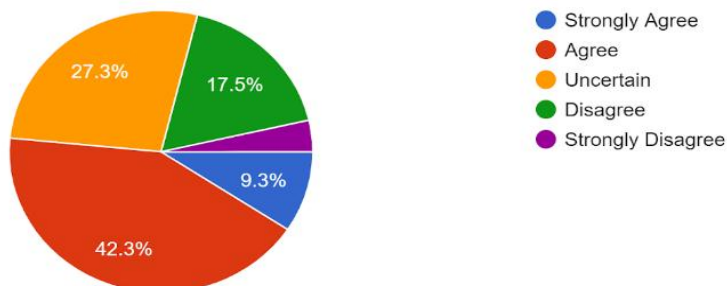
4.4.4 Risk Taking

Interpersonal risks are common in the workplace. Employees take interpersonal risks when they feel safe. They ask questions without having this fear that they might be labeled ignorant. Taking interpersonal risks shows the safety level and makes the workplace smooth and productive. To the question whether employees feel safe to take risks a little over half of them, 100(51.6%) felt safe. 53(27.3%) of them are uncertain. 41(21.1%) do not feel safe to take risks.

Figure 17: Taking Risks

4. It is safe to take a risk on my team.

194 responses

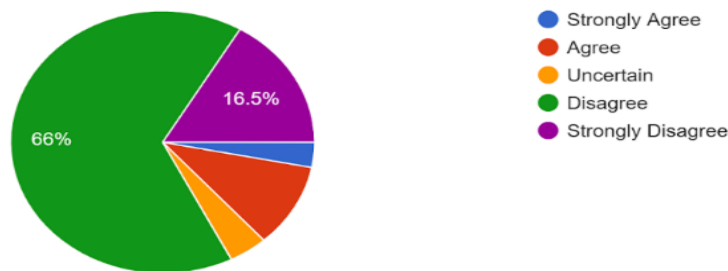


4.4.5 Asking For Help

Asking for help in the workplace also known as helping seeking, information or feedback seeking in the literature is one of the key qualities of the workplace. It is inevitable that employees ask for help from those high or lower or parallel to them in the organization ladder. The survey results indicate that 160(82.5%) of respondents do not think that asking for help was difficult in the organization.

Figure 18: Asking for Help

5. It is difficult to ask other members of my team for help.
194 responses

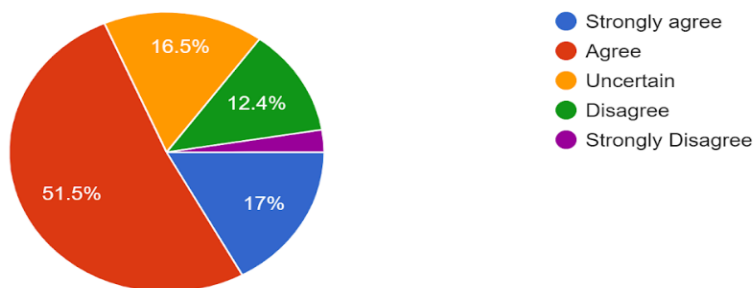


4.4.6 Mutual Support

Mutual support marks a good team and good team members. It fosters workplace productivity and keeps team members connected and mutually benefited from each other. To the question whether respondents feel that anyone would act in a way that undermines their efforts, 134 of them (69.1%) of them confirm that their teammates would never act in a way that undermine their efforts.

Figure 19: Mutual Support

7. No one on my team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.
194 responses

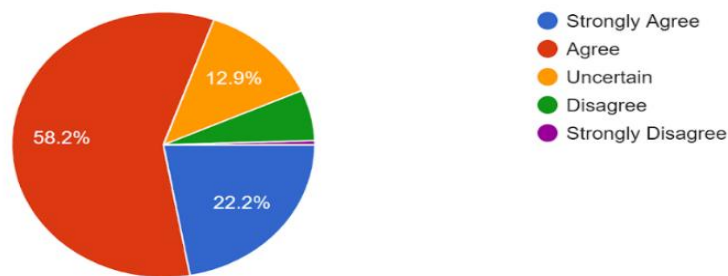


4.4.7 Appreciation

Appreciation is the most important aspect of psychological safety and critical in the workplace as indicated in the literature review section. Employee’s value appreciation, recognition and it costs almost nothing to the organization. It requires just a determined and informed manager and team player. When employees are appreciated, they get the sense that their unique skills and talents are valued and utilized. 156(80.4%) of the respondents feel that in their respective teams, their unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.

Figure 20: Appreciation

6. Working with members of my team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.
194 responses



4.4.8 State of Psychological Safety Summary

Respondents are provided with a general question that captures the concept of psychological safety. The survey participants are presented with a question on whether they perceive the organization as emotionally safe and they do speak up with concerns and questions they may have. 122(62.9%) of the respondents perceive that the organization is safe, 23.2% of them feel uncertain, 27(13.9%) do not feel psychologically safe. Variable by variable investigation of the psychological safety in the organization helped to determine team norms where the organization is struggling and needs a reboot if any. It helped to show on which team norms to focus or prioritize for quick wins on improving the quality of workplace relationships and boost psychological safety.

Figure 21: State of Psychological Safety Summary

2. Generally speaking, the organization I am working for is emotionally safe. Thus, I am not afraid of speaking up with concerns and questions I have with out being wary of negative consequences
 194 responses

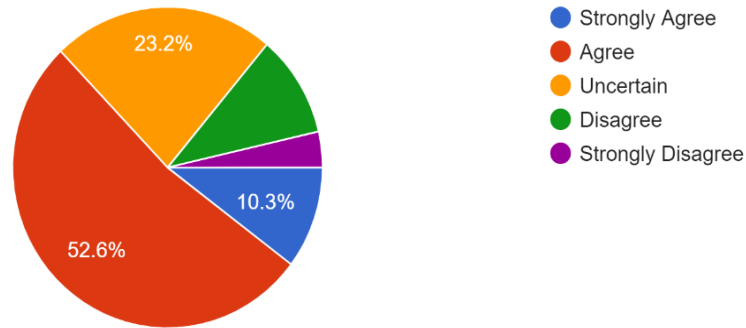
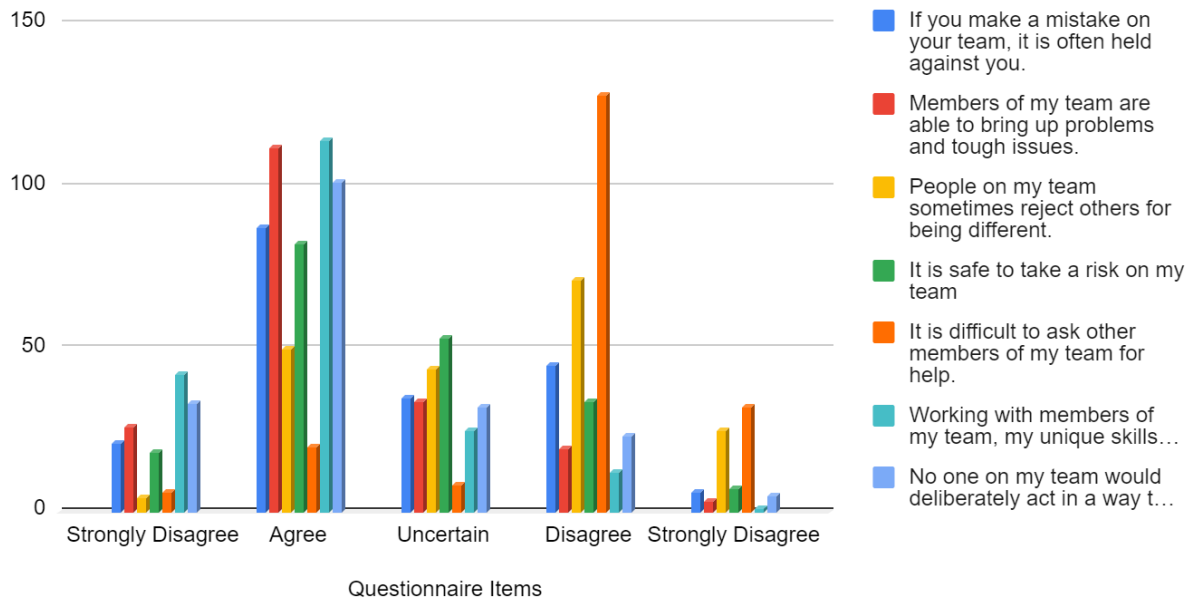


Figure: 22 State of Psychological Safety Summary

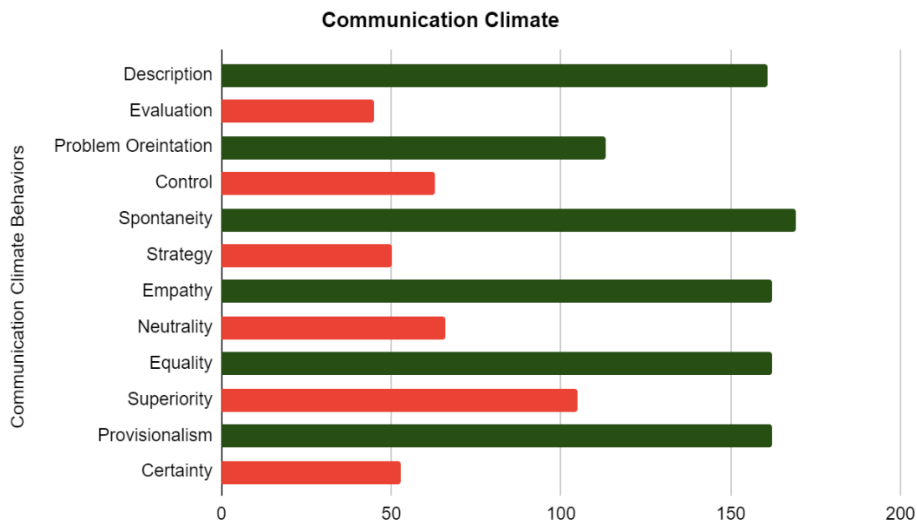
Psychological Safety Summary Scores



4.5 Research Question 3-Communication Behaviors prioritized for Intervention

The third research question has the objective of identifying the specific communication behaviors that should be prioritized for intervention if any. These specific behaviors and team norms are identified from the frequency table, comparison of Mean values and Summary of scores. Three defensive communication behaviors are determined for priority for intervention. They are Superiority, neutrality and control. Compared with the supportive communication behaviors, defensive communication behaviors have lower positive affirmations, meaning that the presence of these behaviors according to the respondents are not rejected as much as the presence of supportive behaviors are affirmed. Constructed from the frequency table, the following figure reveals these communication behaviors

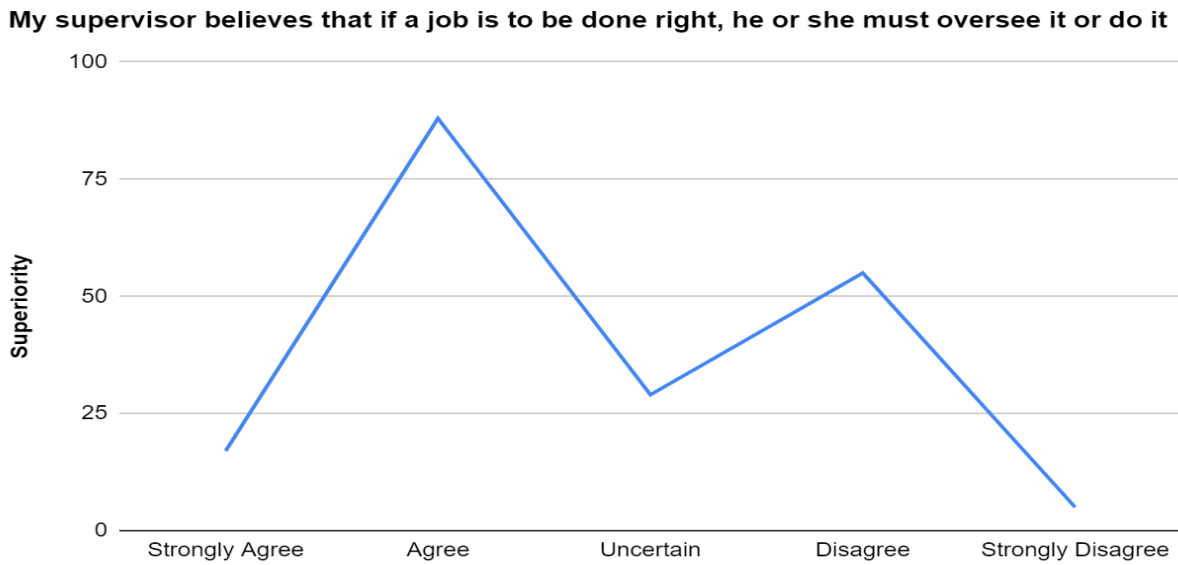
Figure 23: Communication Climate Summary



4.5.1 Superiority

The superiority chart shows that 105 of the respondents, 54.2 % perceive that if a job has to be done right, the supervisor must oversee it or do it himself or herself. Superiority tops all the other defensive communication behaviors and is determined for intervention.

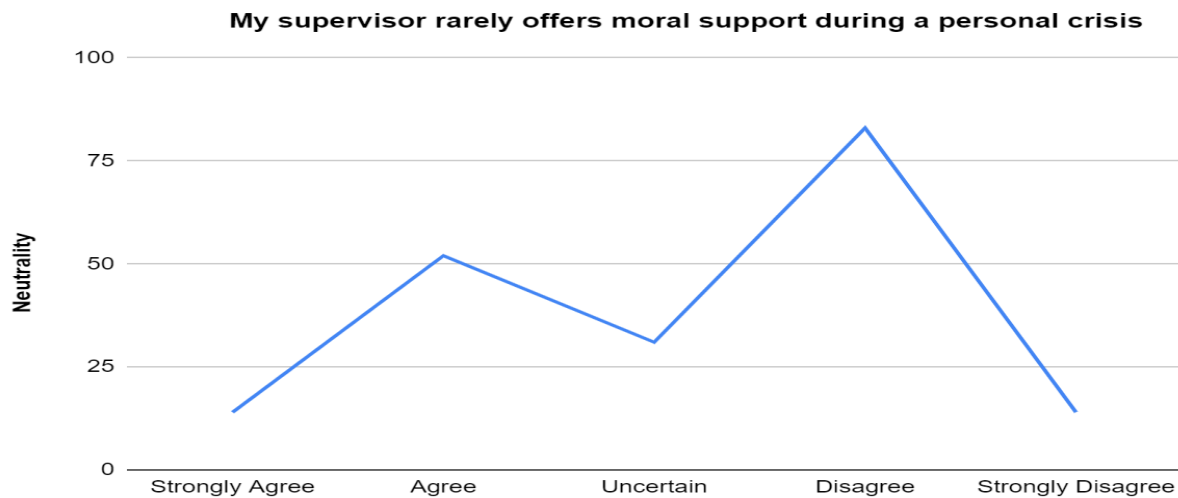
Figure 24: Superiority Chart



4.5.2 Neutrality

The chart on neutrality indicates that 66 of the respondents, 34% of them, believe that the supervisor offers moral support during a personal crisis rarely. This ranks second to superiority in terms of frequency and percentage.

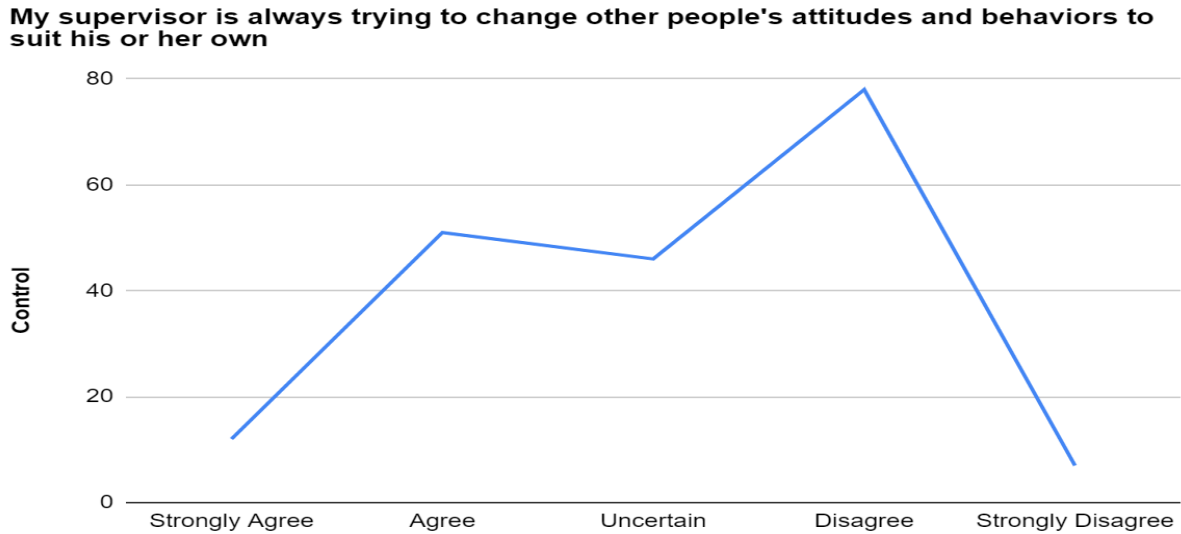
Figure 25: Neutrality Chart



4.5.3 Control

The frequency table on control display that 63 of the respondents (32.5%) of them think that their supervisor always try to change their attitudes and behaviors to suit his or her own. Control ranked third while identifying behaviors for priority interventions.

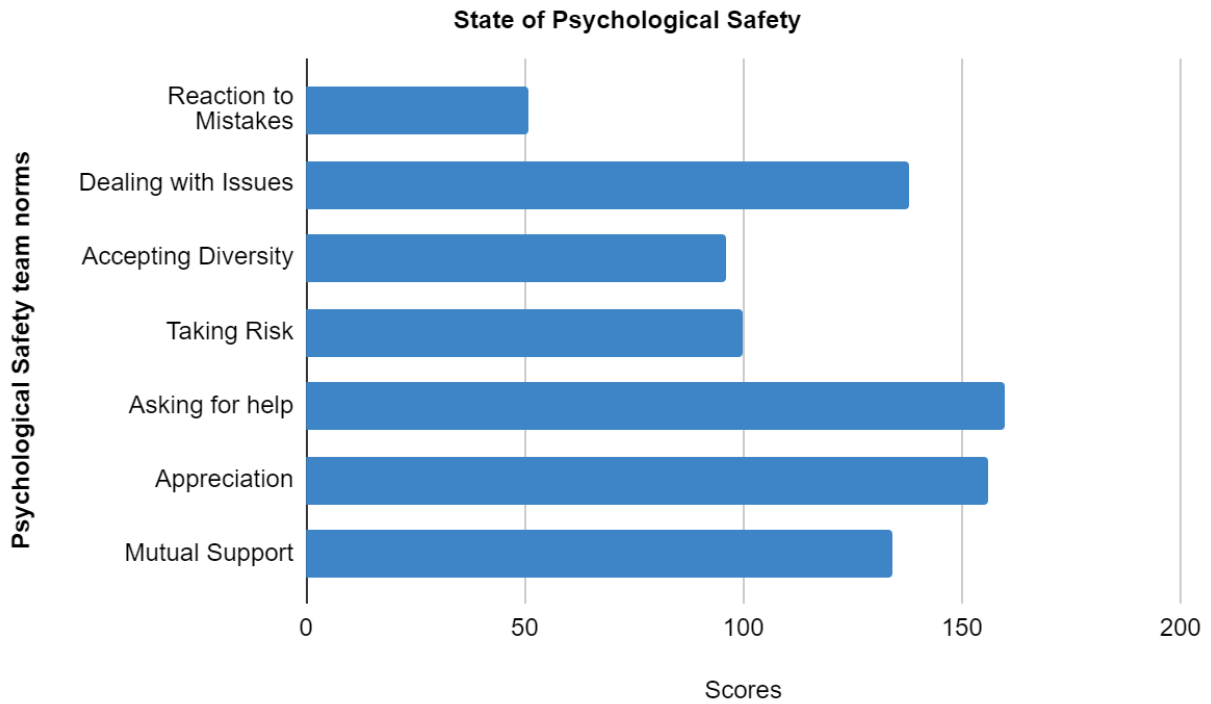
Figure 26: Control Chart



4.6 Research Question 3-Psychological safety Team Norms prioritized for Intervention

Of all the constructs of psychological safety, reaction to mistakes and accepting diversity has lower positive records. 108 of the respondents (55.7%) feel their mistakes are often held at them and 54 of the respondents (27.9%) feel that they are sometimes rejected for being different. The mean values also confirm the same. These two key team norms are identified for priority intervention to bolster psychological safety in the organization. They are reaction to mistakes and accepting diversity. A figure constructed from the frequency table demonstrates confirms the two team norms

Figure: 27 State of Psychological Safety Summary



4.6.1 Reaction to Mistakes

Supervisors are accountable for team performance. They feel the heat for mistakes in the workplace. No wonder if they act and speak impulsively when confronted with mistakes or low performance issues. It takes emotional maturity to govern one’s emotion and think of mistakes as opportunities for learning. Furthermore, rather than only focusing on immediate reason for mistakes and solving them(First Order problem solving), framing of mistakes as opportunities for learning that will lead to rectify the root causes and ensure particular mistakes will not be repeated in the future(Second Order Problem Solving). 106(55.7) believe that mistakes are often held at them.

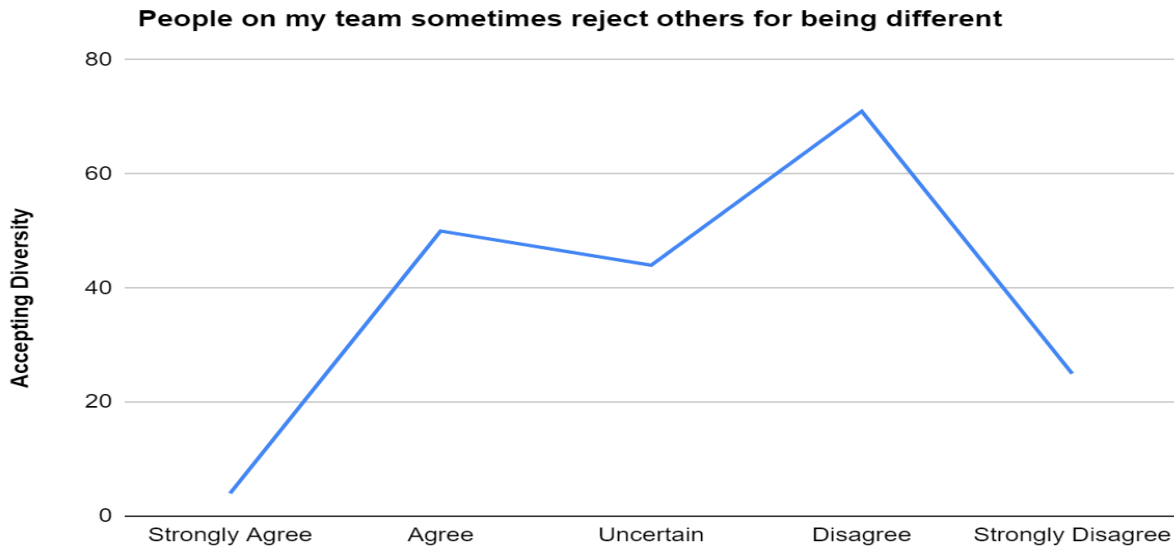
Figure 28: Reaction to Mistakes



4.6.2 Accepting Diversity

As can be seen in the frequency table, 54 of the respondents (27.8%) feel others reject them in a team for being different. Accepting diversity is another area where lower score is registered. Diversity in the workplace can be both a blessing and curse depending how it is managed. World Vision welcomes and attracts professionals from diverse backgrounds, languages and culture. This requires that leaders at level need to manage their diverse teams wisely. Diversity in World Vision ranges from age, sex, profession, work experience, personality/behavior, religion, language, ethnicity, ideology, etc.

Figure 29: Accepting Diversity



4.8.3 Employees Ideas for supportive Communication Climate and high Psychological Safety

Table 11: Short Answer Questions on Employees ideas on Communication Climate & Psychological Safety

Research Question	Concept	Question	Remarks
Q.2 How do employees characterize the communication climate and psychological safety in the organization? Q.3 Which communication behaviors and team norms should be prioritized for intervention ?	Psychology Safety and Communication Climate	What ideas, comments or suggestions or ideas do you have for a supportive communication climate and emotional safety in the workplace?	The short answer seeks to probe respondents' ideas, comments and suggestions to boost supportive communication climate and psychological safety. Nevertheless, many of the responses indicated existing situations, the problems, the gaps in addition to their ideas, automatically addressing the 2nd research question.

One hundred twenty responses are collected in response to the short answer question. The responses revolve around two general categories. The first category revolves around how respondents characterize the communication climate and psychological safety in the organization. Whereas the second division deals with what ideas, suggestions or comments respondents might have to promote a supportive communication climate and psychological safety in the organization. A careful and repeated reading and reading of the data reveals that the following themes summarize, contain or capture the multiple and varied responses collected.

- Supervisor's communication behaviors, styles and skills
- Supervisor's leadership style and skills
- Supervisor's emotional maturity/emotional intelligence
- Training on appropriate communication styles, behaviors and skills

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The general objective of the research study was to explore the association between communication climate and psychological safety in World vision Ethiopia, Addis Ababa. Besides, assessing of employee's perception of the communication climate, the state of psychological safety, and determining the communication behaviors and psychological safety team norms if any that should be prioritized for intervention was the specific objectives of the research study.

Primary data was collected through survey on communication climate and psychological safety. A correlational research design was used to explore the relationships and Spearman rank correlation test was conducted using SPSS. Accordingly, positive associations observed between communication climate and psychological safety. Nevertheless, unsummarizable associations also found. The conclusions following the data analysis given here below.

5.2. Conclusions

Employees in international humanitarian and development organizations like World Vision Ethiopia work under immense pressure. Ability to cope with stress and working under stressful situations is one of the key requirement usually mentioned in the job advertisement for vacancies. Working in stressful situations puts one under pressure, make mistakes likely, and could adversely affect the communications climate.

In stressful situations, slipping emails without replying, failing to meet the demands of multiple stakeholders, failure to meet report deadlines are most common. When such and such surfaces, it would be tempting for supervisors to outburst, communicate and act unwisely. They tend to blame subordinates for failures(reaction to mistakes), act as if they care more about the work than their subordinates and micro manage(superiority and control), solely focus on the work and ignore personal issues(Neutrality), and fail to appreciate and benefit from personal differences of diverse team members(accepting diversity).

Gibb's categories of the supportive and defensive communication behaviors and Edmondson's conceptualization of psychological safety employed to collected data on these concepts. The data collection is limited to World vision Ethiopia. Thus, the findings and conclusions thus is limited to this organization. The data analysis led to the following conclusions

A Spearman correlation for the data revealed a significant relationship between communication climate and state of psychological safety, $r = +.504$, $n = 194$, $p < .01$, two tails. The corresponding coefficient of determination (r^2) is 25.4, indicating that 25.4% of the variability of the communication climate can be predicted from the relationship with psychological safety. The data also revealed that there is a positive monotonic relationship exists between communication climate and psychological safety.

There is a large association between communication climate and psychological safety. Spearman's rho of 0.504 represent a large association. Correlation does not necessarily imply causation. However, it successfully predicts the presence or absence of a particular phenomenon depending on the magnitude of the correlation. Given the result, it could be concluded for World Vision Ethiopia, Addis Ababa that psychological safety can fairly predicts the communication climate.

Besides, correlations are used for theory verifications. This result may also help to verify Gibbs (1961, p.141) famous assertion that claims reducing the degree of defensiveness improves interpersonal relationships which in turn improves communication. The state of psychological safety is a good indicator of the quality of inter personal relationships. Thus, any alteration of personal relationships affects the communication process and vice versa. The presence of a direct monotonic relationship between the two concepts also shows this. A continuous improvement of the state of psychological safety is to be accompanied by the improvement in the communication climate.

Moreover, variable-to-variable correlations shows appreciation is positively associated with a medium magnitude significant at 0.01(2-tailed) with all variables of supportive communication behaviors except with empathy. The magnitude with empathy is large. While mutual support is negatively associated with small magnitude significant at 0.01 (2-tailed) with all six behaviors of defensive communication climate, except with evaluation. The magnitude with evaluation is

medium. Diversity has a small magnitude negative association with all behaviors supportive communication climate contradicting the assumptions.

These findings are supported by the literatures widely. Employees need appreciation and appreciation involves using words of encouragement that uplifts emotions. Using words of encouragement that uplifts emotions align with behaviors of supportive communication climate. Thus, the positive relationships appreciation and behaviors of supportive communication climate shows is conceivable and a confirmation of the assumptions made. Mutual support is working together supporting another for a shared goal. Teams usually work for the same goals though individuals may have differing responsibilities. Hence, team members need one another's support. This is impossible without a supportive and positive language. Defensive and negative language degrade communications and limit mutual support. Hence, mutual support is negatively associated with all six behaviors of defensive communication climate. Mutual support requires good communications and relationships.

An overwhelming majority of the employee's perception of the communication climate and psychological safety was positive. 79.9 % of the respondents think that communication is supportive, open and respectful in the organization. 62.9% believe that the organization is emotionally safe for speaking up with the concerns they have without being afraid of negative consequences.

Nevertheless, some communication behaviors and team norms, which have lower positive confirmations compared to others have been determined. The communication behaviors are superiority, neutrality and control. The team norms or psychological safety team norms are reaction to mistakes and accepting adversity.

54.1% of the respondents believe that their supervisors display or communicate their superiority, 32.5% say that their supervisors attempt to change their attitudes and behavior to suit his or her own, 34 % think that their supervisor rarely offers moral support during a personal crisis, which refers to neutrality. 55.7 % respondents perceive that mistakes are often held at them. 27.8 % feel that they are rejected for being different.

5.3. Recommendations

Positive workplace relationships are essential. A workplace with positive relationship is known for its supportive communication behaviors and high psychological safety. Good relationships and friendships fosters communications, nurtures trust and boost the care or emotional warmth employee feel towards each other. Thus

- ✚ The organization ought to think about organizing social events including fun, in door and outdoor games, sports and all sorts of team building activities as frequently as possible in a given year. These events and activities will surely help to counter defensive communication behaviors identified in the research such as superiority, neutrality and control. They also promote the values like diversity. As team members learn to get together and play, they will be able to appreciate and accept their differences rather than rejecting others for being different and being intolerant of differences.
- ✚ There should be strategies in place in the organization for learning from failure and tapping mistakes and failures as sources of learning and preventing recurrence of them rather than blame games and focus on who made them. The focus should be on why the mistakes happened and on how to prevent their recurrence. Supervisors should be given special orientation on mistakes in the workplace, learning from mistakes, and how mistakes can be opportunities not just bad things. Changing how supervisors frame mistakes through various trainings, workshops, discussions, meetings and peer learning can help to change how one react to mistakes.

Managers or supervisors are instrumental in shaping the communication climate and psychological safety in teams and organizations. They help to either cultivate behaviors of supportive communication climate and psychological safety or provoke defensive communication behaviors and degrade the psychological safety. Thus,

- ✚ The organization should build the communication skill and emotional awareness of supervisors. Part of doing that includes, planning and implementing a specialized and adult training on appropriate communication behaviors and emotional intelligence or

awareness. The appropriate communication behavior training should be specifically designed to address behaviors identified in research result.

- ✚ In addition to capacity building training, giving timely, honest specific feedback can help to develop supervisors with good communication behaviors, skills and emotional intelligence. When feedback is untimely, not specific or not real, the valuable lessons that supervisors could have shaped supervisors remains untapped. In short, feedback if used appropriately aids learning and development of supervisor's communication behaviors and emotional awareness in addition to formal training.

5.4. Future Research Recommendations

The research study was conducted to explore relationships between communication climate and psychological safety in World vision Ethiopia. The data collection is limited to this organization. Thus, the findings, conclusions and recommendations is thus limited to this organization. The researcher wonder if these same positive and significant associations could be repeated in other organizations. Specifically, the conclusion of this research that communication climate could fairly predicts psychological safety and vice versa and supporting of Gibb's assertion that communication can be improved by improving relationships among people. Until some other researchers take up this, the findings and implications of research remains limited to this particular organization. To establish the prediction and maintain prove of Gibb's assertion needs a wider study that encompasses many organizations.

The research study found out positive correlations between appreciation and the supportive communication behaviors. Mutual support is found out to have negative associations with all behaviors of defensive communication climate. The other variables of psychological safety have a mixture of all sorts of associations (negative, positive, low, medium and large) with behaviors of communication climate, which is difficult to summarize and overlooked in this research. Thus, it needs further research to explore and better understand the associations. Diversity has negative associations with small magnitude with all behaviors of supportive communication behaviors contrasting the assumptions, which implies a further research need.

Whether communication climate drives psychological safety or the reverse was not the scope this research. The finding of this research study established a strong association between the two in

the organization under study. Exploring of causations and deterministic relationships can be the scope of future researches.

Finally, this research study made a brief assessment of communication climate and psychological safety. A thorough assessment takes many resources in terms of time, energy and finance. The assessment was kept at brief because it was a corollary research objective. The major objective is to explore relationships between the two concepts. Future research may also go for a thorough assessment of the communication climate and psychological safety as its major objective or stand-alone research.

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Appendices

Appendix A Letter of Request for Data Collection

Memo

Date: 18 March 2021

From: Fikru Tsegaye

To: World Vision Ethiopia, People & Culture Dept.

Subject: Requesting to Gather Data for the Research Study

I am Fikru Tsegaye, capacity-building officer at World Vision Ethiopia, Sponsorship department. I have been pursuing an MA in Public Relations and Strategic Communication from Addis Ababa University.

As part of the fulfillment of the program, I am undertaking a research study on Communication Climate Versus Psychological Safety. The research Study will employ a short survey using questionnaires and interviews for data collection from HO staff. The questionnaires and the interview guide is attached with this letter. The questionnaires will be sent via ‘Google Forms’ to the respondents so that responding will be time effective.

The data collected will be confidential and will only be used for academic purposes only. For any breach of data confidentiality, I will be held fully responsible. Moreover, the ethics and procedures of data collection will be effective in the course of data collection and throughout the research undertaking. At the end of the research work, the final document will be shared as needed with the organization.

Thanks in advance for your cooperation!

Appendix B Questionnaires used to conduct brief survey on Communication Climate and Psychological Safety

Communication Climate Vs Psychological Safety

This survey will be used for academic purpose only & will be kept confidential. Thanks for taking the time !

General

1. Please select your gender

1. Male
2. Female

2. Please select your age group

1. 18-24
2. 25-34
3. 35-44
4. 45-54
5. 55-64
6. Above 64

3. Please select your work experience with the organization

1. Less than a year
2. 1-3.5 years
3. 3.6-5.5 years
4. 5.6-7.5 years
5. 7.6-10 years
6. Above 10 years

4. Please select your educational level

1. High school Complete
2. College Diploma
3. College Diploma
4. Degree
5. MA/MS
6. PHD

Psychological (emotional) Safety

1. If you make a mistake on your team, it is often held against you.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Uncertain

4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

2. Members of my team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.

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

3. People on my team sometimes reject others for being different.

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

4. It is safe to take a risk on my team.

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

5. It is difficult to ask other members of my team for help.

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

6. Working with members of my team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.

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

7. No one on my team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.

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

Behaviors/ Characteristics of Supportive Communication Climate

1. My supervisor attempts to explain situations clearly & without personal bias.

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

2. My supervisor listens to my problems with interest

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

3. My supervisor participates in meetings with employees without projecting his or her higher status or power

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

4. I feel that I can be honest and straightforward with my supervisor.

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

5. My supervisor defines problems so that they can be understood but does not insist that his or her subordinates agree.

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

6. My supervisor is willing to try new ideas & to accept other points of view.

1. Strongly Agree

2. Agree
3. Uncertain
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

Behaviors/Characteristics of Defensive Communication Climate

1. My supervisor criticizes my work in the presence of others

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

2. My supervisor is always trying to change other people's attitudes and behaviors to suit his or her own.

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

3. My supervisor tries to manipulate subordinates to get what he or she wants or to make himself or herself look good

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

4. My supervisor rarely offers moral support during a personal crisis

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

5. My supervisor believes that if a job is to be done right, he or she must oversee it or do it.

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

6. My supervisor thinks that he or she is always right

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

Summary Questions

1. Overall, workplace communication in our organization is open, supportive and respectful

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

2. Generally speaking, the organization I am working for is emotionally safe. Thus, I am not afraid of speaking up with concerns and questions I have without being wary of negative consequences

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

Short Answer Question

1. What comments, suggestions or ideas do you have for supportive communication climate and emotional safety in the workplace?