Boosting Psychological Safety in Schoolchildren

Sevinch Rustamova
The 1st year student of the Philological faculty
s.rustamova.glamorous77@gmail.com

Aziza Kholboboyeva
Supervisor, Doctor of philosophy in philological science (PhD)
Uzbekistan State University of World Languages, Tashkent, Uzbekistan
azizakholboboeva1611@gmail.com

Annotation: Psychological safety, defined as shared belief that individuals will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up or taking risks, plays vital role in fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment for schoolchildren. This article explores the concept of psychological safety in educational settings and presents a multidimensional approach to enhance psychological safety among children. Drawing upon current research and evidence based practices, the article discusses strategies targeting educators, peers, and the overall school climate to create the atmosphere that nurtures psychological safety. By implementing these strategies, educational institutions can effectively promote positive mental health, facilitate academic engagement, and cultivate a sense of belongingness among schoolchildren.

Keywords: Schoolchildren, educational settings, educator practices, peer interactions, school climate, multidimensional approach, trust, respect, acceptance, diversity, open communication, supportive environment, active listening, constructive feedback, empathy, vulnerability, peer relationships, cooperative learning, conflict resolution, school policies, extracurricular activities.

Psychological safety is an emerging concept that has gained significant attention in educational research. In recent years, educators and researchers have recognized the importance of creating a psychologically safe environment for schoolchildren. This article provides an in-depth exploration of psychological safety in educational settings and presents a comprehensive approach to boost that skill in youngsters.

Psychological safety refers to an environment where individuals feel safe and comfortable expressing their thoughts, ideas, and concerns without fear of negative consequences. In the context of schools, psychological safety is crucial for fostering open communication, encouraging intellectual risk-taking and prompting collaborative learning. When students feel psychologically safe, they are more likely to engage actively in their learning, seek help when needed, and develop positive relationships with their peers and teachers.

In a way through:

To effectively boost that feeling, it is essential to understand its key dimensions, antecedents, and consequences. Psychological safety encompasses various elements, including trust, respect, acceptance of diversity, freedom to express ideas, and support for personal growth. These dimensions work together to create an environment where students feel valued, included and supported in their academic journey.

Strategies to promote psychological safety:

Boosting it requires a multifaceted approach that involves educators, peers, and the broader school community. The following strategies can be implemented to create a supportive and inclusive environment that nurtures psychological safety:

1. Educator practices:

Educators play a significant role in cultivating psychological safety in the classroom. They can implement specific practices within the classroom environment. These practices are designed to cultivate a climate of trust, open communication, inclusivity, and support. By employing these strategies, educators can promote an atmosphere where students feel safe, take academic risks, and engage in meaningful learning experiences. Central to the establishment of psychological safety is the cultivation of trusting relationships between educators and students. Teachers should prioritize the creation of a supportive and welcoming environment, characterized by mutual respect, understanding, and empathy. By actively engaging with students and demonstrating approachability, educators can build strong rapport that encourages students to feel valued and heard.

Facilitating open communication is essential in nurturing psychological safety. Educators should create opportunities for students to freely express their thoughts, opinions and concerns without fear of negative judgement. Encouraging active listening and providing constructive feedback are crucial opponents of an environment that fosters students' willingness to share their ideas and perspectives.

An emphasis of embracing mistakes as valuable learning opportunities is fundamental in promoting psychological safety. Teachers should help students to understand that errors are a natural part of the learning process and should be viewed as opportunities for growth and improvement. By reframing mistakes in this manner, educators can reduce the fear of failure and encourage students to take risks without hesitation.

Inclusivity and respect are vital aspects of psychological safety in the classroom. An environment should be created that celebrates diversity and values individual differences. Providing supportive feedback is also crucial for enhancing that feeling in schoolchildren.

2. Peer interactions:

This criteria also plays a significant role. When children have positive peer interactions, it can contribute to their overall psychological well-being in several ways:

Emotional support: Interacting with peers provides emotional support and a sense of belonging. Children who feel accepted and understood by their peers are more likely to experience psychological safety, as they know they have a support system within the group. This support helps to build resilience and confidence in them.

Perspective taking: Engaging with peers helps children develop perspective-taking skills. By listening to others, considering their viewpoints, and understanding different perspectives, children learn empathy and gain a broader understanding of the world around them. This increased awareness and empathy contribute to create a psychologically safe environment where diverse thoughts and opinions are valued.

Skill development: Peer interactions offer numerous opportunities for skill development. Children learn and practice important social and emotional skills such as communication, cooperation, conflict resolution and problem solving though their interactions with people who are at the same

age level with themselves. As they become more proficient in these skills, they feel more capable and empowered, fostering a psychological safety.

It is important for caregivers, educators and parents to create environments that encourage positive peer interactions. This can be seen as fostering inclusive, supportive, and respectful spaces where they feel comfortable expressing themselves without fear of ridicule or rejection.

School climate and policies: Schools can enhance psychological safety by implementing restorative justice practices, suggesting clear behavioral expectations, and providing opportunities for students to engage in extracurricular activities. Many researchers believe that the influence on the school climate and academic success of pupils is not one-sided. Improving the mental health of education professionals is most effectively achieved by linking policy decisions, studying area's culture and individual staff wellbeing.

To further grow a psychologically safe environment in schools, the following approaches and provisions can be used:

➢ Have a mental health and wellbeing policy – often seen as an essential first step which states what your school wants to achieve in terms of wellbeing.

➢ Prioritize activities, messages and initiatives which talk about staff mental health and wellbeing.

➢ Offer exercises, relaxation, stress management and mindfulness programs, groups or classes, potentially as part of a wider wellbeing program.

➢ Upskill the whole school on mental health awareness, resilience and personal wellbeing, and effective communication in a team including feedback sharing – use agile and efficient training methods.

So why psychological safety is important?

Related to the future carrier path of the students,

As an employee, they can be:

➢ Able to express feelings of vulnerability

➢ Have a strong feeling of trust

➢ Have a deep respect

➢ Ability to accept different opinions

Picture-1. *Psychological Safety.*

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

When you have it	*When you don't*
See mistakes as opportunities to learn	See mistakes as threats to your career
Willing to take risks and fail	Unwilling to rock the boat
Speaking your mind in meetings	Keeping your ideas to yourself
Openly sharing your struggles	Only touting your strengths
Trust in your teammates and supervisors	Fear of your teammates and supervisors
Sticking your neck out	Having your head chopped off

Potential impacts of Psychological safety:

It results in:

➢ Happier teams

➢ Innovative and decisive environment

In performance cultures, the emphasis on results often undermines psychological safety. When we see people get punished for failures and mistakes, we become worried about proving our competence and protecting our careers.

"To achieve an emotionally safe environment, you have to find the right balance of being emotionally open and authentic without sacrificing the boundaries and hierarchy that keep you and your students secure" suggests Mark Philipps.

For this, various group projects and games would work professionally.

A supportive culture, sustained advisory relationships, and teaching strategies that create positive learning all promote psychological safety.

"Every child deserves an education that guarantees the safety to learn in the comfort of one's own skin"-,Simmons.

A few simple, uncommon, powerful phrases that every single individual can utter to make the workplace feel just a tiny bit more psychologically safe:

I don't know.

I need help.

I made a mistake.

I am sorry.

Students should be taught as willing to acknowledge that they are fallible human-being. By making them confident about admitting the possible mistakes, both technical and psychological error rates will decrease and leads them to open-ended interviews when they will come to the stage of choosing a workplace.

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