

Improving Psychological Safety in Teaching and Social Organizations in Finland

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Abstract : The aim of the study is to examine psychological safety in the context of change in working life and continuous learning in social- and educational organizations. The participants in the study are social workers and vocational teachers working as employees and supervisors in the capital region of Finland (public and private sectors). Research data has been collected during 2022-2023 using the qualitative method called empathy-based stories (MEBS). Research participants were asked to write short stories about situations related to their work and work community. As researchers, we created and varied the framework narratives (MEBS) in line with the aim of the study and theoretical background. The data were analyzed with content analysis. According to the results, the barriers and prerequisites for psychological safety at work could be located in four different working culture dimensions. The work culture dimensions were named as follows: 1) a work culture focusing on interaction and emotional culture between colleagues, 2) communal work culture, 3) a work culture that enables learning, and 4) a work culture focused on structures and operating models. All these have detailed elements of barriers and prerequisites of psychological safety at work. The results derived from the enlivening methods can be utilized when working with the work community and have discussed psychological safety at work. Also, the method itself (MEBS) can prevent open discussion and reflection on psychological safety at work because of the sensitivity of the topic. Method aloud to imagine, not just talk and share your experiences directly. Additionally, the results of the study can offer one tool or framework while developing psychological safety at work.

Keywords : psychological safety, empathy, empathy-based stories, working life

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