

## **Fostering Faculty Retention and Engagement through Occupational Health and Psychological Safety Programs: The Role of Institutional Safety Culture in Higher Education**

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### **Abstract**

*Faculty turnover in higher education is a growing concern primarily related to increasing stress levels, overwhelming workloads, job dissatisfaction, and academic career competition. This research examines how the engagement and retention of academic staff in universities are influenced by the proliferation of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) training, psychological safety (PS) climate, and institutional safety perceptions among them. On the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, the research focused on the impacts that OHS training had resulted to faculty outcomes, where institutional safety culture is considered a moderator through psychological safety. Questionnaires that were self-reports and time-lagged were gathered among 250 faculty members working in both public and private universities in Pakistan. Regression, mediation, and moderation methods were applied in the data analysis. The research results suggest that a successful OHS education intervention is associated with increased organizational commitment and reduced*

*turnover thoughts, with psychological safety serving as the mediating factor. The research advocates for creating an academic safety culture and introducing comprehensive OHS training plans as measures to increase faculty attention and retention. The theoretical and practical implications of the theory and research directions are mentioned.*

**Keywords:** *Employee retention, Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) training, psychological safety, workplace safety culture, employee engagement.*

### **Introduction**

The problem with the high employee turnover rate among academic staff members, stimulated by the growing levels of job stress, the necessity of psychological assistance, and the urge to get better working matters turned out to be an urgent concern within the sphere of higher education. Introduction of turnover into faculty adversely affected research continuation, teaching quality and institution performance in general (Dong & Li, 2024). In spite of installing numerous retention mechanisms, numerous schools still found it hard to put in place sustainable processes that can influence faculty to feel appreciated and committed (Zhang et al., 2020).

Psychological safety has become one of the constructs in dealing with this challenge. According to Edmondson (1999), psychological safety was having liberty to share ideas and concerns without being punished. This type of environment promoted creativity, free communication, and effective additions to the work done by the faculty without the fear of punishment (Claxton et al., 2022; Frazier et al., 2021). The perception of psychologically safe working environment led to empowered faculty, increased innovativeness, and a tendency of the faculty members to stick to the institutions they work in.

OHS (Occupational Health and Safety) instructional design contributed to eliminating academic stressors and a culture of care as well. Such interventions were the consideration of burnout and mental health, lab safety assurance, and the organization of workloads (Neal & Griffin, 2021). OHS programs conveyed the intentions of an institution to support faculty and improve retention by showing that this institution cares about

the welfare of the faculty ( Amfo-Antiri, 2023). Academic staff was ready to move to more supportive institutions and find more significant research opportunities and work-life balance which led to losses in finances and knowledge of higher education institutions due to faculty mobility as well as recruitment expenses. Therefore, value, safety, and engagement culture became one of the most urgent human resource initiatives (Rozaq, 2022). Psychological safety led to increased engagement as it prompted communication, professional risks, and respect and negative institutional cultures were found to be associated with burnout and turnover (Saksvik et al., 2021). Physical safety was an other important aspect especially in disciplines where laboratory or field work was involved. The OHS training equipped faculty to deal with such dangers and increase the confidence in institutional care (Vinodkumar & Bhasi, 2020).

OHS training is essential for creating an environment that fosters faculty retention and engagement, as well as a healthy and supportive academic atmosphere. At any point in the higher education development framework, these programs enable faculty to identify and prevent occupational hazards, including stress due to research demands, laboratory hazards, workload imbalances, and occupational mental fatigue (Bayram et al., 2022). The state of psychological safety is one of the main pillars of a comprehensive OHS approach nowadays, and the tendency is related to the complicated scenario of interconnections between mental health and work. The literature review examines the study of relationships between OHS training, faculty involvement, and retention, as well as the test of psychological safety as a mediator variable and institutional safety culture as a moderator variable (Dong & Li, 2024).

This research filled the gap of the little study concerning the interplay of OHS with psychological safety in the academic specifics in Pakistan particularly. Earlier research was done primarily in industry or on the field of healthcare (Lari, 2024), but not on faculty welfare (Kline & Frone, 2019). It explored the effects of OHS training and psychological safety on faculty engagement and retention paying special attention to the fact that both do impact the level of loyalty and performance (Bathan & Joy, 2023).

## **Generation of Research Hypotheses**

### **1. OHS Training Programs and Employee Engagement (EE)**

In higher education facilities, OHS training equips teachers with the knowledge to establish secure teaching and research environments. Faculty members feel more engaged in their teaching roles, as well as in research and service positions when they perceive that their institutions prioritize their safety (Neal & Griffin, 2021). Such training interventions support faculty members on their emotional commitment and engagement by reinforcing their confidence in their workplace (Frazier et al., 2021).

Regarding higher education, where roles and responsibilities often include classroom teaching, research publications, student supervision, and administrative tasks, it is crucial to have well-defined safety procedures in place to prevent burnout. Psychologically and physically safe training minimizes uncertainty, builds trust, and allows faculty to be less distracted by other functionalities, concentrating on the excellence of studies (Amfo-Antiri, 2023). The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) suggests that people want to conserve and augment resources (e.g., health and psychological well-being). This process can be assisted by OHS training, which minimizes the sense of threat and allows faculty to conserve some of their remedial energy, thereby keeping them engaged in academia.

*H1: OHS training programs are positively associated with employee engagement.*

#### **i. OHS Training Programs and Employee Retention(ER)**

Retaining skilled faculty is also a significant challenge in higher education as competition for top academic talent intensifies. Schools that have an effective OHS training program, which focuses on labs and ergonomic training (including mental health assistance), demonstrate their commitment to the well-being of their faculty. Such a dedication creates trust and loyalty. When faculty members feel a relatively safe campus, there is a reduced risk that they will leave their university to work elsewhere. Quite the contrary, the absence of physical or psychological safety can prompt educators to consider safer, more reliable organizations (Bathan & Joy, 2023). Under the theory of COR, faculty members would tend to stay in their positions with their well-being safeguarded. OHS training is a vital

tool that enables faculty to manage academic requirements without compromising their health, leading to improved retention.

H2: OHS training programs are positively associated with employee retention.

ii. **Psychological Safety (PS) as a Mediator between OHS Training Programs and Employee Engagement**

Psychological safety refers to an employee's ability to raise concerns and voice their opinions to management and others without fear of repercussions, which is essential for engaging employees. Psychological safety in OHS training promotes a culture of open communication in the workplace, thereby enhancing employee participation in organizational tasks (Edmondson & Roloff, 2009). Psychological safety fosters suggestions and investment in work activities, as employees perceive that their employer will protect them (Frazier et al., 2021).

The psychological support mechanisms, including OHS programs (such as stress management workshops, safe reporting mechanisms, and inclusive decision-making), can help improve retention. When faculty members feel a sense of belonging and a sense of protection, they are more likely to remain at their institution. This paper identifies psychological safety as a crucial mediator in OHS training and its outcomes in faculties. When faculty members undergo training focused on safety matters and feel that an institution genuinely cares about them, they are highly engaged and less likely to experience turnover (Lari, 2024; Lal, 2022). Emotional capital is also encompassed by psychological safety, which includes confidence and motivation. Mental health and consideration of other opinions in OHS training programs contribute to resilience and low faculty turnover (Essoun-Mensah, 2022).

H3A: Psychological safety mediates the positive relationship between OHS training programs and employee engagement.

H3B: Psychological safety mediates the positive relationship between OHS training programs and employee retention.

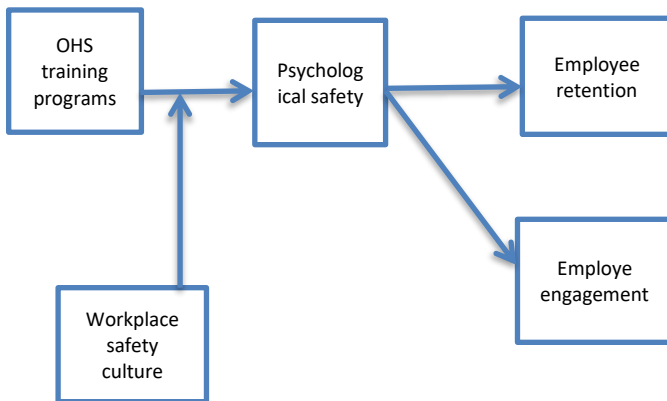
iii. **Workplace Safety Culture as a Moderator (WSC)**

Organizational safety culture can be defined as the overall perception that an organization and its employees share regarding safety and health. A positive safety culture supports and strengthens lessons, enhancing safety

consciousness within OHS training programs and guaranteeing that the entire firm and team embrace safety at all levels (Zohar & Polachek, 2022). The case studies of this system have revealed that a comprehensive safety culture enhances attitudes toward OHS training and minimizes risks related to the workplace.

Safety culture refers to the institutional values, practices, and norms related to health and safety within academic institutions. The effect of OHS training is strengthened by a rich safety culture that achieves the sharing of collective responsibility and uniformity of safety behaviors between departments (Zohar & Polachek, 2022). An environment where psychological safety is achieved is developed when universities embrace safety leaders and adopt open policies that foster constructive participation. In these institutions, OHS training has a more positive influence on faculty engagement and well-being (Pham, Lingard, & Zhang, 2023); however, in entities with a poor safety culture, even the best OHS programs may not be effective. There may be a perceived lack of harmonization between training and institutional values, as perceived by faculty members, which can undermine the implementation of safety (Ajmal et al., 2022). Institutional safety culture can also be analyzed within the framework of the COR approach to safety, where it doubles the psychological benefits of OHS training or suppresses them. At universities with a safety-oriented environment, such resources are well-protected and preserved.

H4: Workplace safety culture moderates the relationship between OHS training programs and psychological safety.



**Figure 1** *Conceptual model*

### **Methodology**

The current research used a time-lagged quantitative research design to examine the relationship of OHS training, institutional safety culture, psychological safety, faculty involvement and retention in the higher education sector in Pakistan. It used two-wave surveys with a four-week interval between them (Time 1 included the variables of OHS training, psychological safety, and safety culture; Time 2 included the variables of engagement and the intention to work in the company) and thus reduced the common method bias and facilitated causal inference. The demographic and institutional variety in the 250 full-time faculty was covered by stratified purposive samples of public and privately funded universities in Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad. Emails were distributed through the official sources in the university and in academic WhatsApp groups, and surveys were run by Google Forms.

Ethical procedures prescribed to be followed were consent, either written or verbal, confidentiality, voluntary participation and safe handling of data. This approach allowed undertaking rigid descriptive, correlational, mediation and moderation tests to gauge the strength and interaction of these constructs, both in terms of a theoretical contribution to the understanding of their temporal underpinnings and a practical one concerning faculty development and safety policy in the Pakistani higher education. A time-lagged design is popular and usually used to analyze a cause-and-effect relationship over a period of time.

### **Measures**

The study utilized a closed-ended questionnaire to assess the five key variables: psychological safety, Occupational Health and Safety training, the promotion of Safety Climate, employee engagement, and employee retention. The questions in all the sections of the questionnaire were adopted from other accepted and standardized tools for assessing the reliability and validity of the measures.

**Table 1**

*Variables' scales and Cronbach's Alpha*

Variables	Scale Adapted	Items	Cronbach Alpha
Psychological Safety (PS)	Edmondson's (1999)	7	0.88

OHS Training Programs	Neal & Griffin (2021) and Silva et al. (2020).	7	0.89
Workplace Safety Culture:	Scale, developed by Dvora Zohar (2000),	16	0.92
Employee Engagement	(Clifton & Harter, 2003).	12	0.92
Employee Retention	Park & Hong (2020) and Gillen et al. (2020)	7	0.88

### **Findings and Results**

In this study of the time lag in the Pakistani higher education, the regression, mediation, and moderation analyses led to explaining and demonstrating the effect of robust OHS training and a strong institutional safety culture on predicting a healthier psychological safety among faculty, which could increase engagement in academic, research, and administrative work and decrease turnover intentions. The mediation analysis found psychological safety as the major mechanism through which OHS training influenced engagement and retention, and moderation analysis indicated a strong effect of OHS training on the psychological safety particularly among the institutions that had well-developed safety cultures. These findings support the applied worth of integrated safety training and culture to improve the faculty retention.

Table 2 revealed, in Descriptive statistics, OSHTP had  $M=2.29$ ,  $SD=0.855$  (low-average perceptions, modest dispersion); PS  $M=2.59$ ,  $SD=0.968$  (mid-level security, robust increase in scatter); WSC  $M=3.07$ ,  $SD=1.027$  (high results in safety culture, considerable dispersion); EE  $M=3.52$ ,  $SD=0.908$  (high scores in employee engagement); and ER  $M=3.79$ ,  $SD=$  Correlations showed that correlations were in strongest strength: OSHTP-PS (.757), PS-WSC (.737), WSC-EE (.774), EE-ER (.735); there was moderate force in OSHTP-WSC (.598), OSHTP-EE (.520), PS-EE (.698), WSC-ER (.436), PS-ER (.411); the weakest was OSHTP-ER (.275). The cronbach alphas were above replacing alphas therefore internal consistency high, (most alphas greater than 0.80; WSC and EE alphas greater than 0.90).

**Table 2**

*Means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliabilities for the main variables of interest in this study*

	Mean	SD	OSHTP	PS	WSC	EE	ER
Mean OSHTP	2.2903	.85502	<b>1</b>				
Mean PS	2.5926	.96778	0.757**	<b>1</b>			
Mean WSC	3.0717	1.02697	0.598**	0.737**	<b>1</b>		
Mean EE	3.5240	.90835	0.520**	0.698**	0.774**	<b>1</b>	
Mean ER	3.7920	.91710	0.275**	0.411**	0.436**	0.735**	<b>1</b>

Note. N=250; Cronbach alpha reliabilities are in parenthesis.\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01

**4.4 Mediation analysis (OHS IV, PS (Med), DVS (EE, ER))**

The mediation analysis in Table 2 examines whether psychological safety (PS) mediates the relationship between Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) training programs and two employee outcomes: participation, involvement, retention, and commitment, collectively referred to as employee engagement (EE) and employee retention (ER). The findings of direct and indirect effects are reported using unstandardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ), standard errors (S.E), and p-values.

**1. Direct Effects**

**H1: OHS training programs are positively associated with employee engagement**

OSH → EE: ( $\beta = 0.5526$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ): The impact of OSH on EE is, therefore, positive and robust; as a result, safety training programs are positively correlated with Employee Engagement. This aligns with the notion that when an employee has the assurance of safety at the workplace, they are more productive.

PS → EE ( $\beta = 0.8565, p = 0.000$ ): Another impact of psychological safety about engagement is also relatively high and highly significant. This reveals that the concept of psychological safety is a crucial factor in enhancing engagement. Workers who have a voice and can speak up about issues that affect their jobs and the organizations they work for without fear of losing their jobs are likely to be more committed.

OSH → PS: ( $\beta = 0.6682, p = 0.000$ ): OSH has a highly significant direct influence on the level of psychological safety. It, therefore, indicates that safety training programs foster psychological safety in the workplace, ensuring that people can voice their concerns and be willing to take risks because of adequate assurance that, in case things go wrong, they will not be penalized.

## **H2: OHS training programs are positively associated with employee retention**

OSH → ER: ( $\beta = 0.2954, p = 0.000$ ): It is relevant to note that the relationship between OSH and ER is indirect, yet, when direct, it is somewhat less robust than the relation to Employee Engagement (EE). This means that though safety training increases retention rates, it is not enough to promote it alone.

PS → ER: ( $\beta = 0.4483, p = 0.000$ ): Psychological safety was strongly associated with staff turnover, indicating that the staff who worked in settings that they perceived psychologically safe would be likely to remain in the organization. Psychological safety increases retention by minimizing turnover intention and promoting the sense that people are part of the team.

## **2. Indirect Effects**

### **H3A: Psychological safety mediates the positive relationship between OHS training programs and employee engagement.**

OSH → PS → EE ( $\beta = 0.5723, p = 0.000, LLCI = 0.4490, ULCI = 0.7114$ ): Hypothesis 3 established that OSH has an indirect effect on the EE through the mediation of psychological safety. The results of the Bootstrap test reveal that this relationship is both reliable and statistically meaningful. Bootstrap 95% confidence interval of the indirect effect did not cross zero:  $LLCI = .019, ULCI = .041$ . This implies that the level of psychological safety fully mediates the relationship between OSH training and employee

engagement. In other words, training in OSH increases the level of perceived psychological safety, which subsequently improves the level of engagement.

**H3B: Psychological safety mediates the positive relationship between OHS training programs and employee retention.**

OSH → PS → ER ( $\beta = 0.3898, p = 0.000, LLCI = 0.2352, ULCI = 0.5422$ ): Likewise, the total indirect effect OSH has on Employee Retention through the mediator of psychological safety is also significant. This means that OSH training has a positive impact on retention by promoting a positive psychology and fostering an environment that encourages employees to stay within the organization.

**3. Normal Theory Test for Indirect Effects**

Mediation results indicated that OSH IM→ PS mediation had  $Z = 8.90, p = .000$  and OSH IM↔ PS mediation had  $Z = 5.11, p = .000$ , so the mediating role of psychological safety was fully perceived on engagement and retention (Note that IM= rank-transformed to 1-5). These results merge with Neal & Griffin (2021), who discovered that practice creates skills/confidence, enhancing participation. They also reaffirm the psychological model of safety presented by Edmondson (1999) as well as the connection between safety and engagement and intent to remain by Frazier et al. (2021). The findings serve as evidence of the COR theory at work, and as evidence of the fact that integration of OHS training into a safety culture results in psychological safety, which improves engagement and retention.

**Table 3**

*Mediation Analysis (psychological safety mediates between OSH ns employee outcomes)*

Mediator: PS and DV: EE and ER				
	<b>B</b>	<b>S.E</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>P</b>
<b>OSH→EE</b>	0.5526	0.0576	9.59	0.000
<b>PS→EE</b>	0.8565	0.0470	18.22	0.000
<b>OSH→PS</b>	0.6682	0.0654	10.21	0.000
<b>OSH→ER</b>	0.2954	0.0655	4.511	0.0000
<b>PS→ER</b>	0.4483	0.0840	5.33	0.000
<b>Indirect Effect</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>S.E</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULI</b>

<b>OSH→PS→EE</b>	0.5723	0.0654	.4490	.7114
<b>OSH→PS→ER</b>	0.3898	0.782	.2352	.5422
<b>Regular Theory Test for Indirect Effect</b>				
	<b>Effect</b>	<b>S.E</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>p</b>
	0.5723	0.0643	8.90	0.000
	0.3898	0.0750	5.11	0.000

Note: n=250; unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size=5000.LL=lower limit; CI= confidence interval; UL = upper limit

**4.5 Moderation analysis (WSC as a Moderator of OSH → PS)**

**H4: Workplace safety culture moderates the relationship between OHS training programs and psychological safety.**

Table 4 presents the outcome of the moderation analysis, in which WSC strengthens the relationship between the OSH training program and PS. Again, how OSH impacts PS is also analyzed by the interaction between OSH and WSC, that is, the OSH × WSC interaction. Constant ( $\beta = 2.6461$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ): Specifies the level of psychological safety (PS) in the experiment when OSH =0 and WSC =0. This is statistically highly significant, meaning that the model can well capture the data.

OSH → PS ( $\beta = 0.6030$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ): There is a stronger association between Occupational Safety and Health training and Psychological Safety with a medium direct effect. The estimated regression coefficient is positive ( $\beta = 0.6030$ ), indicating that as OSH training improves, employee perception of psychological safety also increases, which supports the hypothesis that every effective safety training program fosters psychological safety in organizations. This is in concordance with the suggested hypothesis that OSH programs improve psychological safety.

WSC → PS ( $\beta = 0.3674$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ): As expected, both Workplace Safety Culture to Psychological Safety (Communication-Unit B, Unwritten Rules-Unit B) and Cognitive Reliability to Psychological Safety (Information Exchange-Unit C) paths are statistically significant. The regression coefficient estimate ( $\beta = 0.3674$ ) >0 indicates that as WSC evolves, employees report increased psychological safety. This supports the hypothesis proposed here that a good safety culture correlates with employees' perceived safety.

OSH × WSC Interaction ( $\beta = -0.1024$ ,  $p = 0.0095$ ): As expected, the interaction term is negative and significant. This means that Workplace Safety Culture mediates the relationship between OSH training and Psychological safety in a manner that reduces the direct impact of OSH training on psychological safety. In particular, as WSC rises, the positive Influence of OSH on PS is given slightly less emphasis.

In organizations with a high culture of workplace safety, the relationship between OSH training programs and psychological safety was relatively low. This may be because, in places where safety is seen as being of prime importance, there could be minor gains from boosting OSH training for promoting psychological safety, as employees already feel secure. On the other hand, in organizations that practice a comparatively fragile safety culture based solely on formal structures, OSH training is more effective in increasing psychological safety.

Confidence Intervals (LLCI - ULCI): Examining the confidence intervals of the interaction effect (LLCI =  $-0.1796$ , ULCI =  $-0.0252$ ) reveals that they do not cross zero, thereby indicating the existence of a moderation effect. The hypothesis was probably generated from the idea that Workplace Safety Culture (WSC) may mediate the relationship between Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) training programs and Psychological Safety (PS). The results support this hypothesis as it has been found that WSC mitigates the extent of the OSH → PS relation. Strong Safety Culture (WSC): Even in organizations where leadership has already adopted a safety culture, training in OSH still enhances the psychological safety of employees, albeit to a lesser extent than in organizations that lack a safety culture.

Weak Safety Culture (WSC): In organizations with a less developed safety culture, the Influence of OSH training on the level of psychological safety is higher, as individuals use other safety training to feel protected. In this study, Workplace Safety Culture serves as the moderator through which the association between OSH training and Psychological Safety is mediated. OSH training and WSC have been individually linked to enhanced psychological safety. However, the findings suggest that while cross-multiplying both training outcomes reduces harm, there is a slight loss in the potency of OSH training where WSC is high. This implies that

safety culture can mediate the extent to which OSH training is necessary to attain psychological safety, as postulated in this study.

**Table 4**

*Moderation Analysis*

<b>Moderator: WSC to OSH and DV: PS</b>						
	<b>B</b>	<b>S.E</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>P</b>	LLCI	ULI
<b>Constant</b>	2.6461	.0450	58.8353	.0000	2.5575	2.7347
<b>OSH</b>	.6030	.0567		.0000	.4913	.7147
			10.6356			
<b>WSC</b>	.3674	.0469	7.8359	.0000	.2751	.4598
<b>OSH×WSC</b>	-.1024	.0392	-2.6142	.0095	-.1796	-.0252

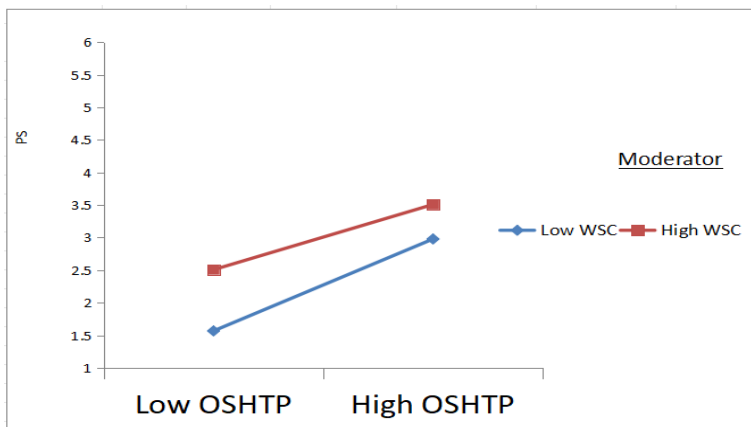
Note: DV=PS IV=OSH, Moderator=WSC

In Figure 2, a moderated relationship is depicted, where Workplace Safety Culture, as the mediator variable, dampens the direct relationship between Occupational Safety and Health Training Programs and Psychological Safety. On the x-axis, we have low and high OSHTP, which indicates the strength of the safety training programs offered by the organization. On the y-axis, the levels of psychological safety are deployed, where numbers from 1 to 5 represent low to high degrees of safety when it comes to speaking up concerns or ideas without risking being penalized or punished. When OSHTP is low, psychological safety is also low; hence, this is true for both low WSC (blue line) and high WSC (red line). However, it is worth noting that employees in high WSC environments experience comparatively higher levels of psychological safety than those in low WSC environments. It also implies that unlike with weak WSP, even infrequent and ineffective safety training can improve Psychological Safety and create a culture where employees feel comfortable sharing ideas and are open to taking risks.

Overall, as OSHTP rises, psychological safety is enhanced, which is true for both low and high WSC. However, the results revealed that the post-implementation elevation of OSHTP has a more substantial impact in an area with a poor safety culture. Here, trends in physiological and psychological safety are seen to rise steeply as OSHTP strengthens in these settings, as indicated by the steep slope in the blue line. On the other hand,

in a high-safety culture where psychological safety is already presumed to be high, the increment added to OSHTP is smaller; in essence, the red line slope becomes relatively flat.

Hence, workplace safety culture mediates the relationship between OSH training programs and psychological safety. The results show that when an organization has a poor safety culture, OSHTP has a comparatively more substantial influence on psychological safety, indicating that safety training plays a significant role in these organizations. On the other hand, companies with advanced safety culture and psychological safety are already established at a reasonable level, and the increase brought by OSHTP is less significant than in organizations with no safety culture at all. This underscores the need for a safety culture, as well as the importance of safety training in building a psychologically safe environment.



**Figure 2** *Intercept plot*

### Discussion

In this study, the associations between faculty engagement and retention, Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) training schemes, psychological safety, and institutional safety culture were assessed. All the hypotheses were confirmed by the results provided, which stated that overall, OHS training creates a multifold enhancement of faculty engagement and shortens turnover intentions (H1, H2). Effective OHS programs lead to a sense of safety among faculty members, which in turn facilitates their

promotion and a feeling of achievement, ultimately fostering their broader loyalty to the institution's performance.

Moreover, the linkages between OHS training and faculty engagement, as well as retention, were also discovered to be mediated by psychological safety (H3a, H3b). There is a chance that faculty will be more willing to stay engaged and devoted to their institutions if they feel safe to express themselves and take interpersonal risks. They also suggest that an institutional safety culture moderates the relationship between OHS training and psychological safety (H4), whereby the link between OHS training and psychological safety is more significant in a setting with a strong safety culture.

In a highly academic environment where the safety culture remains underdeveloped, training in OHS can become the driver of positive change in psychological safety. Marginal benefits of repeated training may fade away, however, in already safety-conscious institutions. This conclusion aligns with the Conservation of Resources theory, which assumes that people want to conserve resources, holding their value, such as psychological well-being.

### **Practical implication**

Institutions of higher learning should prioritize implementing holistic OHS training programs as a common practice, with measures in place to safeguard both physical and psychological safety (e.g., training in communication skills and mental health provision). Such training can effectively increase faculty participation in institutions with weaker safety cultures and decrease turnover. For universities that already have high levels of safety climate, the objective would be to maintain this performance and refine the psychological safety plans.

The influence of academic leadership is crucial in supporting a positive safety culture within an institution. Those leaders who can demonstrate the importance of safety and establish a transparent communication system while also promoting the reporting of incidents without punishment can enhance the positive outcomes of OHS training. Such measures promote trust, boost faculty participation, and reduce turnover.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Based on the framework defined by Edmondson (1999) regarding the concept of psychological safety and the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, this experience paper provides insight into the academic literature by further developing the idea in the context of higher education. The results support the conclusion that psychological safety mediates the relationship between the institution's resources and faculty outcomes (OHS training). Moreover, institutional safety culture serves as a contextual moderator that supports the theory, which posits that individual and environmental resources have concurrent impacts on determining retention and engagement.

### **Limitations**

Although the study provides valuable insights into faculty well-being, its scope is limited to Pakistani higher-level teaching institutions, as it lacks generalizability to other contexts. The institutional governance, mode of funding, and cultural expectations may differ in other countries, which could yield different outcomes. Although the time-lagged research design increases temporal credibility, it may not enable clear causality to be ascertained. Longitudinal or experimental designs in the future would provide more support to the causal pathways.

### **Future Directions**

The next direction in research is to investigate the long-term effects of OHS training and institutional safety culture changes on faculty engagement and retention. Examination of these dynamics would also be facilitated by comparative research conducted across various academic fields and in international locations. Moreover, research on the application of innovative safety training methods, including simulation-based learning and virtual reality (VR), would also provide insights into enhancing psychological security and organizational commitment in higher education.

### **Conclusion**

The present research highlights the importance of combined OHS training and the safety culture within an institution on faculty involvement and turnover. Faculty members will be more willing to stay and be productive

when they feel that their physical and psychological well-being is being taken into account. In this respect, psychological safety, especially, is an effective mediator that allows faculty to share their concerns, offer their ideas, and cooperate without fear.

By leveraging the strengths of building a solid safety culture and a prudent approach to investing in OHS education for faculty, universities will be able not only to meet regulatory requirements effectively but also to satisfy the psychological needs of their academic staff. Culturally competent practices lead to better, more active, and stable faculty communities, which is a long-term success factor for the institution.

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