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Being Part of ‘the Family’: The Role of  
 Psychological Safety on Affective Commitment in  
 Small Family Firms

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### **Abstract**

The goal of this study was to investigate whether working in a family-owned (vs. non-family-owned) small firm affects the relationship between psychological safety and employees' affective commitment. In particular, I hypothesized that the positive relationship between psychological safety and affective commitment is stronger for employees who are employed in a family firm. Using a quantitative research design, I collected data from 104 participants via an online questionnaire. I employed a convenience sample of employees from small firms, resulting in 72 participants from family firms and 32 from non-family firms. The hypotheses were tested using regression analyses, revealing that perceived psychological safety significantly predicts employees' affective commitment in small firms. However, employment in a family firm did not significantly moderate the relationship between psychological safety and affective commitment. The insights from these findings can inform both future research and practical interventions aimed at improving psychological safety and affective commitment in the workplace.

*Keywords:* psychological safety, affective commitment, small family firms, employees, social exchange theory.

## **Being Part of ‘the Family’: The Role of Psychological Safety on Affective Commitment in Small Family Firms**

Growing up as the fourth generation of a small family firm has inspired me to explore the functioning, dynamics, and characteristics of these firms. The way in which family firms are shaped by traditions, principles and beliefs, both tangible and intangible, shape their unique way of doing business (KPMG, 2022). Extending the family beyond economic and legal aspects, leading to their unique organizational behavior (Chua et al., 2012). Research on small firms has revealed that, unlike family firms, non-family firms tend to focus more on transactional dynamics and are significantly driven by outcomes. (Azoury et al., 2013). In particular, small family firms stand out for their view of employees as the most important asset of the organization, fostering an emotional and moral connection within the organization (Bacon et al., 1996).

Consequently, the impact of the work environment for employees working in a family firm may result in a more positive and fulfilling state of mind compared to employees working in non-family firms. One theoretical framework for understanding the employees’ attitudes towards the organization is the concept of psychological safety. In a psychologically safe work environment, employees experience a sense of freedom to learn, take risks, and share knowledge (Tiwari & Lenka, 2016). These behaviors may particularly be relevant in the context of small family firms, as these firms rely even more on their employees to engage in psychologically safe attitudes and actions, essential for ensuring long-term prosperity of the firm for the next generation (Jin et al. 2023).

Perceiving psychological safety within an organization may signify the emotional connection employees establish with their workplace (Meyer & Allen, 1997). As a result, researchers have argued that affective commitment is the result of a reciprocal response by employees who have received supportive exchanges and other benefits from their

organization (Herrera & De Las Heras-Rosas, 2021). Accordingly, there are theoretical reasons to believe that employment in a family firm may foster these beneficial reciprocal exchanges, which in turn can result in heightened levels of affective commitment (e.g., Frazier et al., 2017; Neubauer & Lank, 1998).

Given the importance of psychologically-safe work environments for both organizations and their employees, I aim to investigate how employment in a small family firm (vs. non-family firm) affects the relationship between psychological safety and employees' affective commitment. These constructs will serve as the foundation for my research, as the values in small family firms may facilitate the transition of contractual employees into engaged members, in contrast to non-family firms (Azoury et al., 2013). This study contributes to the psychological dimension of family firm literature by expanding the research on psychological safety and its effect on affective commitment in the context of small firms. Secondly, this study examines the moderating impact of employment in a family firm, an aspect not previously explored in existing research. By delving into these effects, the study sheds light on the importance of considering psychological factors in the family firm context, as the significance of family firm contributions in the business landscape should not be overlooked, since their impact on the Dutch economy is evident. In the Netherlands, family firms constitute to a total of 61% of all companies (CBS, 2023) and, with 2.6 million jobs, they stand as the largest employer in the country.

### **Theoretical Background**

To explore this research gap, the theoretical foundations of key concepts will be addressed in the following sections, followed by an integration of family firms into the framework.

## **Psychological Safety**

Psychological safety can be defined as *“an individual's perceptions as to whether he or she is comfortable to show and employ his(her)self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career”* (Kahn, 1990). Psychological safety is vital for employees as well as the organization (Plouffe et al., 2023). In a psychologically safe work environment, employees feel comfortable expressing and being themselves (Edmondson, 2018). In particular, this work environment is characterized by mutual respect for each other's competence, trust, genuine interest, positive intentions toward each other, and a sense of security for experimenting and interpersonal risk-taking (Edmondson, 1999, 2018; Pearsall & Ellis, 2011). Additionally, psychological safety is associated with various communication outcomes, such as enhanced interpersonal communication (e.g., Leroy et al., 2012; Peltokorpi, 2004), and greater knowledge sharing among team members (e.g., Mu & Gnyawali, 2003; Siemsen et al., 2009; Xu & Yang, 2010; Zhang et al., 2010).

Research has highlighted a strong positive correlation between psychological safety and employees' work attitudes, including presumably greater work engagement (Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006), attitudes towards teamwork (Ulloa & Adams, 2004), vitality and involvement in creative work endeavors (Kark & Carmeli, 2008), improved learning and performance (Carmeli et al., 2008), and increased organizational commitment (e.g., Elsbach & Pieper, 2019; De Clercq & Rius, 2007; Rathert et al., 2009). In terms of attitudinal outcomes, when employees experience a sense of safety in their workplace, they are more likely to want to continue in their current jobs, consequently leading to a more profound emotional attachment to the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Therefore, psychological safety can lead to elevated levels of affective commitment (e.g., Detert & Burris, 2007; O'Neill & Arendt, 2008).

## **Affective Commitment and The Role of Psychological Safety**

According to the Three-Component Model of Meyer and Allen (1991), affective commitment is one of the components of organizational commitment. Organizational commitment can be conceptualized as the psychological state reflecting individuals' attachment to the organization. The model posits that employees commit to an organization through three distinct psychological states: affective commitment, involving emotional bonds; continuance commitment, linked to costs of leaving; and normative commitment, rooted in feelings of obligation and moral duty. Affective commitment is characterized by employees' identification, involvement, and emotional attachment to the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001), as well as passion for their work and duties (Sharma & Irving, 2005). The meta-analysis of Meyer et al. (2002) highlighted that affective commitment had the strongest and most positive correlations with organization-relevant outcomes such as attendance, performance, and organizational citizenship behavior, as well as employee-relevant outcomes like stress, work-family conflict, and increased job satisfaction. Following these findings, affective commitment is presumably the most influential predictor of employee behavior. Accordingly, the current study will only focus on this dimension of commitment.

Building on this notion, perceiving psychological safety within an organization leads employees to feel cared for and valued (Detert & Burris, 2007; O'Neill & Arendt, 2008). Research points out that these positive perceptions contribute to a favorable attitude towards the organization. (Frazier et al., 2017; Singh & Winkel, 2012). Drawing from the social identity theory (Ashforth & Meal, 1989), an individual's self-concept is influenced by the groups they belong to, referred to as the "social self". As a central aspect of an employee's life, the organization occupies a prominent position in the employee's social self, significantly shaping their self-concept. Therefore, perceiving positive experiences such as psychologically

safety within the organization may enhance the employee's self-concept and social self. These positive experiences lead employees to develop stronger connections with the organization, thereby enhancing their social identity (Cohen, 1993; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Pratt, 1998). Accordingly, a positive self-perception often leads to favorable attitudes toward the organization, reflected in increased organizational commitment (e.g., Aryee et al., 2002; Dukerich et al., 2002; Dutton et al., 1994; Smidts et al., 2001; Van Knippenberg et al., 2007).

Building on these findings, employees who perceive high levels of psychological safety in their work environment will feel more open in expressing and being themselves, fostering a stronger connection with their workplace. Based on this information, the following hypothesis was formed:

**Hypothesis 1.** Employees who perceive higher psychological safety are likely to exhibit increased levels of affective commitment towards their organization.

### ***Employment in a Family Firm: The Relationship between Psychological Safety and Affective Commitment***

In addition to exploring the influence of psychological safety on affective commitment, this study is particularly interested in examining the potential moderating role that employment in a family firm may have on this relationship. The following section will provide an overview of why employment in a family firm may differ from employment in a non-family firm. Scholars specialized in family firms argue that the intertwining of family and business leads to the emergence of a unique and inherent identity in a family firm (e.g., Berrone et al., 2012; Dyer & Whetten, 2006). This identity is shaped by the family's vision and values, resulting in a range of family-centric, non-economic objectives (Chua et al., 2012) extending beyond economic and legal aspects (e.g., Bettinelli et al., 2022). Moreover, there is an overall recognition in small family firms that employees constitute an invaluable, competitive advantage and should be safeguarded to ensure the sustained success of the



business over the long term, implementing lower job rotation rates to enhance engagement, knowledge retention, and skill development (e.g., Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2006; Azoury et al., 2014). Miller & Le Breton-Miller (2006) highlighted that family firms prioritize the well-being of their employees more than non-family firms. The contributions families bring to their firms create a positive workplace environment marked by trust, cooperation, safety, support for risk-taking, accountability, and a sense of esteem and belonging, often treating employees as ‘part of the family’ (Azoury et al. 2013; Pimentel et al. 2017b; Pimentel & Rodrigues 2022).

Important to consider is that family firms are not homogenous in nature, and differ in a variety of ways (Daspit et al., 2021). Because of this, previous literature described the effects of family firms as a “double-edged sword”, acknowledging the presence of conflicting effects within research, since working in a family firm can also come with challenges (e.g., Jin et al., 2023; Stewart & Hitt, 2012). Nevertheless, studies indicate notable commitment differences among employees in family and non-family firms, with individuals employed in family firms showing higher levels of commitment (Pimentel et al., 2020). Supporting this idea are the personal and trust-based relationships commonly found in small-sized family firms (Azizi et al., 2017; Erdem & Atsan, 2015). The unique relationship within family firms creates a sense of being part of a broader "family" beyond the workplace, intensifying commitment to both the organization and its people (Pimentel et al., 2017a, b). Existing literature employed different theories for explaining the strengths inherent in family firms. The subsequent sections will explain why family firms might foster such a positive work environment and what distinguishes them from non-family firms.

**Stewardship Theory.** Stewardship stands out as a distinctive characteristic of family firms, embodying crucial values such as altruism, collectivism, trust, identification, loyalty, and commitment (Vallejo, 2009). The embedded values and vision of family firms provide a

climate of care and concern leading to stewardship behavior (e.g., Barnett et al., 2012; Bernhard & O'Driscoll, 2011; Fang et al., 2013), prioritizing stewardship more significantly than non-family firms (Miller et al., 2008). Even though these organizational cultures might not entirely replicate a "family-like" environment, family firms are acknowledged for cultivating a more caring and benevolent environment than non-family firms (Tabor et al., 2017).

**Social Capital Theory.** According to the social capital theory (Adler & Kwon, 2002), social capital contributed by a family to their firm is what distinguishes a family firm from a non-family firm. Adler & Kwon (2002) defined social capital as the resources that are embedded within networks, facilitating the pursuit of collective goals. Due to the social capital contributed by the family on the organizational social capital, family firms exhibit elevated levels of trust, participation, and superior work climates (Ruiz Jiménez et al., 2015). Scholars argue that the social capital theory serves as an important theoretical framework for exploring the concept of 'familiness' in family firms (Pearson et al., 2008; Sharma, 2008), meaning that employees within family firms frequently perceive themselves as being part of the "family" (Pimentel et al. 2020).

**Socioemotional Wealth Theory.** Furthermore, the socioemotional wealth (SEW) theory offers a comprehensive understanding on the complex dynamics of family firms, underscoring the diverse non-economic utilities offered by the family (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2007). The SEW in family firms, particularly in social relationships, generate collective benefits like social capital, trust, and solidarity (Cruz, et al., 2012). These reciprocal connections extend beyond familial ties, and affect both family and nonfamily employees (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2006). The SEW suggests that family-firm membership engenders feelings and thoughts of harmony, belonging, and trust (Morgan & Gomez-Mejia, 2014).

Following these theories, the work environment within family firms presumably fosters beneficial reciprocal exchanges, which can be explained through the Social Exchange Theory (SET; Blau, 1964). The SET helps explain the interpersonal relationships between employees and employers, specifying why employees choose to be less or more engaged in their jobs (Lee & Veasna, 2013). The theory argues that when one party provides a benefit to another, the recipient tends to reciprocate the favor by offering benefits and favorable treatment to the first party (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007).

Building from this theory, the work environment within family firms, built on personal and trust-based relationships, may result in heightened levels of affective commitment (e.g., Neubauer & Lank, 1998). Based on this reasoning, the current study expects that employment in a family firm moderates the relationship between psychological safety and affective commitment.

**Hypothesis 2.** The positive relationship between psychological safety and affective commitment is strengthened for employees employed in a family firm.

### **The Present Study**

Overall, I anticipate that employees who perceive higher levels of psychological safety will be more likely to perceive higher levels of affective commitment. Furthermore, I expect that working within a family-owned business positively influences the relationship between psychological safety and employees' affective commitment. In addition, organizational tenure is included as a covariate, as spending more years in an organization may lead to higher levels of affective commitment (e.g., English et al., 2010; Allen & Meyer, 1993). To accomplish these objectives, I collected data from employees in small-scale organizations. Small family firms are especially suitable for investigating the effects of psychological safety due to the psychosocial proximity between the employees and employers (Lefebvre, 2024).

## Methods

### Participants and Procedure

In collaboration with Katariina Pehlo, another MA student, I have conducted a work environment questionnaire among working professionals in family and non-family firms. The study was registered with the ethics committee of the Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences of the University of Groningen (EC-GMW) and was active from the 9<sup>th</sup> of February until the 23<sup>th</sup> of April. The study relied on a convenience sample, meaning that employees were approached to fill in the questionnaire through the use of LinkedIn, social media, E-Mail and by handing out business cards. Additionally, the researchers attended a few corporate events, to approach employees from family firms.

For the data collection, the online-platform “Qualtrics” was used. The data was administered individually and anonymously. To maintain anonymity, participants were not asked about any identifiable personal details, and the data collection software automatically anonymized their responses. The questionnaire took about five minutes to complete, and was presented in both English (see Appendix C) and Dutch (see Appendix B), allowing participants to choose the language they preferred. At the beginning of the questionnaire, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study after which informed consent was requested to participate in the study. Following this, participants were asked about some demographic characteristics, such as age, nationality and gender (Appendix B/C, Q2-Q5). Participants were then asked to answer 38 short questions, on the following topics, presented in this particular order: employment in a small firm, employment in a family firm, psychological safety, affective commitment, work engagement, work withdrawal, and organizational tenure. Participants were able to skip questions when they experienced discomfort in providing a response. At last, participants were asked once more whether they still provided informed consent at the end of the questionnaire.

Out of 202 participations who opened the survey, 73 participations were removed from the dataset based on incomplete questionnaires. A participation was judged as incomplete when the participant stopped filling in the questionnaire before finishing. Participants who indicated that they did not work in a small firm were also excluded from the study ( $N = 21$ ). Furthermore, four participants did not consent to the use of their data and therefore were not included in the study. Two attention check questions were included in the questionnaire (Appendix B/C, Q11.5 & Q13.4). A total of 28 participants incorrectly completed one or two attention check questions, the choice was made to retain these data points to maintain the completeness and representativeness of the dataset.

The number of valid participants resulted in 104 participants (45,2% women, 53,8% men, 1% gender-diverse). The age of the participants ranged from 17 to 67 years ( $M = 33,5$   $SD = 14,2$ ). Participants' nationalities were Dutch (90,4%) and other nationalities (9,6%). Additionally, the survey conducted employees from family firms ( $N = 72$ ) and non-family firms ( $N = 32$ ).

## **Measures**

For the purpose of this study, the items specifically examined were: working in a small firm, working in a family firm, psychological safety, affective commitment and organizational tenure. All relevant reliability analyses of the scales can be found in Appendix A.

### ***Employment in a Small Firm***

A firm was classified as a small firm, as per Ramos et al. (2014), when it employed five to fifty employees. Whether a participant was classified as an employee of a small firm was measured based on the question: “*Could you provide an estimate of the current count of actively employed individuals within the organization*”, which participants could answer either “*between 5-5- employees*” or “*more than 50 employees*” (see Appendix B/C, Q8). Participants' responses were coded as 1 if they worked for a small firm and 0 if they did not.

### ***Employment in a Family Firm***

The criteria for classifying a firm as a family firm, according to Naldi et al. (2013), include having at least two family members actively involved and majority family ownership. Whether a participant was classified as an employee of a family firm was measured based on the question: *“Does the organization where you are currently employed qualify as a family business, wherein there are two or more family members actively involved and have majority family ownership within the organization?”* (see Appendix B/C, Q9). Participants could answer this question with either ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Participants' responses were coded as 1 if they worked for a family firm and 0 if they did not.

### ***Psychological Safety***

Psychological safety was measured with the seven-item scale from Edmondson (Edmondson, 1999;  $\alpha = .82$ ). An example item was: *“If you make a mistake in this organization, it is often held against you”* (see Appendix B/C, Q10). All items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). The value of the variable was calculated as the mean of the seven items, after recoding the reversed items. The Cronbach's alpha of this scale was .68, which means that the scale had a questionable internal consistency. However, based on the item-total correlations, no item exhibited a low or insignificant correlation with the overall scale score. This suggests that while the overall consistency of the scale may be modest, each individual item contributed meaningfully to the measurement of the construct, and the results can be interpreted with caution.

### ***Affective Commitment***

Affective commitment was measured based on the seven-item scale by Allen and Meyer (1990;  $\alpha = .91$ ). An example item was: *“I do feel ‘emotionally attached’ to this organization”* (see Appendix B/C, Q11). All items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). The value of the variable was calculated as the mean

of the seven items, after recoding the reversed items. The Cronbach's alpha of this scale was .88, which means that the scale had good internal consistency.

### ***Organizational Tenure***

Organizational tenure was included as a covariate (duration of employment within the current organization; Van de Brake et al., 2019), as spending more years within an organization might lead to higher levels of affective commitment among employees. Previous research shows that employees with extended tenure tend to exhibit higher levels of affective commitment (English et al., 2010; Allen & Meyer, 1993). By introducing organizational tenure as a covariate variable, the study aims to account for the potential impact of this variable on affective commitment levels, ensuring a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between psychological safety and affective commitment. Organizational tenure was measured based on the following question: ‘*For how many years have you been employed at your current organization?*’ (see Appendix B/C, Q7). Participants were able to respond to this question by filling in the number of years of their employment.

### **Statistical Analysis**

The analysis was performed using SPSS software (IBM Corp, 2021; version 28). Regression analysis was used to test the relationship between the level of psychological safety and affective commitment (H1). Hayes-Macros analysis was then employed to test the moderating effect of employment in family firms on this relationship (H2).

## **Results**

### **Descriptive Data**

Before testing the hypothesis, descriptive analyses were conducted to explore the attributes of the variables. Table 1 contains the descriptive statistics and correlations of the variables collected from the sample.

**Table 1***Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of the Variables*

Variables:	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.
1.Psychological Safety <sup>a</sup>	104	5.28	.95	-			
2.Affective Commitment <sup>a</sup>	103	5.30	1.18	.532*	-		
3.Employment in Family Firm <sup>b</sup>	104	.69	.46	.042	.147	-	
4.Organizational Tenure	103	7.81	8.98	.026	.177	.283*	-

*Note.* \* $p < 0.01$ . <sup>a</sup>The minimum value of the scale is 1 and the maximum value of the scale is 7.

<sup>b</sup>Employment within a family firm = 1, Employment in a non-family firm = 0

**Assumption Checking**

Before running the statistical analysis, the assumptions for linear regression were assessed. Based on the descriptive statistics, it was noted that the participant sample exhibited an imbalance in terms of employment in family firms versus non-family firms, with approximately 69% of the participants being employees from family firms. This notion made the assumption check more salient, as an unbalanced sample size can increase the vulnerability of assumption violations. The study validated assumptions, including linearity through and normality through a P-P scatterplot and the Shapiro Wilk test, assessed homoscedasticity via a scatterplot of the residuals, and tested for collinearity using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). Despite the discrepancy in the sample, it's reassuring to note that all the assumptions required for the analysis were met. Therefore, the decision has been made to proceed with the analysis.



### Correlation between Psychological Safety on Affective Commitment

A linear regression analysis was conducted to test Hypothesis 1, assessing the relation between psychological safety and affective commitment. In support of Hypothesis 1, the results show that psychological safety positively affects the level of affective commitment,  $F(1, 101) = 39,80, p < 0,001$ . As can be seen in Table 1, elevated levels of psychological safety are associated with elevated levels of affective commitment ( $r = .532$ ). Furthermore, psychological safety accounts for 27% of the variance in affective commitment.

To control for organizational tenure, organizational tenure was modeled as a predictor of affective commitment, in the linear regression analysis (see Table 2). This modeling approach showed that when organizational tenure was included in the model, the explained variance of the model increased to 30%. However, this increase was not significant, meaning that working longer in an organization did not significantly predict affective commitment ( $b = .02, p = .053$ ).

**Table 2**

*Regression Coefficients of Psychological Safety on Affective Commitment: Controlling for Organizational Tenure*

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>AdjR</i> <sup>2</sup>
Model					.56	.31	.30
Constant <sup>a</sup>	1.68	.56	3.01	.001*			
Psychological Safety	.65	.10	6.32	.001*			
Organizational Tenure	.02	.01	1.96	.053			

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Dependent variable: affective commitment. \* $p < 0.01$ .

### The Moderating Effect of Employment in a Family Firm

Hypothesis 2 was tested with the use of the PROCESS Hayes Procedure (Hayes, 2013). Hypothesis 2 builds upon Hypothesis 1, suggesting that working in a family firm would positively moderate the relationship between psychological safety and affective commitment. To examine this hypothesis, the data from the variable ‘Employment in a Family Firm’ was first converted into dummy coding (family firm = 1; non-family firm = 0).

**Table 3**

*Moderation Analysis: The Role of Employment in a Family Firm on the Relationship Between Psychological Safety and Affective Commitment*

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>R</i> <sub>change</sub>	<i>F</i>
Model				.000*	.56	.31		14.74
Constant <sup>a</sup>	4.99	.18	27.02	.000*				
Psychological safety	.51	.15	3.31	.001*				
Employment in a Family Firm	.24	.22	1.06	.291				
Organizational Tenure	.02	.01	1.57	.120				
PS*EFF	.25	.21	1.21	.230			.01	1.46

*Note.* \* $p < 0.01$ . <sup>a</sup>Dependent variable: affective commitment. <sup>b</sup>Employment in a family firm = 1, Employment in a non-family firm = 0

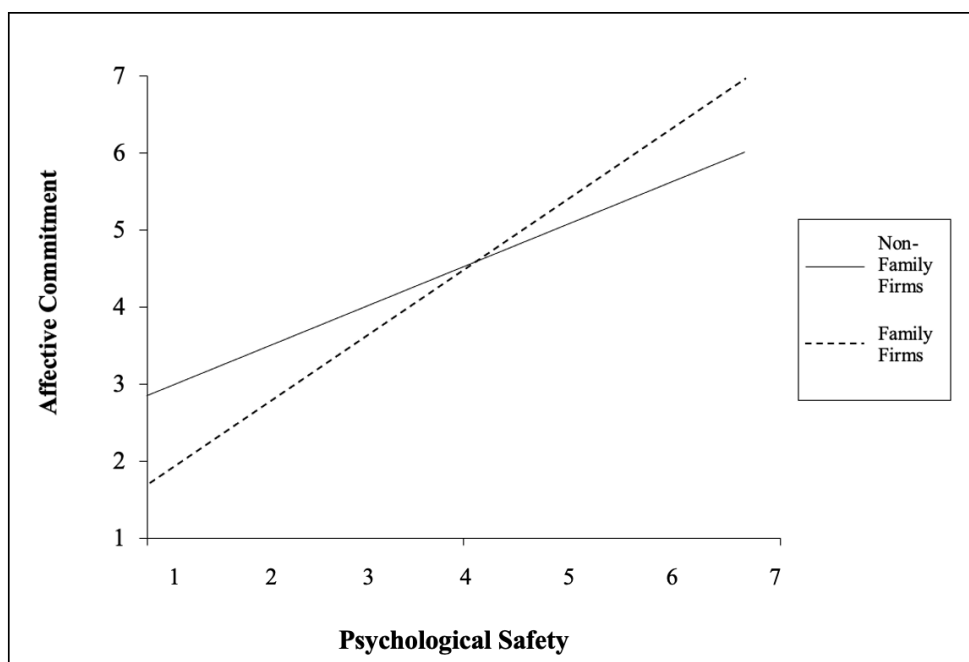
Table 3 shows that the analysis is in line with the previous regression analysis, highlighting the strong predictive value of psychological safety on affective commitment. Interestingly, including the interaction term of employment in a family firm in the model did not affect the relationship between psychological safety and affective commitment ( $b = .25$ ,  $p$

= .230). Meaning that the relationship between psychological safety and affective commitment did not differ for employees working in a family firm (vs. employees working in non-family firms). Moreover, the predicted value of employment in a family firm on affective commitment was also non-significant ( $b = .24$ ,  $p = .291$ ).

To facilitate the interpretation of the moderation effect, the interaction term was plotted in Figure 1. This visualization aids in understanding the relationships and patterns observed in the data, enhancing the interpretability of the study's outcomes.

**Figure 1**

*Interaction of Psychological Safety and Family Firm Status on Affective Commitment*



*Note.* PROCESS Hayes moderation analysis output, including organizational tenure as control variable. Based on the two-way interaction term of Dawson (2013).

### ***Bootstrapping***

As the distribution of the sample was unequally divided, bootstrapping was used to enhance the robustness of the analysis and to provide a more reliable interpretation of the data

(e.g., Gries, 2006). Table 4 shows the results of the moderation analysis with 10.000 bootstrap samples to construct 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (*Bootstrapping - IBM SPSS Statistics*, z.d.). The results of the bootstrapping analysis are in line with the moderation analysis, suggesting that Hypothesis 2 cannot be supported. Moreover, this bootstrapping analysis consistently shows the significant positive effect of psychological safety on affective commitment, supporting Hypothesis 1.

**Table 4**

*Moderation Analysis of The Relationship between Psychological Safety and Employment in a Family Firm on Affective Commitment – With Bootstrapping*

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>95% confidence interval</i>	
			<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
Constant	4.99	.18	4.71	5.40
Psychological Safety	.51	.13	.18	.72
Employment in Family Firm	.24	.22	-.20	.68
Interaction term: PS*FF	.25	.20	-.09	.68
Organizational Tenure	.02	.02	-.01	.04

*Note.* With 10.000 bootstrapping samples. PROCESS Hayes moderation analysis output.

### **Detectable Effect Sizes**

To conduct the statistical power analysis of the study, G\*Power 3.1 Software (*Universität Düsseldorf: G\*Power*, n.d.) was used. Due to the difficulty in accessing the target population and the limited time and resources of the study, the decision was made to conduct this analysis post hoc. To compute the power analysis, F-tests were selected from the test family, and linear multiple regression: fixed model R<sup>2</sup> increase was selected from the drop-down menu of statistical tests. Based on the sample size of 104 participants and the

effect size of .45 ( $f^2 = .45$ ), the achieved power was estimated to be approximately .99. This indicates that the study had an 99% chance of identifying a significant effect if it truly existed in the population. The power of the study was greater than the recommended cut-off score of .80 (Cohen, 1992). In addition, the study was sensitive to smaller effect sizes, with a power of approximately 0.98 for detecting a smaller effect size ( $f^2 = 0.20$ ). Therefore, the study was well-equipped to detect effects of practical significance within the context of the research question.

### **Discussion**

The aim of this study was to investigate how employment in a small family firm (vs. employment in a non-family firm) affects the relationship between employees' psychological safety and employees' affective commitment. To answer this research question, two hypotheses were formed. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, the findings of this study provided supportive evidence that psychological safety is positively related to affective commitment. This finding is consistent with previous literature, as the meta-analysis of Frazier et al. (2017) suggested a simple and positive relationship of psychological safety on affective commitment. Of particular interest in this study was the moderation effect of employment in a family firm. However, the findings did not give support for Hypothesis 2, as the moderation effect was insignificant. That is, the relationship between psychological safety and affective commitment did not differ for employees working in a family firm.

The moderation results encourage further exploration of alternative explanations. As previous research has highlighted the benefits of working in a family firm, the literature on this topic has not consistently supported this proposition. The following two sections provide a brief exploration of alternative explanations that may potentially undermine the psychologically safe work environment in family firms.

As previously mentioned, existing literature acknowledges the presence of conflicting effects (Jin et al., 2023) in the family firm literature. While we already know that the ‘familiness’ in family firms can be expanded to non-family members (Karra et al. 2006), working in a family firm can also come with challenges. To give an example, employees working in a family firm need to manage two different types of relationships: personal/family and professional (Rogoff & Heck, 2003). As these roles may conflict, behaving in line with these two roles can lead employees to not feel safe in speaking up, hindering a psychologically safe work environment.

Additionally, family firms have the tendency of nepotism, which is the preferential treatment of family members in an employment context by giving them positions regardless of merit or abilities (Jaskiewicz, 2013). Research shows that family members are treated favorably in comparison to non-family members in the context of hiring, performance appraisal, promotion and compensation (e.g., Gersick, 1997; Jaskiewicz, 2013). Likewise, research indicates that the relational familiarity among family members results in unique communication styles, potentially placing non-family employees at a disadvantage (Morris et al., 2010). This results in adverse effects on the perceived justice of non-family employees, potentially undermining the psychologically safe work environment (Ganesh & Gupta, 2015).

### **Theoretical Contributions**

The present study attempts to address multiple gaps and, in doing so, makes important theoretical contributions. First, the study extends the research on the understanding of psychological safety and its impact on affective commitment in a different context. The current study is among the first to assess psychological safety and its impact on affective commitment in small firms. In line with previous literature, this study effectively replicates earlier findings (e.g., Frazier et al., 2017). The replication relation, particularly within the

context of small firms, enhances the robustness and generalizability of our understanding in this area.

Second, because of the growing involvement of family firms in the business landscape, there is an increasing need for a better understanding of the effects of working in a family firm. Therefore, the current study addresses calls for a better understanding on the differences and similarities between family firms and non-family firms across spatial contexts (Amato et al., 2022). Accordingly, this study extends the literature by examining the moderating role of family firm employment (vs. non-family firm employment) on the relationship between psychological safety and affective commitment. Despite the lack of previous literature on this specific relationship, the current study builds on several theoretical frameworks: stewardship theory, social capital theory, and socioemotional wealth theory, linking them to social exchange theory. By demonstrating that the relationship between psychological safety and affective commitment does not differ in the context of employment in family firms, the study underscores the reliability and applicability of the relationship between psychological safety and affective commitment. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the non-significant results of the study could also be due to the methodological limitations mentioned in the following paragraph.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

The current study, as any empirical work, comes along with several limitations which represent avenues for future research. First, the literature on family firms presents a variety of definitions and concepts, making it challenging to uniquely identify this phenomenon (Amato & Patuelli, 2023). In this study ‘employment in family firms’ was defined as followed: “*having two or more family members actively involved and have majority family ownership within the organization*”. Consequently, this restrictive definition increases the risk of a Type II error, meaning that a participant might be misclassified as working in a non-family firm

when, in fact, they are employed in a family firm. For example, this study excludes employees working in family firms with only one family member involved, which can be the case in a generational family firm. As a result, the conceptualization used in this study may limit its scope and potentially undermine the observed effects in the current research. Future research could explore whether different conceptualizations show similar effects.

Second, due to the limited time and resources and as a consequence of the measurement challenges accompanied by defining family firms, the current study has implemented family firms as homogeneous. However, the literature on family firms has largely emphasized existing differences within family firms (e.g., Zahra et al., 2004), suggesting that researchers should treat family firms as heterogeneous in nature (Daspit et al., 2021). This means that when implementing family firms as homogenous, the effect of this variable is likely to be moderated or mediated in many ways. Consequently, this leaves a research gap for future research. Developing a better understanding of the contextual factors could be a fruitful avenue for future research. Such contextual factors could include: the number of family members involved, power distance, generational involvement, etc. Therefore, I would encourage further research on the effects of family firms and related behaviors and outcomes, and their level of variance across different contexts.

Third, employees who participated in this study were all working in small-sized firms, mainly based in the Netherlands. accordingly, this sample could lead to a cultural bias, and therefore limit the generalizability of the findings. This means our sample is not necessarily representative of all firms, family or otherwise. For example, the nature of a family's involvement and its influence on firm behavior could be different for larger firms (Combs, 2008; Miller et al., 2007). There may also be important cultural differences between family firms in the Netherlands and those in other nations (Hofstede, 2001). Thus, care must be taken in applying these results to firms that are larger or based outside the Netherlands. It would be



relevant for further research to replicate this study in different geographical locations, countries and socioeconomic contexts.

Fourth, this study builds upon Social Exchange Theory (SET; Blau, 2017), suggesting that beneficial reciprocal exchanges within small family firms can lead to heightened levels of affective commitment (e.g., Neubauer & Lank, 1998). The SET helps explain the interpersonal relationships between employees and employers, clarifying why employees may choose to be more or less engaged in their jobs (Lee & Veasna, 2013). This may suggest a mediating role, where it is not merely the employment in a family firm but the reciprocal exchanges within family firms that foster the affective commitment. Therefore, future studies could build on the current research by exploring the role of these beneficial reciprocal exchanges within family firms on affective commitment.

Finally, this study employed a convenience sample, a common limitation in family firm literature (Chrisman et al., 2012), which may reduce its representativeness for the broader population. Additionally, the sample of the study was rather small and was drawn from a small number of different firms. This means that multiple employees from the same firm participated in the study, potentially biasing the results due to the influence of their shared work environment. Furthermore, it is important to note that the sample of this study is based only on employees from small firms.

### **Practical Implications**

With the above limitations in mind, the theory and findings of this study offer a number of practical implications. As previously mentioned, psychological safety is vital for organizational thriving and success (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023). The findings of this study imply that all firms, family as well as non-family firms, should continuously consider the benefits of creating and maintaining a psychologically safe work environment which promotes the affective commitment within employees. Research suggests that firms can

benefit from employees who are highly committed, as this commitment leads to greater personal investment in daily activities performance (e.g., Marique et al., 2013, Mercurio, 2015). Moreover, our results suggest that for small business owners, understanding employees' perceptions of their work status, the organizational climate, and fostering an internal environment of psychological safety are crucial considerations for enhancing firm success (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023).

Second, it is reasonable to assume that variations in psychological safety exist within organizations. Edmondson (2018) created a tool for building psychological safety within an organization. This toolkit suggests to set expectations about failure, uncertainty and interdependence to clarify the need for voice. Moreover, it suggests to demonstrate situational humility, set up structures and processes, express appreciation and destigmatize failure and sanction clear violations. This toolkit may help leaders to create a psychological safe working climate in which employees are comfortable expressing and being themselves.

Considering that the effects of employment in family firms remain a more open-ended discussion, this study will not provide practical implications on this aspect. As discussed in the previous section, these results should be interpreted with great caution.

## **Conclusion**

In this article, I argued that employees working in family firms might tend to perceive higher psychological safety, leading to perceiving higher levels of affective commitment. However, the findings of this study do not support this proposition, suggesting that there are no significant differences for employees working in family firms compared to non-family firms. I believe that the insights from these findings can inform both future research and practical interventions aimed at improving psychological safety and affective commitment at the workplace.

Overall, the complex nature of family firms in this domain is hard to grasp, making this domain so interesting. Therefore, I would encourage further research on the effects of employment in family firms and related behaviors and outcomes. For instance, investigating the differences between non-family and family employees in a family firm, comparing small and larger family firms, examining the influence of the number of family members involved in the business compared to non-family employees, among other factors, could provide valuable insights. Developing a better understanding of the effects of family firms could be fruitful for employers as well as employees.

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## Appendix A – Citation of the Scales

**Table 5**

*Scale Measurements*

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Nr. of items</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>	<b>Based on:</b>	<b>Dutch translation</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha Dutch</b>
Psychological safety	7	.82	Edmondson's psychological safety scale (Edmondson, 1999)	Translated by: van't Hof, M. Team effectiviteit en medewerkerstevredenheid binnen teams in de langdurige zorg.	.75
Affective commitment	7	.91	Scale by Allen and Meyer (1990)	Unknown – own translation	
Work engagement	9	Between .85 and .92	Scale by Schaufeli et al. (2006). Shortened version of UWES.	Translated by Schaufeli & Bakker (2004)	.93
Small firm	x	x	Ramos et al. (2014)	Unknown – own translation	
Family firm	x	x	Naldi et al. (2013)	Unknown – own translation	

Work withdrawal	4 items physical, 7 items psychological	.77 (psychological) and .81 (physical)	Scale by Turan (2015). Physical and psychological withdrawal, based on the original scales introduced by Lehman and Simpson (1992).	Unknown – own translation	
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### Appendix B: Questionnaire Dutch

Welkom bij de vragenlijst over psychologische veiligheid in organisaties

Voordat de vragenlijst begint, krijgt u eerst wat informatie over het onderzoek waarna u een 'informed consent' formulier krijgt.

Daarna start de vragenlijst. We verwachten dat het invullen van de vragenlijst ongeveer 5 minuten zal duren. Hartelijk dank voor uw medewerking!

INFORMATIE OVER HET ONDERZOEK " Psychologische veiligheid in organisaties".

**Ø Waarom ontvang ik deze informatie?** Als medewerker binnen een kleine organisatie ben je uitgenodigd om deel te nemen aan dit onderzoek. De uitkomsten van dit onderzoek zijn waardevol voor het verbeteren van werkomgevingen binnen organisaties.

**Ø Wie zijn de onderzoekers?** Het onderzoeksproject wordt uitgevoerd door masterstudenten: Katariina Pelho en Jet Rietvink.

**Ø Moet ik meedoen aan dit onderzoek?** Deelname aan het onderzoek is geheel vrijwillig. Je toestemming is echter wel nodig. Lees daarom deze informatie goed door. Als je besluit om niet mee te doen, hoef je niet uit te leggen waarom, en er zullen geen negatieve gevolgen voor je zijn. Nadat je toestemming hebt gegeven voor deelname aan dit onderzoek, hebt u nog steeds het recht om u terug te trekken, wat betekent dat u op elk moment kunt stoppen met deelname. Onvolledig ingevulde vragenlijsten worden niet verwerkt in het onderzoek.

**Ø Waarom dit onderzoek?** Uw inzichten en ervaringen zijn waardevol om onderzoekers te helpen een beter inzicht te krijgen in de invloed van psychologische veiligheid op werknemers. Uw deelname helpt bij het vormen van zinvolle resultaten en draagt bij aan een beter begrip van de invloed van psychologische veiligheid. Uw deelname wordt zeer gewaardeerd en zal een waardevolle bijdrage hebben.

**Ø Wat vragen we van je tijdens het onderzoek?** Allereerst wordt je toestemming gevraagd om deel te nemen aan dit onderzoek. Daarna word je gevraagd alle vragen in de vragenlijst te beantwoorden. De vragen zullen voornamelijk bestaan uit stellingen die betrekking hebben op je werkomgeving. Je kunt op elke uitspraak reageren door aan te geven in hoeverre deze op u

van toepassing is aan de hand van de bijgeleverde schalen. Duidelijke instructies voor de schalen vindt u bij elke vraag. Het invullen van de vragenlijst zal naar schatting ongeveer 5 minuten van je tijd in beslag nemen.

**Ø Wat zijn de gevolgen van deelname?** Deelname aan dit onderzoek kan je bewuster maken van de verschillende aspecten binnen een werkomgeving en hun invloed op je werkervaring.

**Ø Hoe gaan we met je gegevens om?** Dit onderzoek wordt alleen gebruikt voor educatieve doeleinden. De enige gegevens die we van u bewaren, zijn wat u in deze studie ziet en wat u zelf verstrekt. We verzamelen geen aanvullende gegevens over u en we registreren uw e-mailadressen of enquêtelocaties niet. Omdat de gegevens anoniem zijn en we uw antwoorden niet naar u kunnen herleiden, kunt u uw antwoorden niet intrekken nadat u de studie hebt voltooid. Als u beseft dat u niet wilt doorgaan met uw deelname, stop dan gewoon uw enquête en verlaat deze voordat deze is afgelopen. We zullen aannemen dat onvolledige reacties betekenen dat u uw toestemming intrekt, dus we zullen uw gegevens niet gebruiken. We geven u ook de optie om uw toestemming aan het einde van de studie te bevestigen (of in te trekken). Anonieme gegevens worden 10 jaar bewaard, conform het BSS Data Management Protocol. In een poging om open wetenschapspraktijken te promoten, zullen we onze gegevens beschikbaar stellen aan andere onderzoekers via Open Science Framework. Echter, die datasets blijven anoniem en we bewaren alleen uw numerieke antwoorden (bijv. uw antwoorden op vragen en uw demografische informatie die u op de volgende pagina's ziet; we verwijderen uw optionele antwoorden op open vragen). Gegevens worden verzameld en opgeslagen op servers in Europa.

**Ø Wat moet je nog meer weten?** Als je vragen hebt over het onderzoek, kun je deze stellen aan een van de onderzoekers door te mailen naar ...

Heb je vragen of zorgen over je rechten als onderzoeksdeelnemer? Ook hiervoor kun je terecht bij de Ethische Commissie van de afdeling Psychologie van de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, te bereiken via [ecp@rug.nl](mailto:ecp@rug.nl).

Heeft u vragen of zorgen over uw privacy, of over de omgang met uw persoonsgegevens? Ook hiervoor kunt u contact opnemen met de Functionaris Gegevensbescherming van de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen: [privacy@rug.nl](mailto:privacy@rug.nl).

**Q1 - Door in te stemmen met deelname begrijpt u het volgende:** Ik heb de informatie gelezen die mij over dit onderzoek is verstrekt. Mijn deelname is vrijwillig en ik kan mijn toestemming om deel te nemen aan dit onderzoek op elk moment intrekken zonder boete. Er zijn geen voor- of nadelen voor mij afhankelijk van mijn beslissing om de hele vragenlijst in te vullen of me terug te trekken uit dit onderzoek. Al mijn antwoorden zijn volledig anoniem en vertrouwelijk. Dit betekent dat mijn antwoorden op geen enkele manier kunnen worden gebruikt om mij te identificeren. In het geval dat ik informatie heb verstrekt waarmee ik kan worden geïdentificeerd, zal deze informatie uit het onderzoeksmateriaal worden verwijderd. Alle reacties worden veilig opgeslagen en zijn alleen toegankelijk voor het onderzoeksteam en worden niet doorgegeven aan derden. Ik begrijp verder dat dit project de ethische uitvoering van onderzoek en de bescherming van de waardigheid, rechten, belangen en veiligheid van deelnemers te allen tijde onderschrijft.

- Ja ik geef toestemming

- Nee ik geef geen toestemming

Beantwoord eerst de algemene vragen hieronder. Deze vragen worden niet gebruikt om personen te identificeren, maar helpen de onderzoeker om de steekproef van deelnemers te beschrijven.

**Q2** - Ter controle: werk je momenteel parttime of fulltime in een organisatie? Zo nee, dan kunt u nu stoppen met het invullen van deze vragenlijst. Zo ja, ga dan verder.

**Q3** - Wat is je geslacht?

- Man
- Vrouw
- Anders

**Q4** - Wat is je leeftijd?

**Q5** - Wat is je nationaliteit?

- Nederlands
- Anders

**Q6** - Hoeveel jaar ervaring heb je in je huidige functie?

**Q7** - Hoeveel jaar ben je al in dienst bij je huidige organisatie?

**Q8** - Kun je een inschatting geven van het aantal personen dat momenteel actief werkzaam is binnen de organisatie?

- Tussen de 5 en 50 werknemers
- Meer dan 50 werknemers

**Q9** - Kwalificeert de organisatie waar je momenteel werkt als een familiebedrijf, waarbij twee of meer familieleden actief betrokken zijn en een meerderheidsbelang in de organisatie hebben?

- Ja
- Ne

**Q10 - Psychologische veiligheid**

Geef aan in hoeverre de volgende uitspraken op jou van toepassing zijn

Als je binnen ons team een fout maakt, wordt dat vaak tegen je gebruikt. (1<sup>R</sup>)

In ons team is het mogelijk om problemen en lastige kwesties aan te kaarten. (2)

Leden van ons team keuren anderen soms af omdat ze anders zijn. (3<sup>R</sup>)

Het is veilig om een risico te nemen in ons team. (4)

In ons team is het moeilijk om andere teamleden om hulp te vragen. (5<sup>R</sup>)

Niemand binnen ons team zou opzettelijk handelen op een manier die mijn inzet zou ondermijnen. (6)

In de samenwerking met leden van ons team worden mijn unieke vaardigheden en talenten gewaardeerd en benut. (7)

<sup>R</sup> Reverse coded.

***Schaal:***

Helemaal mee oneens

Oneens

Enigszins oneens

Niet mee eens of oneens

Enigszins eens

Eens

Helemaal mee eens

**Q11 - Affectieve toewijding**

Ik zou heel graag de rest van mijn carrière bij deze organisatie doorbrengen (1)

Ik ervaar de problemen van deze organisatie als mijn eigen problemen (2)

Ik voel me emotioneel gehecht aan deze organisatie (3)

Deze organisatie betekent veel voor mij (4)

Klik op ‘‘oneens’’ (5 – attentie vraag)

Ik praat graag met andere mensen over mijn organisatie (6)

Ik heb het gevoel dat ik echt bij deze organisatie hoor (7)

Ik voel me als ‘een deel van de familie’ in deze organisatie (8)

***Schaal:***

Helemaal mee oneens

Oneens

Enigszins oneens

Niet mee eens of oneens

Enigszins eens

Eens

Helemaal mee eens

### **Q12 - Werkbetrokkenheid**

Op mijn werk bruis ik van energie (1)

Als ik werk voel ik me fit en sterk (2)

Ik ben enthousiast over mijn baan (3)

Mijn werk inspireert me (4)

Als ik 's morgens opsta heb ik zin om aan het werk te gaan (5)

Wanneer ik heel intensief aan het werk ben, voel ik mij gelukkig (6)

Ik ben trots op het werk dat ik doe (7)

Ik ga helemaal op in mijn werk (8)

Ik kan volledig opgaan in mijn werk (9)

#### ***Schaal:***

Nooit

Bijna nooit (een paar keer per jaar of minder)

Af en toe (eens per maand of minder)

Regelmatig (een paar keer per maand)

Vaak (eens per week)

Zeer vaak (een paar keer per week)

Altijd (dagelijks)

### **Q13/Q14 - Werkterugtrekking**

#### ***Q13 - Fysiek***



- Ik verlaat mijn werk vroeg zonder toestemming. (1)
- Ik neem langere lunch- of rustpauzes dan toegestaan. (2)
- Ik neem voorraden of apparatuur mee zonder toestemming. (3)
- Klik op ‘‘zelden’’ (4 – attentie controle)
- Ik val in slaap op het werk. (5)

**Q14 - Psychologisch**

- Ik besteed werktijd aan persoonlijke zaken. (1)
- Ik doe minder moeite voor mijn werk dan ik zou moeten doen. (2)
- Ik laat anderen mijn werk doen. (3)
- Ik verlaat mijn werkplek om onnodige redenen. (4)
- Ik dagdroom op het werk. (5)
- Ik denk erover mijn huidige baan op te zeggen. (6)
- Ik denk eraan om afwezig te zijn op het werk. (7)

**Schaal:**

- Nooit
- Zelden
- Soms
- Meestal
- Altijd

**Q15** - Je hebt het einde van de enquête bereikt - we danken je voor je deelname. Voordat u uw antwoorden indient, willen we graag weten of u deze enquête naar waarheid ingevuld heeft. Uw antwoord helpt ons ervoor te zorgen dat de kwaliteit van de gegevens hoog is.

- Ja, ik heb de antwoorden naar waarheid ingevuld
- Ik heb over de antwoorden over het algemeen naar waarheid ingevuld
- Nee, ik heb de antwoorden niet naar waarheid ingevuld

**Q16** - Als je verder opmerkingen of gedachten hebt over het onderzoek die je met ons wilt delen, schrijf ze dan in het vak hieronder.

Hartelijk dank voor je deelname aan onze enquête. Jouw input is van ontzettend waardevol voor ons onderzoek, en we waarderen de tijd en moeite die je hebt genomen om de vragen te beantwoorden.

Het doel van de enquête was om inzicht te krijgen in het effect van psychologische veiligheid op de werknemersbetrokkenheid en toewijding binnen kleine (familie-)bedrijven.

Na het verzamelen en analyseren van de gegevens zullen de resultaten midden juli beschikbaar worden gesteld in de universiteitsbibliotheek van de Rijksuniversiteit van Groningen.

Als je meer wilt weten over de onderzoeksresultaten, kun je in contact komen met een van de onderzoekers door een e-mail te sturen naar: ...

Met vriendelijke groet,

Katariina en Jet

Dit is het einde van de enquête.

Bedankt voor uw deelname aan dit onderzoek.

Klik op "→" om het onderzoek te beëindigen

### Appendix C: Questionnaire English

Welcome to the questionnaire about work environments in organizations

Before the questionnaire starts, you will first receive some information about the research after which you will be presented with an informed consent form.

Then, the questionnaire will start. We expect that filling out the questionnaire will take about 10 minutes. Thank you for your cooperation!

INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCH "Psychological safety in organizations "

**Ø Why do I receive this information?** As an employee within an organization, you're invited to participate in this research. The outcomes of this study are valuable for improving work environments within organizations.

**Ø Who are the researchers?** The research project is carried out by master students Katariina Pelho and Jet Rietvink.

**Ø Do I have to participate in this research?** Participation in the research is voluntary. However, your consent is needed. Therefore, please read this information carefully. If you decide to not participate, you do not need to explain why, and there will be no negative consequences for you. After consenting to participate in this research, you still have the right to withdraw, meaning that you may stop participating at any moment in time. Incomplete questionnaires will not be processed as part of the research.

**Ø Why this research?** Your insights and experiences are valuable in helping researchers gain a deeper understanding of the impact of psychological safety on workers. Your participation helps in shaping meaningful results and contributes to the further understanding of the impact of psychological safety. Your participation is greatly appreciated and will have a valuable impact.

**Ø What do we ask of you during the research?** Firstly, you will be asked for consent to participate in this study. After this, you will be asked to answer all the questions in the questionnaire. The questions will mainly consist of statements related to your work environment. You can respond to each statement by indicating the extent to which it applies to you based on the provided scales. Clear instructions for the scales will accompany each question. Completing the questionnaire is estimated to take approximately 10 minutes of your time.

**Ø What are the consequences of participation?** Participating in this research might make you more aware of the different aspects within a work environment and their influence on your work experience.

**Ø How will we treat your data?** This research will only be used for educational purposes. The only data that we are retaining about you is what you will see in this study and what you provide yourself. We are not collecting any additional data about you and we are not recording your email addresses or survey locations. Because the data is anonymous and we cannot trace your responses to you, you will not be able to withdraw your responses after you complete the study. If you realize you do not wish to continue your participation, simply stop your survey and exit before the end. We will assume that incomplete responses mean that you are withdrawing your consent, so we will not use your data. We will also give you an option to confirm (or rescind) your consent at the end of the study. Anonymous data will be kept for 10 years, conforming to the BSS Data Management Protocol. In efforts to promote open science practices, we will make our available to other researchers through Open Science Framework. However, those datasets will remain anonymous and we will only retain your numerical responses (e.g., your responses to questions and your demographic information that you will see on the following pages; we will remove your optional responses to open comments). Data will be collected and stored on servers in Europe.

**Ø What else do you need to know?** If you have question about the research, you can ask them to one of the researchers by emailing... You can also contact the project supervisor, Dr. Maja Graso, by emailing [m.graso@rug.nl](mailto:m.graso@rug.nl).

Do you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant? For this you may also contact the Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology of the University of Groningen, to be reached via [ecp@rug.nl](mailto:ecp@rug.nl).

Do you have questions or concerns regarding your privacy, or regarding the handling of your personal data? For this you may also contact the Data Protection Officer of the University of Groningen: [privacy@rug.nl](mailto:privacy@rug.nl).

**Q1 - By agreeing to participate you understand the following:** I have read the information that was provided to me about this research. My participation is voluntary and I may withdraw my consent to participate in this study at any time without penalty. I may refuse to answer or skip any questions in this study that I do not wish to answer. There are no advantages or disadvantages for me depending on my decisions to fulfill the whole questionnaire or to withdraw from this research. All of my responses are completely

anonymous and confidential. This means that there is no possible way of using my responses to identify me. In the event that I have communicated any information that is able to identify me, the information would be removed from the survey materials. All responses will be securely stored and only be accessible to the research team, and not passed on to any third parties. I further understand that this project subscribes to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection of the dignity, rights, interests and safety of participants at all times.

- Yes I consent
- No I do not consent

**Q2** - Just to check: are you currently employed in an organization on either a part-time or full-time basis?

If not, you can now stop filling out this questionnaire. If yes, please continue.

- Yes
- No

First, please answer the general questions below. These questions will not be used to identify individuals, but they will help the researcher to describe the sample of participants.

**Q3** - What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other

**Q4** - What is your age?

**Q5** – What is your nationality?

- Dutch
- Other

**Q6** - How many years of experience do you have in your current field of employment?

**Q7** - For how many years have you been employed at your current organization?

**Q8** - Could you provide an estimate of the current count of actively employed individuals within the organization?

- Between 5 – 50 employees
- More than 50 employees

**Q9** - Does the organization where you are currently employed qualify as a family business, wherein there are two or more family members actively involved and have majority family ownership within the organization?

- Yes

- No

### **Q10 - Psychological safety**

Please indicate to what extent the following statements apply to you.

If you make a mistake in this organization, it is often held against you. (1<sup>R</sup>)

Members of this organization are able to bring up problems and tough issues. (2)

People in this organization sometimes reject others for being different. (3<sup>R</sup>)

It is safe to take risks in this organization. (4)

It is difficult to ask other members of this organization for help. (5<sup>R</sup>)

No one in this organization would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts. (6)

Working with members of this organization, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized. (7)

<sup>R</sup> Reversed coded

### ***Scale***

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Slightly Disagree

Neutral

Slightly Agree

Agree

Strongly Agree

### **Q11 - Affective commitment**

Please indicate to what extent the following statements apply to you

I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization (1)

I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own (2)

I do feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization (3)

This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me (4)

Please click ‘disagree’ (5 – attention check)

I enjoy discussing about my organization with people outside it (6)

I do feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization (7)

I feel like ‘part of the family’ at my organization (8)

***Scale***

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Slightly Disagree

Neutral

Slightly Agree

Agree

Strongly Agree

**Q12 - Work engagement**

Please indicate to what extent the following statements apply to you

At my work, I feel bursting with energy. (1)

At my job, I feel strong and vigorous. (2)

I am enthusiastic about my job. (3)

My job inspired me. (4)

When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work. (5)

I feel happy when I’m working intensely. (6)

I am proud of the work that I do. (7)

I am immersed in my work. (8)

I get carried away when I’m working. (9)

***Scale***

Never

Almost never (a few times a year or less)

Seldom (once a month or less)

Regularly (a few times a month)

Often (once a week)

Very often (a few times a week)

Always (every day)

### **Q13/Q14 Work withdrawal**

Please indicate to what extent the following statements apply to you

#### **Q13 - (Physical)**

I leave work early without permission. (1)

I take longer lunch or rest breaks than allowed. (2)

I take supplies or equipment without permission. (3)

Please click ‘seldom’ (4 – attention check)

I fall asleep at work. (5)

#### **Q14 - (Psychological)**

I spend work time on personal matters. (1)

I put less effort into my job than I should. (2)

I let others do my work. (3)

I leave my work station for unnecessary reasons. (4)

I daydream at work. (5)

I think about leaving my current job. (6)

I think about being absent from work. (7)

#### **Scale**

Never

Seldom

Sometimes

Most of the time

Always

**Q15** - You have reached the end of the survey - we thank you for your participation. Before you submit your responses, we would like to know if you completed this survey truthfully? Your answer will help us to ensure that the quality of the data is high.

- Yes
- Mostly
- No

**Q16** - Furthermore, if you have any comments or thoughts about the study, which you would like to share with us, please write them in the box below.

Thank you very much for participating in our survey. Your input is of great value to our research, and we appreciate the time and effort you took to answer the questions.

The purpose of the survey was to understand the effect of psychological safety on employee engagement and commitment within small (family) businesses.

After data collection and analysis, the results will be made available at the University Library of the University of Groningen in mid-July. If you would like to know more about the research results, you can get in touch with one of the researchers by sending an email to... You can also contact the project supervisor, Dr. Maja Graso, by emailing [m.graso@rug.nl](mailto:m.graso@rug.nl).

Kind regards,

Katariina and Jet

This is the end of the survey.



## Appendix D: Transparency On the Use of Chat AI Tools

I acknowledge the use of ChatGPT 3.5 (OpenAI, 2023) to help overcome a writing block and to help me in structuring certain texts. The in- and output of this AI-tool are summarized in this section.

The following prompts were input into ChatGPT 3.5: *'Can you rewrite the following sentence: Numerous family business scholars contend that the intermeshing of family and business gives rise to an inherently unique identity within family firm'*. The output obtained was: *'Many scholars specializing in family business argue that the intertwining of family and business leads to the emergence of a distinct and inherent identity within a family firm'*. The output was changed by me in the following ways: *'Scholars specialized in family firms argue that the intertwining of family and business leads to the emergence of a unique and inherent identity in a family firm'*.

The following prompts were input into ChatGPT 3.5: *'Can you rewrite the following: In the context of FFs, the family dimension typically goes beyond mere economic and legal aspects, and the complexity of social relationships is especially visible and plays a crucial role in shaping family and firm behavior'*. The output obtained was: *'Within the realm of family firms (FFs), the family dimension extends beyond mere economic and legal aspects. The intricate nature of social relationships becomes particularly prominent, playing a pivotal role in shaping both family and firm behavior'*. The output was changed by me in the following ways: *'Extending the family beyond economic and legal aspects, leading to their unique organizational behavior'*.

The following prompts were input into ChatGPT 3.5: *'Can you rewrite the following: Scholars content that the social capital theory can be a crucial theoretical framework for examining the concept of 'familiness' in family firms'*. The output obtained was: *'Research has argued that for exploring the concept of 'familiness' in family firms the social capital theory*

*serves as a crucial theoretical framework*'. The output was changed by me in the following ways: *'Scholars argue that the social capital theory serves as an important theoretical framework for exploring the concept of 'familiness' in family firms*'.

The following prompts were input into ChatGPT 3.5: *'Can you rewrite this sentence: A family firm will be defined as having at least two family members actively involved in the firm and having a majority stake in the organization*'. The output obtained was: *'A family-owned enterprise will be characterized by the active involvement of at least two family members in the business and their possession of a majority stake in the organization*'. The output was changed by me in the following ways: *'The criteria for classifying a firm as a family firm, according to Naldi et al. (2013), include having at least two family members actively involved and majority family ownership*'.

The following prompts were input into ChatGPT 3.5: *'Can you rewrite the following: The relation between psychological safety and organizational commitment can be explained through social identity theory*'. The output obtained was: *'The connection between psychological safety and organizational commitment can be clarified by employing the principles of social identity theory*'. The output was changed by me in the following ways: *'Drawing from the social identity theory (Ashforth & Meal, 1989), an individual's self-concept is influenced by the groups they belong to, referred to as the "social self"*'.

The following prompts were input into ChatGPT 3.5: *'Can you rewrite the following: Research suggests (Edmondson, 2004) that the level of psychological safety perceived by employees is closely tied to the behaviors of organizational leaders*'. The output obtained was: *'Studies indicate (Edmondson, 2004) that employees' perception of psychological safety is strongly linked to the behaviors exhibited by organizational leaders*'. The output of this prompt was mainly used for overcoming a writer's block and is not part of the final product.

The following prompts were input into ChatGPT 3.5: *'Can you rewrite the following: Following these findings, affective commitment is presumably the most influential predictor of employee behavior. The current study will therefore specifically focus on this dimension of commitment'*. The output obtained was: *'Based on these discoveries, it is presumed that affective commitment holds the highest sway over employee behavior. Consequently, the current study will concentrate specifically on this aspect of commitment'*. The output was changed by me in the following ways: *'Following these findings, affective commitment is presumably the most influential predictor of employee behavior. Accordingly, the current study will only focus on this dimension of commitment'*.

The following prompts were input into ChatGPT 3.5: *'Can you give some tips for writing a discussion section?'*. The output obtained was: *'Certainly! Here are some tips for writing an effective discussion section: Summarize Key Findings: Begin by briefly summarizing the main findings of your study without repeating the results section verbatim. Highlight the most significant results that directly address your research questions or hypotheses. Interpret Results: Discuss what your findings mean in the context of your research. Explain how they support or contradict existing theories and previous studies. Make sure to provide a balanced view by acknowledging any unexpected or non-significant results.'*

*Link to Literature: Situate your findings within the broader body of literature. Compare and contrast your results with those of other studies. Discuss how your work advances knowledge in the field, fills gaps, or offers new perspectives. Address Limitations: Acknowledge the limitations of your study openly and honestly. Discuss how these limitations might have influenced your results and the conclusions you can draw. This shows rigor and transparency in your research. Consider Alternative Explanations: Explore alternative interpretations of your findings. Discuss other factors that might explain your results and how future research could address these issues. Implications for Practice: If applicable, discuss the practical*

*implications of your findings. Explain how they can be applied in real-world settings, influence policy, or guide future research and practice. Future Research Directions: Suggest areas for future research. Based on your findings and their limitations, propose specific questions or methodologies that could be explored in subsequent studies. Conclude with a Strong Takeaway: End with a strong concluding statement that encapsulates the main contribution of your study. Reinforce the importance of your findings and their potential impact on the field. Use Clear and Concise Language: Write clearly and concisely. Avoid jargon and ensure your discussion is accessible to a broad audience. Be precise in your interpretations and cautious with overgeneralizations. Stay Focused: Keep your discussion focused on your study's results. Avoid introducing new data or unrelated information that could distract from your main points.*

*By following these tips, you can create a discussion section that effectively interprets your findings, situates them within the existing literature, and provides valuable insights for future research and practice. The output was changed by me in the following ways: See the discussion section.*

The following prompts were input into ChatGPT 3.5: *'Can you rewrite the following; Participants were able to skip question when they felt uncomfortable in answering them'*. The output obtained was: *'Participants had the option to skip questions if they felt uncomfortable answering them'*. The output was changed by me in the following ways: *'Participants were able to skip question when they experienced discomfort in providing a response'*.

The following prompts were input into ChatGPT 3.5: *'Can you rewrite the following sentence: In the Netherlands, family firms constitute to a total of 61% of all companies in the country (CBS, 2023), and with 2.6 million jobs, they stand as the largest employer'*. The output obtained was: *'In the Netherlands, family firms account for 61% of all companies (CBS, 2023) and, with 2.6 million jobs, they are the largest employer in the country..'* The output was changed by me in the following ways: *'In the Netherlands, family firms constitute*

*to a total of 61% of all companies (CBS, 2023) and, with 2.6 million jobs, they stand as the largest employer in the country'.*