

## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

IJPHY

# Before - and - After Effects of Management Training on Psychological Safety, Job Satisfaction, and Client Satisfaction in Older Adult Daycare Facilities

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Psychological safety is the shared belief within a team that it is safe to take interpersonal risks. This concept has been associated with enhanced organizational outcomes, including higher job satisfaction, better employee performance, and greater customer satisfaction. Research shows that psychological safety enhances interprofessional collaboration, learning, and communication. Leadership, particularly among managers, plays a critical role in cultivating such an environment. The present study aimed to investigate the effects of psychological safety training for managers on employees' psychological safety and job satisfaction, as well as client satisfaction, in older adult daycare facilities.

**Methods:** Managers and manager candidates participated in monthly online training sessions that included lectures, discussions, and implementation of workplace initiatives focused on fostering open communication, addressing mistakes constructively, and leveraging employees' strengths. Before and after the training, psychological safety, job satisfaction, and client satisfaction were assessed through anonymous questionnaires.

**Results:** Statistical analyses revealed significant improvements in these three metrics following the training ( $p < 0.05$ ). Key findings highlighted specific improvements (e.g., reduced fear of blame for mistakes, more precise job evaluation criteria) that contributed to enhanced employee satisfaction. Client satisfaction also improved significantly across all measures, suggesting that better employee interaction and communication were pivotal.

**Conclusion:** Improved employee well-being positively influenced service quality, leading to higher client satisfaction. These findings underscore the importance of leadership in creating psychologically safe environments that enhance organizational and customer outcomes.

**Keywords:** psychological safety, job satisfaction, client satisfaction, older adult daycare, training.

Received 06<sup>th</sup> August 2025, accepted 15<sup>th</sup> November 2025, published 09<sup>th</sup> December 2025



www.ijphy.com

10.15621/ijphy/2025/v12i4/1943

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## INTRODUCTION

Psychological safety, situated within the field of organizational behavior, a subdiscipline of psychology, has received increasing scholarly attention in recent years. In Japan, its importance has been highlighted in official documents from institutions such as the Financial Services Agency (FSA) [1,2], the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) [3,4], and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) [5]. However, psychological safety is not new. In 1965, Edgar H. Schein and Warren G. Bennis first emphasized the necessity of psychological safety in organizations, stating that it enables individuals to feel secure enough to change their behavior in response to organizational challenges or new initiatives [6]. In 1990, William A. Kahn discussed how psychological safety enhances employees' willingness to engage with and contribute to their organizations [7]. Later, in 1999, Amy C. Edmondson defined psychological safety as a shared belief among members that their team is a safe environment for taking interpersonal risks. She defined it as a condition in which members feel secure that expressing their opinions will not result in embarrassment, rejection, or punishment. Edmondson's research further revealed that psychological safety could vary significantly across teams within the same organization [8]. Since then, various interventions in companies, hospitals, and schools have demonstrated that psychological safety influences team productivity [9].

Today's employees are expected to work autonomously and collaboratively, making psychological safety a critical factor. Organizations need to establish environments that encourage employees to express themselves and voice their opinions comfortably. Moreover, promoting a workplace culture that values and respects the ideas of individuals from diverse backgrounds and perspectives enables organizations to capitalize on diversity for improved overall performance. Along with psychological safety, mental health issues have also gained global attention [10, 11]. These issues impact not only individual performance and well-being but also organizations' overall productivity and efficiency<sup>12</sup>. In Japan, therefore, addressing workplace mental health has become a policy priority. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has established guidelines to promote workers' mental health. Since December 2015, a stress check program has been mandated as part of broader mental health initiatives [13].

A full-measure survey of psychological safety showed significant associations with low psychological distress, high work engagement, high job performance, and high job satisfaction [14]. Moreover, employees had high organizational commitment when they were happy with their jobs [15], thereby contributing to improved customer satisfaction [16]. Moreover, employees' organizational commitment was positively related to customer service quality [15]. These findings suggest that employees' psychological safety and job satisfaction influence service quality and lead to customer satisfaction.

Consequently, developing managerial training sessions

and communication enhancement programs to improve employees' psychological safety is essential. These initiatives can encourage employees to express their opinions freely, leading to enhanced psychological safety within the organization, greater utilization of diversity, improved mental health, higher productivity, and greater job satisfaction. Service industries that rely on human interaction include healthcare, caregiving, and food services. Particularly in healthcare and caregiving, service quality directly impacts patients' and users' physical and mental health. Since the quality of healthcare and caregiving services relies heavily on the competence of the employees who provide them, improving employees' skills and awareness is expected to enhance service quality and customer satisfaction significantly. Actively incorporating user feedback and addressing users' needs is also expected to improve customer satisfaction.

Previous research on healthcare professionals has demonstrated that fostering psychological safety positively impacts interprofessional collaboration, patient safety, adverse event reporting, and learning [17-19]. Evidence from studies on multidisciplinary teams indicates that psychological safety fosters an environment in which members feel comfortable expressing their opinions, raising questions, and engaging in shared decision-making. In turn, this environment allows them to learn with, from, and about each other [18]. For example, conducted in 2012 as part of their "re: Work" initiative, Google's notable corporate "Project Aristotle" highlights the importance of psychological safety. This initiative aimed to identify effective team characteristics based on the belief that employees achieve better results when working collaboratively rather than individually [20]. Google researchers found that individuals on teams with higher psychological safety were less likely to leave Google, more likely to harness the power of diverse ideas from their teammates, and more likely to bring in more revenue, and were rated as effective twice as often by executives [20]. These insights underscore the correlation between psychological safety and team success. As a concept grounded in psychological theory, psychological safety fosters open, constructive communication by freeing employees from fear and anxiety, thereby enhancing problem-solving skills and increasing collaboration.

Of course, leadership plays a critical role in fostering psychological safety [21,22] because leaders have significant influence through decisions on task allocation, performance evaluation, and the establishment of explicit and implicit norms within organizations [21]. Therefore, providing leadership training to managers and manager candidates to improve psychological safety is considered adequate.

Drawing on these findings, we hypothesized that implementing psychological safety training for managers in caregiving environments would improve employees' psychological safety and job satisfaction. This, in turn, is expected to improve service quality at older adult daycare facilities, ultimately increasing client satisfaction.

Therefore, this study examined the impact of training on improving employees' psychological safety and job satisfaction. In addition, the study evaluated the effects of this training on the satisfaction of clients using older adult daycare facilities.

## METHODS

This study involved employees and clients of older adult daycare facilities operated by a specific corporation and was approved by the ethics committee of Hokuriku University for research involving human subjects (Approval Number: 2023-21). All experimental procedures performed in this study complied with the ethical standards outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. All participants were also provided with detailed explanations about the study before their participation, and their verbal consent was witnessed and formally recorded.

The data were collected from January 2023 to March 2024. As part of their work schedule, monthly 1-hour psychological safety training sessions were conducted for managers and managerial candidates at each facility (Table 1). Participants joined online sessions—all presented by the same facilitator—using such tools as Zoom and Google Meet. Training participants first learned about psychological safety through lectures and research papers. Next, they listed their respective workplaces' current situations and, based on these lists, exchanged ideas on how to engage employees and which initiatives to undertake at each workplace. These initiatives were then implemented, and progress reports were presented at the next training session during which participants discussed what went well and what needed improvement. They then revised the initiatives' content accordingly. Additionally, based on evaluation indicators for psychological safety and previous studies' findings, participants shared potential workplace scenarios and appropriate measures to address them. These measures were implemented, followed by progress reports at subsequent sessions, during which further discussions refined the initiatives. Throughout the sessions, participants first reflected individually before sharing ideas with their groups. Each group then presented its findings, facilitating information-sharing across groups. As the sessions progressed, initiatives were implemented and refined iteratively.

Before and after training sessions, psychological safety, job satisfaction among employees, and client satisfaction were evaluated using anonymous questionnaires to encourage honest responses. At each facility, participants anonymously deposited their completed questionnaires into a special collection box. Incomplete questionnaires were excluded from analysis.

Psychological safety was assessed using Amy C. Edmondson's [23] concept, using seven items, with a maximum total

score of 35 points: (a) If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you, (b) Members of this team can bring up programs and challenging issues, (c) People on this team sometimes reject others for being different, (d) It is safe to take a risk on this team, (e) It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help. (f) No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts. (g) Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and used. Employees responded on a 4-point Likert scale: "Always true," "Mostly true," "Sometimes true," and "Not true," scored five, four, two, and zero, respectively [24]. For analysis, the total score was treated as an interval scale.

Job satisfaction was measured using a customized employee questionnaire with 10 items: (a) Supervisors show consideration for employees, (b) Interpersonal relationships are favorable, (c) The environment is conducive to expressing opinions, (d) The environment makes it easy to ask questions, (e) The company's policies are clear, (f) I understand the objectives of my supervisor's decisions, (g) I feel my salary is appropriate for my abilities, (h) The company's evaluation criteria for work performance are transparent, (i) I would recommend my coworkers as ideal colleagues to friends or acquaintances, (j) I would recommend this facility to family or acquaintances as clients. These items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale: "Strongly agree," "Somewhat agree," "Neutral," "Somewhat disagree," and "Strongly disagree," scored five, four, three, two, and one, respectively. For analysis, the total score was treated as an interval scale.

Client satisfaction was measured using a questionnaire with 10 items: (a) Staff show consideration for clients, (b) The staff are punctual, (c) You are satisfied with the facility, (d) It is easy to ask questions, (e) Communication notes are easy for family members to understand, (f) Communication among staff is good, (g) Complaints and consultations are handled promptly, (h) The facility is clean, (i) Overall, the facility is easy to use, (j) I would recommend this facility to acquaintances. These items were also rated on a 5-point Likert scale: "Strongly agree," "Somewhat agree," "Neutral," "Somewhat disagree," and "Strongly disagree," scored five, four, three, two, and one, respectively. For analysis, the total score was treated as an interval scale.

To confirm whether the variables followed a normal distribution, we performed the Shapiro-Wilk test. Subsequently, pre- and post-comparisons of psychological safety, job satisfaction, and client satisfaction were conducted using the Mann-Whitney U test. The significance level was set at 0.05, and all statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS Statistics version 28.0 for Windows (IBM Corp., Tokyo, Japan).

**Table 1: Training programs on psychological safety**

Month	Contents of training session
1st	Survey about employees' psychological safety and job satisfaction, and customer satisfaction Lecture of psychological safety
2nd, 3rd	Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Listing the current situations</li><li>• Exchanging ideas of the initiatives</li></ul>
4th	Reporting progress Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussioning what needed improvement for initiatives</li></ul>
5th, 6th	Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Imaging ideas from research papers</li><li>• Exchanging ideas of the initiatives</li></ul>
7th	Reporting progress and discussioning what needed improvement Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussioning what needed improvement for initiatives</li></ul>
8th	Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thinking ideas from the survey</li><li>• Exchanging ideas of the initiatives</li></ul>
9th	Reporting progress and discussioning what needed improvement Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussioning what needed improvement for initiatives</li></ul>
10th	Survey, Reflection

**RESULTS**

Survey results revealed the following: For employees' psychological safety, responses were collected from 14 individuals before the training and 20 after. To assess employees' job satisfaction, responses were collected from 19 individuals before the training and 20 after the training. To assess client satisfaction, responses were collected from 227 individuals before the training and 269 after the training. Tables 2–4 present detailed results.

In Item (a) of the employees' psychological safety scale, the score before the training was  $4.2 \pm 1.0$ , while the score after the training was  $5.0 \pm 0.2$ , showing a significant difference ( $p = 0.03$ ). In Item (h) of the employees' job satisfaction scale, the pre-training score was  $2.5 \pm 1.1$ , and the post-training score was  $3.4 \pm 1.1$ , again showing a significant difference ( $p = 0.03$ ). Compared to before the training ( $p < 0.001$ ), all client satisfaction items showed significantly higher scores after the training.

The following are opinions expressed by managers and employees considered to be manager candidates during task provision. For tasks involving discussions about each office's current state, the following points were noted: "Lack of information sharing means only some employees are aware of important details, leading to mistakes and subsequent reprimands." "Pointing out mistakes can create discomfort among employees, making it difficult to address issues." "There are differences in values due to the wide age range of employees." "Lack of confidence causes

some employees to question whether they are using their skills fully."

To address these issues, the following were suggested: "Allocate five minutes before work begins for sharing information." "Provide positive feedback when addressing mistakes." "Identify and understand employees' strengths and weaknesses." "Create an environment where employees feel comfortable seeking advice by having managers show their own vulnerabilities."

Additionally, in tasks designed to consider potential scenarios based on prior research, the following concerns were raised: "Disparities arise between employees who actively take on riskier tasks and those who do not." "Employees performing high-risk tasks are more likely to cause incidents." "In case of accidents, there is a tendency to rely on nurses overly." "Mistakes lead to employees becoming overly cautious and hesitant."

To address these issues, the following countermeasures were suggested: "Display all employees' tasks to ensure fair work assignments." "Increase near-miss reports to help prevent accidents." "Discuss accidents not only with the responsible person and those directly involved but also with everyone." "Create a manual for responding to accidents." "Listen carefully and attentively to employees." "Allocate time specifically for discussions." "Avoid using negative language during exchanges of opinions." "View mistakes as collective errors rather than individual ones."

**Table 2: Psychological safety before and after training**

Table 2. Psychological safety before and after training

Survey item	before (n=14)	after (n=20)	Z	p
a. If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you.	4.2 ± 1.0	5.0 ± 0.2 *	3.03	.025
b. Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.	3.5 ± 1.4	3.8 ± 1.0	0.39	.743
c. People on this team sometimes reject others for being different.	4.4 ± 0.8	4.5 ± 0.9	0.35	.769
d. It is safe to take a risk on this team.	3.5 ± 1.0	3.9 ± 1.3	1.42	.204
e. It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help.	4.1 ± 1.2	4.7 ± 0.5	1.12	.359
f. No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.	4.4 ± 1.0	4.8 ± 1.1	1.76	.290
g. Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.	3.4 ± 1.3	3.8 ± 1.3	0.78	.478
total	27.6 ± 5.2	30.3 ± 4.1	1.62	.112

Mean ± SD. \*p &lt; .05.

Scores for each survey item before and after training were compared using Mann-Whitney's U test.

**Table 3: Job satisfaction before and after training**

Survey item	before (n=19)	after (n=20)	Z	p
a. Supervisors show consideration for employees.	4.5 ± 0.8	4.2 ± 1.1	-0.97	.396
b. Interpersonal relationships are favorable.	4.1 ± 1.1	3.7 ± 1.3	-0.89	.411
c. The environment is conducive to expressing opinions.	4.2 ± 1.1	3.7 ± 1.2	-1.49	.166
d. The environment makes it easy to ask questions.	4.1 ± 1.0	4.0 ± 1.2	-0.17	.879
e. The company's policies are clear.	2.5 ± 1.1	2.9 ± 1.2	0.69	.513
f. I understand the objectives of my supervisor's decisions.	3.3 ± 1.1	3.3 ± 1.0	-0.35	.749
g. I feel my salary is appropriate for my abilities.	3.4 ± 1.2	3.4 ± 1.2	-0.13	.901
h. The company's evaluation criteria for work performance are transparent.	2.5 ± 1.1	3.4 ± 1.1 *	2.34	.028
i. I would recommend my coworkers to friends or acquaintances as ideal colleagues.	2.6 ± 1.2	3.0 ± 1.3	0.88	.411
j. I would recommend this facility to family or acquaintances as users.	3.4 ± 1.3	3.7 ± 1.3	0.77	.461
total	34.4 ± 7.9	35.1 ± 9.6	0.24	.813

Mean ± SD. \*p &lt; .05.

Scores for each survey item before and after training were compared using Mann-Whitney's U test.

**Table 4: Client satisfaction before and after training**

Table 4. Client satisfaction before and after training

Survey item	before (n=227)	after (n=269)	Z	p
a. Employees show consideration for users.	4.7 ± 0.7	4.9 ± 0.4 *	4.52	<.001
b. Employees are punctual.	4.8 ± 0.5	4.9 ± 0.3 *	5.06	<.001
c. You are satisfied with the facility.	4.7 ± 0.6	4.8 ± 0.5 *	3.79	<.001
d. It is easy to ask questions.	4.7 ± 0.6	4.9 ± 0.3 *	5.38	<.001
e. Communication notes are easy for family members to understand.	4.7 ± 0.7	4.8 ± 0.5 *	4.43	<.001
f. Communication among staff is good.	4.8 ± 0.5	4.9 ± 0.4 *	3.84	<.001
g. Complaints and consultations are handled promptly.	4.8 ± 0.5	4.9 ± 0.5 *	3.43	<.001
h. The facility is clean.	4.7 ± 0.6	4.9 ± 0.4 *	4.97	<.001
i. Overall, the facility is easy to use.	4.8 ± 0.4	4.9 ± 0.3 *	4.59	<.001
j. I would recommend this facility to acquaintances.	4.5 ± 0.7	4.8 ± 0.6 *	4.29	<.001
total	47.2 ± 4.0	48.7 ± 2.6 *	5.26	<.001

Mean ± SD. \*p &lt; .01.

Scores for each survey item before and after training were compared using Mann-Whitney's U test.

**DISCUSSION**

Psychological safety is associated with job satisfaction, and satisfied employees exhibit higher organizational commitment, which, in turn, leads to improved customer satisfaction [14-16, 25]. Therefore, we hypothesized that training managers in psychological safety would

enhance employees' psychological safety and job satisfaction. That improved employee well-being would lead to better services in older adult daycare facilities, ultimately enhancing client satisfaction. Indeed, after the training, significant improvements were observed in the psychological safety indicator, "Making mistakes at work

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often leads to blame,” and the job satisfaction indicator, “The criteria for evaluating my work are clear.” Moreover, post-training, client satisfaction improved significantly across all measures. These findings partially support our hypothesis.

### **Characterization of the Training**

During the training, an important objective was to communicate to managers and manager-candidates the reasons for selecting psychological safety as the focus. We envisioned that the training would enhance employees’ psychological safety, improve their working environment, and boost their performance. This, in turn, would elevate the service quality at older adult daycare facilities and increase client satisfaction. Training sessions were conducted primarily through group work, offering participants multiple opportunities to think proactively. To foster a comfortable environment for speaking, managers were encouraged to actively facilitate discussions, ensuring that manager-candidates felt comfortable expressing their views. Additionally, participants were given opportunities to report on the progress of their efforts, sharing both strengths and areas for improvement with the group.

### **Facilitation of Training Sessions**

As part of initiatives addressing each facility’s current conditions, several issues were raised, as indicated in the results. For instance, during information-sharing meetings, measures were put in place to maximize participation. Facilitators rotated roles to ensure inclusiveness and actively encouraged quieter employees to share their opinions. This approach helped increase contributions from less vocal employees, likely fostering psychological safety and enabling them to feel secure expressing their views.

### **Managerial Initiatives**

Assigning roles based on each employee’s strengths and proactively relying on their expertise may have boosted their confidence and reinforced their self-worth. Additionally, initiatives inspired by prior research yielded several ideas. Displaying all employees’ job responsibilities not only created a fair work environment but also facilitated smooth follow-ups on tasks when staff were unexpectedly absent. The creation of an incident response manual likely ensured that everyone could handle accidents efficiently, reducing anxiety and enabling seamless task execution. Furthermore, by framing mistakes as a collective issue rather than an individual one and involving everyone in devising improvement strategies, the responsibility shifted from the individual to the team. This approach helped eliminate fear of blame and encouraged a cooperative atmosphere focused on preventing future errors.

### **Effectiveness of the Psychological Safety Training**

Edmondson explains psychological safety as “a shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking”<sup>8</sup>. In addition, individuals with lower status within a group or department tend to feel less psychologically safe than those with higher status. This

makes them less likely to check with others when they are unsure about something, less able to raise challenging problems, less likely to say that others value their skills, and more fearful that mistakes will be held against them [23]. Moreover, fostering a psychological safety environment is considered a top leadership challenge for organizations worldwide [26]. By encouraging managers and manager-candidates to reconsider and modify their interactions with other employees, as in this study, it became possible to step closer to a psychologically safe environment. Thus, psychological safety indicator scores for “In this workplace, making a mistake usually leads to blame” improved after the training. Indicator scores for job satisfaction and “The evaluation criteria for my work are clear” also improved. Before the training, these evaluation criteria had already been documented and made accessible to all employees in written form. Therefore, improved scores can be attributed to managers’ and candidates’ actions, for example, creating opportunities for communication and dedicating time to sharing information. These actions likely enhanced communication, increased opportunities for support, reduced misunderstandings about evaluation criteria and goals, and clarified them for employees. Additionally, the actions may have made it easier to provide specific feedback, thereby addressing situations in which evaluations felt vague. Receiving support likely strengthened trust relationships [27,28], and this may have clarified employees’ subjective perceptions of evaluation criteria.

Compared to before the training, after the training, client satisfaction scores improved significantly in all metrics. Improving client satisfaction requires addressing both tangible aspects, such as facilities, and intangible aspects, such as service and interpersonal interaction. Because the facilities’ quality or services did not change during the study period, employees’ interactions and communication likely contributed to these improved outcomes. As employees’ psychological safety improved, emotional stress decreased, allowing them to handle client interactions more calmly. Moreover, employees likely became more confident in proposing ideas and sharing their opinions [9, 29, 30]. Thus, employees’ increased proactivity may have deepened trust among team members, leading to smoother information sharing and more effective mutual support [31, 32].

### **Limitations**

The study had some limitations, however. Employee and client surveys were conducted anonymously, making it impossible to analyze individual changes. Additionally, changes in workforce composition, such as employee turnover or client enrollment, prevented analysis of a consistent population. Future studies should consider incorporating identifiers into surveys to track individual changes over time, enabling more detailed analysis of personal contexts and their effects.

Finally, implementing psychological safety training for managers and manager candidates improved employees’ psychological safety and job satisfaction.

These improvements, in turn, enhanced service quality in older adult daycare facilities, thereby increasing client satisfaction.

## CONCLUSION

This study showed that providing psychological safety training to managers in older adult daycare facilities can enhance employees' psychological safety and job satisfaction, as well as client satisfaction. After the training, employees reported a significantly lower fear of being blamed for mistakes and greater clarity regarding evaluation criteria, both critical indicators of psychological safety and job satisfaction. Moreover, client satisfaction improved significantly across all measured dimensions, despite no changes in the facilities' physical environment or services. These findings suggest that improvements in workplace interpersonal dynamics, particularly open communication, fair treatment, and supportive leadership, contribute directly to enhanced service quality.

Given that psychological safety is foundational to employee well-being, effective teamwork, and service excellence, particularly in human-centered industries such as caregiving, this kind of managerial training may serve as a powerful tool for organizational development. Future studies employing larger sample sizes and extended follow-up periods are warranted to clarify the long-term effects and scalability of such training initiatives.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the employees who volunteered to participate in this study.

**Funding Source Declarations:** This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

**Conflict of Interest Statements:** The authors have no conflict of interests to declare.

**Disclaimer:** The views expressed in the article are ours and not the funders/institutions.

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