

**MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION OF THE REPUBLIC
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School of Social Sciences, Business and Law

«Approved»

Head of department

«Economics and Business»

PhD A. Abdrazakova

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Submitted by Student 2nd
course, group
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(signature of the student)

Shugyla Kalmaganbet

Scientific Supervisor

(signature of the
supervisor)

Tleubayev Alisher

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EE - Employee Engagement

LS - Leadership Support

TR – Organizational Trust

MH – Mental Health Awareness

PS - Psychological Safety

MLQ - Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire

UWES-9 - Utrecht Work Engagement Scale

LMICs – Low- and middle-income countries

JD-R Theory - Job Demands-Resources Theory

PLS-SEM - partial least squares structural equation modeling

CR - composite reliability

AVE - Average Variance Extracted

ABSTRACT

Employee mental health has grown to becoming a more critical issue for organizations who want to create a healthier and more productive workplace for their employees. This study looks at the effects of mental health training in organizations on employee engagement, and investigates the mediating effects of organizational leadership support and the psychological safety climate, and the moderating effect of organizational trust. Based on the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, the study suggests that mental health awareness is an organizational resource that can positively affect the employee's engagement both directly and indirectly. The data were obtained using a structured survey, and analyzed using the analysis methods of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings revealed that there is a positive relationship between mental health awareness in the organization and employee engagement. In addition, the role mental health awareness plays in leadership support and psychological safety partially mediates the link between mental health awareness and employee engagement. The results also reveal that organizational trust further enhances the positive connection between mental health awareness and employee engagement. Further analysis showed variations in strength of some relationships by generation.

This study builds on a growing body of literature on workplace mental health by pointing to the value of cultivating mental health awareness, practices of supportive leadership, psychological safety, and organizational trust. The findings offer implications for organizations aiming to foster healthy workplaces and enhance employee engagement.

Keywords: mental health awareness, employee engagement, leadership support, psychological safety, organizational trust, and PLS-SEM.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the recent years, mental health has turned out to be a significant issue in the organizational realm of the globe. The work environment changes; pressure of performance and swift technological change are some of the factors that have led to increased stress, burnout and psychological pressure among employees. Consequently, organizations are coming to acknowledge that worker mental health is not just a personal matter, but also an organizational problem that is important to its performance, retention, and sustainability in the long term (Organization, 2022). Mental health awareness is workplace-based work to recognize psychological well-being, decrease stigma, and provide positive working conditions to employees with mental health issues. These can be open communication, mental health resource access and organization policies that facilitate work-life balance. According to the previous studies, organizations that proactively support mental health awareness tend to achieve a positive attitude of employees and overall organizational performance (Harvey et al., 2014).

The involvement of employees has been greatly identified as an essential factor contributing to the success of an organization. Involved employees have an increased energy, commitment as well as involvement in what they are doing, and this factor leads to better productivity and organizational commitment (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Although employee engagement has become increasingly attractive, the little focus has been made on the comprehension of the effects of organizational mental health awareness on engagement and especially through psychological and relationship processes. Leadership and social environment in organizations are also significant in defining the experiences of employees in terms of mental health support. With supportive leadership behaviors and work environments that are psychologically safe, employees have the opportunity to raise their concerns and get assistance without any fear of facing any negative outcomes (Edmondson, 1999). Moreover, organizational trust can also affect what employees mean and react to mental health programs, thus determining the outcomes of engagement (Mayer et al., 1995).

In the environment of Kazakhstan, there are a limited number of studies on mental health in the workplace that are based on empirical data. Cultural specifics connected to hierarchy and expression of emotions can influence the approach of the employee to organizational support, especially concerning mental health. Furthermore, the generation shifts in the labor force, such as the Generation Z, have brought new demands in terms of open-mindedness, welfare, and company principles (Lyons et al., 2015).

It is against this background that the current study looks at the role of organizational mental health awareness on employee engagement among the Kazakhstani workers. In particular, it examines the mediating position of psychological safety and leadership support and the moderating position of the organizational trust utilizing a partial least squares structural equation modelling (Ringle, 2024) with the help of a quantitative research design.

1.1. Background of the study

The following sections shall provide the background of the study, the research problem, objectives, research questions, significance, scope, and key definitions and thus lay proper foundation to the literature review and methodology. The increased interest in mental health in the workplace is indicative of more general shifts in organizationally conceived notions of employee well-being and performance. Historically, the organizational success was mostly linked to engagement, efficiency and financial performance with the psychological health of employees being given very little formal attention. Nevertheless, modern studies focus more on highlighting the importance of mental health as an essential element of human capital and a sustainable organizational operation (de Oliveira et al., 2023; Harvey et al., 2014; Ranjiwala, 2024; Sharma, 2025).

Employee engagement has become one of the key constructs in employee motivation and behavior. Engagement, which is defined as a positive, satisfying, work related state (Schaufeli et al., 2006), which is characterized by a state of vigor and dedication and absorption, has been associated with better job performance, less

turnover intentions and better organizational results (Schaufeli et al., 2017). The identification of organizational engagement promoters has turned into one of the top priorities among researchers and practitioners.

Psychological experiences experienced by the employees at work are likely to shape relationship between mental health awareness and employee engagement. Psychological safety refers to the commonality of the perception that the work environment is safe to take interpersonal risks. One of the principles that allow employees to share ideas, make mistakes, and raise sensitive topics without being afraid of being negatively affected (Edmondson, 1999). The organizations that actively support mental health awareness can make employees feel that their workplace is a safer environment and increase engagement.

The other significant mechanism of the connection of mental health awareness to engagement is leadership support. Organizational messages that are connected with mental health assistance and stigmatization related to psychological issues can be strengthened by leaders. That exhibit personal attention and sincere interest in the welfare of employees (Bass & Avolio, 1996). These leadership actions can enhance emotional attachment of the employees to the organization and increase engagement.

The organizational trust also influences the perception of the employees regarding the mental health initiatives. Trust indicates the thoughts of the employees concerning the integrity, fairness and benevolence of the organization (Mayer et al., 1995). High trust environments can make the employees feel that mental health initiatives are helpful, and low trust diminishes this impact.

Mental health awareness in the organizational setting refers to policies, practices, and cultural norms that recognize the issue of psychological well-being as a valid. Such measures can include stress management programs, flexible work hours, availability of counseling programs, mental health education, and leadership communication that make discussion of mental health about normal (Febriana & Mujib, 2024). Mental health awareness programs can foster an atmosphere of support and non-judgment toward employees facing psychological issues by eliminating the stigma and

promoting openness. These issues are especially relevant in the framework of Kazakhstan where a few empirical studies have been done on mental health in the workplace. Employee perceptions of organizational support and leadership actions might be influenced by cultural norms of the authority, emotional expression, and mental health disclosure. Moreover, the Kazakhstani population is getting more and more heterogeneous in relation to age and generational structure of the workforce. The importance of mental health support and transparency, as well as value-oriented organizational cultures, are more emphasized by younger employees. In particular, the members of Generation Z, which may affect the engagement pattern across the generations (Yahya et al., 2024).

In the light of these changes, there exists an increased necessity of carrying out empirical research that will investigate mental health awareness in organizational setting in Kazakhstan, and the mechanisms through which it influences employee engagement. The current study aims to add to a more refined concept of employee engagement and mental health awareness by incorporating the concept of psychological safety, leadership support, and organizational trust as one conceptual construct.

1.2. Statement of the problem

With more focus on the mental health at the workplace, most organizations are not able to translate the awareness programs into employee performances. Although formal policies and programs that help employees to support the psychological well-being are becoming increasingly popular. They can be seen as symbolic or not as effective enough by the employees, which restricts their effects on interactions and working attitudes.

The available literature has proven that employee engagement is important to the performance of the organization, but the level of engagement is still disproportionate. Especially, in settings that are marked by work pressures and poor psychological care. This indicates that mental health awareness programs can be too weak unless proper

psychological and relational processes are in place in organizations (Edmondson, 1999; Schaufeli et al., 2006).

Moreover, much of the available research on mental health and engagement at work is also focused in the West, and there is little actual research on the basis of any of the new economies, including Kazakhstan. Hierarchy, stigma, and emotional expressiveness aspects of culture can affect the perception and reaction of the employees to organizational mental health programs (Lyons et al., 2015).

Furthermore, no previous research has explored the psychological safety, leadership support, and organizational trust in one combined system. The lack of focus on mediating and moderating mechanisms limits the comprehension of how and in what circumstances mental health awareness can be used to affect employee engagement. These gaps need to be addressed to create evidence-based strategies that will improve employee engagement based on effective mental health awareness practices in the Kazakhstani organizations.

1.3. Research objectives

The major aim of this research is to analyze how organizational mental health awareness influences employee engagement among the workers in Kazakhstan. The study aims at offering empirical data on the impact of such initiatives on engagement-related result in a maturing and culturally specific context by concentrating on how mental health awareness initiatives are perceived by employees at their organizations.

To accomplish this main goal, the following specific objectives will be followed in the study:

- To test the direct correlation between the level of organization mental health awareness and employee engagement.
- To determine the intervening variable of psychological safety in the correlation between mental health awareness and employee engagement.
- To examine the mediation of the relations between mental health awareness and employee engagement by leadership support.

- To test the moderating effect of organizational trust on the relationship between mental health awareness and employee engagement.
- To examine how generational differences will act as control variable in explaining the variation in employee engagement.

The objectives of the study will help to create a full picture of how mental health awareness leads to employee engagement and provide insights that can guide organizational practices and policies in the area of employee well-being in Kazakhstan.

1.4. Research questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions in the settings of the Kazakhstani organizations and rely on employee's perception of organizational mental health awareness:

- How does the perceived organization mental health awareness affect the engagement of the employees in Kazakhstan?
- Is psychological safety an explanatory phenomenon in which organizational mental health awareness influences the employee engagement at Kazakhstani workplaces?
- Is perceived leadership support, as perceived by employees, an intermediary between the relationship between organizational mental health awareness and worker engagement?
- Does organizational trust enhance or diminish the role of organizational mental health awareness on employee engagement in the settings of Kazakhstani organizations?
- Once organizational mental health awareness and associated psychological processes have been taken into consideration, are there any extra generational differences in employee engagement?

These are the research questions that are developed to include not only the presence of the relationships between the variables, but also the processes and the conditions in the context, which influence how the mental health awareness initiatives are converted into employee engagement outcomes.

The paper has a value in a number of different aspects insofar as it not only adds to the academic literature in the field of workplace mental health and employee engagement, but also to the organizational practice. Through empirical research to study the organizational mental health awareness through the lens of employees in Kazakhstan, the research fills contextual gap in the current literature that has been biased on western and developed economies.

Theoretically, the research makes a contribution to the workplace well-being literature as it combines the concepts of mental health awareness, psychological safety, leadership support, and organizational trust into one conceptual framework. Although the constructs have been studied separately in the previous literature, the interaction between them has not been fully investigated with the help of a structural model that considers both mediating and moderating processes. Using the partial least squares structural equation modeling, this research paper enhances the current knowledge of the processes behind the relationship between mental health awareness and employee engagement, as opposed to indicating direct associations.

The research also advances the current engagement research by placing mental health awareness as an important organizational antecedent of engagement. In this regard, it addresses recent demands of research that is not confined to the conventional performance-based predictors, includes the well-being-related influences. Inclusion of psychological safety and leadership support as mediators gives further understanding of the influence of organizational practices on the psychological experience and perception of leadership among the employees.

1.5. Significance of the study

Practically, the results of this research will be useful in providing implications to organizational leaders, human resource professionals, and policy makers in Kazakhstan. The study can also be used to shape the development of specific mental health awareness programs on employee engagement. To identify how programs can influence the behavior of leaders providing supportive working conditions and psychologically safe workplaces. This applies especially to those organizations that

want to mitigate burnout rates, retention rates, and motivation in growing competitive workforces.

In addition to this, the fact that generational differences were included as a control variable offers some practical information regarding how mental health awareness programs can be manifested differently depending on the age. The understanding can help organizations design mental health strategies to align with the expectations of a multigenerational workforce. Since younger workers who may be more concerned with mental health support and transparency in the organization.

Comprehensively, this paper builds on a more contextual and nuanced interpretations of mental health awareness and employee engagement at the workplace that provide evidence-based information that can be applied in both academic research and organizational decision making in Kazakhstan.

1.6. Scope of the study

Theoretically, the research centers on organizational mental health awareness as one of the antecedents of employee engagement. The analysis focuses on mediating functions of psychological safety and leadership support. Likewise moderating impact of organizational trust on explaining the relationship between the mental health awareness initiatives and the employee engagement outcomes. Although the engagement of employees can be at work due to a vast variety of individual, job-related, and organizational variables, the current study is narrowed to these variables deliberately to have a narrow and theoretically oriented research paradigm. A control variable of generational differences is based on the year the employees were born in order to represent the differences between the generations.

The geographical study area implies the activity of organizations in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Such a context is a very specific and in the same time, under-studied context because the Kazakhstani organizations are at the crosspoint of the collectivist, post-Soviet cultural legacy and global management innovations, which are becoming quickly widespread. Kazakh traditional organizational culture has usually placed value on hierarchy and conformity, as well as emotional restraint which could have hindered

the open and transparent discussion of mental health at work. Meanwhile, further incorporation into the global economy and exposure to international organizational standards have placed new demands regarding the well-being of the employees and psychological support.

This social-cultural shift can be manifested most notably in the increased number of younger employees and especially those of Generation Z since they tend to be more prone to global discussion on mental health awareness, stigma reduction, and work-life balance than their older counterparts. Consequently, the efficiency of organizational mental health programs could not be established across the generations, and all the global tendencies like more workers leave their positions or require more attention to their well-being cannot be presumed to be equally apparent in the environment of Kazakhstan. In this regard, generation is introduced as a control variable in order to have a more detailed interpretation of the relationships under consideration in this study.

The population of the study includes the full-time employees of various sectors and organizations with varying sizes in Kazakhstan. The attitudes of the organizational leaders or managers are not directly looked at. But rather the research takes the focus on the employee perspective that focuses on how the employees perceive mental health awareness, leadership support, psychological safety and the organizational trust in the organizations they work in.

The methodologically, the study uses a quantitative, cross-sectional research design based on data gathered by using online questionnaire. Validated and established measurement scales are used in order to increase the reliability and validity of the results. PLS-SEM is a method of data analysis that is performed with Smart PLS 4 that is highly appropriate to analyses the intricate models that include mediation effects, moderation effects. The present study is not within the scope of qualitative methods and longitudinal designs.

1.7. Definition of key terms

To conduct this research, the following are the important terms that will be used in the study context:

Mental health awareness is a perception of the employees of an organization about the efforts by their organization to identify, affirm, and encourage psychological health among employees. It also includes organizational practices in this study, which are associated with reducing the stigmas and open communication about mental health. As well as, access to supportive resources and policies designed to avoid excessive stress.

Employee engagement may be described as a good, satisfying, work related mental mood marked with vitality, commitment and involvement. In the work, the level of employee engagement is assessed based on the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9). It entails the degree of employee enthusiasm, inspiration, and subordinate immersion in the work.

The psychological safety is the common belief by employees that the work place is a secure place to take interpersonal risks. In the framework of the given work, psychological safety can be used as an indicator of how the employees view their capacity to raise concerns, request assistance, and talk about delicate issues, such as mental health, without fearing that they will be treated ill.

Leadership support is the perception of the employee on how well the immediate supervisor is found to be individualized in his concern, empathetic and caring towards the welfare of the employees. The role of leadership support in this research is conceptualized as supportive leadership behavior that leads to the feeling of value, trust, and psychological comfort among employees at work.

The trust that employees have with their organization can be described as organizational trust because employees believe that the organization is honest, just, and good. Organizational trust in the current study demonstrates how much employees believe that their organization is doing in their best interest as it regards to mental health programs and employee welfare.

Generation is a group of people born in a certain time frame, who have common social, cultural and historical events. The concept of generation is also calculated on the year of birth of respondents and employed in this study as a control variable in order to determine the differences between cohorts regarding workplace expectations and their perception of mental health support.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction to the literature review.

This chapter aims at critically assessing and synthesizing the available academic material related to the topic of organizational mental health awareness and employee engagement. It will formulate the conceptual base of the current study and determine gaps that will support the intended research model by reviewing the previous theoretical and empirical literature. The chapter is centered on five fundamental constructs, which include the mental health awareness, the engagement of the employees, the psychological safety, the support of its leadership and the trust of the organization. Special focus is put on how organizational mental health awareness can impact employee engagement and the circumstances in which the said relationship can be reinforced or undermined.

To begin with, the idea of mental health awareness in organizations is discussed, its development, its main aspect, and applicability to the well-being of the employees. Then followed by review of the literature on employee engagement, with special emphasis made on how it has been conceptualized and its organizational outcomes. The next concept discussed in the chapter is the idea of psychological safety and leadership support as possible mediating factors interpretation of how mental health awareness is converted to engagement. Then, organizational trust is examined as a situational factor that can mediate the relationship between mental health awareness and employee engagement. Due to the dynamic nature of the labor force, the implications of generational differences in the workplace expectations and perceptions are also referred to in the chapter. The review gives focus to empirical results in various organizational settings all through and points to the relative lack of research studies in new economy, like that of Kazakhstan.

2.2. Mental health awareness within organizations.

The issue of mental health awareness has become a very important organizational issue, which indicates a larger-scale move towards management that considers

performance as the sole basis of management to management that is more focused on people and their attitude towards work. Modern literature focuses on the fact that mental health in the work environment is not reduced to the absence of mental illness but the psychological well-being of employees, their perceived support, and access to organizational resources (Organization, 2022).

Organizational mental health awareness is defined as the degree to which organizations are proactive to note, communicate and respond to mental health problems via policies, organizational behaviors of their leaders as well as supportive practices. The World Health Organization (WHO) suggests that mental health awareness programs are intended to enhance the ability of individuals to take charge of their health by addressing social, organizational, and environmental factors that can determine mental health, which is important instead of the treatment process (Luberenga et al., 2023). These programs can encompass workload management, flexible work arrangements, stigma reduction programs, access to counseling services and open communication as far as psychological well-being is concerned.

Given the evidence, it is always shown that mental health issues are rampant among the working populations. It has been estimated that about 42% of working people across the world report high or very high levels of workplace stress, and a long-term exposure to stressful conditions heightens the chances of developing anxiety, depression, and burnout (Luberenga et al., 2023).

Notably, psychological outcomes were not the only consequences of poor workplace mental health that was associated with physical health conditions, such as cardiovascular disease and hypertension, which strengthens the applicability of mental health awareness programs within organizations.

In terms of organization, failure to address mental health is highly expensive. Previous research shows that the lack of attention to employee mental well-being leads to a lack of productivity, engagement, poor decision-making, and more absenteeism and presenteeism (Ramesh, 2023). Also, as emphasized in the previous literature, the strategic significance of mental health awareness as opposed to its marginal status is

amplified by the fact that it can be said the mental health of individual employees is tied to the overall success of the organization (Ramesh, 2023).

Low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are the most relevant area in terms of mental health awareness because mental health in the workplace is being under-prioritized even though its prevalence is extremely high. More than 80% of people with mental health conditions live in LMICs, and gaps in accessing treatment of prevalent mental health disorders may go up to 95 percent (Luberenga et al., 2023; Schaufeli et al., 2017). Organizational mental health awareness programs, in this setting, can be compensatory in nature by offering help where national healthcare systems fail to do so.

Mental health awareness is even more relevant in such transitional economies as Kazakhstan. There is a change in the expectations that make reference to the psychological well-being, openness, and organizational support as the organizations are becoming more globalized and employee-centered. The old-fashioned standards involving the rejection of the open dialogue about mental health can come in conflict with the new international standards, which makes the mental health programs more varied in the perception and implementation. This situation-specific aspect of mental health awareness implies that its efficacy cannot be presupposed but should be tested in a certain cultural and organizational context.

Overall, the available literature defines mental health awareness as a multidimensional organizational construct with the important implication on the attitudes and behaviors of employees.

Nevertheless, whereas the previous studies reveal its overall significance, there is a paucity of information regarding how mental health awareness leads to desirable organizational results like employee engagement, specifically, through relational and psychological channels. To fill this gap, it is necessary to consider mediating processes like psychological safety and leadership support that are talked about further.

2.3. Employee engagement

The interest in employee engagement as one of the primary constructs of organizational behavior research is attributed to its close links to individual performance, organizational performance, and employee welfare. The involvement is usually defined as a positive, satisfying, work-related state of mind that is vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2006). The engaged employees are very energetic, emotional, and persistent in their work activities even when they are faced with the challenges.

Employee engagement is important as it is not just about personal attitudes but carries great consequences to the organizational performance. It is indicated in previous studies that engagement can be considered as one of the strategic organizational resources that lead to productivity, innovation, and long-term sustainability (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Employee engagement, as it is reflected in the literature, may be interpreted as a type of discretionary effort, as a result of which employees willingly dedicate physical, cognitive, and emotional resources in supporting organizational interests (Yahya et al., 2024). This is because the view emphasizes engagement as the outcome of a mutually beneficial event to employees and organizations.

Empirical research has constantly shown that when employees are highly engaged, organizational results are positive such as better performance and less turnover. To illustrate this point, the high levels of engagement in organizations have been identified to result in much higher operating income, with low levels also being linked to huge financial losses (Mangkunegara, 2017). These results highlight the fact that engagement is not just a psychological phenomenon but highly important determinant of organizational performance.

Employee engagement will be an indicator of a significant psychological interest in work. The engaged employees have positive interest in their job, they are involved in work processes, and are very much concerned with the performance of their organization (Bakker and Leiter, 2010). Engaged employees as noted in previous studies have a high probability of remaining with their organization, pursuing more

than what their job description requires, and telling others good things about their work (Bakker and Leiter, 2010). The presented behavioral pattern is especially applicable to the modern labor markets that are more mobile and competitive in terms of talent.

Leadership and contextual factors are key elements that contribute to the engagement of employees. According to the research, the individualized consideration and trust towards employees are positively connected with the engagement levels and are also referred to as supportive leadership behaviors (Dwidienawati et al., 2025). Employees will be empowered and interested in work when they have well-established communication, freedom, and emotional support by managers. As stressed in previous research, trust and open communication by managers facilitate the environment where the autonomy of employees is facilitated, and hence, the engagement is reinforced (Luberenga et al., 2023).

Moreover, other work environment factors, including autonomy, flexibility, and work-life balance, have been discovered to be a significant antecedent of engagement. Research has indicated that flexible work practices and positive organizational climate mitigate stress and allow employees to maintain elevated rates of energy and commitment at work (Pandita and Singhal, 2017). Notably, any flexibility should be entrenched in a culture of trust and psychological safety; policies are not enough in the situation when employees have fear of adverse career impacts associated with using them (Kossek et al., 2011).

The issue of employee engagement has become especially topical in the framework of generational change on the workforce. Generation Z workers who are gradually making their way into the labor market have different expectations in terms of meaningful work, flexibility, inclusion, and well-being. According to previous studies, Gen Z is highly focused on happiness and psychological well-being in the workplace and supportive leadership, considering these as the necessities and not discretionary (Nguyen et al., 2024). This change of generation provides an indication that the classic forms of engagement drivers might be subject to reconsideration with respect to the emerging workforce values.

In addition, it has been shown that leadership strategies that focus on inclusion and concern with the psychological well-being of employees are especially effective in increasing turnover among Gen Z workers. The studies based on the social exchange theory show that inclusive leadership has a positive effect on engagement and adaptive performance, and the engagement serves as a partial mediator in this case (Cenkci et al., 2021). These results support the topicality of engagement as an effect and a process according to which organizational practices can affect employee behavior.

Although, there is a body of literature concerning the employee engagement, there are still gaps regarding the way the engagement can be influenced by the mental health awareness of the organization. Although previous research has been conducted on the relationship between leadership, autonomy, and work-life balance as antecedents of engagement, less research has directly been conducted to establish the relationship between organizational mental health awareness and engagement based on psychological and relational processes. Such a break is especially acute in the non-Western and newly developed economy scenarios, where cultural values and the organizational processes can influence engagement in different ways.

In a nutshell, the literature has established that employee engagement is a multidimensional construct whose implications are far-reaching both on the part of the employees and organizations. Leadership behavior, organizational culture and contextual factors including psychological safety and trust influence engagement. Nonetheless, there is scanty empirical studies that have investigated the contribution of mental health awareness programs towards engagement, particularly in different generations. The ability to fill this gap is a compelling argument that supports the relevance of the current study on the topic of the psychological safety and leadership support as intermediate variables between mental health awareness and employee engagement.

2.4. Psychological workplace safety.

Psychological safety is one of the basic concepts of organizational behavior literature and it has been generally identified as the provision of successful teamwork,

learning and well-being among employees. Formally, psychological safety was defined by Edmondson (1999) who explained that the belief in a workplace as safe to engage in interpersonal risk-taking was shared by the employees. Within psychologically safe settings, individuals are free to express ideas, ask questions, confess mistakes and raise issues without the fear of embarrassment, rejection and punishment.

Psychological safety is especially topical in a situation where employees are supposed to speak about something very sensitive or even stigmatized, like mental health. Organizations can send the right message by ensuring that they advocate mental health awareness as a way of accepting and accommodating employees who are facing psychological problems. According to previous studies, these indicators play a role in shaping psychologically safe environments, in which staff members are more willing to discuss stress and work strain issues, stress levels, and other welfare requirements (Edmondson, 2018).

Evidence-based research always shows that the relationship between psychological safety and a variety of positive employee performance is positive. These are augmented learning conduct, enhanced engagement, enhanced performance and low levels of emotional exhaustion (Frazier et al., 2017). Psychological safety helps the employees devote cognitive and emotional resource to work-related activities instead of self-defense, which increases their potential to engage and work hard.

The correlation between employee engagement and psychological safety is especially good. Literature has shown that the employee that feels psychologically safe in his or her workplace has a greater chance of feeling vigor, commitment, and engagement in work roles (Kahn, 1990). Psychological safety imparts meaningfulness and availability which are the two psychological conditions recognized to be vital in engaging people as it eliminates fear and enhances the sense of belonging of individuals in the organization.

The psychology of safety is heavily dependent on the leadership behavior. Leaders who show transparency, compassion, and care toward the well-being of the employees help in creating a culture in which employees feel valued and respected.

The perception of psychological safety has been found to be reinforced by the inclusive leadership practices, which include encouraging participation and responding constructively to the input of the employees (Edmondson, 2018). Conversely, authoritarian or punitive leaders can negatively affect psychological safety especially in hierarchical organizational cultures.

The psychological safety development is also influenced by culture and context factors. The tendency to raise concerns or to oppose authority figures by the workers may be underdeveloped in those cultures that adhere to collectivism and have strong power-distance, despite formal promotion of mental health support. This is quite applicable in post-Soviet organization where the hierarchical rules and emotional suppression have in the past defined the workplace relationship. Psychological safety can also become an essential mechanism in such conditions where mental health awareness in organizations is converted into real employee support instead of being a mere symbol.

In context with the current study, the issue of psychological safety would be defined as a mediating variable between the organizational mental health awareness and the engagement of employees. Organizations can foster the belief in the psychological safety of the working environment by actively expressing care about mental health, lessening stigma, and offering easily accessible support to employees. The perception, in its turn, increases the willingness of the employees to put in effort and dedication to their work jobs, which results in increased engagement.

Overall, the existing literature puts psychological safety as a key psychological state that, in turn, connects organizational practice to employee outcomes. Although its significance is highly established, there is a gap in the psychological safety literature that empirically studies the role of psychological safety as a mediator that exists between mental health awareness and engagement among employees especially in the context of the emerging economy like in Kazakhstan. The correct response to this gap offers a good theoretical basis on the mediation model that was tested in this research.

2.5. Leadership support and mental health.

The support of leadership is extensively known as a decisive element affecting the attitude of employees and their well-being and performance. The concept of leadership support is widely used in organizational research to signify how employees feel about the degree to which their immediate compliant or bosses show care, consciousness, and personalized attention to their needs and growth. The supportive leadership practices are especially significant in influencing the perception and experience of organizational programs, such as mental health awareness programs, by the employees.

In this paper, the notion of leadership support will be based on transformational leadership theory, namely, the aspect of individualized consideration. Individualized consideration is the behavior of the leaders that covers coaching, mentoring and dealing with individual needs and ambitions of the employees (Bass & Avolio, 1996). Individualized consideration leaders develop relational environments where employees feel appreciated as individuals but not as commodities. These leadership behaviors have continued to be associated with good employee results such as job satisfaction, trust and engagement.

Leadership support is an important aspect in the application of organizational values in daily experiences in the workplace. Although organizational policies can be used to advance mental health awareness on paper, employees normally depend on their respective supervisors to determine and actualize such policies on the ground. Studies indicate that the more leaders publicly address the issue of mental health and lead by example, the higher the chances that employees would regard mental health programs as sincere and non-threatening (Kelloway et al., 2013). Conversely, unsupportive leadership may negate organizational activities by increasing the stigma and the discouragement of help-seeking behavior.

Evidence shows that there is a very good positive correlation between leadership support and employee engagement. The leaders who support employees create an environment that is marked by trust, autonomy, and psychological safety, which help

employees to dedicate more emotional and cognitive resources to their work (Breevaart et al., 2014). The more the employees feel they have a lot of leadership support, the more they are likely to enjoy a sense of vigor, commitment and absorption, which are important elements of engagement as explained by Schaufeli et al. (2006).

Employee well-being and stress management are also closely intertwined with the aspect of leadership support. Research has shown that leaders who offer emotional support and positive feedback are able to cushion the adverse impacts of job stress and decrease the chances of burnout (Skakon et al., 2010). As a component of mental health awareness, supportive leaders can be important gatekeepers that seek access to resources and promote open dialogue on the issue of psychological problems.

Leadership support can also be especially significant in hierarchical and collectivist cultures, whereby the leaders are regarded as sources of authority and role models. Leaders' attitudes and behaviors are therefore very important in making employees willing to talk about sensitive matters such as mental health in such contexts. The supportive leadership, in the post-Soviet organizational setting, where the conventional leadership styles used frequently focused on control and authority, can be viewed as a significant cultural change that has a significant implication regarding the engagement of employees.

As viewpoint of generation, younger workers have come to regard leadership support as a major concern. Studies indicate that Generation Z workers place more emphasis on empathetic, genuine, and supportive leadership approaches that place emphasis on well-being in addition to performance (Nguyen, 2024). In the case of this generation, leadership support does not just act as a motivating factor, but that it is a prerequisite that defines their dedication and involvement in the workplace.

In the context of the current research, the concept of leadership support is defined as an intermediate between the organizational mental health awareness and employee engagement. The supportive leaders strengthen such values by interacting daily with employees when they advance mental health awareness in the organizations. This

reward also increases the perception of care and fairness among the employees thus leading to greater engagement.

To conclude, the current body of work exemplifies that leadership support is one of the primary relational processes that can connect the organizational practices with the results of employees. Nonetheless, a small number of empirical studies have investigated leadership support as an intervening variable between mental health awareness and employee engagement within a single integrated model, especially in a setting of emerging economies. This gap is filled and this reinforces the theoretical contribution of the current study.

2.6. Organizational trust

The organizational trust is also influenced and shaped by the cultural context. Trust on institutions and leadership in hierarchical societies that have high power distance norms might be weak or not uniformly spread. The historical events of centralized control and lack of transparency in the post-Soviet organizational setting of Kazakhstan could have the effect of shaping the dynamics of trust today. Therefore, it could be that organizational trust is especially relevant to the perceptions of the employees on whether mental health efforts are believable and trustworthy.

Generationally, the expectations of trust might differ among the generations. The younger employees especially those of Generation Z tend to highly value authenticity, transparency, and morally upright organizational conduct. The studies indicate that Gen Z workers are more aware of the apparent differences between organization rhetoric and the actual practice that can directly influence their levels of trust and interest (Nguyen et al., 2024). This sensitivity brings out the importance of trust as moderating variable in the correlation amid mental health awareness and engagement.

In the context of the current research, organizational trust is understood as a moderating factor that determines the magnitude of relationship between the organizational mental health awareness and employee engagement. In particular, it is hypothesized that a positive link between mental health awareness and engagement is going to be more apparent in an organization that is marked by a greater degree of trust.

Conversely, in low-trust settings, the intervention of mental health awareness might not significantly affect engagement.

Summarizing the available literature, organizational trust is posed as a very important contextual variable determining how employees react to organizational practices. Although trust is a well-researched direct predictor of employee outcomes, as a mediator of the correlation between mental health awareness and engagement, it has not been thoroughly investigated, specifically in an emerging economy setting. The analysis of this moderating effect assists in developing a more complex picture of the functioning of the organizational mental health initiatives in practice.

2.7. Generational differences in the work place

The issue of generational differences in the work environment has received growing academic interest as age-diverse organizations are becoming more widespread, and older generations are yielding to younger generations and entering the labor market.

According to the generational theory, people born at the same time in history have a similar formative social, economic, and technological experience, which guides their values, attitudes, and behaviors, including work-related ones. Such common experiences shape the perceptions of the various generations in relation to the organizational practices, leadership, and well-being programs (Nguyen et al., 2024). Generational difference is commonly studied in organizational research to enhance the knowledge of difference in employee expectation and behaviors at work among different age groups of employees.

Generation Z, Millennials (generation Y), and Generation X are three generational groups that are especially applicable to the modern labor market. Although there are some minor differences in the definitions of the generational boundaries between different studies, these cohorts are usually determined by the year of birth and social-historical backgrounds.

The so-called generation X, which is generally referred to as people born in the mid-1960s to the early 1980s, was the generation that was in the workforce at the time

of economic change and company restructuring. According to research, the Gen X employees will be interested in employment security, independence and work-life balance, and can be considered relatively pragmatic in their loyalty towards the organization (Twenge et al., 2010). Since they have had the traditional hierarchical organizational structures, Gen X employees might be less willing to openly talk about mental health issues in the workplace especially in the situations where stigma is still considered to be common.

The so-called millennials (Generation Y) were mostly born between the early 1980s and mid-1990s, making their entry into the labor market in times of a booming technology and globalization. It is common to describe millennials as being interested in meaningful work, consistent feedback, and opportunities to develop personally (Nguyen et al., 2024). Millennials are more likely to be open to talk about psychological well-being in comparison with Gen X and require organizations to offer conducive work environments. Consequently, organizational mental health awareness programs can be more influential in determining the engagement and organizational commitment of Millennials.

The newest generation of workers is referred to as Generation Z and is typically considered people who were born after the mid-1990s. The current generation has been brought up in very digitalized and globally connected world where the discourse of mental health has gained increased visibility and normalization. Studies follow that Gen Z workers put a lot of emphasis on psychological well-being, inclusivity, and authenticity in the workplace, and in many cases, they consider emotional support as an essential part of the organization instead of a benefit (Nguyen et al., 2024; Schroth, 2019). As a result, the Gen Z workers might be especially sensitive to the differences between the rhetoric and real mental health practices in the organization.

There are also differences in terms of generation in leadership and authority. Participative and supportive leadership styles that are based on collaboration and one-on-one attention are more acceptable to younger workers than hierarchical control (Lyons et al., 2015). These preferences can have a positive impact on the perceptions

of younger workers towards leadership support and psychological safety in the organizational context, which also has the potential to influence the outcomes of engagement.

Cultural and national context adds to the usefulness of the differences in generational differences. The cohorts of generations in transitional economies like Kazakhstan have been subjected to a significantly different socio-economic environment. The previous generation of employees might have acquired the work values that were developed by post-Soviet organizational systems with a focus on stability, hierarchy, and emotional control, and the new employees have been more subjected to the globalized values, online communication, and the international discussion of mental health. This variance can be one of the contributors to differences in the interpretation and valuation of organizational mental health initiatives.

Although there is increasing attention to generational research, the empirical literature is still inconclusive, and researchers advise against generalization and stereotyping on the basis of age alone. Other researchers imply that differences have been observed due to career stage or situational factors as opposed to the generational identity, *per se* (Costanza et al., 2012). This is why in the present study the concept of generation is not considered to be a major explanatory variable but instead, it is taken as a control variable to explain the possibility of cohort-related difference in perceptions and engagement.

In the context of this research, the role of generational differences can be controlled, which will make it possible to estimate the relations between mental health awareness, psychological safety, leadership support, organizational trust, and engagement of the employees more effectively. Considering the aspect of generation, the study aims at making sure that observed effects cannot be confounded by age related difference in expectations or attitudes towards mental health support.

Overall, the review of the literature indicated that the generational differences could have an effect on the workplace perception, especially regarding mental health awareness, leadership and engagement. Nevertheless, due to the current discussions of

the legitimacy of the generational differences, the current research assumes a conservative path, where the concept of generation is included as a control variable but is not the primary object of the investigation.

2.8. Theoretical framework

The current research is based on the existing organizational behavior and psychology theories that explain how organizational practices manipulate employee attitudes and behaviors. The conceptual framework incorporates the theory of job demands-resources (JD-R) theory, the psychological safety theory, transformational leadership theory, and social exchange theory to elaborate on the connection between organizational mental health awareness and employee engagement.

According to JD-R Theory, job demands and job resources determine the health and motivation of employees with a balanced relationship (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Job resources including organizational support, leadership care and safe work environment are essential to employee engagement in that they motivate employees and decrease strain. In this context, organizational mental health awareness can be conceived as a valuable job resource that facilitates the psychological well-being of the employees. Employees tend to gain more energy, commitment and engagement towards their work when they realize that their organization is actively encouraging mental health.

The psychological safety theory emphasizes the significance of interpersonal safety in making learning, voice behavior, and engagement possible in organizations (Edmondson, 1999). In this theory, the employees will have more chances to give their full input when they feel secure to raise concerns, confess, and ask assistance without experiencing any negative attitude towards them. Mental health awareness campaigns in organizations might also help to create psychologically safe settings by decreasing stigma and making the discussion of stress and well-being a normal talk. Psychological safety, in its turn, helps the employees to be more authentic and active in their jobs.

The theory of Transformational Leadership and especially the aspect of individualized consideration offers a theoretical explanation of leadership support in

the study (Bass & Avolio, 1996). Leaders that practice individualized consideration consider the personal needs of the employees, coach them, and support them emotionally. These leadership actions are critical towards converting values of organizational mental health to the day-to-day activities. In that sense, leadership support can be regarded as a mechanism in which the organizational mental health awareness is implemented and realized by the employees in a way that engages the employees.

According to the Social exchange theory, any relationship in an organization is founded on mutual resources and support exchanges (Blau, 1964).

2.9. Proposed Hypothesis

The framework combines relational and psychological processes in clarifying how the mental health awareness interventions are converted to engagement outcomes. In particular, mediation variables suggested to include psychological safety and leadership support, organizational trust is suggested as a moderating variable. Generation is also a control variable that is used to explain generational differences in perception at the workplace.

The awareness of mental health in organizations is likely to become a central part of the working experiences of the employees. Once the organizations take initiative to create awareness about mental health by encouraging supportive policies, open communication, and elimination of stigma, the employees have higher chances of viewing the workplace as enabling and empathic.

Employee engagement is a good satisfying work related condition, which depends on organizational practices and social context. Companies that prove to be concerned about psychological well-being of its employees can increase the emotional attachment and commitment of the employees to their jobs.

H1: Mental health awareness by an organization has a positive impact on employee engagement.

Psychological safety allows the employees to communicate the issues, request assistance, and interact with each other in a real manner without the fear of penalty

actions. Awareness programs related to organizational mental health can be used to establish psychologically safe spaces because of the normalized approach to discussing stress and well-being. Psychological safety, in its turn, is supposed to improve the engagement of employees because it decreases the level of fear and makes employees feel more a part of the team.

H2: There is a mediating role between organizational mental health awareness and employee engagement by psychological safety.

Leadership support is a mechanism that is important and critical in the practices of actualizing organizational values in the everyday workplace interactions. Positive role models who exhibit individualized attention and care strengthen organizational messages where mental health awareness is concerned.

H3: Leadership support mediates the correlation between mental health awareness of organizations and employee engagement.

Organizational trust impacts on how the employees perceive the organizational efforts and evaluate the risk possibilities of the vulnerability. Employees tend to believe that mental health awareness efforts have greater honest intentions and benefit them when there are high levels of organizational trust which adds more force to involvement. On the other hand, this relationship can be undermined by low trust.

H4: Organizational trust moderates the association between organizational mental health awareness and employee engagement, where the association is stronger at high levels of organizational trust.

2.10. Overview of literature review

The chapter synthesized and reviewed the available literature that was pertinent to the key constructs under study. The review started by discussing the organizational mental health awareness, its increasing significance in the modern working environment, and its possible impact on the attitude and behavior of employees. According to the literature, mental health awareness programs have the potential to improve the health of workplaces but the success of such programs relies on psychology and relationship variables in organizational settings.

The following chapter has discussed employee engagement as a multidimensional concept that is vigorous, dedicated and absorbed. In the past, studies show that engagement is related to positive personal and organizational performance, lower turnover intentions, and greater well-being. Although the role of organizational practices like mental health awareness is important, the mechanisms by which they affect engagement have not been well investigated.

Mediating mechanisms include psychological safety and leadership support which were reviewed. According to the literature, psychologically safe environments allow the employees to raise their concerns and request assistance without being afraid of adverse effects on them, thus enhancing engagement. In line with this, leadership encouragement, especially with personalized attention, is central to the process of strengthening organizational values and reforming mental health projects into everyday workplace practice.

There was organizational trust tested as a contextual variable that can mediate the association between mental health awareness and employee engagement. Current literature indicates that trust influences organizational meaning-making and feels more motivation to participate in well-being programs among employees. The positive effect of mental health awareness can be enhanced by high levels of trust and diminished by the low levels of trust.

Lastly, the chapter analyzed the literature on generational differences in perception at the workplace by focusing on Generation Z. Although the review accepts the fact that there are current controversies on the research of generations, it encouraged the use of generation as a control variable to explain cohort-based differences in expectation in mental health, leadership, and engagement, particularly in transitional situations like in Kazakhstan.

In general, it is possible to note that a definite gap in the empirical studies exploring the concept of organizational mental health awareness, psychological safety, leadership support, and organizational trust on the basis of a single integrated framework can be identified especially in the context of emerging economies.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design and approach

The study will use quantitative and cross-sectional research design to test the hypotheses of the relationship between organizational mental health awareness and employee engagement and mediating and moderating mechanisms suggested in the conceptual model. A quantitative study method is suitable to test hypotheses developed based on theories, analyzing the relationship between latent constructs, and generating generalizable results using empirical evidence (Creswell, 2014).

The study is deductive in nature, that is, the hypotheses are based on the existing theories and previous empirical research in the field of organizational behavior, leadership and mental health at the workplace. The conceptual framework suggested will combine the mental health awareness as an independent variable, psychological safety and leadership support as mediations, organizational trust as a moderator, and employee engagement as the dependent variable. There is also the inclusion of generation as a control variable to ensure that cohort-based differences in workplace perceptions have been taken care of.

The design of the study is cross-sectional, which implies that data are gathered at a specific time with regard to respondents. The design is applicable in the organization research because it is efficient and effective in analyzing perceptual and attitudinal variables. Despite the fact that cross-sectional designs are not suitable when one needs to make a causal inference, they are suitable to exploratory and theory-test purposes, especially in a context that has not been well studied like in the case of Kazakhstan.

3.2. Population and sample

The target population of this research is the full-time employees working in organizations in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The research question is on how the employees perceive organization mental health awareness, leadership support, psychological safety and organizational trust and employee engagement. The workers in the different organizational levels are involved but the study does not explicitly

identify senior leaders or managers as a distinct respondent group. The reason why this method is employee-centered is the purpose of the study, which was to investigate the perception and experience of organizational practices by the employees.

The research does not limit the study to a given industry or sector. Participation is open to employees of both the private and the public organizations and organizations of different sizes. The organizational size is gathered as a demographic variable to facilitate descriptive analysis and their possible control in subsequent studies. This is the inclusive method that increases the generalizability of the results to the various organizational situations in Kazakhstan.

In this study, a non-probability sampling method, which is the convenience sampling method, is used. Convenience sampling is usually deployed to conduct research on the organization and management of organizations, especially where there is little availability of a full sampling frame. The method used to recruit the respondents is via professional circles, social media, and online communication platforms.

The least acceptable sample size is calculated according to PLS-SEM analysis recommendation. The number of structural paths directed towards all latent constructs in the model should be at least ten times the size of the sample according to the 10-times rule (Hair et al., 2022). The employee engagement has the largest number of direct paths in the proposed model, and thus the minimal requirements in the sample size are around 100 respondents. The study will require a minimum of 150-250 valid responses in order to increase the statistical power and the stability of estimates.

Participation criteria will include age of 18 years and the respondent has to be employed currently in an organization that is located in Kazakhstan. The involvement will be voluntary, and the respondents will be made aware that they will be free to pull out of the study at will.

3.3. Data collection method

In this study, data is gathered through a self-administered Web-based questionnaire to assess the perception of organizational mental health awareness, psychological safety, leadership support, organizational trust, and employee

engagement of the employees. The online data collection approach is chosen because it is efficient, accessible, and suitable in reaching a wide range of employees in various organizations and sectors in Kazakhstan.

The questionnaire will be realized in Russian to increase the response rates and make the respondents feel comforted and understood. The initial questionnaire is written in English, then undergoes the process of translation into the Russian language where translating and back-translation system is used to guarantee semantic equivalence of the language versions. First, the English is translated into the Russian language by the bilingual people with knowledge of organizational and psychological terms. The versions thus translated are back-translated independently into English. Any differences that come about in this process are discussed and settled to achieve uniformity in meaning in all the three versions of the questionnaire.

The survey will be sent online via Google Forms, professional networks, email invitations, and social networks. The potential respondents will receive a short introduction describing the aim of the research, voluntary aspects of involvement, and confidentiality and anonymity guarantee. No individual identifiable data is gathered and the answers are utilized within the academic research.

Before accessing the questionnaire, the participants shall offer informed consent using electronic means by agreeing to participate after reading through the information about the study. The respondents would be told that there are no correct and incorrect answers and they should be free to answer in their own way depending on what they perceive and experience. Unanswered questionnaires and responses that show signs of careless responding are not included in the final dataset.

The completed data are exported into charts that can be analyzed using Smart PLS 4. Ethical research standards include storing all data safely and ensuring access by the researcher only.

The research utilizes PLS-SEM as the main method of data analysis with the help of Smart PLS 4 software. PLS-SEM is best appropriate to this research due to a number of reasons. In the first place, it enables the estimation of complicated models with

several mediating and moderating relations. Second, PLS-SEM is resistant to the normality violation and is suited to be used in exploratory research and studies with the focus on prediction.

On the whole, the selected research design and methodology are aligned with the aims and theoretical framework of the study and allow analyzing the impact of the organizational mental awareness of mental health on employee engagement in a rigorous way considering the psychological and relational processes.

3.4. Measurement instruments

The measures of all constructs in this study are done on the basis of already validated scales that have been modified to suit the literature that is based on organizational behavior, leadership and occupational health. The validated instruments increase the reliability and construct validity of the model of measurement, and make it comparable to previous empirical studies. Everything, except those mentioned, is measured on Likert scale with a higher score corresponding to a greater level of agreement or frequency.

In order to establish the organizational mental health awareness, it is measured with the help of a series of 13 items that are based on the previous studies of workplace mental health promotion and awareness. Though there is no universally accepted mental health awareness scale as such, the items are conceptually grounded in frameworks by McFeeters (2015) and Commons et al. (2016) that underlie the frameworks, which focus on organizational support, stigma reduction, communication, and access to mental health resources. The modified items gauge the perceptions of the employees concerning the interest of their organization in matters of mental health, the willingness of the organization to discuss psychological well-being, provision of support systems, and the treatment of employees with mental conditions fairly. The measures of response are on a scale of one to five (Likert) with 1 (Strongly Disagree) as the highest mark and 5 (Strongly Agree) as the lowest mark. In the PLS-SEM, the scale is used as a reflective construct.

Measurement of psychological safety is done through a shortened version of Team Psychological Safety Scale that was initially created by Edmondson (1999). The scale comprises 7 questions that determine how the employees feel about interpersonal safety, openness, and support at their work place. Statements about comfort in speaking up, seeking help and speaking out without fear of adverse outcomes, are some of the sample items.

The level of responses is assessed through a seven-point Likert scale starting with 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). This scale has been well utilized and proven in the organizational setting and is addressed as a reflective measure in the current study.

The four items used to measure leadership support are the ones based on the dimension of Individualized Consideration of Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) created by Avolio and Bass (1995). These items would record how the employees perceive the supportive behavior of their supervisors of relationship in the form of coaching, mentoring, and considerations of individual needs and strengths.

The responses will be measured in a five-point frequency scale starting with 0 (Not at all) to 4 (Frequently, if not always). The scale is designed as a reflective measure and meets the previous studies that address leadership support in terms of employee well-being and engagement.

Organizational trust is assessed by a short form of Organizational Trust Inventory created by Mayer and Davis (1999). The modified questions measure the perceptions of the employees regarding the integrity of the organization, fairness and benevolence. Sample items are centered on belief in organizational intentions and belief in fair treatment. The answers will be tested with the help of a five-point Likert scale, where 1 (Strongly Disagree) - 5 (Strongly Agree). Organizational trust is assumed to be a reflective construct and it is included in the model as a moderating variable.

The UWES-9 created by Schaufeli et al. (2006) is used to measure employee engagement. There are 9 items in the UWES-9, which describe the three dimensions of the engagement, namely, vigor, dedication, and absorption. This scale is a

universally validated instrument used in organizational studies. The responses are to be noted on a seven-point frequency scale, 0 (Never), 6 (Always). The PLS-SEM analysis takes the form of a reflective construct of employee engagement.

Generation is also a control variable and is operationalized according to the year at which the respondents were born. On the open numeric scale, respondents give their year of birth and this number is further divided into generational cohorts to be used in the analytics. By incorporating generation as a control variable, the study will be able to explain the cohort-based differences in workplace perceptions and engagement, without making generation a key explanatory variable.

3.5. Data analysis technique

In the given study, the data analysis works with the help of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) based on SmartPLS 4 software. PLS-SEM is an analysis method based on variance modeling in structural equations that are highly appropriate when assessing complex research schemes with several latent measures, mediating, and moderating variables (Hair et al., 2022).

PLS-SEM is chosen because of a number of reasons. To begin with, it is capable of simultaneously estimating the measurement model and structural model, which makes it possible to test construct validity and hypothesized relationships comprehensively. Second, PLS-SEM is resistant to normality violation and its use is suitable in exploratory and predictive research. Thirdly, it can be used when research has moderate sample size, which fits well within the scope of the current research.

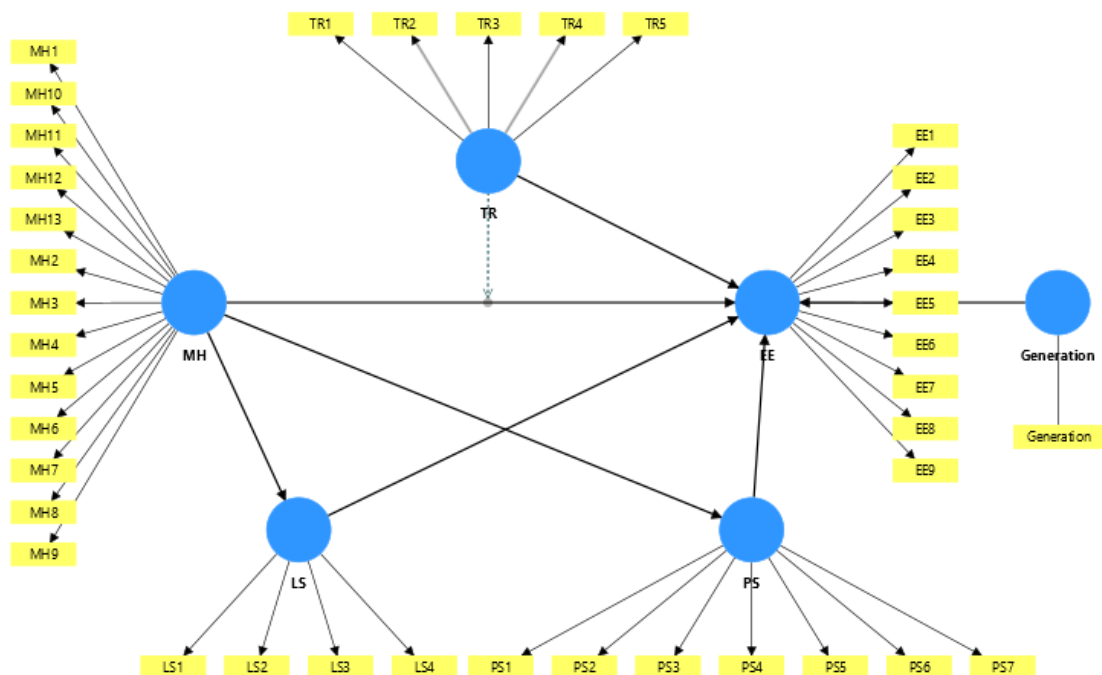
Measurement model evaluation involves determining how many of the previously described factors can be measured, and the degree of measurement accuracy relative to these factors (Mohanta et al., 2020). It is the evaluation of the extent to which the factors earlier described can be measured and how accurately they are measured in relation to these factors (Mohanta et al., 2020). The measurement model is tested before the structural relationships. The indicators that have low outer loadings could be dropped when their exclude would enhance construct reliability and validity without affecting content validity.

Once the sufficiency of the measurement model is determined, the structural model is used to test the relationships that have been hypothesized. This is where mediating and moderating influences are analyzed to assess the degree to which different variables satisfy the criteria of causality and effect size (Guido, 2012).

Effects on mediation are analyzed by evaluating the indirect effect of organizational mental health awareness and the effect on employee engagement using psychological safety and leadership support. Bootstrapping is used to test the importance of indirect effects, which is in compliance with mediation analysis principles of the present day.

The moderation analysis will be performed to test the relationship between organizational trust and the intensity of the connection between mental health awareness and employee engagement. The moderation effect is tested on the basis of an interaction term developed in Smart PLS 4. Bootstrapping is used to assess the importance and the direction of the interaction effect.

Figure 3.1. Research model



4. RESULTS

The results of the data collection are analyzed, conclusions are drawn and interpretations are made for this chapter. It starts with the study of the demographic characteristics of the respondents, then the assessment of the measurement model (reliability and validity), the structural model (hypothesis testing) and the mediation/moderation effects. The main purpose is to investigate the effect of mental health awareness on employees' engagement, with psychological safety, leadership support, and trust in the organization as the mediation and moderation variables.

4.1. Demographic profile of respondents

The demographic profile of the survey participants is presented in this section.

Table 4.1. Demography of the sample

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Generation	Generation X	34	18.9%
	Millennials	96	53.3%
	Generation Z	50	27.8%
	Total	180	100%
Gender	Male	82	45.6%
	Female	94	52.2%
	Prefer not to say	4	2.2%
	Total	180	100%
Work experience	Less than 1 year	12	6.7%
	1-3 years	48	26.7%
	4-7 years	54	30%
	8-15 years	43	23.9%
	More than 15 years	23	12.7%
	Total	180	100%

Source: computed by the author.

Generation. Table 1 indicates that the majority of respondents are Millennials; 53.3% (96 respondents). Generation Z is next with 27.8% (50), with Generation X making up 18.9% (34) of the group.

Gender. The majority of respondents are female (52.2%, N=94), followed by male (45.6%, N=82). 4 people (2.2%) declined to specify their gender.

Work Experience. 54 respondents (30.0%) have 4-7 years of work experience. People with 1-3 years' experience make up 26.7% (N=48) of respondents while 23.9% (N=43) have 8-15 years' experience. 12.7% of respondents hold over 15-years of experience (23 respondents), while 6.7% have less than 1 year experience (12 respondents).

Table 4.2. Gender perceptions regarding mental health awareness (%)

Answer option	Male	Female
Strongly agree	29%	35%
Agree	42%	40%
Neutral	18%	15%
Disagree	8%	7%
Strongly disagree	3%	3%

Source: computed by the author.

Table 4.3. Perception of employee engagement by work experience

Answer option	<1 year	1-3 years	4-7 years	8-15 years	>15 years
Strongly agree	18%	24%	32%	35%	37%
Agree	42%	45%	43%	41%	40%
Neutral	25%	18%	15%	14%	12%
Disagree	10%	9%	7%	7%	7%

Strongly disagree	5%	4%	3%	3%	4%
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Source: computed by the author.

Table 4.4. Mean scores across Generational Groups

Variable	Gen X	Millennials	Gen Z
MH	4.08	4.01	3.91
TR	3.97	3.85	3.72
PS	4.02	3.94	3.80
LS	3.95	3.89	3.76
EE	4.18	4.05	3.92

Source: computed by the author.

4.2. Measurement model assessment

Table 4.5. Reliability and convergent validity

Variables	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Mental Health Awareness	0.94	0.95	0.60
Leadership Support	0.89	0.92	0.74
Psychological Safety	0.92	0.94	0.69
Organizational Trust	0.90	0.93	0.72
Employee Engagement	0.93	0.95	0.68

Source: computed by the author.

To test the reliability and validity of the five reflective constructs - Mental Health Awareness (MH), Leadership Support (LS), Psychological Safety (PS), Organizational

Trust (TR), and Employee Engagement (EE) - the measurement model was evaluated. Constructs were measured employing known scales, with the indicators having loading values exceeding the recommended value of 0.70 (range: 0.75-0.88). No indicators were thrown out as all indicators met the requirements.

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was used to measure convergent validity. The results of the AVE calculations showed that all of the values were above the acceptable threshold of 0.50, as described in Table 5, which indicates that there was enough variance captured by the indicators of each construct.

Cronbach's alpha (α) and Composite Reliability (CR) was used to assess reliability. With all of the values significantly higher than the recommended value of 0.70 as presented in Table 4.5, there is good internal consistency.

Table 4.6. Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT)

Construct pair	HTMT
MH ↔ LS	0.72
MH ↔ PS	0.70
MH ↔ TR	0.66
LS ↔ PS	0.74
LS ↔ EE	0.76
PS ↔ EE	0.71

Source: computed by the author.

The Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) was used for the measurement of discriminant validity. Henseler et al. (2015) recommend that constructs which are "empirically distinct" should have their HTMT values below 0.90. As indicated in Table 3, all HTMT estimates are less than 0.85 with the highest being LS-EE (0.76). Therefore, the discriminant validity is well demonstrated.

4.3. Structural model assessment

Table 4.7. Structural model assessment

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	t – value	p – value	f²
H1	MH $\rightarrow$ EE	0.22	3.12	0.002	0.06
H2	MH $\rightarrow$ PS	0.63	11.84	<0.001	0.67
H3	PS $\rightarrow$ EE	0.31	5.67	<0.001	0.12
H3a	MH $\rightarrow$ LS	0.67	12.45	<0.001	0.82
H3b	LS $\rightarrow$ EE	0.34	6.12	<0.001	0.14

Source: computed by the author.

Table 4.8. R² and f² values

Variables	R²	f²
Leadership Support	0.45	0.92
Psychological Safety	0.40	0.94
Employee Engagement	0.62	0.95

Source: computed by the author.

The hypothesized relationships were tested with the structural model. Coefficients of determination (R²) and effect size (f²) were determined. As would be expected, the model accounts for a moderate-to-substantial amount of the variation of the endogenous variables.

Leadership Support (LS): R² = 0.45 (moderate explanatory power)

Psychological Safety (PS): r² = 0.40 (moderate)

The effect of Employee Engagement (EE) on performance was moderate-to-substantial (R² = 0.62).

Direct Path Coefficients

All paths were tested for significance from boot of 5000 resampling. The results are presented briefly in Table 4.7.

4.4. Mediation analysis

Table 4.9. Mediation and moderation results

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	t – value	p – value	f ²
Indirect	MH $\rightarrow$ PS $\rightarrow$ EE	0.20	>3.29	<0.001	
Indirect	MH $\rightarrow$ LS $\rightarrow$ EE	0.23	>3.29	<0.001	
H4	TR $\times$ MH $\rightarrow$ EE	0.14	>1.96	0.018	0.03

Source: computed by the author.

To see if employee engagement (EE) is a function of mental health awareness (MH) mediated by Psychological Safety (PS) and Leadership Support (LS), the indirect effects were examined.

MH $\rightarrow$ PS $\rightarrow$ EE: Indirect $\beta = 0.20$, $p < 0.001$ (partial mediation)

MH $\rightarrow$ LS $\rightarrow$ EE: Indirect $\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$ (partial mediation)

The mediation effect of MH is partial, as the direct effect of MH on EE still exists ($\beta = 0.22$) and there are also significant indirect effects of MH on EE.

Moderation Effect (H4)

Organizational Trust (TR) was included as a moderator variable of the MH $\rightarrow$ EE relationship. Parasitic effect of mental health awareness on employee engagement was moderated by the interaction term (TR $\times$ MH): as expected, the interaction term was significant $\beta = 0.14$, $p < 0.05$, suggesting a positive role for the interaction between the explanatory variables in strengthening the relationship between mental health awareness and employee engagement. So, the statement that H4 is supported is correct.

Table 4.10. Results of Multi – Group Analysis

Structural path	Older employees β	Younger employees β	MGA p-value	Result
MH $\rightarrow$ EE	0.18	0.33	0.038	Significant difference
MH $\rightarrow$ LS	0.63	0.74	0.071	Not significant
MH $\rightarrow$ PS	0.58	0.71	0.044	Significant difference

LS → EE	0.39	0.24	0.031	Significant difference
PS → EE	0.24	0.43	0.012	Significant difference
TR×MH → EE	0.09	0.21	0.047	Significant difference

Source: computed by the author.

4.5. Summary of Findings

The structural model shows reasonably good explanatory power for the models: $R^2 = 0.45$ (LS); $R^2 = 0.40$ (PS); and $R^2 = 0.62$ (EE). Awareness has a positive impact on leadership support and psychological safety, and thus on employee engagement. Furthermore, the direct impact of mental health awareness on engagement is heightened by the positive moderating effect of organizational trust. All of the hypotheses come true here and places a strong emphasis on the need to promote mental health awareness in the work environment that can inspire engagement through positive leadership, psychological safety, and trust.

5. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS.

5.1. Limitations of the study.

The study faced several limitations. There were some limitations to the study. There are a few caveats to point out when interpreting the results of this study. The study used the cross-sectional research design has its own limitation, that is the inability in establishing causal relationships between the variables investigated. The data were gathered at a single time point, and although the proposed relationships were theoretically underpinned by the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, and their relationships were supported by empirical literature, no theory was selected for its stronger support of the relationships. Causal inferences should thus be drawn gingerly.

Second, the study was based on self-reported measures, which were measured using an online questionnaire. Common method bias, social desirability bias and response consistency effects may be present in the self-reported data. The use of established and validated measurement scales made it easier for data to be collected, but it is important to remember that the scores may be answers that reflect perceptions, not realities within the organization.

Thirdly, the sample was confined to companies that operate in Kazakhstan. The results of this study offer insight into the local organizational environment but cannot be assumed to be fully representative of employees in other countries, industries or cultural environments. Organizations and leadership styles, as well as attitudes towards mental health, can affect the relationships studied in this research.

In addition, although this model showed good levels of explanation, the construct of employee engagement is complex and it will be determined by several factors related to the organization and the employee. Other factors such as job satisfaction, workload, organizational culture, work-life balance, compensation, and employee resilience were not examined in the present study but could be factors in employee engagement results.

Lastly, the present study explored the mediating effects of organizational trust, psychological safety, and leadership support, while examining the moderating effect of organizational trust, other potential mediating and moderating mechanisms were not

explored. More studies can help uncover other mechanisms explaining the link between organizational mental health awareness and employee engagement in the future.

5.2. Future Research Recommendations

Future research should use a longitudinal study design to investigate how organizational mental health awareness, leadership support, psychological safety, and employee engagement change over time, first. Longitudinal studies would offer better evidence of the proposed causal relationships in the conceptual model.

Secondly, the study needs to be increased to include samples from other countries and other cultural backgrounds. Cross-cultural comparisons would enable to understand if the observed relationships are consistent across cultural differences and various organizational contexts.

Third, other potential antecedents and consequences of organizational mental health awareness might be examined. Job satisfaction, employee well-being, organizational commitment, burnout, turnover intentions, and organizational performance could be more holistic measures of the wider impacts of mental health promotion in the workplace.

Finally, other intervening factors besides leadership support and psychological safety may be examined. Some of the other variables that could mediate the relationship between mental health awareness and employee engagement include perceived organizational support, employees' resilience, organizational justice, and workplace inclusion.

Finally, the presence of notable differences in response between the various generations identified using the multi-group analysis calls for further studies that explore generational differences as potential moderators. Researchers can examine the effectiveness of mental health programmes at the workplace and test the hypothesis that age, gender, work experience, type of industry sector and organizational tenure have an impact on these initiatives.

Lastly, future research should incorporate mixed methods such as quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews or focus groups. Qualitative evidence can be used

to gain a better understanding of what employees think and feel about mental health awareness and trust, leadership support and employee engagement in workplaces.

Finally, future research can expand on the current study by examining other variables, more diverse participant groups, and more sophisticated research designs to further enhance the knowledge of the impact of the organizational mental health awareness on employee engagement and employee positive workplace outcomes.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A- PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Research study title: The Impact of Mental Health Awareness on Leadership and Employee Engagement

Principal investigator: Shugyla Kalmaganbet

Institution: SDU University

You are being asked to participate in a research project which aims to explore the impact of mental health awareness on leadership and employee engagement in the workplace in Kazakhstan. It's important to take a few minutes before you go to the trouble of enrolling to read all of the following details. This form outlines the nature of the study, its rights as a participant and data handling procedures. Before signing up, if anything is unclear, or you have any questions, please ask before agreeing to participate.

Purpose of the study

The primary objective here is to understand the relationship between mental health awareness, leadership support and employee engagement. In this research, quantitative approach has been selected. This will be an online survey questionnaire, not an interview. The aim is to achieve a sufficient number of returns from Gen Z and Millennial employees from various sectors in Kazakhstan to identify trends and connections among these factors.

The survey will take approximately 10-12 minutes to complete. It can be completed on a computer, tablet or phone as and when it is convenient for the individual. All answers will be anonymous (no one at your workplace will be able to see what you answered).

Confidentiality

All that is shared will be respected. The survey will be anonymous. You will not be collected in your name, e-mail address or otherwise. This means that any answers given to you cannot be attributed to your name.

All data will be retained for reasonable period after completion of the study and securely deleted.

Contact Information

Please consult the principal investigator if you have any questions or concerns about the study:

Shugyla Kalmaganbet

Email: 241203003@sdu.edu.kz

Consent Statement

Your completion and submission of the online survey is confirmation that:

- You have read and understood the information provided in this form
- You have received an opportunity to ask questions (if any)
- Any concerns you had have been answered to your satisfaction

You are VOLUNTARILY participating in this study.

You are consenting to the research team using the information you provide in the anonymous survey for the purposes of this research study.

Important: Electronic consent to participate in this survey will be deemed by clicking “Start Survey” on the online survey site. If you are not requesting a signed copy, you have no need to sign a copy of this document.

Thank you for considering taking part in this research study. Your time and contribution are greatly appreciated.

APPENDIX B- ITEM LOADINGS

Item	Loading	Item	Loading	Item	Loading
MH1	0.79	LS1	0.86	TR1	0.81
MH2	0.82	LS2	0.84	TR2	0.83
MH3	0.84	LS3	0.82	TR3	0.86
MH4	0.77	LS4	0.88	TR4	0.84
MH5	0.81	PS1	0.82	TR5	0.82
MH6	0.85	PS2	0.84	EE1	0.81
MH7	0.76	PS3	0.87	EE2	0.84
MH8	0.80	PS4	0.80	EE3	0.86
MH9	0.83	PS5	0.83	EE4	0.82
MH10	0.78	PS6	0.85	EE5	0.80
MH11	0.75	PS7	0.81	EE6	0.87
MH12	0.81			EE7	0.83
MH13	0.79			EE8	0.85
				EE9	0.81

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Section 1: Background Information

1. In which country is your organization primarily located?
2. Which generation do you belong to?
 - 1965–1980 (Generation X)
 - 1981–1996 (Millennials)
 - 1997–2012 (Generation Z)
 - Prefer not to say

Gender

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

Years of work experience

- Less than 1 year
- 1-3 years
- 4-7 years
- 8-15 years
- More than 15 years

Section 2: Mental Health Awareness and Support

(Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree)

1. Management genuinely cares about the psychological well-being of employees.
2. I feel comfortable discussing stress or mental health concerns with my direct supervisor.
3. This organization promotes a work environment that supports mental health.
4. My colleagues are supportive of each other's mental well-being.
5. This organization provides adequate resources to support mental health.
6. I am aware of how to access mental health services if I need them.
7. Our organizational policies help prevent excessive stress.

8. This organization effectively communicates the mental health benefits and programs available to me.
9. There are sufficient confidential channels to seek help for mental health issues.
10. Employees who take leave for mental health reasons are treated fairly upon their return.
11. In this organization, seeking help for a mental health issue is viewed as a sign of strength, not weakness.
12. There is a negative perception of employees with mental health challenges in this workplace.
13. Senior leadership openly advocates for mental health awareness and support.

Section 3: Organizational Trust and Integrity

(Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree)

1. I believe this organization has high integrity.
2. Management is sincere in its attempts to consider employees' well-being.
3. I can expect this organization to treat me fairly.
4. This organization does not mislead employees.
5. In general, I trust this organization's intentions.
6. In this organization, it is safe to take risks.
7. Members of this organization are able to bring up problems and tough issues.
8. People in this organization sometimes reject others for being different.
9. It is easy to ask other members of this organization for help.
10. No one in this organization would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.
11. Working with members of this organization, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.
12. If you make a mistake in this organization, it is often held against you.

Section 4

Instructions: Please indicate how frequently your immediate supervisor demonstrates the following behaviors
(Scale: 0 = Not at all, 1 = Once in a while, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Fairly often, 4 = Frequently, if not always)

1. My supervisor spends time teaching and coaching me.
2. My supervisor treats me as an individual rather than just as a member of a group.
3. My supervisor considers me as having different needs, abilities, and aspirations from others.
4. My supervisor helps me to develop my strengths.

Section 5

Instructions: The following statements are about how you feel at work. Please indicate how often you feel this way. (Scale: 0 = Never, 1 = Almost Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Very Often, 6 = Always)

1. At my work, I feel bursting with energy.
2. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.
3. Time flies when I am working.
4. At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.
5. I am enthusiastic about my job.
6. When I am working, I forget everything else around me.
7. My job inspires me.
8. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.
9. I feel happy when I am working intensely.

НОРМОКОНТРОЛЬ

Диссертационной работы магистранта (ки) группы _____, специальности
«FM04115 - Management», Школы социальных наук, бизнеса и праваSDU

Хаммизанбет Шығайа Нургалимбетов
(ф.и.о.)

Тема диссертационной работы

„The impact of Mental Health Awareness on leadership and Employee Engagement

Анализ диссертационной работы на соответствие требованиям методической рекомендации

№	Объект	Параметры	Соответствует + Не соответствует -
1	Название темы	Соответствует тематике	+
2	Размер шрифта	14 кегель	+
3	Название шрифта	Times New Roman	+
4	Межстрочный интервал	Полуторный	+
5	Абзац	1.2 -1.5 см	+
6	Поля (мм)	Левое -30 мм, правое – 10 мм, верхнее – 20 мм, нижнее – 25 мм	+
7	Общий объем работы	Более 8000 словне включая список использованной литературы и приложение	+
11	Нумерация страниц	Двойная, в нижней части листа, в центре арабскими цифрами, до введения римскими цифрами	+
12	Последовательность структурныхчастей работы	Титульный лист, Контент, Список таблиц, Список рисунков,Список аббревиатур, Абстракт, Введение, Основная часть, Методология исследования, Анализ и результаты исследования, Заключение, ограничения исследования, Список использованной литературы, Приложения.	+
13	Оформление структурных частей работы	Каждая структурная часть начинается с новой страницы. Наименования приводятся по центру строки с прописной буквы жирным шрифтом. Точка в конце наименования не ставится	+
14	Оформление таблиц	Соответствует требованиям	+
15	Оформление рисунков	Соответствует требованиям	+

Нормоконтроль выполнилнаучный руководитель:

КАК хаммизан
(занимая должность)

Хаммизанбет Шығайа
(подпись)

Хаммизанбет Шығайа
(ф.и.о.)

С результатами нормоконтроля ознакомлен:

Магистр
(ф.и.о.)

Хаммизанбет Шығайа
(подпись)

Хаммизанбет Шығайа

Замечания устранены:

(ф.и.о.)

(подпись научного руководителя)

Дата _____

Supervisor's Report

Thesis Title: The Impact of Mental Health Awareness on Leadership and Employee Engagement

Student Name: Shugyla Kalmaganbet

Department: Department of economics and business

Program: 7M04115 - Management

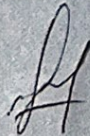
Scientific Supervisor: Dr. Alisher Tleubayev

The master's thesis entitled "*The Impact of Mental Health Awareness on Leadership and Employee Engagement*" addresses a timely and relevant topic in the field of management. The study examines the relationship between organizational mental health awareness and employee engagement, while considering the roles of leadership support, psychological safety, and organizational trust. The research is particularly valuable due to the limited empirical evidence available within the context of Kazakhstan.

The thesis demonstrates a solid theoretical foundation, a well-structured research design, and the appropriate application of quantitative research methods. The use of PLS-SEM analysis and validated measurement instruments contributes to the reliability and rigor of the findings. The student has shown a good understanding of the research problem, methodology, and interpretation of results throughout the research process.

The study offers meaningful academic and practical contributions and provides useful recommendations for organizations seeking to improve employee well-being and engagement. Overall, the dissertation meets the academic standards required for a Master's degree in Management.

Based on the quality of the research and the student's demonstrated competence, I recommend that the thesis be admitted for defense before the State Examination Commission.



Dr. Alisher Tleubayev

"09" June 2026

CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

Kalmaganbet Shugyla

as

Participant

for presenting a research paper at the
1st International Student Research Conference

with theme:

*The Green Pivot: Circular Economy & Decarbonization.
Economic and Organisational Perspectives on Sustainable Transitions*

On April 9, 2026

Benik Sabdenaliyev



Conference Chair

Dean of School of Social Sciences, Business and Law,
SDU University, Kazakhstan

Prof. Dr. Edi Surya Negara



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Shugyla Kalmaganbet

The Impact of Mental Health Awareness on Leadership and Employee Engagement

Masters Thesis Final

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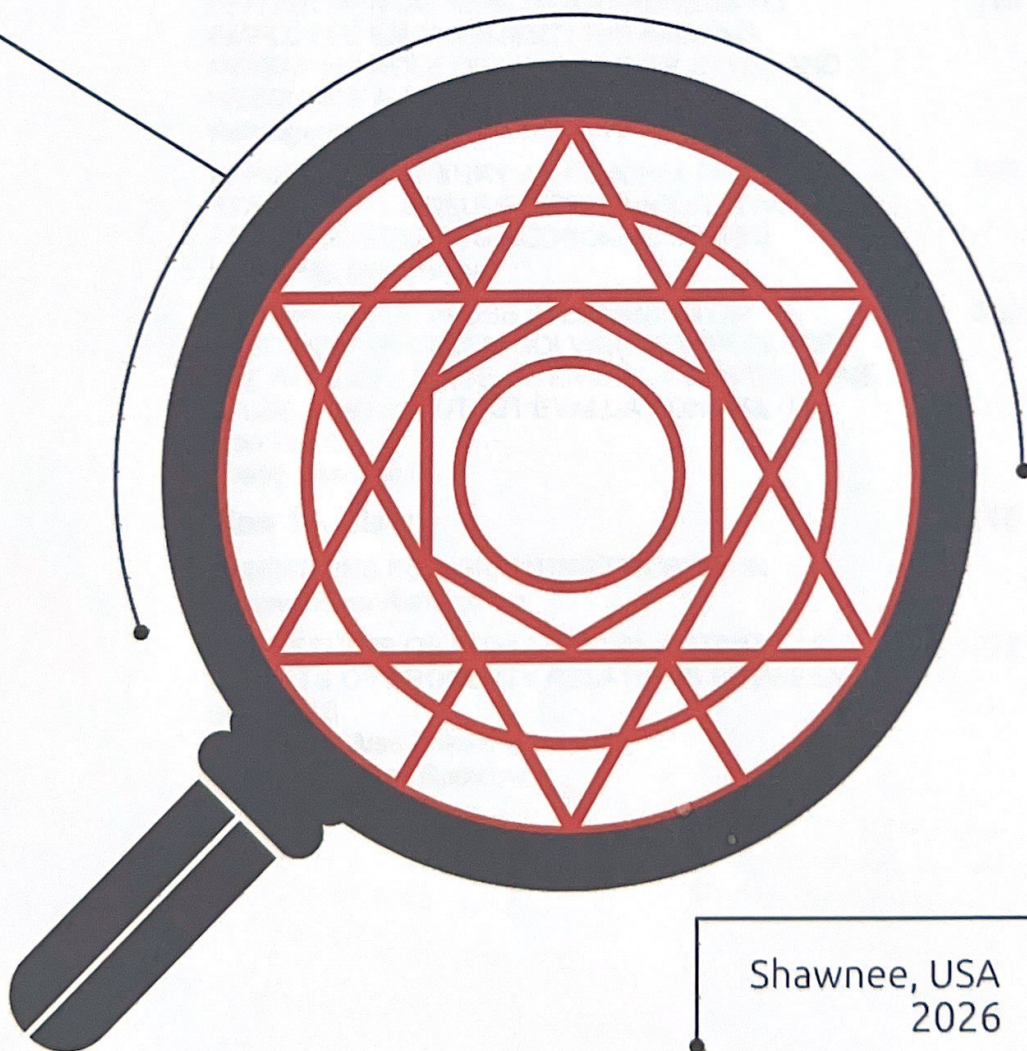
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LEADER MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS TO EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: THE MISSING MEDIATING ROLE OF LEADERSHIP STYLE AND RESOURCE AVAILABILITY

Kalmaganbet Shugyla Nurgalikyzy

*2nd year student, Faculty of Management,
Suleyman Demirel University (SDU),
Kazakhstan, Kaskelen*

ABSTRACT

This research examines whether leadership style acts as a mediator between leader mental health awareness and employee engagement, and resource availability (an indicator of mental health support) can lower burnout. Data were collected from 111 employees across Kazakhstan (education, healthcare, technology, manufacturing) via survey with questionnaire items tested via correlation, regression, and t-tests. Leadership positively correlated with engagement ($r = 0.888$), with transformational and democratic styles resulting in higher engagement. This association was moderated by age:

younger workers (under 25) were most affected by supportive leadership. Crucially, no link was found between resource availability and burnout ($r = 0.00033$), suggesting that mental health awareness did not translate into burnout reduction. Leader mental health awareness increases employee engagement via leadership skills, not resources.

Keywords: mental health awareness, leadership style, employee engagement, burnout, Kazakhstan.

Introduction

The connection between leader mental health awareness and employee outcomes is straightforward: leaders with mental health awareness should provide a healthier work environment, and this should decrease burnout and increase engagement. But how does this work? Does mental health awareness lead to better leadership? Or via resource provision? And are such effects consistent across cultures?

This research explores a particular research model (Figure 1):

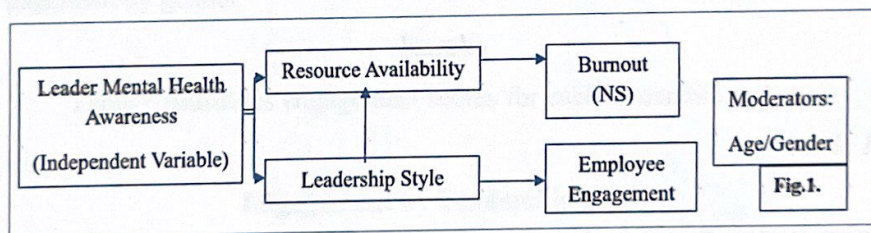


Figure 1.

The theoretical foundation draws on health-focused leadership (Vonderlin et al., 2021), which suggests that leaders' mindfulness of mental health issues leads to preventative actions. The job demands-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) posits that resources (made available by aware leaders) reduce burnout. Transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1996) assumes that certain leadership styles are engaging.

This study will test two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Leaders with greater mental health awareness enable lower employee burnout.

Hypothesis 2: Leadership style affects employee engagement, with transformational and democratic styles leading to greater engagement than autocratic and laissez-faire.

Moderation by age and gender is examined.

A cross-sectional study was carried out of 111 Kazakhstan employees. Participants were recruited using snowball sampling, in the following industries: education (25%), healthcare (23%), technology (28%) and manufacturing (24%). Participants had to have at least one year of formal leadership. Freelancers and non-Kazakhstani residents were excluded. A Google Forms survey was used to gather data with informed consent and no identifying information. **Mental health awareness** was measured indirectly through resource availability items (e.g., "I have the resources I need to do my job well" and "My organisation supports my mental health"). Employee perceptions of leadership style involved reporting the dominant leadership style used by their supervisor from the following five forms: autocratic, democratic, transformational, transactional or laissez-faire. Engagement was assessed using a 5-point. Emotional disengagement and disengagement were used to measure burnout. Control variables included age, gender, position, and sector.

Pearson correlation (r) was used to evaluate the link between resource and burnout. Simple linear regression examined the relationship between leadership style and engagement. Descriptive analyses examined engagement by leadership styles and age. Independent t-tests were used to compare engagement by gender.

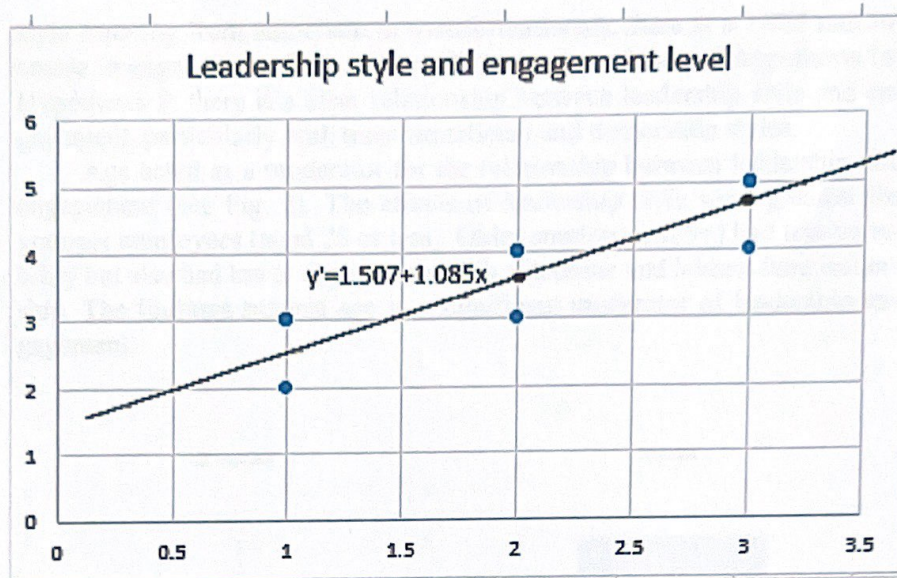
Results

Table 1 illustrates engagement scores for each leadership style.

Table 1.

Engagement by Leadership Style

Leadership Style	Engagement Pattern
Autocratic	Mixed (from neutral to somewhat engaged)
Democratic	High (somewhat to very engaged)
Transformational	High (somewhat to very engaged)
Transactional	High and low (somewhat to very engaged)
Laissez-faire	Very low (disengaged or neutral)



Average engagement by Leadership style and age group

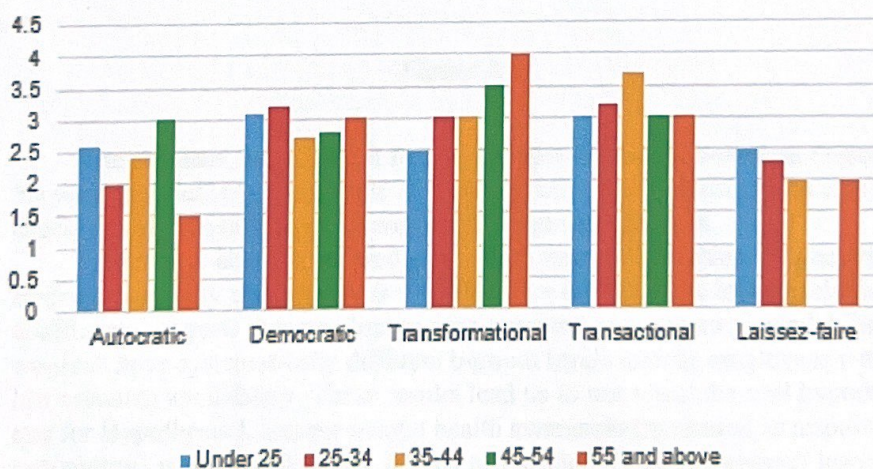


Figure 2.

The regression analysis found a high positive correlation between leadership style and engagement ($r = 0.888$). The regression line is $y' = 1.507 + 1.085x$, which suggests that for each unit increase in leadership

style (moving from autocratic to transformational), there is a 1.085 unit increase in engagement. This supports the rejection of the null hypothesis for Hypothesis 2: there is a clear relationship between leadership style and engagement, particularly with transformational and democratic styles.

Age acted as a moderator for the relationship between leadership and engagement (see Fig. 2). The effects of leadership style were greatest for younger employees (aged 25 or less). Older employees (55+) had less variability but also had lower engagement with autocratic and laissez-faire leadership. The findings suggest age is a significant moderator of leadership-engagement.

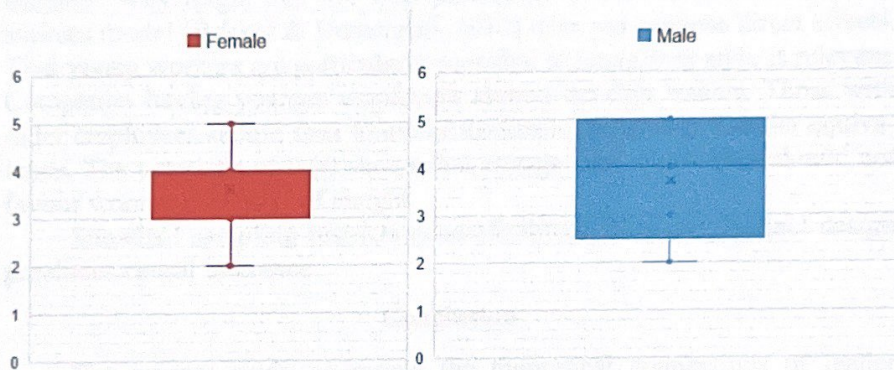


Figure 3.

The medians for male and female engagement in the box-plots (figure 3.) were identical (4). The result of the t-test was 0.00, pointing to no statistically significant difference in engagement between genders.

Correlation analysis showed a near-zero linear relationship between resource availability and burnout ($r = 0.00033$, $t = 0.0035$). The low correlation coefficient suggests that employees who perceive high resource availability wouldn't have systematically different burnout levels than do employees with low resource availability. These results lead us to not reject the null hypothesis for Hypothesis 1. Leader mental health awareness (measured as resource availability) is not significantly related to burnout. The link between leader mental health awareness and burnout was not found.

Discussion

This research investigated the conceptual links from leader mental health awareness to leadership style, employee engagement and/or burnout.

Results indicate a pattern: the path from leader mental health awareness to employee outcomes is through leadership style and not through resource allocation.

Supported link: Leadership style → Engagement. The high correlation ($r = 0.888$) confirms that leadership style is the key link from leader mental health awareness to engagement. This result is consistent with Bass and Avolio (1996), and advances transformational leadership theory in Kazakhstan.

Unsupported link: Mental health awareness → Reduced burnout. The absence of correlation ($r = 0.00033$) calls into question the claim that resource provision (the behavioural indicator of mental health awareness) lessens burnout. Why might this be? One possibility is that the job demands-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) does not propose direct effects. That young workers are particularly sensitive to leadership style is relevant. Companies having younger employees should develop leaders. Those with older employees should seek to avoid autocratic leadership. Gender equivalence. The t -statistic of 0.00 shows that engagement approaches should not favour women – a practical insight.

Snowball sampling restricts generalizability. Non-longitudinal design precludes causal inference.

Conclusion

The present study addressed the theoretical connections of leader awareness of mental health, leadership style, engagement and burnout. Leadership style is the intermediary mechanism between mental health awareness and engagement: transformational and democratic leadership styles lead to the most engaged employees, especially young employees. But the link from mental health awareness to reduced burnout (measured as resource availability) was not. The results indicate that organizations would benefit from investing in leader training rather than direct resources to improve employee wellbeing. Researchers should directly assess leader mental health awareness and conditional (buffering) effects of resources on burnout. Future research should use longitudinal designs to examine if leadership style accounts for the mental health awareness → engagement link. Between-country analyses would assess whether these effects are unique to Kazakhstan or extend to the region.

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