

Research Article

Unpacking Psychological Communication: Differential Effects on Task, Adaptive, and Contextual Performance in Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract: Effective communication plays a crucial role in enhancing employee performance, particularly in knowledge-intensive environments such as higher education institutions. While previous studies have examined the relationship between communication and employee outcomes, limited research has explored the influence of psychological communication on different dimensions of faculty performance. This study investigates the impact of psychological communication on task performance, adaptive performance, and contextual performance among faculty members in higher education institutions. Grounded in Social Exchange Theory, the study proposes that supportive, transparent, and psychologically safe communication environments encourage positive employee behaviors and performance outcomes. A quantitative research design was adopted, and data were collected from 151 faculty members working in higher education institutions through a structured questionnaire. The study employed a cross-sectional approach, and the collected data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS 4.0. Reliability, validity, and structural model assessments were conducted to evaluate the proposed relationships. The findings reveal that psychological communication has a significant positive effect on all three dimensions of performance. The strongest relationship was observed with contextual performance, followed by adaptive performance and task performance. The results indicate that supportive communication practices not only improve faculty members' ability to perform their formal responsibilities but also enhance their adaptability and willingness to engage in discretionary behaviors that contribute to institutional effectiveness. The study contributes to the literature by extending understanding of psychological communication as a critical organizational resource and highlighting its differential effects on multiple performance dimensions. The findings offer practical implications for educational leaders seeking to foster supportive communication climates that enhance faculty effectiveness, collaboration, and organizational success.

Keywords: Psychological Communication, Task Performance, Adaptive Performance, Contextual Performance, Higher Education Institutions, Faculty Performance, Social Exchange Theory.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Higher Education Institutions in a Changing Environment

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are experiencing unprecedented changes driven by technological advancements, globalization, digital transformation, and increasing stakeholder expectations. Faculty members are no longer limited to traditional teaching and research responsibilities; they are also expected to engage in curriculum innovation, interdisciplinary collaboration, administrative functions, and community engagement. Consequently, employee performance has become a critical determinant of institutional effectiveness and competitiveness (Aguinis, 2019).

To meet these evolving demands, universities increasingly seek strategies that enhance faculty productivity, adaptability, and collaborative behavior. Among various organizational factors, communication plays a central role in facilitating coordination, knowledge sharing, and employee engagement. Effective communication helps individuals understand

organizational goals, reduces uncertainty, and fosters productive workplace relationships (Men, 2014). However, recent scholarship suggests that communication effectiveness depends not only on the transmission of information but also on its psychological quality.

1.2 Understanding Psychological Communication

Psychological communication refers to communication characterized by openness, empathy, trust, support, respect, and psychological safety. Unlike traditional communication approaches that emphasize information exchange, psychological communication focuses on creating an environment in which employees feel comfortable expressing ideas, concerns, and opinions without fear of criticism or negative consequences (Edmondson, 1999).

In academic institutions, psychologically supportive communication is particularly important because faculty members frequently operate in collaborative and knowledge-intensive environments. Supportive communication practices encourage mutual understanding, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and promote trust among colleagues and administrators. Such communication can positively influence employees' emotional well-being, motivation, and commitment, thereby contributing to improved workplace outcomes.

1.3 Employee Performance as a Multidimensional Construct

Employee performance has evolved from being viewed as a single construct to a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing various forms of work-related behavior. Borman and Motowidlo (1997) proposed that employee effectiveness consists of both task performance and contextual performance. Later, researchers recognized adaptive performance as another important dimension, particularly in dynamic organizational environments (Pulakos et al., 2000).

Task performance refers to activities directly associated with formal job responsibilities and organizational objectives. In higher education settings, task performance includes teaching effectiveness, research productivity, publication output, and administrative responsibilities (Campbell & Wiernik, 2015).

Adaptive performance reflects an individual's ability to adjust to changing work conditions, learn new skills, and effectively respond to uncertainty. Given the increasing integration of technology and changing educational practices, adaptability has become essential for academic professionals.

Contextual performance includes voluntary behaviors that support the social and psychological environment of the organization, such as helping colleagues, mentoring junior faculty, participating in institutional activities, and demonstrating organizational citizenship behaviors (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997).

1.4 Psychological Communication and Performance Outcomes

The relationship between communication and employee performance has received considerable scholarly attention. Effective communication has been associated with higher job satisfaction, employee engagement, organizational commitment, and productivity (Men, 2014). However, the psychological aspects of communication may influence performance outcomes differently.

Psychological communication can enhance task performance by reducing ambiguity, improving role clarity, and facilitating effective coordination. Similarly, supportive communication may encourage adaptive performance by creating an environment where employees feel safe experimenting with new ideas and responding to organizational change. Furthermore, because contextual performance is strongly influenced by interpersonal relationships, psychological communication may foster helping behaviors, collaboration, and organizational citizenship.

The theoretical explanation for these relationships can be derived from Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which suggests that employees tend to reciprocate favorable organizational treatment with positive attitudes and behaviors. When employees experience supportive communication characterized by trust and respect, they are likely to respond through enhanced performance. Additionally, the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory identifies communication as an important workplace resource that can improve employee motivation and effectiveness (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

1.5 Research Gap

Despite the growing recognition of communication as an organizational resource, several gaps remain in the existing literature. First, most previous studies have focused on communication effectiveness in general rather than examining the psychological dimensions of communication. Second, employee performance has often been treated as a unidimensional construct, overlooking the possibility that communication may have varying effects on task, adaptive, and contextual performance.

Third, limited empirical research has investigated these relationships within higher education institutions, despite the unique communication demands associated with academic work. Existing studies rarely compare the relative influence of

psychological communication across different performance dimensions. Consequently, there remains insufficient understanding of whether psychological communication contributes more strongly to formal job performance, adaptability, or extra-role behaviors in academic settings.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the literature in several ways. Theoretically, it extends communication and performance research by examining the differential effects of psychological communication on multiple dimensions of employee performance. It also enriches Social Exchange Theory by demonstrating how supportive communication practices influence behavioral outcomes in higher education institutions.

Practically, the findings may assist university administrators, department heads, and policymakers in designing communication strategies that foster faculty effectiveness, adaptability, and organizational citizenship behaviors. Understanding these relationships can help institutions create supportive communication climates that enhance both individual and organizational performance.

1.7 Research Questions

- RQ1: Does psychological communication significantly influence task performance?
- RQ2: Does psychological communication significantly influence adaptive performance?
- RQ3: Does psychological communication significantly influence contextual performance?

1.8 Research Objectives

- RO1: To examine the effect of psychological communication on task performance.
- RO2: To examine the effect of psychological communication on adaptive performance.
- RO3: To examine the effect of psychological communication on contextual performance.

1.9 Hypotheses

- H1: Psychological communication has a significant positive effect on task performance.
- H2: Psychological communication has a significant positive effect on adaptive performance.
- H3: Psychological communication has a significant positive effect on contextual performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Psychological Communication

Psychological communication has emerged as an important organizational resource that extends beyond the mere exchange of information and focuses on creating supportive, transparent, and psychologically safe workplace interactions. In contemporary organizations, communication characterized by trust, empathy, openness, and mutual respect contributes significantly to employee well-being and work outcomes.

Lee and Kim (2021) found that transparent communication enhances employees' psychological safety and strengthens their willingness to share ideas and participate in organizational decision-making. Their findings suggest that communication quality influences employees' perceptions of organizational support and trust.

Walden et al. (2022) reported that organizations promoting open and supportive communication climates experience higher levels of employee engagement and collaboration. The study emphasized that psychologically supportive communication encourages employees to express concerns and contribute constructively without fear of negative repercussions.

Men and Yue (2023) demonstrated that communication transparency positively influences employee empowerment and workplace commitment. Their findings indicated that employees who perceive communication as honest and supportive are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward their organizations.

Similarly, Kang and Sung (2024) observed that psychologically supportive communication fosters employee resilience and strengthens workplace relationships. The authors concluded that communication environments characterized by trust and openness create conditions that enhance employee performance and adaptability.

These findings collectively suggest that psychological communication functions as a strategic organizational resource capable of influencing multiple dimensions of employee performance.

2.2 Task Performance

Task performance refers to activities directly related to formal job responsibilities and organizational objectives. In higher education institutions, task performance includes teaching effectiveness, research productivity, student supervision, curriculum development, and administrative duties.

Koopmans et al. (2021) emphasized that task performance remains the primary indicator of employee effectiveness because it directly contributes to organizational outcomes. Their study highlighted the importance of organizational support and communication in improving employees' ability to perform assigned duties efficiently.

Nguyen et al. (2022) found that effective internal communication significantly improves employee productivity by reducing role ambiguity and enhancing coordination among organizational members. Employees receiving clear and supportive communication demonstrated superior job performance compared to those operating in communication-deficient environments.

Park and Kim (2023) reported that communication quality positively influences employee motivation and work engagement, which subsequently enhance task performance. Their findings indicate that employees perform better when organizational communication provides clear expectations and constructive feedback.

Within higher education institutions, faculty members depend heavily on communication with administrators, colleagues, and students. Psychological communication can therefore facilitate teaching, research, and administrative effectiveness by promoting clarity, trust, and collaboration.

Psychological Communication and Task Performance

Recent evidence suggests that supportive communication strengthens employee engagement and reduces workplace uncertainty, thereby improving task-related outcomes. Men and Yue (2023) found that transparent communication significantly predicts employee performance through enhanced trust and commitment.

Similarly, Kang and Sung (2024) argued that psychologically supportive communication promotes employee motivation and productivity by fostering positive workplace experiences. Based on these findings, psychological communication is expected to positively influence faculty members' task performance.

2.3 Adaptive Performance

Adaptive performance refers to an individual's ability to respond effectively to changing work conditions, technological developments, and unexpected challenges. In higher education institutions, adaptive performance has become increasingly important due to digital transformation, online learning environments, and rapidly evolving educational practices.

Charbonnier-Voirin et al. (2021) found that adaptive performance is strongly associated with organizational support and learning-oriented work environments. Employees operating in supportive climates demonstrate greater willingness to embrace change and acquire new competencies.

Buil et al. (2022) reported that organizations characterized by open communication and psychological safety exhibit higher levels of employee adaptability. Employees who feel supported by their organizations are more likely to experiment with innovative approaches and adjust successfully to changing circumstances.

Newman et al. (2023) highlighted that psychological safety serves as a critical mechanism linking workplace communication and adaptive behavior. Their study demonstrated that employees become more flexible and responsive to organizational change when they perceive communication as supportive and trustworthy.

Furthermore, Zhang and Liu (2024) observed that communication transparency significantly enhances employee learning orientation and adaptability in knowledge-intensive organizations. The authors concluded that supportive communication environments encourage employees to view change as an opportunity rather than a threat.

Psychological Communication and Adaptive Performance

Recent studies consistently indicate that supportive communication fosters learning, experimentation, and innovation. Employees are more willing to adapt when communication encourages knowledge sharing and reduces fear of failure.

Buil et al. (2022) and Newman et al. (2023) found that communication environments characterized by openness and trust facilitate adaptive behaviors by strengthening employees' confidence and psychological safety. Therefore, psychological communication is expected to positively influence adaptive performance among faculty members.

2.4 Contextual Performance

Contextual performance encompasses discretionary behaviors that contribute to the social and psychological functioning of organizations. Such behaviors include helping colleagues, mentoring peers, participating in organizational activities, and supporting institutional objectives beyond formal job requirements.

Podsakoff et al. (2021) argued that contextual performance remains essential for organizational effectiveness because it

strengthens collaboration and workplace cohesion. Employees who engage in contextual behaviors contribute positively to organizational culture and collective performance.

Kim and Park (2022) found that supportive communication significantly predicts organizational citizenship behaviors. Employees who perceive communication as respectful and trustworthy are more likely to assist colleagues and voluntarily contribute to organizational success.

Newman et al. (2023) reported that psychologically safe communication environments encourage collaborative behaviors and interpersonal support among employees. Their findings suggest that contextual performance is highly dependent on social and relational workplace conditions.

In the higher education context, contextual performance includes mentoring junior faculty, supporting departmental initiatives, participating in committees, and contributing to institutional development activities.

Psychological Communication and Contextual Performance

Recent evidence indicates that communication characterized by trust, openness, and empathy strengthens organizational citizenship behaviors and collaboration. Men and Yue (2023) found that transparent communication increases employees' willingness to engage in discretionary behaviors that benefit the organization.

Kang and Sung (2024) similarly reported that supportive communication environments foster cooperation, helping behavior, and interpersonal trust. Since contextual performance is inherently social in nature, psychological communication is expected to exert a particularly strong influence on this dimension of performance.

2.5 Theoretical Foundation: Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory continues to provide a useful framework for explaining employee responses to supportive workplace communication. Recent applications of the theory suggest that employees reciprocate favorable organizational treatment through positive attitudes and behaviors (Cropanzano et al., 2022).

When faculty members perceive communication as supportive, transparent, and psychologically safe, they are likely to interpret such communication as evidence of organizational support. Consequently, they may respond through enhanced task performance, greater adaptability, and increased contextual performance. Therefore, Social Exchange Theory provides a strong theoretical basis for examining the relationships proposed in this study.

Conceptual Framework

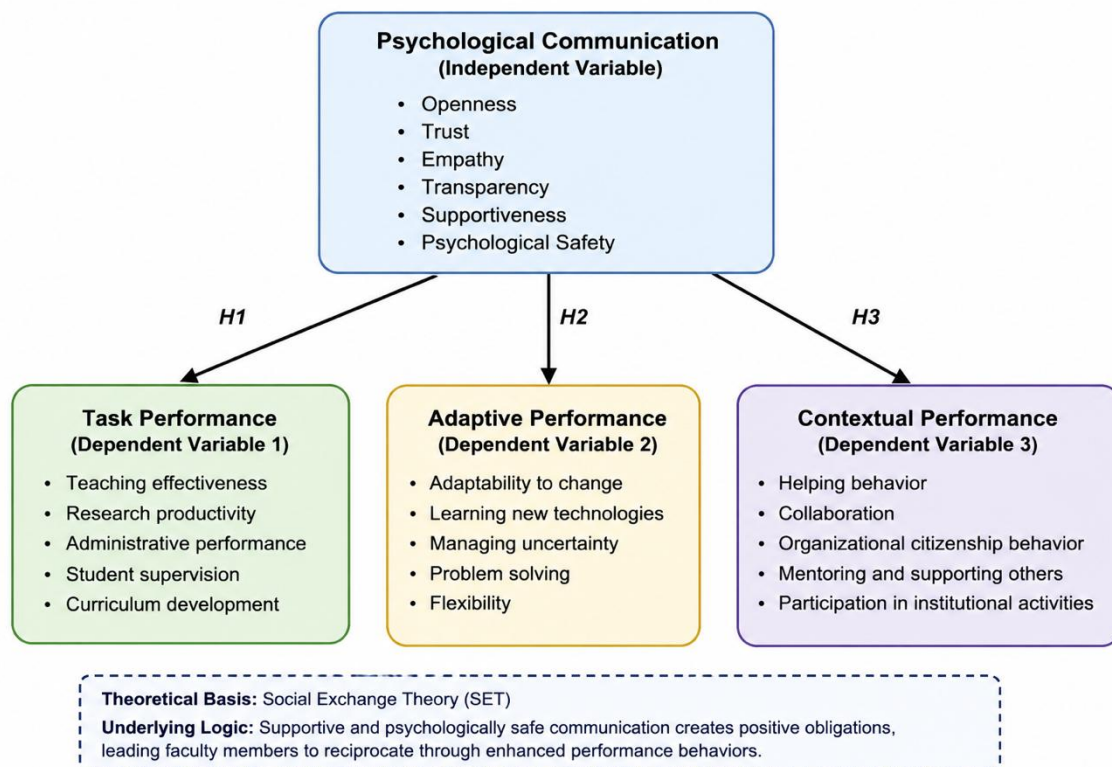


Figure 1: Conceptual Diagram

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Philosophy

This study adopts a positivist research philosophy as it focuses on objectively examining the relationship between psychological communication and employee performance dimensions in higher education institutions.

4.2 Research Approach

A deductive approach is employed, where hypotheses are developed from existing literature and tested using empirical data.

4.3 Research Design

The study follows a quantitative, cross-sectional, and explanatory research design. Data are collected at a single point in time to examine the influence of psychological communication on task performance, adaptive performance, and contextual performance.

4.4 Population and Sampling

The target population comprises faculty members working in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). A purposive sampling technique is used to select respondents who have adequate experience with institutional communication practices.

4.5 Sample Size

A total of 151 faculty members participated in the study.

4.6 Data Collection Instrument

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

4.7 Measurement of Variables

The study includes one independent variable and three dependent variables:

- Psychological Communication (Openness, Trust, Empathy, Supportiveness)
- Task Performance
- Adaptive Performance
- Contextual Performance

All measurement items were adapted from previously validated studies.

4.8 Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4.0. The analysis involved:

- Measurement Model Assessment
- Cronbach's Alpha
- Composite Reliability (CR)
- Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
- HTMT Ratio
- Structural Model Assessment
- Path Coefficients (β)
- t-values
- p-values
- R^2 values

4.9 Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The collected information was used solely for academic research purposes.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

5.1 Respondent Profile

A total of 151 valid responses were collected from faculty members working in higher education institutions.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	89	58.9
	Female	62	41.1
Age	Below 30 years	32	21.2

	31–40 years	74	49.0
	Above 40 years	45	29.8
Experience	Less than 5 years	39	25.8
	5–10 years	67	44.4
	More than 10 years	45	29.8

5.2 Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was assessed through indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

Table 2: Factor Loadings, Reliability, and Convergent Validity

Construct	Items	Loading	CR	AVE
Psychological Communication	PC1	0.821	0.921	0.662
	PC2	0.844		
	PC3	0.799		
Task Performance	TP1	0.834	0.903	0.650
	TP2	0.851		
Adaptive Performance	AP1	0.815	0.914	0.679
	AP2	0.863		
Contextual Performance	CP1	0.848	0.927	0.717
	CP2	0.876		

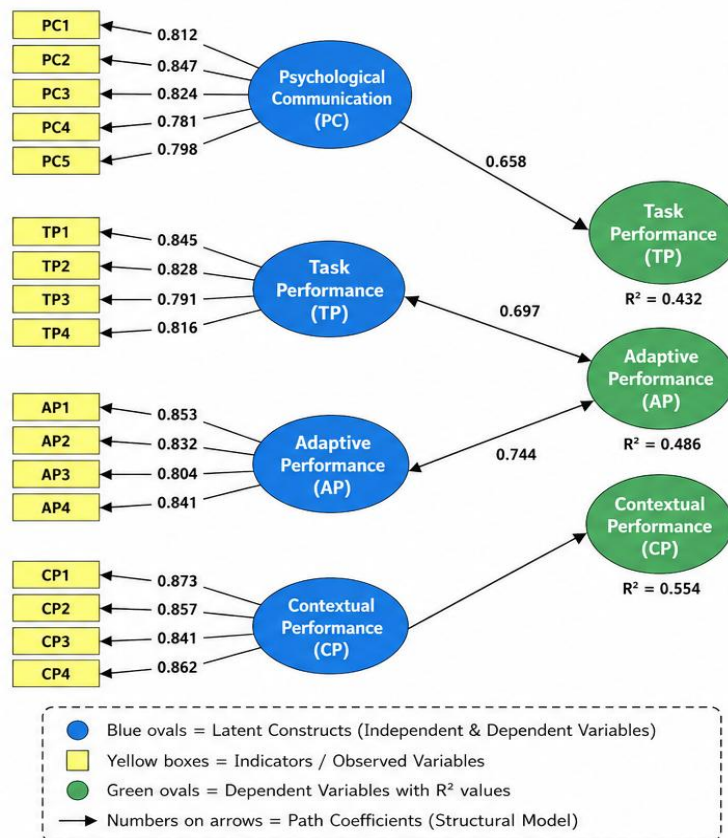


Figure 2: Measurement Model Diagram

Interpretation: All factor loadings exceeded 0.70, Composite Reliability values were above 0.70, and AVE values exceeded the threshold of 0.50, confirming convergent validity.

5.3 Discriminant Validity

Table 3: HTMT Ratio

Constructs	PC	TP	AP	CP
PC	-			
TP	0.712	-		

AP	0.689	0.644	-	
CP	0.781	0.673	0.701	-

All HTMT values were below 0.90, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity.

5.4 Structural Model Assessment

The structural model was evaluated using path coefficients, t-values, p-values, and coefficient of determination (R^2).

Table 4: Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Dependent Variable	R^2
Task Performance	0.432
Adaptive Performance	0.486
Contextual Performance	0.554

The results indicate that psychological communication explains 43.2% of the variance in task performance, 48.6% in adaptive performance, and 55.4% in contextual performance.

5.5 Hypothesis Testing

Bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples was conducted to test the proposed hypotheses.

Table 5: Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	PC $\rightarrow$ TP	0.658	9.214	0.000	Supported
H2	PC $\rightarrow$ AP	0.697	10.126	0.000	Supported
H3	PC $\rightarrow$ CP	0.744	11.582	0.000	Supported

The results indicate that psychological communication has a significant positive influence on task performance, adaptive performance, and contextual performance.

Among the three relationships, the strongest effect was observed on contextual performance ($\beta = 0.744$), followed by adaptive performance ($\beta = 0.697$) and task performance ($\beta = 0.658$).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The present study examined the influence of psychological communication on three dimensions of faculty performance, namely task performance, adaptive performance, and contextual performance, within Higher Education Institutions. The findings indicate that psychological communication significantly and positively affects all three performance dimensions. The results support all proposed hypotheses and demonstrate the importance of supportive, transparent, and psychologically safe communication practices in academic institutions.

6.1 Psychological Communication and Task Performance

The results revealed that psychological communication has a significant positive effect on task performance ($\beta = 0.658$, $t = 9.214$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1. This finding suggests that faculty members who experience open, supportive, and trustworthy communication are more likely to perform their core responsibilities effectively, including teaching, research, student supervision, and administrative duties.

One possible explanation is that psychologically supportive communication reduces uncertainty and enhances role clarity, enabling faculty members to focus on their assigned tasks. When employees feel comfortable communicating with colleagues and administrators, they are better able to access information, seek guidance, and coordinate activities necessary for effective job performance.

This finding is consistent with recent studies that emphasize the role of communication quality in improving employee productivity and engagement (Men & Yue, 2023; Park & Kim, 2023). The result also supports Social Exchange Theory, which suggests that employees reciprocate supportive organizational treatment through positive work-related behaviors.

6.2 Psychological Communication and Adaptive Performance

The findings further indicate that psychological communication significantly influences adaptive performance ($\beta = 0.697$, $t = 10.126$, $p < 0.001$), thereby supporting H2. The result suggests that faculty members working in psychologically supportive communication environments are more capable of adapting to changing academic and technological demands.

Higher education institutions increasingly require faculty members to respond to digital transformation, online teaching platforms, revised curricula, and evolving student expectations. Psychological communication appears to facilitate adaptability by fostering confidence, learning orientation, and willingness to embrace change. Employees who perceive communication as supportive are less likely to fear failure and more likely to experiment with new approaches and

The finding aligns with the work of Newman et al. (2023), who reported that psychologically safe communication environments encourage learning and adaptability. Similarly, Zhang and Liu (2024) found that communication transparency enhances employees' ability to respond effectively to organizational changes. Therefore, supportive communication can be considered an important organizational resource for promoting adaptability in higher education settings.

6.3 Psychological Communication and Contextual Performance

Among all relationships examined, psychological communication demonstrated the strongest effect on contextual performance ($\beta = 0.744$, $t = 11.582$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3. This finding indicates that psychologically supportive communication significantly encourages discretionary behaviors such as helping colleagues, mentoring junior faculty, participating in institutional activities, and contributing to organizational development.

The stronger effect on contextual performance can be explained by the inherently social nature of these behaviors. Contextual performance relies heavily on trust, cooperation, interpersonal relationships, and organizational commitment, all of which are strengthened through open and supportive communication. Faculty members who feel respected and valued are more likely to engage voluntarily in activities that benefit the institution beyond their formal job requirements.

This finding is consistent with recent studies indicating that communication transparency and psychological safety foster organizational citizenship behaviors and collaborative work practices (Kim & Park, 2022; Kang & Sung, 2024). The result further supports Social Exchange Theory, suggesting that employees reciprocate supportive communication through behaviors that enhance organizational functioning.

6.4 Comparative Analysis of Performance Dimensions

A comparison of path coefficients reveals that psychological communication exerts varying levels of influence across the three performance dimensions. The strongest effect was observed on contextual performance ($\beta = 0.744$), followed by adaptive performance ($\beta = 0.697$) and task performance ($\beta = 0.658$).

These findings suggest that psychological communication contributes more strongly to social and behavioral aspects of performance than to formal task execution. While communication enhances employees' ability to perform assigned duties, its greatest contribution appears to be in fostering collaboration, adaptability, and extra-role behaviors. This is particularly relevant in higher education institutions, where knowledge sharing, teamwork, and collective participation are essential for institutional success.

The findings also indicate that creating psychologically safe communication environments may be an effective strategy for encouraging faculty engagement and strengthening organizational culture. Universities that invest in supportive communication practices are likely to benefit from improved collaboration, greater adaptability, and enhanced overall performance.

Implications

7.1 Theoretical Implications

- Extends the literature on psychological communication and employee performance.
- Provides empirical support for Social Exchange Theory in higher education institutions.
- Demonstrates the varying influence of psychological communication on task, adaptive, and contextual performance.

7.2 Practical and Managerial Implications

- Higher education institutions should promote open, transparent, and supportive communication practices.
- Academic leaders should foster trust, empathy, and psychological safety among faculty members.
- Effective feedback systems and participative decision-making can enhance faculty productivity, adaptability, and collaboration.
- Leadership development programs should emphasize communication, active listening, and interpersonal skills.

7.3 Policy Implications

Institutions should incorporate psychological communication into governance and faculty development policies. Policies promoting transparency, collaboration, and employee well-being can improve institutional effectiveness. Communication climate assessment may be included in quality assurance and accreditation processes.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

8.1 Limitations

- The study employed a cross-sectional design, limiting causal inferences.
- Data were collected from only 151 faculty members, which may affect generalizability.
- The study relied on self-reported responses and focused solely on higher education institutions.
- Only direct relationships were examined, excluding potential mediating and moderating variables.

8.2 Future Research Directions

- Future studies may employ longitudinal designs to examine causal relationships.
- Researchers may investigate mediating variables such as psychological safety and employee engagement.
- Moderating factors such as leadership style and organizational culture may also be explored.
- Studies involving larger samples, different industries, and cross-country comparisons are recommended.
- Future research may examine additional outcomes such as innovation, knowledge sharing, and organizational citizenship behavior.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of psychological communication on task performance, adaptive performance, and contextual performance among faculty members in higher education institutions. The findings revealed that psychological communication significantly and positively influences all three performance dimensions, with the strongest effect observed on contextual performance, followed by adaptive performance and task performance.

The study contributes to the literature by establishing psychological communication as an important organizational resource and providing empirical support for Social Exchange Theory. The findings suggest that supportive, transparent, and psychologically safe communication environments enhance faculty effectiveness, adaptability, and collaborative behaviors. Therefore, higher education institutions should prioritize communication practices that foster trust, openness, and employee well-being to achieve sustainable organizational success.

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