

The Impact of Psychological Safety on Retention: Realising Mitigation Potential In Organizational Crisis

Michael W. Dabeck

An organisational crisis is looming across multiple Western militaries. Over the last several years, commands have struggled to meet their objectives in recruiting and retention. The inability to dissuade voluntary turnover of these service members presents both a loss in the financial capital committed and, more detrimentally, a loss in experiential knowledge across an organisation. This loss of experiential knowledge is not just a statistic; it is a potential blow to the very core of military effectiveness.

This research examines the mitigating potential of psychological safety's influence on retention. Underpinned by theory and established literature, the study formed five central propositions to interrogate the research question. Through the development of the research model, each proposition was then assessed in a progressive exploratory study.

The research findings establish the mitigating presence of psychological safety's mediating influence on the psychological climate. Within the established servant leader and retention relationship, the psychological climate is seen to moderate the core mediating mechanisms of team cohesion, job satisfaction, and embeddedness with their improvement directly related to improved retention rates. These findings were found to be legitimate and applicable across the assessed subgroup populations.

The article concludes with recommendations, derived from this research, that allow for the desired organisational change through minor behavioural adjustments at all levels of the military. By creating a psychological sense of safety among service members, mitigation of organisational retention crises may be realised.

In an era where established rules-based international order and security are being challenged across the continuum of great power competition, the requirement for military credibility remains paramount. The facets of credibility that influence military might and the projection of power it allows are extensive. One contributing aspect is the requirement for militaries to be manned proportional to their doctrinal employment and specified task organisations. Across multiple Western countries, however, an organisational crisis is looming. In recent years, the ability of commands to recruit new talent and retain existing members has failed to meet its objectives at an alarming and unprecedented rate (Government of Ireland, 2022c).



While the scale and scope of this crisis vary from nation to nation, the heart of the matter remains the same.

With respect to retention, voluntary turnover among service members is not only to be expected but also planned and prepared for. However, the current shift beyond these planned retention parameters poses a significant risk to the military and its designed efficacy. Defence Departments worldwide invest considerably in not only the initial training of their respective service members but also in tailoring their continued development. The inability to dissuade voluntary turnover of these service members presents both a loss in the financial capital committed and, more detrimentally, a loss in experiential knowledge across the organisation. This loss of experiential knowledge is not just a statistic; it is a potential blow to the very core of military effectiveness. The experientially based judgement and decision-making of military leaders at all levels can be directly associated with everything from unit performance to the loss, or preservation, of life, to the success or failure of operations and strategy as the respective means and ways to political ends.

The criticality of achieving desired retention rates is at a fever pitch. Significant resources have been expended in recent years to better understand this problem set, yet the issue not only persists but deepens. The complexity and multiplicity of the interdependent factors of retention are immense and pose a potentially wicked problem¹. This research examines the mitigation potential of psychological safety as one of these factors in providing an immediate ability to enhance organisational change and further improve retention.

Background

This research took place in a transitional and transformative moment across multiple militaries. Amidst the uncertainty of this turbulent environment, the United States Department of Defense and the Irish Defence Forces (DF) have sought organisational change in their approaches to culture and climate. An example of this change can be seen particularly in the US Army's implementation of a series of initiatives under the *People First* approach to organisational change (US Army, 2023). This approach builds upon the US Army's 2019 *The Army People Strategy* document in looking to "define, drive, and align our culture with our vision of cohesive teams" (p.12) and seeks to eliminate corrosive behaviour within the ranks. Similarly, the Government of Ireland published the Commission on the Defence Forces and its High-Level Action Plan, both of which highlighted the need for cultural change within the force (Government of Ireland, 2022a, 2022b). The recognition across both nations only further exemplifies the scale and scope of cultural challenges.

The cultural transformation proposed above falls, in execution, to the leaders within the respective organisations. While seemingly a heroic task, a focus on leadership theory and climate presents the ability to aid the organisation in realising this transformation. The ramifications of doing so may aid not only in allowing for organisational change but also in improving retention as well. The implication of realising this potential then allows for a proportionate and direct increase in the service's capability and credibility and retains a principal importance in enacting national security policy.

¹ As introduced by Rittel and Webber in 1973, wicked problems are those that are "ill-defined and rely upon elusive political judgment for resolution" (p. 160). The ambiguous definition of wicked problems creates further difficulty in clearly stating a plan of action and in determining when the problem has been solved.

Research Aim and Scope

The aim of this paper is to investigate the impact of psychological safety in the Irish DF and US Army by analysing pertinent literature and expanding upon it. To do this, the research sought to answer the question: to what extent does psychological safety influence the servant leadership and retention relationship? A further comparison between samples within the armed forces of each nation allowed perspective beyond nepotism² biases toward current organisations. Recruitment of future officers and enlisted personnel encompasses a broad range of societal, psychological, and economic factors and is outside this paper's scope. Similarly, the retention of senior officers does not align with the study's parameters. This research sought to conduct and analyse questionnaires of junior officers and use the results to refine and specify a focus group study. This approach best captured the knowledge and experiences of the target population. By employing a progressive and holistic approach to the executed research methodology, it was anticipated that a wealth of data encompassing various experiences, observations, and best practices would be found. These findings address the research question by improving psychological safety and its related retention outcomes.

The commitment of the Irish DF and the US Army to provide positive cultural change within each respective organisation finds its underpinning in the psychological climate instilled in their members. As such, the implications of this research span across both the DF and the US Army and show strong potential for further multinational application. Both militaries advance ethical and values-based leadership at all echelons of service (Irish Defence Forces, 2015; 2023; US Army, 2019b). This embodiment of leadership has been researched and 'known' for decades, yet the full potential in implementation has not been achieved. These leadership philosophies, however, do promote the tenants necessary for learning organisations to mature and develop. Only through continuous learning and agile and adaptive execution can organisations stay relevant (Edmondson, 2019). Amid a constantly evolving and uncertain global situation, and with complex domestic policy, the aspiration for military organisations to be learning organisations becomes more requirement than desire. Psychological safety sets the structural basis for building these organisations and aids in realising the full benefits of their espoused values.

PART ONE. Literature Review

The introduction above presented the background and context needed to establish the foundational basis for interrogating previous research. This Part expands upon this basis and examines literature pertinent to the research question. The focus of this research is to explore the elemental characteristics proposed to be critical to the retention rate crisis and their compositional aspects.

Context and possible underlying links are identified through engagement with existing literature to develop the theoretical research model. The conceptual framework selected for this literature review is comprised of several sections and allows for the use of deductive reasoning³, as seen in Figure 1.1. From an initially broad focus on leadership theory, the

² Nepotism refers to favouritism shown due to close relatedness; in this instance, the potential of favouritism to the organisation employing the author and the organisation supporting the research (Oxford, 2023b)

³ Deductive reasoning is a logical approach that moves from broad concepts and theory to specific conclusions. It is juxtaposed with inductive reasoning, which begins with specific observations and derives broader conclusions (Bhandari, 2022).

review uses this framework to introduce research propositions to be studied, with the discussion accordingly subdivided.

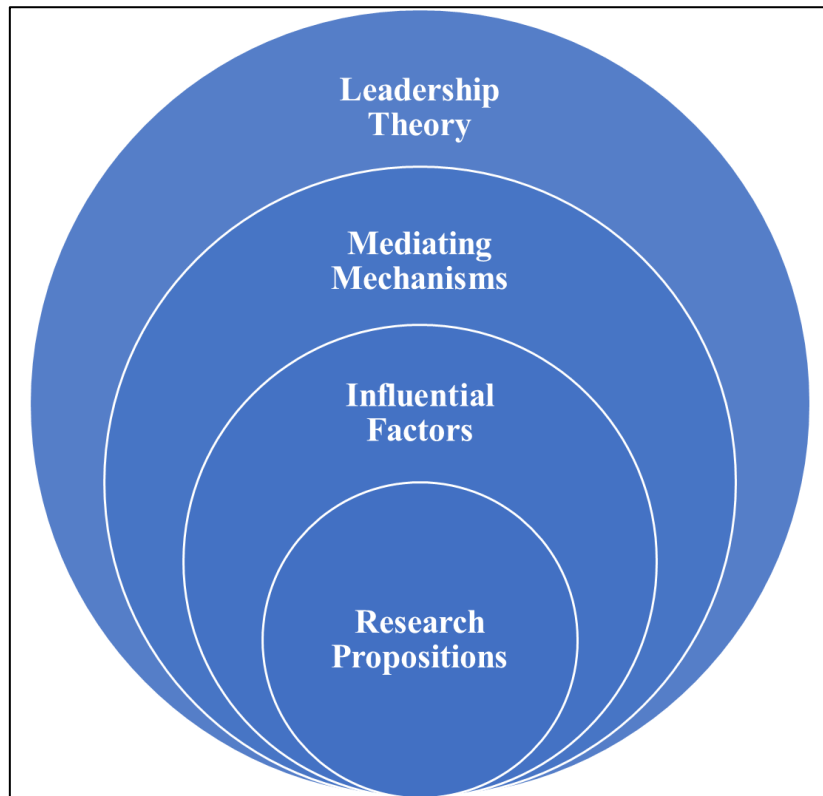


Figure 1.1: Deductive Conceptual Framework

Leadership Theory

Key to examining retention, specifically within the military context, is leadership. While the literature on leadership theory is extensive and splits itself between varying schools of thought and sub-theories, this review will focus on servant leadership theory as a lens to explore possible mitigating factors to military retention. The literature surrounding servant leadership suggests that the theory provides a basis for understanding the leader-follower relationship and its effect on an organisation. Through this understanding, an examination of mediating mechanisms between servant leadership and retention can also be reviewed.

The definitional understanding of leadership finds its roots in selection within the conceptual research paradigm. The assumptions and perceptions of leadership vary according to the lens through which the world is viewed. As discussed in Part Two, this research will take a pragmatic approach while focusing on the experiences and perspectives of the individual (Dugan, 2017; Crotty, 1998; Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). Through this lens, leadership can be seen as relational and requires specific attention to the interaction and influence between people (US Army, 2019; Irish Defence Forces, 2015; 2023; Dugan, 2017). Accordingly, both the US Army's *Leadership (ADP 6-22)* and The Irish Defence Forces' *Defence Forces Leadership Doctrine (DFDM-J2)* doctrinally define leadership as the activity of "influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization" (ADP 6-22, 2019, p. 1-13).

Leadership theory has evolved and adapted across history. The disciplinary progression has sought to refine and understand leadership from the initial great man and

trait theories to behavioural and situational theories to the more modern focus on transactional, transformational and authentic leadership theories. Modern study has seen an emphasis on the interaction of transactional and transformational leadership⁴. The literature suggests that an augmented approach blending the two leadership styles yields the greatest team performance (Avolio and Yarmmarino, 2002; Yarmmarino and Bass, 1990). This augmented approach allows for a more dynamic understanding of the versatility and motivation captured in leader-member exchange and outputs (Sparrowe and Liden, 1997).

Concurrent to this progression was the advancement of authentic leadership.⁵ Under this premise, a leader can be authentic while simultaneously being transactional, transformational, or employing the better-suited augmented approach (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Through the progression of leadership theory, illustrated in Figure 2.2, the application of augmented and authentic leadership allows for the catalytic expansion into servant leadership theory.

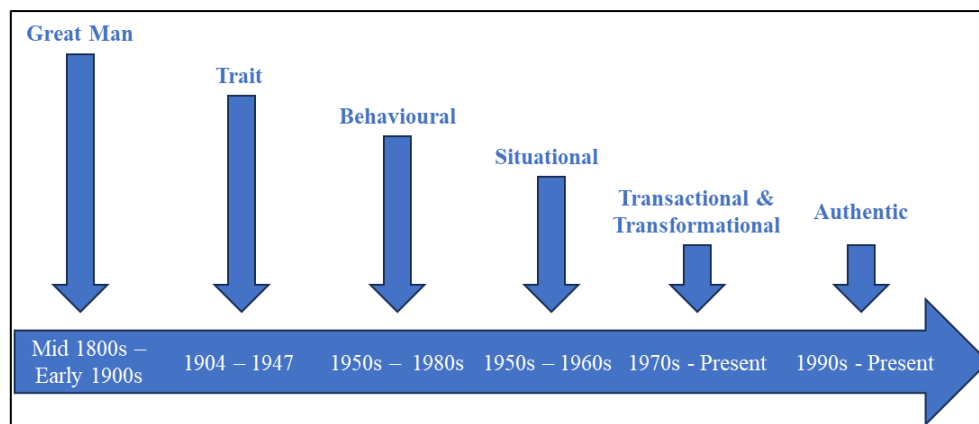


Figure 2.2: The Evolution of Formal Leadership Theory
(Adapted from Dugan, 2017)

While a definitive definition of servant leadership has yet to be agreed upon, the research presented will adopt the definition offered by Dr. Jim Laub. He defines servant leadership in the following way:

[it] is an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader ... promotes the valuing and development of people, the building of community, the practice of authenticity, the providing of leadership for the good of those led and the sharing of power and status for the common good of each individual, the total organisation and those served by the organisation. (Laub, 2004)

Laub's definition provides a basis for assessing the effects of a leader's actions. This definition helps to provide insight into the mentality that is required of servant leadership in that they

⁴ Transactional leadership stems from social exchange theory in trading "one thing for another [such as] jobs for votes" (p. 4) or "rewards for productivity" (Bass and Riggio, 2006, p. 3). Alternatively, transformational leaders inspire others to achieve extraordinary outcomes, often beyond what they intended or imagined possible, and in doing so, develop themselves as well (Bass and Riggio, 2006; Avolio and Bass, 2002).

⁵ To be an authentic leader, "one must know, accept, and remain true to oneself regardless of environmental contingencies" (Hughes, 2005). Similar to the espoused leadership frameworks of both the Irish Defence Forces and the US Army, authentic leaders act within their values, build relationships that allow for various viewpoints, and focus on their ability to develop those around them (Luthans and Avolio, 2003; Hughes, 2005).

must have a desire to serve first, and from this desire to serve comes the aspiration to lead others (Greenleaf, 1970). A central aspect of the motivation behind the drive to be a servant leader comes from the leaders' character (Page & Wong, 2000). The traits, values, and virtues that comprise the leader will stimulate their call to action and guide their decisions as they seek to better those they serve (Gandz et al., 2013). In doing so, the servant leader's character will attract followers.

The leader's action will also allow subordinates to want to interact with the leader as they perceive them to be of good character. Servant leaders' character, motivation, and actions set the foundation for the results and outcomes they can produce in their followers and organisations. The attributes of the servant leader set the basis for understanding the roots of the servant leadership and retention relationship within an organisation.

Huning et al. (2020) established a relationship between servant leadership and employee turnover intentions. Their research built upon the previously identified link between servant leadership and workplace attitudes and attachments as well as the research attributing those attitudes to turnover intentions (Allen & Griffeth, 2001; Barbutto & Wheeler, 2006; Hu & Liden, 2011; Griffeth et al., 2000; Walumbwa et al., 2010). The endeavours of servant leaders to demonstrate considerate behaviour have been associated with decreased turnover intentions while the leader's ability to foster a feeling of inclusion and construct a sense of cohesion establish strong connections and have a positive effect on retention (Huning et al., 2020; Jarmillo et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2004). The literature and research expanded and presented by Huning et al. (2020) establishes the servant leadership and retention relationship from which the mediating mechanisms between the two nodes can be explored.

Mediating Mechanisms

Through the empirical evidence provided by Huning et al. (2020), Team Cohesion, Job Satisfaction, and Embeddedness are found to mediate⁶ the relationship between servant leadership and turnover intentions, as seen in Figure 2.3. These mediating relationships reinforce the connectedness of servant leadership on retention and allow for a progression into examining possible moderating⁷ factors. The following section expands upon their work, introducing the mediators and providing a brief conceptual understanding before exploring their relationship to psychological climate.

⁶ A mediator lies on the causal pathway between *X* (the active variable) and *Y* (the target or outcome variable) and either partially or fully explains the process (how and why) by which they are related (Morrow, et al., 2022; Damyanov, 2023).

⁷ A moderator affects the relationship (interaction) between *X* and *Y* (e.g., changes the magnitude or direction of the effect) but does not form part of the causal chain linking them (Morrow, et al., 2022; Damyanov, 2023). Including mediators and moderators allows for the study of relationships between variables while avoiding biases.

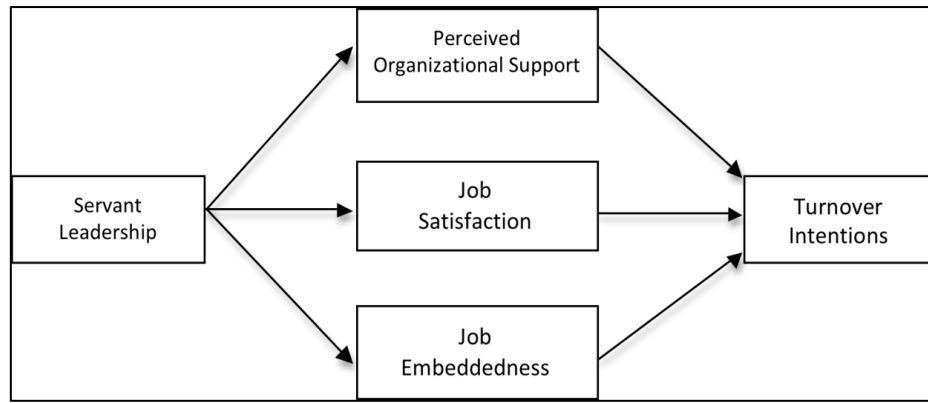


Figure 1.3: Relational Model Between Servant Leadership and Turnover Intentions
(Huning et al., 2020, p. 5)

Team Cohesion

Where Huning et al.'s research presented perceived organisational support, this research will take a synthesised reductive method in focusing on the aspect of perceived cohesion within the organisation as a support mechanism. Cohesion is often seen, like servant leadership, as a loose construct term used to define a collection of ideas in multiple domains (Forsyth, 2021). As such, it lends itself to various definitions seeking to interpret it. This research will use D. Cartwright's (1968) definition in saying that cohesion describes "the degree to which the members of the group desire to remain in their group" (p. 91). Cartwright describes this as a sense of "we-ness" in that the members of the team will begin to substitute the word "We" for "I" in talking about the group or its actions (1968). The heightened sense of "we" across the team creates a sensation of its own. This sensation embodies the collective essence and drive of the team, the "common spirit existing in the members of a group and inspiring enthusiasm" or *esprit de corps* (Webster, 2020).

In order to gain and maintain this *esprit de corps*, the leader must be able to value and develop the people within their organisation and build community. These areas of leadership fall directly in line with Laub's advancement within servant leadership theory in saying that the servant leader must "value people, develop people, build community, display authenticity, provide leadership, and share leadership" (2004, p. 9). Through this construct, the servant leadership to retention relationship is mediated by team cohesion. Team cohesion, through the advancement of "we" within the perceived ingroup, then also allows for a corresponding increase in job satisfaction.

Job Satisfaction

The concept of job satisfaction as a factor of retention is not novel. Employees with high job satisfaction tend to exhibit more loyalty and commitment to their organisation, resulting in longer tenures. Conversely, those who express dissatisfaction with their work situation are more likely to explore alternative employment opportunities (Ladelsky, 2014). In line with social exchange theory (Blau, 1986), when individuals are treated fairly and compensated proportionally, their performance increases and a propensity to remain committed to their company is fostered (Birtch et al., 2015).

Expanding upon this, Harden et al. (2018) posited that organisations where individuals felt that they were being developed, cared for, and valued had higher rates of job satisfaction

and decreased turnover (Huang and Lin, 2020). These aspects directly correlate to the attributes of the servant leader in that they seek to develop their subordinates and put their subordinates' needs above that of their own (Greenleaf, 1970). In doing so, the relationship between servant leadership and retention is mediated by job satisfaction. The heightened sense of job satisfaction simultaneously produces heightened job embeddedness due to the increased organisational commitment inherent within the valued and developed employee.

Embeddedness

Job embeddedness is “the contextual and perceptual forces constraining people to their jobs, location, and colleagues” (Huning et al., 2020, p. 7), the summation of factors that “keep a person from leaving [their] job” (Yao et al., 2004, p. 156). In examining intra-unit relationships, the more influential the working relationships are, the higher the psychological sense of suffering the individual perceives in leaving the established climate (Mallol et al., 2007). Similar to the aspect of team cohesion, job embeddedness ties the individual to the organisation in which they are a part while also contributing to their perceived cost versus benefit calculus in deciding to either stay with or leave an organisation. Thus, the impact of the servant leader and what they can develop within those led is directly related to turnover intentions (Hurt et al., 2016). Through this construct embeddedness mediates the servant leadership to retention link.

Adapted Theoretical Model of Mediating Mechanisms

Through the examination of the existing literature, empirical evidence, and interconnectedness, the mediating mechanisms of Team Cohesion, Satisfaction, and Embeddedness are established. A positive increase in any or all of the mediators creates a corresponding increase in retention rates. This underpinning theoretical framework is adapted from the research conducted by Huning et al. to better fit the militaristic lens of this research and is modelled below in Figure 2.4. The subsequent section will explore the influence of psychological climate and safety on the mediating mechanisms.

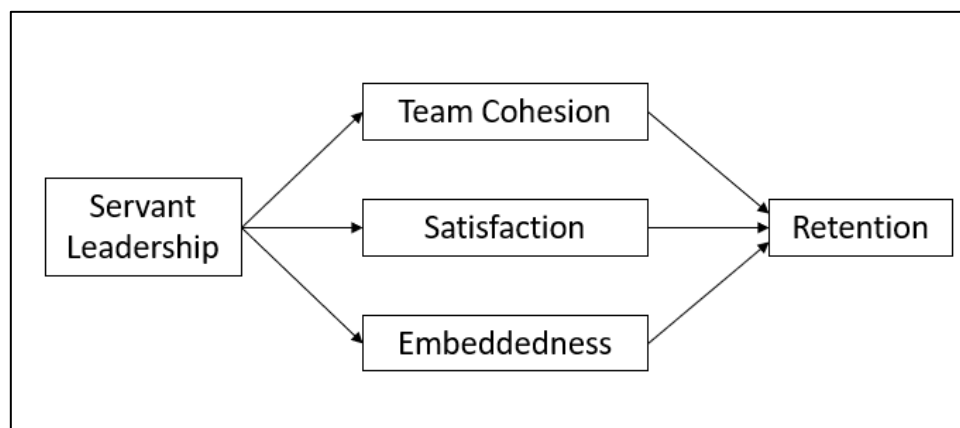


Figure 1.4: Mediating Mechanisms and the Servant Leadership – Retention Relationship
(Adapted from Huning et al., 2020)

Influential Factors

In expanding upon Huning et al.'s 2020 research, this study sought to establish influential factors on the mediating mechanisms within the servant leadership and retention relationship. The recommendations for further research presented in their publication called

for further interrogation of the psychological dimension and its association with servant leadership. The following subsections will introduce psychological climate and one of its main aspects, psychological safety. Understanding whether the mediating mechanisms can be influenced can potentially establish an indirect influence on retention.

Psychological Climate

The psychological climate of a group directly impacts their actions and outcomes (Edmondson, 2014). A positive psychological climate is felt when leaders are perceived as supportive, work roles are clear, members feel free to express themselves, contributions are meaningful, members are appropriately recognised, and work is perceived as challenging (Brown et al., 1996). The servant leader characteristics of empowering and developing people, humility, and interpersonal acceptance create the foundation from which the leader can foster a positive psychological climate (van Dierendonk, 2011). When these factors are all present within a group, there can also be a psychological perception of inherent safety.

This perception of psychological safety, combined with the feeling that the work within the group is meaningful, creates a higher level of job involvement, commitment of time, and effort exerted within the organisation, as well as increased job satisfaction (Brown, Leigh, 1996). The greater the group involvement and effort put forth in the organisation, the greater the sense of satisfaction improves. By implementing van Dierendonk's (2011) servant leadership characteristics, an environment that reinforces a positive psychological climate can positively moderate the overall job satisfaction of the members within the group.

In the field of leading soldiers, understanding how to build a strong and efficient team is extremely important. Team efficiency and cohesion can be assessed through the aspect of the overall performance of the given team. Brown and Leigh (1996) explored this concept through their research on workplace performance. Their research highlighted that a workplace environment with a psychological climate perceived as positive and where work is seen as meaningful is directly related to higher rates of job involvement and commitment of time and energy to the organisation (Brown, Leigh, 1996). This increase in "We-ness" and effort resulted in superior performance compared to teams that did not foster such a cohesive atmosphere (Brown, Leigh, 1996). Underperforming teams could also be seen to have a comparatively negative psychological climate and decreased cohesion. Their research suggests a moderating link between psychological climate and team cohesion.

The relationship between psychological climate and *esprit de corps* also enhances workgroup performance and outcomes. Similar to how an individual team member can develop a positive sense of personal and team climate, aided by a psychological perception of safety, the group can simultaneously develop workgroup *esprit de corps* and a sense of professional *esprit de corps* (Boyt et al., 2005). Boyt et al. (2001) positively correlated a contributing link between the *esprit de corps* of a team and their job satisfaction. With these aspects in place, the individual can easily align themselves to the group, and their perception of self will relate to the social group now formed. With the identity of the group and the above elements, a sense of individual attachment to the organisation can form among the ingroup and spur higher-performing teams. This also creates a higher sense of sacrifice in the individual when considering leaving, thus increasing embeddedness. These qualities further demonstrate the moderating influence of psychological climate on embeddedness.

A critical aspect of an organisation's psychological climate is that of the member's psychological sense of safety. The degree of perceived psychological safety then influences the psychological climate of an organisation. The following section introduces psychological safety as integral to further understanding the servant leadership and retention relationship.

Psychological Safety

Psychological safety describes an individual's perception of the consequences of interpersonal risks in their work environment (Edmondson, 2002). If individuals believe they can make mistakes and take risks without fear of significant reprisal, they have a high perception of psychological safety. Edmondson (2003) states that to create psychological safety, the team's leaders must be accessible and able to acknowledge their own fallibility. In creating a better, more fluid unit climate, members can take more risks, find more creative solutions, and achieve better results. The interconnected and reciprocal nature of psychological safety and climate makes definitively delineating the process and relational interaction significantly complex. This study will frame psychological safety as a mediating influence between servant leadership and psychological climate⁸.

To allow for improved mediating mechanisms between servant leadership and retention, the psychological safety of the unit, and thus climate, must improve. To perceive a high sense of psychological safety, the organisation's members must feel that they are able to speak openly and freely, are encouraged and allowed to take risks, that other members trust and respect each other, and that members have the same beliefs and opinions for their objectives (Edmondson, 1999 cited in Chen et al., 2015).

However, psychological safety is neither a safe space, an "immunity from consequences, nor a state of high self-regard" (Edmondson, 2019, p. XV). In a psychologically safe climate, the members of an organisation understand there are repercussions for poor performance and the possibility of failure but are not restrained by interpersonal fear (Liang et al., 2012; Edmondson and Lei, 2014; Edmondson, 2019). Psychological safety is also not about being nice or providing unconditional support. Rather, it is the inverse by providing candour and the possibility for practical dissent (Bresman and Edmondson, 2022; Edmondson, 2019). It is not lowering performance standards or being comfortable in the workplace. Accountability is crucial in any organisation, and through it, reinforced by psychological safety, members can be challenged, and ambitious goals for the group can be set (Dalio, 2018; Edmondson, 2019).

The individuals within the psychologically safe group fear not fully participating more than they fear the potential of reprisal for presenting a differing view or idea (Edmondson, 2019). This candour in the workplace allows for open sharing of information and collaboration and the ability to highlight mistakes and share apprehensions without fearing embarrassment or retribution (Bresman and Edmondson, 2022). Google's Project Aristotle, a five-year study on team dynamics, found five key components⁹ to their most effective teams. Julia Rozovsky highlighted the study, and found that the composition of a group was not as

⁸ Psychological safety can be seen as both a moderator and mediator. It affects the strength and direction of the relationship between servant leadership and psychological climate as well as explains the mechanism through which the relationship occurs. Differentiation and assignment within research rely upon the framing of the study (Damyanov, 2023).

⁹ Google's Project Aristotle found the five key dynamics for successful teams to be psychological safety, dependability, structure and clarity, meaning of work, and impact of work (Rozovsky, 2015, p. 1).

important as how the group “interacted, structured their work, and viewed their contributions,” and that, of the five dynamics, “psychological safety was far and away the most important ... the underpinning of the other four” (2015, p. 1). Individuals within cohesive high-performing groups, underpinned by psychological safety, have a higher sense of embeddedness through the links and sense of fit they perceive in the job and its positively associated psychological climate (Huning et al., 2020).

The benefits of psychological safety within an organisation spread beyond job performance. The interpersonal risk and unconscious calculation to discount the future are directly related to the individualistic perception of fear (Edmondson, 2019). The consequences of not speaking up in a moment of uncertainty range from decreased performance objectives to loss of life, specifically in the military context. However, these consequences, induced by a lack of action, are mitigated and potentially eliminated through the trust and mutual respect found within a psychologically safe climate. The values of trust and respect are echoed within the Irish Defence Forces and US Army doctrine. Indeed, values-based leadership is at the heart of military operations (ADP 3-0; DFDM-J2). Applying psychological safety within an organisation, led by a values-based leader, provides the conduit for increased psychological climate and team cohesion.

While integral to psychological safety, trust is not synonymous with it. Trust relates to a future expectation between two specific parties, while psychological safety focuses on the immediate moment. Where trust sets an expectation of an individual or group to follow through in the future, the “psychological experience of safety pertains to expectations about immediate interpersonal consequences” (Edmondson, 2019, p. 17). In this way, the psychologically safe climate allows members to quickly admit mistakes or seek help from others. This ultimately allows for higher-performing teams with positive psychological climates and greater degrees of job satisfaction.

In a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world, the requirement for learning organisations that adapt in real time is paramount (Presnky, 2014; Edmondson, 2019). This learning is driven by leaders who create psychologically safe groups and allow individuals to maximise their own potential and that of the collective. The leadership behaviours of the authentic servant leader, dynamically working within the augmented approach, create the psychological sense of safety that allows for this type of work environment to thrive.

Nothing is gained from reserved individuals. Rather, those within the psychologically safe group find higher degrees of job satisfaction through a higher degree of involvement (Edmondson, 2019). In the absence of a safe psychological climate, interpersonal fear remains. Evidence has shown that fear triggers the amygdala¹⁰ and activates an automatic response (Williams et al., 2005; Rock, 2009). In this response, the physiologic resources of glucose and oxygen are redirected from other sections of the brain, such as the portion responsible for memory, ultimately impairing “analytic thinking, creative insight, and problem-solving” (Rock, 2009, p. 4). This neuroscience research explains how a psychologically safe climate allows for individual performance, confidence in work, and a willingness to engage in learning behaviours (Edmondson, 2019). Through these characteristics of involvement, an increase in all three mediating mechanisms can be perceived.

¹⁰ The amygdala is the portion of the temporal-limbic system in the brain responsible for threat identification (Williams et al., 2005).

The research and literature presented highlight that applying psychological safety improves the group's psychological climate, which is positively associated with increased team cohesion, job satisfaction, and embeddedness. As mediating mechanisms between servant leadership and retention, these factors are positively associated with increased retention rates. Gallop's *State of the Global Workplace 2023 Report* showed that 77% of global employees were, either quietly or actively, quitting their jobs, with 41% citing engagement and culture as lacking (Gallop, 2023, p. 7). The polling results highlighted responses from individuals characterising the lack of psychological safety across the global economy (Gallop, 2023, p. 12). A comparative poll conducted in 2017 by Gallop in the United States found a similar result, with less than a third of respondents perceiving aspects of psychological safety in their workgroups (Gallop, 2017, p. 112). Gallop also noted in the 2017 poll that "moving that ratio to six in 10 employees, organizations could realize a 27% reduction in turnover" (p. 112). With ongoing retention crises in multiple Western nations, the military's application of psychological safety then only stands to realise similar reductions in turnover as well.

Research Propositions

In reviewing the included literature, several links and nodes were identified to better understand the servant leadership and retention relationship. While previous research provided the correlations between the mediating mechanisms and the main relational link, a gap in understanding was identified in its influencing factors' presence and potential role. The previously reviewed literature also found a tendency in research to examine non-profit and general bureaucratic organisations, with decreased research regarding for-profit organisations and significantly limited research conducted specifically on military organisations. The following section will present a theoretical model illustratively linking the above literature as the framework to study the influence of psychological safety within the military, while demonstrating its mediating role within the servant leadership and retention relationship.

As the literature suggests, the relationship between servant leadership and team cohesion helps to improve retention. The leader alone cannot create cohesion. Instead, by providing a psychologically safe workplace, they can set the tone for the organisation within the psychological climate of the environment they foster. The perception of the psychological climate would then moderate the link between the servant leader and their influence on the sense of team cohesion and support within the organisation. Through this construct, the following proposition is asserted:

Proposition 1 (P1): Psychological Climate moderates the relationship between Servant Leadership and Team Cohesion.

The correlations within the literature reviewed suggest that a higher sense of job satisfaction, while individualistic, allows for higher organisational retention. The previous research conducted by Huning et al. (2020) offered empirical evidence supporting the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction. Furthermore, the degree to which an individual perceives their psychological climate should moderate the degree to which they find satisfaction in their job (Wright and Bonnett, 2007). Thus, the following proposition is submitted:

Proposition 2 (P2): Psychological Climate moderates the relationship between Servant Leadership and Job Satisfaction.

Similarly, a positive psychological climate fostered within the organisation can be of great value to the individual, and its loss would be perceived as significant (Huning et al., 2020). Positively increasing the psychological climate creates more perceptual forces constraining individuals to their units. The servant leader's impact on their unit's psychological climate would moderate embeddedness through the increased perception of sacrifice associated with voluntarily leaving the organisation (Hurt et al., 2016). Thus, the following proposition is submitted:

Proposition 3 (P3): Psychological Climate moderates the relationship between Servant Leadership and Embeddedness.

As previously described, the psychological climate of the unit can be seen to moderate the relationship between servant leadership and multiple mediating mechanisms of retention. The servant leader can then be seen to have a direct relationship with the psychological climate. Therefore, it warrants further research to capture this in the theoretical framework and explore ways to validate the assertion. As such, the following proposition is put forth:

Proposition 4 (P4): Servant Leadership is positively related to Psychological Climate.

The underlying principles of servant leadership create the basis for the leader to create psychological safety within their organisation. Through this, the degree to which unit members perceive the psychological climate of the unit is directly mediated by the psychological feeling of safety that the servant leader provides. In this capacity, the below proposition is formed:

Proposition 5 (P5): Psychological Safety mediates the relationship between Servant Leadership and Psychological Climate.

The author created the theoretical research model through the propositions previously set forth. The model shown below in Figure 1.5 was adapted from Huning et al.'s 2020 research and expanded through the propositional links. The expansion of their model sought to incorporate recommendations for further research, advance servant leadership theory by increasing its applicational context, and provide further study, specifically within military organisations.

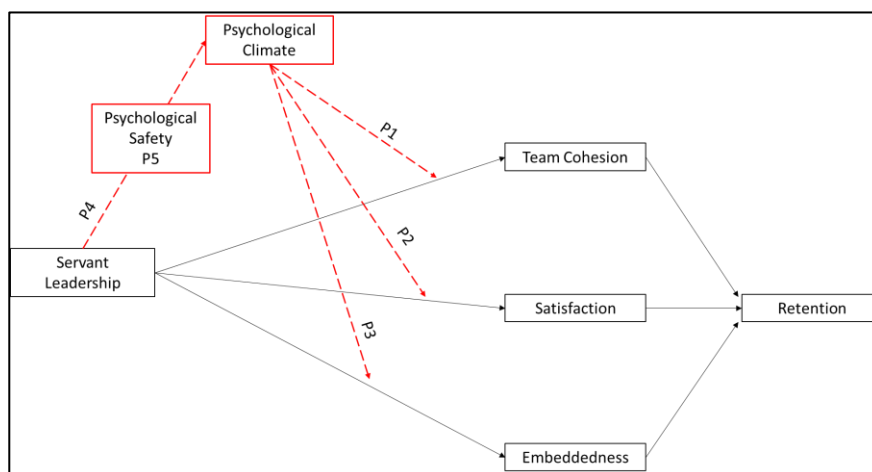


Figure 1.5: Theoretical Research Model
(Adapted and expanded from Huning et al., 2020)

Conclusion

Within the study of servant leadership and retention, there appears to be a gap in understanding how the psychological perception of safety in the military workplace mediates the psychological climate. Furthermore, the literature lacks understanding as to the degree to which the psychological climate moderates the mediating mechanisms of retention. Additional review, exploratory study, and analysis within this research thesis sought to provide a better understanding of these correlations and any inherent limitations.

Reviewing this established literature formed a basis to theoretically model the relationships identified. Using the research propositions submitted, the author sought to expand upon previous work while applying it to an uncharted understanding of its use to the military. The research into disentangling this model sought to allow a new understanding of how leaders can improve organisational retention amid an unprecedented crisis.

PART TWO. Methodology

This research employed quantitative and qualitative studies based on an ethnographic focus. Ethnography seeks to observe cultural groups and describe shared patterns of values, beliefs, and culture (McGinn, 2023b). The research presented in this paper follows an ethnographic focus as it collects data through participant observation and expands on these findings through further discussion with respondents to develop understanding better (Yanow et al., 2012). This methodology is particularly suited to this research as the central question seeks to understand the experiences of individuals from one military cultural group and identify their shared patterns and beliefs. The ethnographic methodology was applied via two methods.

Methods

In seeking knowledge, the ethnographic research conducted in this study used a mixed-methods approach to data collection and analysis, employing questionnaires and focus group methods. This mix of qualitative and quantitative methods allowed for deeper understanding and specified focus within the exploratory study. The conceptual research process used can be seen below in Figure 2.1.

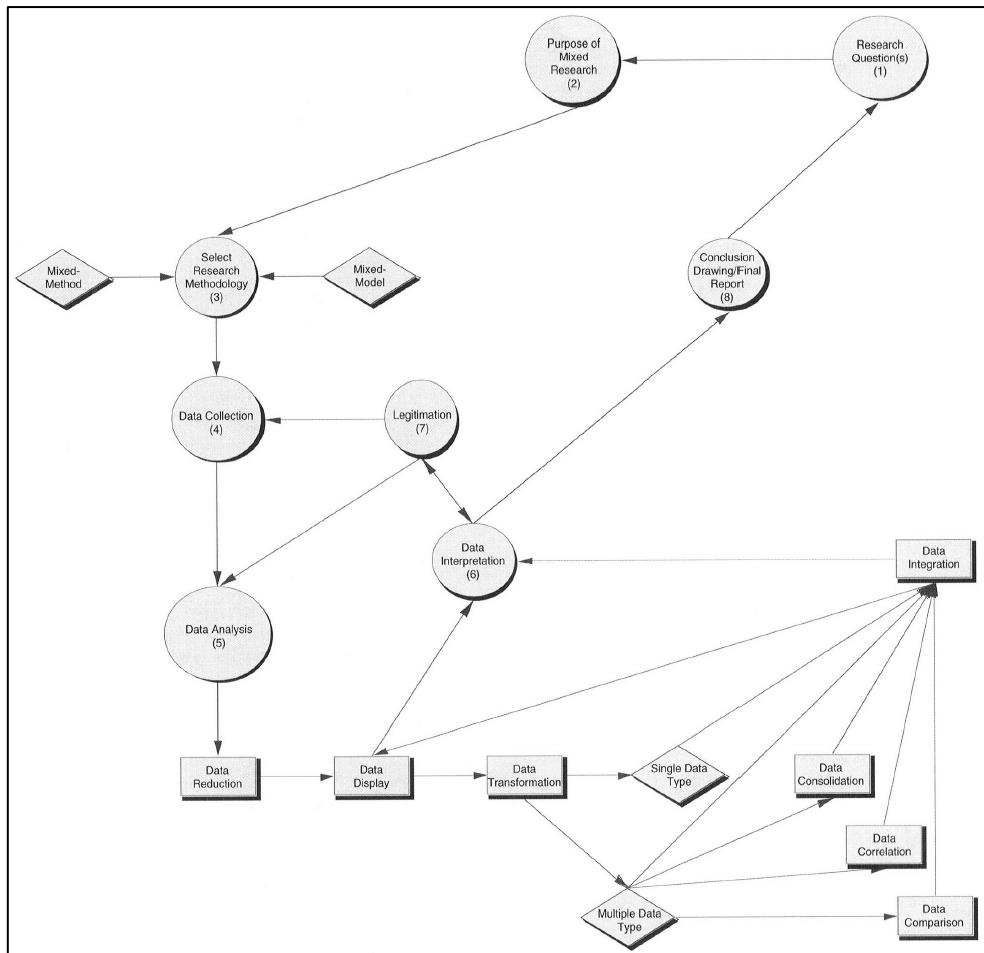


Figure 2.1: Mixed Research Process Model¹¹
(Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 23)

The basis for the exploration conducted in the qualitative focus group study was derived from the data analysis of the quantitative questionnaire. As such, the research followed an initially dominant design mixing quantitative and qualitative methods, with the former given higher prioritisation and a development and expansion rationale (Greene et al., 1989, cited in Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The research was generally inductive, as the author did not have preconceived notions regarding the information to be collected. However, a deductive approach was utilised in the semi-structured focus groups to specifically address and expand upon trends identified in the questionnaire results.

A questionnaire was chosen for systematic collection and standardised development of data. This method provided anonymity to respondents, allowing for honest and unbiased feedback (Lindemann, 2023). This was seen as crucial within the hierarchical nature of the military as fear of judgment, reprisal, and repercussions was eliminated. Using a seven-point Likert scale, this easily replicated method also allows for data quantification in identifying trends and patterns in responses, making the exploratory data analysis streamlined (Jones et

¹¹ Note: Circles represent steps (1-8) in the mixed research process; rectangles represent steps in the mixed data analysis process; diamonds represent components (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 23).

al., 2013). The trend and pattern analysis derived from the questionnaire provided focus in the sequential qualitative method of study.

The focus group method was chosen for its ability to expand upon the data analysis. As an inherently social process, the focus group allowed for capturing nuance and tension within the study despite highly contextualised subjects and contested conversations (Cyr, 2017). This method also allows for emic data collection in that the research and setting interfere minimally with data derived from spontaneous and free-flowing topical discussions (Krippendorff, 2019; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Finally, the quantitative method was prioritised in dominance as it allowed for data interrogation at the individual and group levels and can be substantiated at interactive levels of analysis in the focus group (Cyr, 2017). The following section will detail the sample population researched.

Research Sample

The concept of research sampling inherently extends the requirement of choice between the inclusion and exclusion of data points and sources. This research employed stratified quota sampling to recognise subpopulations within the larger target population (Krippendorff, 2019). Moving beyond relevance, or purposive sampling, in seeking out a representative population to answer the research question based on experience, quota sampling allows for accounting of variation within the sample (McGinn, 2023b).

This research chose its representative target population as company-grade army officers. This population was defined as multinational junior officers who had chosen to stay in their military beyond their respective nations' initial obligation requirement following commissioning. This population was deemed a representative sample due to the collective denial of initial employee turnover intention following their obligation's fulfilment. This study created subgroups for gender, nationality, and time in service to test proportional variation in the data collected. Through the analysis of this sample, insight into the impact of psychological safety on retention could be seen across a demographic spectrum. This analysis and interpretation then offered validity to applying findings in multiple contexts.

Analysis and Interpretation

Data collected from the sample population utilised exploratory data and thematic¹² analysis. An advantage of utilising these analytic techniques was that they provided a detailed and organised description of the data set, making it ideal for extracting information from larger data sets. In order to identify the underlying aspects deemed most important to measuring psychological safety, coded rankings were applied. The goal of the interpretation of the analytical results mirrored the aim of the research in seeking to identify significant factors and tangible ways to improve upon the retention of company-grade officers.

Limitations to Methods

Utilising a mixed methods approach within the study presented limitations and challenges. While acknowledged in the research paradigm, it is important to again recognise that the

¹² Exploratory Data Analysis is the initial process of investigating data to find patterns, spot anomalies, test hypotheses, and check assumptions using summary statistics and graphical representations (Patil, 2018). Thematic analysis is a technique for finding, analysing, and reporting recurring patterns within a given data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

author was an insider to the organisation being researched. Ethical considerations to this point will be addressed below.

Interaction between the researcher and participants was inevitable as the research was insider-oriented and conducted within the author's workplace. As such, the author's perceptions were inherently influenced by the organisational climate being explored in the study. As a member of the organisation from which the respondents stemmed, the author found a perception of greater acceptance and more sincere responses. However, the relationship and interaction of the researcher with respondents necessitates questioning whether the author can be detached enough for objective analysis.

From the research's philosophical underpinning forward, it was acknowledged that complete objectivity in obtaining knowledge cannot be had. However, mitigation of this reality was found. The subjective and individualistic nature of the respondent's lived experiences provided a departure from that of the author. Despite shared and similar environments, each respondents' return provided an inherently unique personal perspective for the researcher to impartially analyse. The sampled target population also provided for separation in perspective and further objectivity. While the hierarchical nature of military structure provided a more analytically neutral position to conduct the research, it also presented ethical considerations in its conduct. Potential for sampling and analytical bias also remained but was mitigated through the ethical implementation of the study and adherence to transparency and impartiality in the process (Edwards and Holland, 2013).

Ethics

Ethics are a critical aspect of the success of any research, as the "validity and reliability of a study depend upon the ethics of the investigator" (Meriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 260). This is particularly relevant when the research is conducted by an organisational insider (Saunders, 2019). Throughout the research, strict adherence to the guidelines established in the Maynooth University Research Ethics Policy were followed in conjunction with specific guidance from the author's supervisory team. This research was conscious of the human element in the participation of respondents and the importance of conducting all aspects in an appropriately ethical manner. A standard Maynooth University information sheet and informed consent form were provided to each participant in order to ensure informed consent prior to data collection. All respondents were informed of the anonymised or confidential¹³ nature in each study method and that they could opt out of participation at any time. This was reiterated at each stage of the progressive study.

The researcher ensured all participants understood that the purpose and process of the study sought data collection for various analyses. Each participant responded in the affirmative that they were participating voluntarily without promise of reward, legitimate order to participate, or threat of coercion for non-compliance in the study. Security of data was ensured through encrypted storage¹⁴ utilising multi-factor and biometric authentication during the research in order to help protect both participants and the research team.

¹³ Questionnaire responses were collected with complete anonymity. Confidentiality was provided throughout the focus group, and identities were not revealed beyond it.

¹⁴ Collected data at rest was stored with Microsoft Forms and Otter AI. MS Forms follows Office 365 rules and compliance and meets FERPA and BAA protection standards. Otter AI also follows similar compliance rules and industry protection standards.

PART THREE. Research Findings and Analysis

Part Three presents the findings of the research conducted. A mixed-methods approach was used to collect primary data from the target population and this section analyses the results and information obtained, utilising the research question as the lens with which to integrate the data. It is structured using headings that mirror the propositions deductively derived from and presented in the literature review. The quantitative questionnaire results support these propositions inductively, and the qualitative themes of the focus group substantiate them deductively. The findings will be analysed to the extent that they pertain to the research question, as addressing additional organisational challenges falls beyond the intended scope of this research. The conceptual process progressing the research propositions to their respective findings is highlighted below in Figure 3.1.

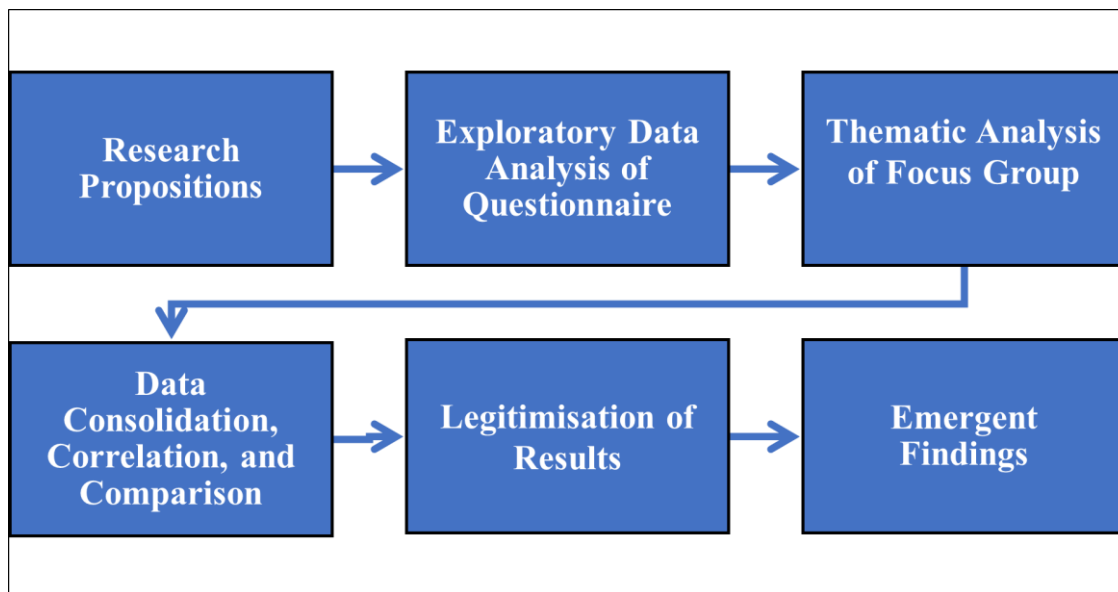


Figure 3.1: Research Findings Conceptual Process

Legitimation of Results

The primary data collected must first be legitimised to provide credibility and allow acceptance of the research findings. The progressive exploratory study used both quantitative and qualitative methods and thus requires an assessment of the respective results of each. Where the methods differed, the target population remained constant. In seeking to address the research question's applicability, several demographics were identified among respondents.

The primary data collected highlighted three main demographic areas: gender, year of commission, and nationality of the respondents' military. The research, offered to equivalent junior officer courses in Ireland and the United States, produced 45 unique responses (N = 45). Data collected captured responses from officers of five nations¹⁵, with the

¹⁵ Anonymity was ensured for N = 3 respondents. This was achieved by acknowledging and recording differing nationalities, genders, and TIS while redacting specifics and omitting data from publication due to insufficient sample sizes. This process was undertaken to uphold the ethical standards in the research.

United States (N = 31, 68.9%) and Ireland (N = 11, 24.4%) providing the majority of questionnaire responses. Of these, 91.2% (N = 41) were male, and 8.8% (N = 4) were female¹⁶. Respondents presented a range of commissioning years from 2007 to 2020. This range was categorised and grouped by time in service (TIS) since commissioning¹⁷. Respondents were evenly split between TIS1 and TIS2 (N = 21, 50%). Irish officers accounted for the entirety of the focus group study participants. As will be subsequently addressed, this sampling of officers suggested that the research results would provide a deeper insight into militaries of differing sizes and across a breadth of their demographic composition. Gender, nationality, and TIS were brought forward for subgroup analysis.

Given the 1,080 questionnaire answers received, determining whether the results were legitimate called into question the reliability of the questionnaire and the validity of the data collected. Cronbach's alpha¹⁸ (α) was assessed to identify the reliability and consistency. The instrument produced $\alpha = 0.896$, indicating the questionnaire was highly reliable¹⁹ (Taber, 2017). While the instrument was reliable, the data collected can also be seen to pass face validity. The responses from the questionnaire also found validity from the focus group assessment when expanded upon in questioning and the distillation of nuance provided.

The focus group results found similar validity in integration. The transcript pages were assessed through multiple coding, and consistent themes were exposed. Member checking was utilised to provide further validity to the focus group results and mitigate researcher bias, as a sample of participants reviewed the proposed themes for validity. Finally, the focus group analysis found similarities in trends to the questionnaire results, further suggesting a high degree of progressive validation within the research.

As seen in Figure 3.2 below, the preponderance of results established that most (70%) of respondents positively characterised previous leaders as servant leaders (SL) in questions 1, 2, and 3 (Q1, Q2, Q3). Unpaired, two-tailed t-tests²⁰ of gender and nationality found no statistically significant differences within either subgroup, indicating homogeneity in the reporting of each. The TIS subgroup t-test found extreme statistical significance, with those over five years of TIS reporting greater rates of positive observations of SL characteristics. This subgroup variance is modelled in Figure 3.3.

These quantitative findings were qualitatively substantiated in the focus group discussions. Participants stated they had served with servant leaders "who [would] do everything for anyone who works for them... to the detriment of their own [wellbeing]."

¹⁶ Gender was recorded based on the participant's self-reported anatomical assignment at birth.

¹⁷ As the research question focused on the retention of junior officers, the research defined time in service as the time since the officer reported commissioning. The year of commissioning was scored as one year regardless of the month commissioned, and the year 2024 was omitted from the scoring. The subgroup was characterised as those with less than or equal to five years (TIS1) and those with greater than five years (TIS2).

¹⁸ Cronbach's alpha statistically assesses reliability by comparing the amount of covariance among the items making up an instrument to the amount of overall variance. If the instrument is reliable, a high degree of covariance among the items relative to the variance should be seen (Birren, 2007).

¹⁹ While academic consensus varies, values greater than $\alpha = 0.70$ are minimally accepted as consistent, with values greater than $\alpha = 0.94$ suggesting a disproportionate amount of redundancy in the instrument used. Values greater than $\alpha = 0.80$ are generally considered very reliable, with values of $\alpha = 0.90$ representing extreme reliability (Dalyanto et al., 2021; Frost, 2022).

²⁰ A t-test is a statistical test used to compare the means of two groups. It is often used in hypothesis testing to determine whether two groups are different from one another (Bevans, 2020). An unpaired, or unequal variance, t-test is an independent t-test used when the number of samples and variance in each group is different (Hayes, 2022). The research utilised a two-tailed t-test in that it tested for differences between groups.

Congruent with the survey results, when discussing servant leader characteristics, a dissenting participant explained that they had come across servant leaders and “unfortunately, more self-centred leadership,” with the attribution of the latter being “due to the constraints put on people for promotion within the organisation by the organisation.” In contrast, an additional participant affirmed the positive impact of being servant-led in that their “commanding officers ... would certainly have [had] an influence on [them] staying in the [redacted unit].” As discussed in the following sections, the relative positive association found in both methods promotes the establishment of the servant leadership node, as presented in Figure 1.5.

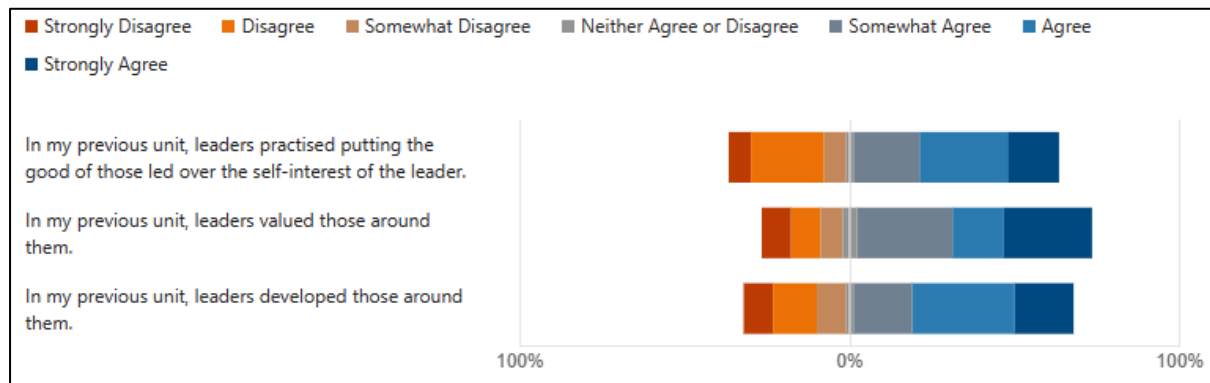


Figure 3.2: Indicative Responses of Servant Leader Characteristics (Q1-Q3)

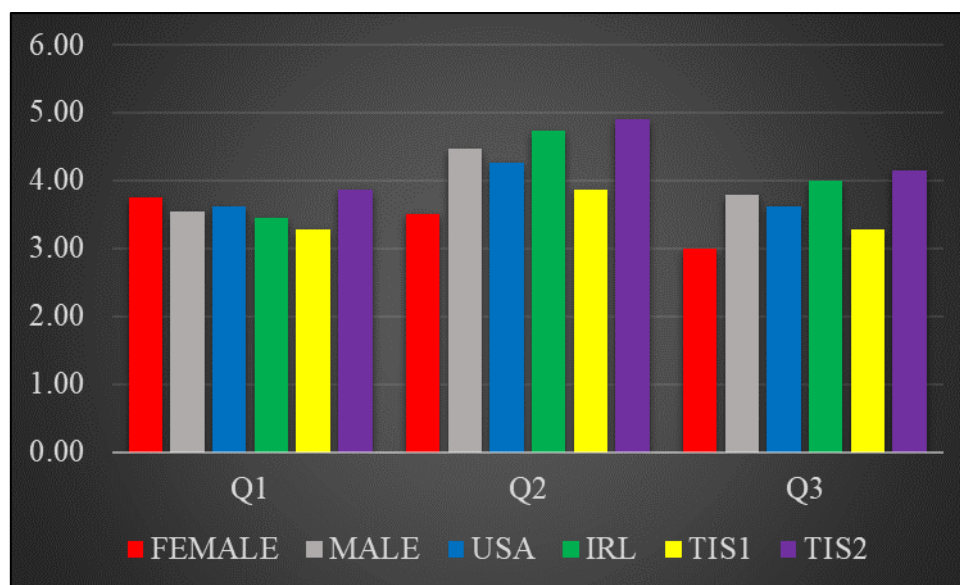


Figure 3.3: Servant Leader Proportional Subgroup Variations²¹

Considering the initial scrutiny of the results, the research team was content that the study's methods and results were reliable and valid. Additionally, the collected demographic data set confirmed that the research methods reached the targeted population intended to be studied. The correspondence between previously retained officers and their characterisation of servant leaders provided the foundation to interrogate the results as they pertained to each of the propositions and their respective emergent findings.

²¹ The 7-Point Likert scale employed throughout the questionnaire was factored with the following scores: Strongly Disagree - 1, Disagree - 2, Somewhat Disagree - 3, Neither Agree nor Disagree - 4, Somewhat Agree - 5, Agree - 6, Strongly Agree - 7.

Research Findings

Establishing legitimate research results provided the credibility necessary to substantiate emergent themes. In seeking to address the research question, the five propositions from Part One are presented with their findings. These results are divided into sub-sections and discussed progressively from quantitative findings to qualitative emergent themes in keeping with the research's structure.

Proposition 1 (P1)

Current literature supports establishing the relationship between the servant leader and team cohesion. The members' perceptions of team cohesion, seen as a supporting mechanism within an organisation, suggest an instrumental link to their individual retention decisions. Further, the literature proposed that the organisation's psychological climate influences the team's cohesion. Previous research established this link in non-profit, for-profit, and limited bureaucratic fields (Huning et al., 2020). Proposition 1 (P1) was carried forward for research through this construct, asserting that the relationship also exists in the military context.

Proposition 1 (P1): Psychological Climate moderates the relationship between Servant Leadership and Team Cohesion.

P1 Quantitative Findings

The questionnaire results quantitatively support the assertion that team cohesion mediates the relationship between servant leadership and retention in the military context. In testing for the influence of *esprit de corps* on perceived support within the unit (Q4), 67.4% of officers surveyed agreed that it did, 13% disagreed, and 19.6% neither agreed nor disagreed. This internal sense of cohesion and support can then be relationally tied to most of the retained junior officer respondents.

As highlighted in the literature, the unit leader drives cohesion. When tested for the servant leader's influence on cohesion (Q6), 80.5% of respondents agreed that the leader had an influence, 13% disagreed, and 6.5% neither agreed nor disagreed. This indicated that the established relationship between servant leadership and team cohesion also exists within the military.

The relationship between the servant leader and team cohesion was then studied to determine the influence of psychological climate as a moderator (Q5). Respondents reported 71.7% had observed psychological climate's influence on team cohesion within previous units, 15.1% disagreed, and 13.2% neither agreed nor disagreed. The concurrence of agreeing responses indicates that psychological climate can moderate the relationship between servant leaders and the overall perception of team cohesion. The indicative results of the questionnaire for P1 are presented in Figure 3.4.

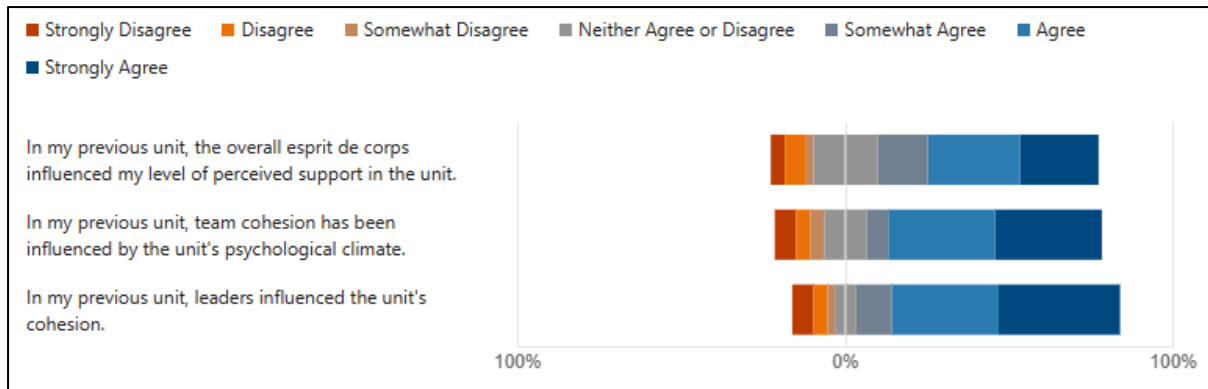


Figure 3.4: Proposition 1 Indicative Responses (Q4-Q6)

P1 Subgroup Findings

Subgroup examination in P1 of gender, nationality, and TIS, found several key observations. Within the P1 section (Q4, Q5, Q6), females reported observations in stronger agreement than males, with mean differences of 0.99, 0.78, and 1.17, respectively. Overall, P1 results found that females reported a 14% stronger degree of cohesion within previous units than males. An unpaired t-test confirmed there was a very statistically significant difference in the scores for females ($M = 16.25$, $SD = 2.18$) and males ($M = 13.32$, $SD = 2.03$); $t(40) = -2.74$, $p = 0.009$ (two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = 2.93, 95% CI: -5.09 to -0.77) was high, with a Hedges' g of 1.44.

Similar results were found through a cross-cultural analysis of the respondent junior officers. The mean differences between American and Irish participants were -0.01 (Q4), 0.50 (Q5), 0.94 (Q6). P1 variation accounted for a 6.8% difference in responses, with US officers reporting higher cohesion rates. The unpaired t-test validated the statistical significance of the difference between the US ($M = 13.97$, $SD = 2.11$) and Irish officers ($M = 12.55$, $SD = 1.50$); $t(40) = 2.05$, $p = 0.0471$ (two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = 1.42, 95% CI: 0.02 to 2.82) was medium, with a Hedges' g of 0.71. While noting the overall P1 difference, the individual item responses highlight agreement in both groups, with variation in degree. This supports the research findings' applicability despite otherwise significant differences in the forces of each nation.

When time in service was studied, this difference grew. Responses resulted in mean differences between TIS1 and TIS2 of -1.00 (Q4), -0.71 (Q5), and -0.33 (Q6). Data collected within this subgroup accounted for a 9.8% variance in P1 responses, with TIS2 reporting greater observation. Further, the unpaired TIS t-test found the difference in results to be very statistically significant between TIS1 ($M = 12.57$, $SD = 2.032$) and TIS2 ($M = 14.62$, $SD = 2.02$); $t(40) = 3.28$, $p = 0.0021$ (two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = -2.05, 95% CI: -3.31 to -0.79) was high, with a Hedges' g of 1.01. This indicated higher rates of cohesion from respondents with greater time in service.

Figure 3.5 visually represents the subgroup variations in P1. The questionnaire findings guided the subsequent focus group discussions.

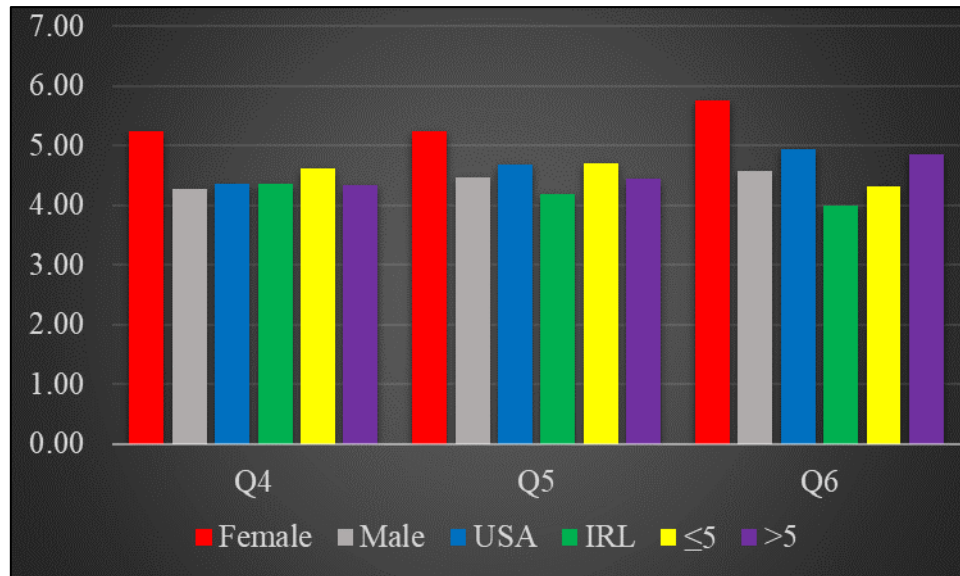


Figure 4.5: P1 Mean Proportional Subgroup Variations

P1 Qualitative Findings

The moderating effect of psychological climate, as provided for by the servant leader, on team cohesion emerged again as a theme in the focus group analysis. One participant highlighted:

Really good units, really cohesive units... with [this] leadership, not only is it a cohesive and working unit in work, but [outside] as well... When [psychological climate] is laid in, cohesion works properly and is excellent. You can get people to do anything, and they do it happily.

Juxtaposed to this, one participant noted that the lack of servant-leader characteristics created a “very poor climate and poor cohesion within the unit,” leaving soldiers “totally disenfranchised.” Yet another added, “That lack of cohesion and that lack of leadership alienates people who really want to be there.” However, reflecting on a positive psychological climate and cohesion relation in a unit, one officer recounted that “the commanding officer himself created [it]; this cohesiveness in the unit and even though the unit was actually at 50% strength, tasked unbelievably... he still created a very, very positive workplace.” In both perspectives, the psychological climate the leader sets can be seen to moderate the degree of cohesion within the unit. This emergent finding aligns with the questionnaire’s findings and supports the confirmation of Proposition 1.

Proposition 2 (P2)

The literature highlighted the mediating role of job satisfaction on the relationship between the servant leader and turnover intention. Expanding upon the research conducted in the for-profit sector by Huning et al. (2020), this research proposed that this relational construct was also valid within the military context and moderated by psychological climate. P2 was then brought forward for study within the respondent population.

Proposition 2 (P2): Psychological Climate moderates the relationship between Servant Leadership and Job Satisfaction.

P2 Quantitative Findings

The second section of the questionnaire, questions seven, eight, and nine, examined the job satisfaction levels of retained junior officers and the influence of the unit's psychological climate and leaders. When tested (Q7), the majority of respondents, 73.9%, reported finding satisfaction in their jobs, with 26.1% reporting a lack of job satisfaction to varying degrees. While dissension is noted, the Q7 findings support validating the job satisfaction node as a mediating mechanism within the servant leadership relation to military retention.

Furthermore, the questionnaire findings highlighted the leader's influence on the individualistic perception of job satisfaction. The junior officer respondents reported having leaders influence their job satisfaction at a rate of 82.6%; 15.2% reported no influence, and 2.2% reported neutrally. Furthermore, 43.5% of the surveyed officers strongly agreed that leaders influenced their job satisfaction. The predominance of positively associated responses asserts the significance of the servant leader's actions in relation to their subordinate's perceived job satisfaction.

In testing directly for the influence of psychological climate on job satisfaction levels (Q8), respondents related a high degree of observed influence in previous units. At variable levels, 89.1% agreed that the psychological climate influenced their job satisfaction, while only 10.9% disagreed. The findings advance the moderating effect of psychological climate on the link between servant leadership and job satisfaction. The indicative responses for the P2 section are presented below in Figure 3.6.

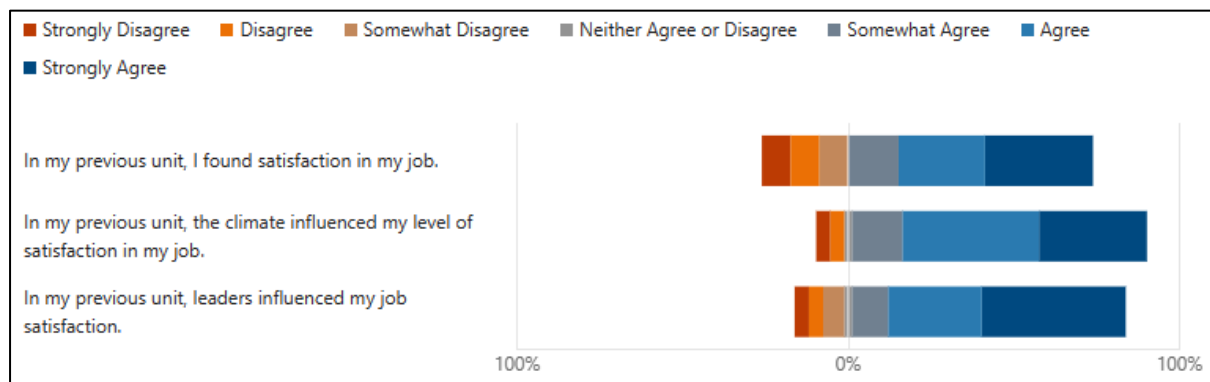


Figure 3.6: Proposition 2 Indicative Responses (Q7-Q9)

P2 Subgroup Findings

Subgroup responses within P2 found commonality among respondents. Gender analysis between females and males found mean differences of 1.66 (Q7), -0.46 (Q8), and 0.11 (Q9). The difference in Q7 found females reported 8% higher in their perceived job satisfaction than males. Beyond this differentiation, P2 found homogeneity. The t-test found the difference in results to not be statistically significant between females ($M = 15.25$, $SD = 2.15$) and males ($M = 13.95$, $SD = 2.11$); $t(40) = 1.17$, $p = 0.25$ (two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = 1.30, 95% CI: -3.54 to 0.94) was medium, with a Hedges' g of 0.62.

The cross-national subgroup found even stronger similarities. Response analysis found mean differences between Americans and Irish of -0.31 (Q6), 0.04 (Q7), and 0.12 (Q8), with an overall P2 difference of -0.7%. Interpretation of the t-test results found no statistically significant difference between the US ($M = 14.03$, $SD = 2.15$) and Irish reporting ($M = 14.18$,

SD = 1.86); $t(40) = 0.21$, $p = 0.84$ (two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = -0.15, 95% CI: -1.63 to 1.33) was medium, with a Hedges' g of 0.70. The near-identical nature of responses within P2 validates that both militaries found similar experiences in their perception of job satisfaction and its influences.

The TIS subgroup found a comparatively greater disparity in responses. Analysis of TIS found mean differences of -0.81 (Q6), -0.48 (Q7), and -0.19 (Q8). The total P2 section resulted in a 7% difference, finding that TIS2 reported greater characterisation of job satisfaction. T-test results confirmed the statistically significant difference in reporting between TIS1 ($M = 13.33$, $SD = 2.13$) and TIS2 ($M = 14.81$, $SD = 2.10$); $t(40) = 2.27$, $p = 0.029$ (two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = -1.48, 95% CI: -2.80 to -0.16) was medium, with a Hedges' g of 0.70. The statistical disparity was found in the degree to which each group positively characterised their job satisfaction. This homogeneity in positive responses provides validity to the applicability of the findings to each TIS group.

Figure 3.7 models the P2 subgroup results. The quantitative findings of P2 were then cross-examined during the focus group discussions.

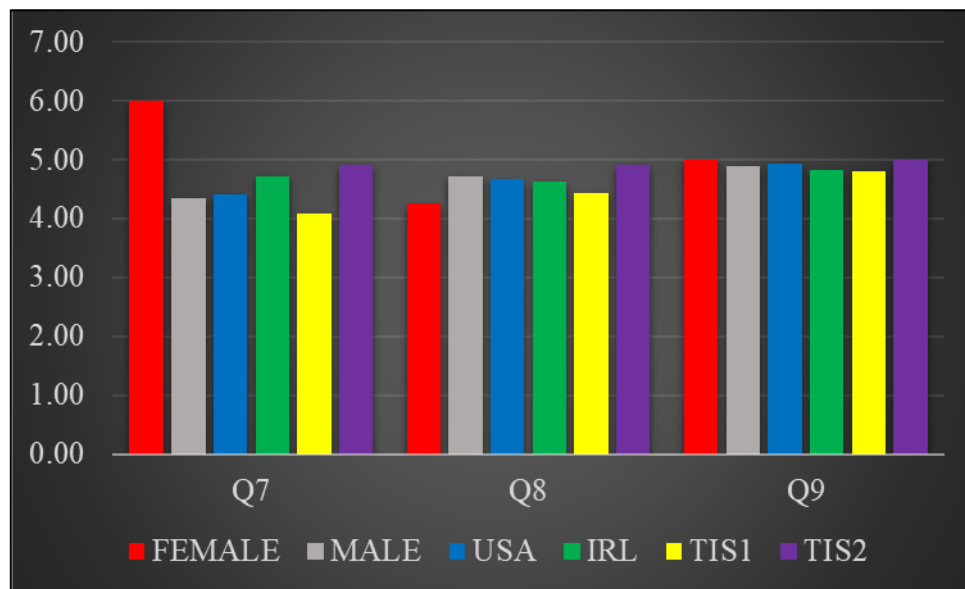


Figure 3.7: P2 Mean Proportional Subgroup Variations

P2 Qualitative Findings

Focus group discussion found agreement with the questionnaire findings. Participants echoed the value that the team, involvement, and development allowed within a positive psychological climate and the leader's influence. One officer described a leader who "mentored... from his experience and knowledge" and that being able to apply that development later in their career allowed "a real sense of job satisfaction that the experience I'd gained over the years was finally paying off... in an effective manner." Another remarked that their leaders "[truly] contributed to a really good climate... [and] great job satisfaction was linked to the time and those two officers."

In keeping with the questionnaire's findings, a dissenting opinion was noted in the perceptions of some leaders to treat command "as a placeholder gig." With that, the participant noted the following:

There is no interest in progressive development. Their intent is to get in, make sure [command] happens, and then move on. That's part of the issue with development within the Defence Forces: command is looked at as something you have to do. What you did when in command is really irrelevant.

Despite this, group consensus found climates and leaders were "very positive, very inclusive of the whole unit." The discussion and responses received in each method highlight the applicability of the servant leadership and job satisfaction relationship within the military and the moderating presence of psychological climate. This then lends validity to Proposition 2.

Proposition 3 (P3)

The third proposition asserted the moderating effect of the psychological climate on the link between servant leadership and embeddedness. The literature underpinned this proposition in that the climate provided for by the leader directly influenced the value the member placed on remaining. When considering turnover intention, a highly perceived psychological climate would have a correspondingly higher opportunity cost felt by the member. While supported in other fields, this research contended additional applicability within the military.

Proposition 3 (P3): Psychological Climate moderates the relationship between Servant Leadership and Embeddedness.

P3 Quantitative Findings

Questions 10, 11, and 12 comprised section P3 of the questionnaire and examined characteristics of embeddedness as perceived by the respondents. The psychological cost of turnover was tested through the influence of relationships on perceived connectedness to the unit (Q10), with 73.9% reporting an impact and 13.1% dissenting to varying degrees. This data is characteristic of internal embeddedness and highlights its presence in junior officers.

In testing for the contextual and perceptual forces constraining members to the organisation, psychological climate and intra-unit relationships were explored (Q11). Respondents were found to have experienced their relationships to be shaped by the psychological climate at a rate of 80.4%, with 10.9% reporting no influence and 8.7% reporting a neutral impact. The responses convey the moderating effect of psychological climate on the relationship between servant leaders and embeddedness.

Question 12 directly tested for observed leadership in action (Q12). Of the responses collected, 69.6% stated that their previous leadership affected their sense of connection to the unit. An additional 8.7% reported a neutral influence, while 21.7% reported no influence. These findings provide foundational evidence of the role of the servant leader and embeddedness in the surveyed military population. The indicative responses for P3 can be seen in Figure 3.8.

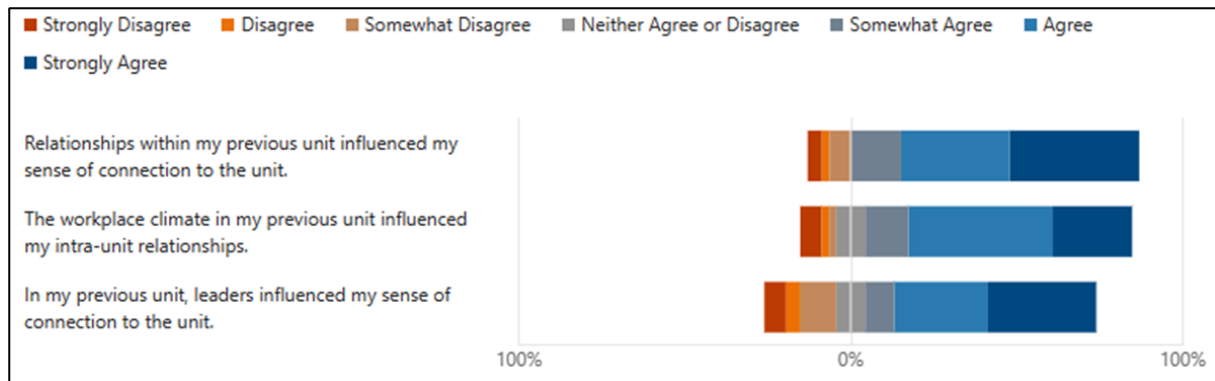


Figure 3.8: Proposition 3 Indicative Responses (Q10-Q12)

P3 Subgroup Findings

Subgroup analysis provided additional legitimacy to the P3 findings. The analysis of responses from female and male subgroups found mean differences of 1.34 (Q10), 0.14 (Q11), and 0.93(Q12). In Q10, the largest variance in P3 responses, females more strongly associated relationships with connection to the unit by 6%. While both reported positive embeddedness, females characterised rates 12% higher. The t-test results confirmed a statistically significant difference in reporting between females ($M = 15.50$, $SD = 2.07$) and males ($M = 13.08$, $SD = 2.06$); $t(40) = 2.24$, $p = 0.031$ (two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = 2.42, 95% CI: -4.61 to -0.23) was high, with a Hedges' g of 1.18.

The nationality analysis found similarities in responses. American and Irish officers responded with mean differences of 0.45 (Q10), -0.45 (Q11), and 0.18 (Q12). Their P3 scores accounted for only a 0.8% variation between countries. The t-test also found no statistical significance in the difference in reporting between US ($M = 13.35$, $SD = 2.09$) and Irish respondents ($M = 13.18$, $SD = 1.90$); $t(40) = 0.24$, $p = 0.814$ (two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = 0.17, 95% CI: -1.28 to 1.62) was low, with a Hedges' g of 0.08. With extreme similarity in the rate of responses, the data collected shows a high propensity for P3 results to be found equitably applicable, regardless of nationality.

Analysis of the TIS subgroup found significant differences in the responses. TIS responses found mean differences between TIS1 and TIS2 of -0.81 (Q10), -0.71 (Q11), and -0.43 (Q12). TIS2 respondents characterised 9.3% greater rates of embeddedness. This was validated in the t-test, finding a very statistically significant difference in reporting between TIS1 ($M = 12.33$, $SD = 2.06$) and TIS2 ($M = 14.29$, $SD = 2.05$); $t(40) = 3.09$, $p = 0.004$ (two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = -1.96, 95% CI: -3.24 to -0.68) was high, with a Hedges' g of 0.95.

Figure 3.9 illustrates the proportional mean findings in the subgroup variance, which were then extrapolated in the focus group discussions.

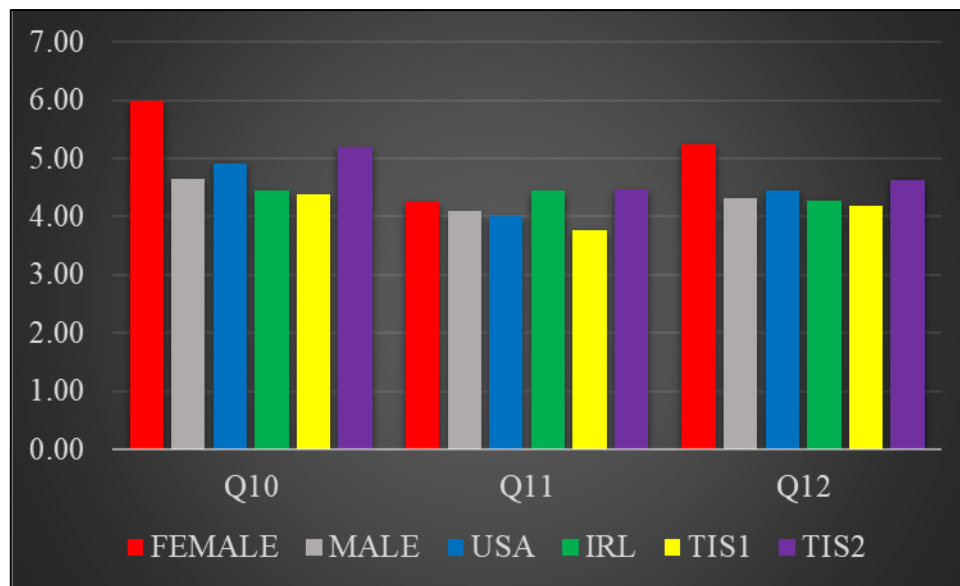


Figure 3.9: P3 Mean Proportional Subgroup Variations

P3 Qualitative Findings

Expanding upon the questionnaire analysis, the focus group discussions found further evidence of the psychological climate's moderating effect on embeddedness. One participant commented on the strong connection to the inter-unit relationships: "You're involved; you literally know every facet [within] the unit." Another built upon this in highlighting a positive climate, remarking that "it [was] so good that it spilt over into home and social life."

Of note, a discussion trend acknowledged perceived constraints, limitations, and improvements participants wanted to see in the organisation. While these factors are outside the scope of this research, they highlighted leadership's ability to negatively influence climate and, thus, embeddedness. A summarising comment was that leadership was perceived to focus on the "higher strategic level vision... but at the end of the day, they are concentrating on the roof [and] not the foundation... to [our] detriment." Despite this, a consensus was found that leaders could "easily influence people" and the unit's psychological climate in either direction. The perceived perspectives of both sides found congruence in the moderating effect of psychological climate on embeddedness. Further, the influence of the leader on this climate can be seen. The emergent trends from both research methods typify the solidarity of Proposition 3.

Proposition 4 (P4)

The first three propositions explored the moderating effect psychological climate had on the mediating mechanisms of the servant leadership and retention relationship. Proposition 4 tested for the direct relation of servant leadership to psychological climate. Literature showed that implementing servant leader characteristics reinforces a positive psychological climate and, thus, should have a corresponding positive moderating effect on the mediating mechanisms. As such, P4 was studied to validate this relational assertion.

Proposition 4 (P4): Servant Leadership is positively related to Psychological Climate.

P4 Quantitative Findings

The questionnaire's P4 section (Q13, Q14, Q15) tested directly for core components and characteristics of servant leadership and psychological climate. While examining if respondents perceived their leaders as supportive (Q13), 60.9% affirmed that they were, while 32.6% did not, and 6.5% neither agreed nor disagreed. While a third of respondents dissented, the data collected shows that most respondents found a foundational aspect of the psychological climate provided by the leader.

Question 14 assessed the compositional aspects of psychological climate in the leader-provided context. When asked if their previous unit provided clear work roles (Q14), 54.3% of respondents affirmed they were, while 43.5% reported, to varying degrees, that they were not, and 2.2% reported neutrally. While the majority of responses indicate a positive observation of previous leaders, the negative observations reported represent the smallest variance in P4 data. With roughly a 10% difference, the component can be seen as present in respondent experiences but suggests additional external influence in lived experiences.

The final question within P4 tested for a core component in respondents' internal perception of their unit's psychological climate. Respondents were asked if their contributions were meaningful in their previous unit (Q15), with 82.7% reporting they were, 15.1% reporting they were not, and 2.2% reporting neutrally. Inversely to Q14, the findings in Q15 represent the largest contrast in data collected and the highest degree of positive observation presented. Through this data, the effects of servant leader characteristics in action can be seen to influence relational aspects of the member's perception of the psychological climate.

Figure 3.10 shows the indicative results of the subsection, which demonstrate the preponderance of evidence supporting the relational characteristics presented in P4.

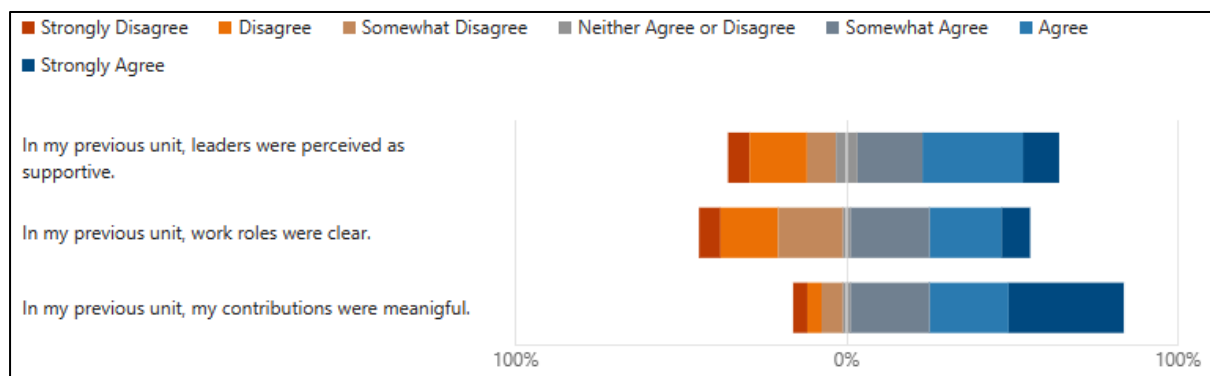


Figure 3.10: Proposition 4 Indicative Responses (Q13-Q15)

P4 Subgroup Findings

The subgroup findings within P4 generally found common responses. The analysis of female and male data found mean differences of -0.21 (Q13), 0.20 (Q14), and 0.49 (Q15), illustrating the similarity in item responses. The P4 section found only a 2.3% difference in response, further exemplifying the two groups' reporting commonalities. This was validated in the t-test finding the difference in reporting between females ($M = 12.50$, $SD = 1.91$) and males ($M = 12.03$, $SD = 1.88$) not to be statistically significant; $t(40) = 0.48$, $p = 0.637$ (two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = 0.47, 95% CI: -2.47 to 1.53) was low, with a Hedges' g of 0.25.

The nationality subgroup found similar results. The mean difference between American and Irish respondents was -0.79 (Q13), -0.33 (Q14), and 0.48 (Q15). Overall, P4 accounted for a variation in response of 3.1%, with Irish officers characterising slightly more positive climates. Differences in reporting between the US (M = 11.90, SD = 1.89) and Irish officers (M = 12.55, SD = 1.68) were found in the t-test not to have statistical significance; $t(40) = 1.01$, $p = 0.321$ (two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = -0.65, 95% CI: -1.96 to 0.66) was low, with a Hedges' g of 0.35. The holistic data collection exhibits the similarity of each nation's surveyed junior officer population.

Analysis within the TIS subgroup found additional concentration in responses between the two groups. Mean differences between TIS1 and TIS2 were -0.33 (Q13), -0.57 (Q14), and -0.67 (Q15). The P4 data recorded a 7.5% variance in responses between groups. T-test findings showed a very statistically significant difference in reporting between TIS1 (M = 11.29, SD = 1.84) and TIS2 (M = 12.86, SD = 1.86); $t(40) = 2.75$, $p = 0.009$ (two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = -1.57, 95% CI: -2.72 to -0.42) was high, with a Hedges' g of 0.85. This data shows that TIS2 respondents characterised higher rates of psychological climate in previous units.

Figure 3.11 presents the variance in the mean subgroup data collected. Establishing these findings allowed for progressive research and understanding in the focus group study.

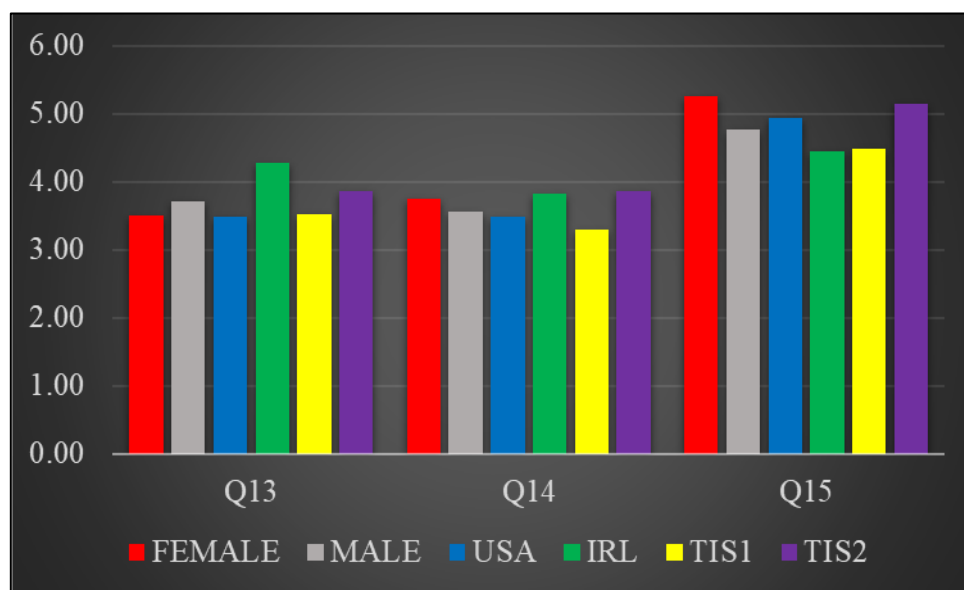


Figure 3.11: P4 Mean Proportional Subgroup Variations

P4 Qualitative Findings

The focus group discussions teased out additional nuance from the questionnaire findings. Throughout the research of each proposition, the servant leader's influence on physiological climate emerged as a theme. Like questionnaire findings, participants generally found their immediate leaders to positively influence the climate to varying degrees and with some dissension. Characteristic of a positive psychological climate, most participants also found their immediate leaders supportive. However, a perception of a lack of support from a higher headquarters to the unit also emerged, with one officer noting he felt "no transparency, no support, [and] under-resourced, [with] no emphasis on actual capability." This external influence on operational unit commands was also noted due to a perception of a lack of clear

guidance. Again, while outside the scope of this research, this emergent topic demonstrated how unclear work roles ultimately “severely diminish” the unit’s psychological climate. As discussed in the P2 findings, the belief that member contributions were meaningful directly impacted the perceived psychological climate and satisfaction level. The focus group and questionnaire findings indicate the establishment of the relationship between servant leadership and psychological climate. The confirmation of this relation then validates Proposition 4.

Proposition 5 (P5)

The final research proposition examined the effect of psychological safety on the relationship between the servant leader and the psychological climate. The literature presented psychological safety as one of the core components of the psychological climate (Brown et al., 1996). Furthermore, previous research offered that servant leader characteristics allow the group members to feel safe psychologically. This sense of safety would then underpin the way in which the group positively perceives the psychological climate. Through this construct, P5 was researched.

Proposition 5 (P5): Psychological Safety mediates the relationship between Servant Leadership and Psychological Climate.

P5 Quantitative Findings

The P5 subsection comprised five questions assessing psychological safety and servant leader characteristics. In testing for the consequences of interpersonal risk (Q16), 47.8% of respondents perceived that unit members would not typically be resented for their faults, 45.6% reported they would, and 6.6% reported a neutral perception. This split data minimally found that the junior officer population observed risk acceptance in previous units. Moreover, the data collected could be seen to indicate the presence of additional external variables in their decision-making process.

Juxtaposed to the Q16 findings, Q17 tested the respondents' belief in their personal ability to express themselves without facing negative consequences and noted inverse results. A majority of 65.2% of respondents indicated they could speak freely, 23.9% reported varying beliefs they could not, and 10.9% reported impartially. This data shows an increased perception of workplace candour among junior officer respondents.

Question 18 tested for the values of trust and mutual respect within previous units. When asked if service members were often excluded if they did not conform to a group or idea, 67.4% reported they would not be, 19.5% reported they would be to varying degrees, and 13.1% reported neutrally. This general refutation of divergent exclusion indicates that the respondent population observed values-based leadership within their previous units.

Authenticity and humility, central characteristics of servant leadership and psychologically safe groups, were examined in Q19. When asked if previous leaders acknowledged their own fallibility, 47.8% reported that they did, 39.1% that they did not, and 13.1% neither agreed nor disagreed that they did. This indicates the presence of servant leadership and psychological safety in the retained officers surveyed. However, this indication is noted narrowly, with a difference of less than 10% in responses.

Expanding upon the impact of respect, humility, and mutual trust within an organisation, Q20 assessed whether previous climates allowed members to seek and receive help. Respondents were asked if they thought the unit's service members wanted to help, with 71.7% saying they did, 8.7% reporting neutrally, and a marked 19.6% reporting they did not. Despite the counter-responses, the data suggests collaborative workplaces and members seeking common objectives. The P5 results in Figure 3.12 express the data supporting the relational characteristics of psychological safety and servant leadership.

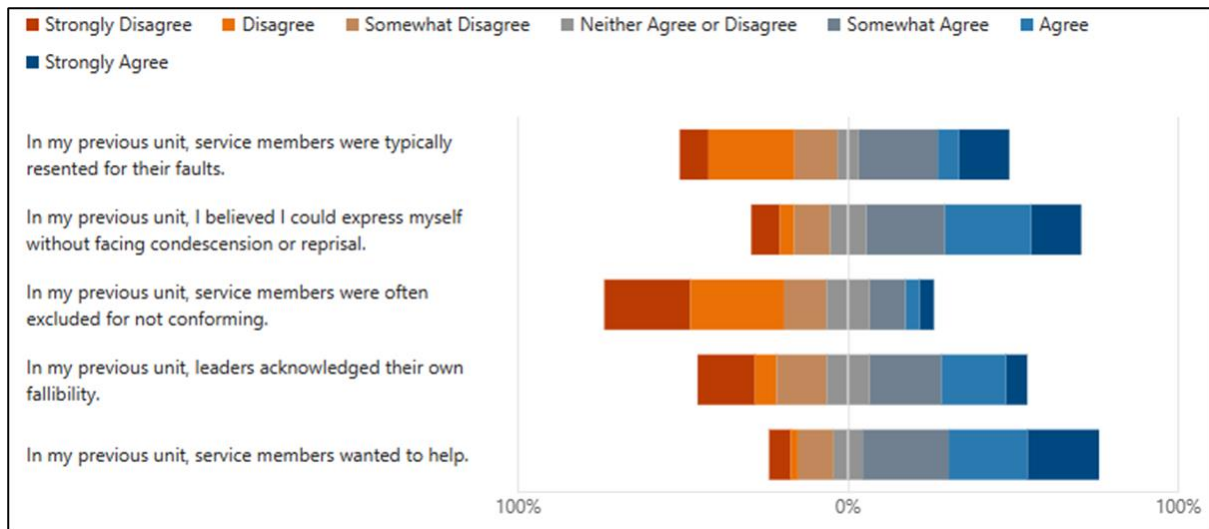


Figure 3.12: Proposition 5 Indicative Responses (Q16-Q20)

P5 Subgroup Findings

The P5 subgroups found mixed correlations in responses. The gender subgroup found mean differences between females and males of 1.39 (Q16), 0.33 (Q17), 0.39 (Q18), 0.18 (Q19), and -0.92 (Q20), suggestive of homogenous responses. P5 responses presented a 3.95% variance between genders. This commonality within the population was supported by the t-test, finding the difference between females ($M = 22.25$, $SD = 1.92$) and males ($M = 20.87$, $SD = 1.89$) not to be statistically significant; $t(40) = 1.39$, $p = 0.173$ (two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = -1.38, 95% CI: -3.39 to 0.63) was medium, with a Hedges' g of 0.73.

The nationality subgroup found opposite results. The mean difference in reporting between US and Irish officers was -1.40 (Q16), -0.56 (Q17), -0.42 (Q18), -0.16 (Q19), and -0.90 (Q20). This data highlighted that Irish officers reported a greater characterisation of psychological safety in their previous units than their American counterparts. The P5 difference in reporting was 9.9%. This divergence was confirmed by the t-test finding extremely statistically significant differences in reporting between Americans ($M = 20.10$, $SD = 1.91$) and Irish ($M = 23.55$, $SD = 1.68$); $t(40) = 5.29$, $p = 0.0001$ (two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = -3.45, 95% CI: -4.77 to -2.13) was high, with a Hedges' g of 1.85.

Similarly, the TIS subgroup also found significant contrast in reporting. Mean differences in reporting between TIS1 and TIS2 were -0.48 (Q16), -0.48 (Q17), -0.76 (Q18), -0.38 (Q19), and -0.38 (Q20). This data found that TIS2 respondents reported higher

characterisation rates of psychological safety in previous units by 7.1%. The t-test confirmed that the difference in reporting between TIS1 ($M = 19.76$, $SD = 1.88$) and TIS2 ($M = 22.24$, $SD = 1.88$); $t(40) = 4.28$, $p = 0.0001$ (two-tailed) was extremely statistically different. The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = -2.48 , 95% CI: -3.65 to -1.31) was high, with a Hedges' g of 1.32.

Figure 3.13 highlights the variance in the mean subgroup data collected. These trends were then explored further in the focus group discussions.

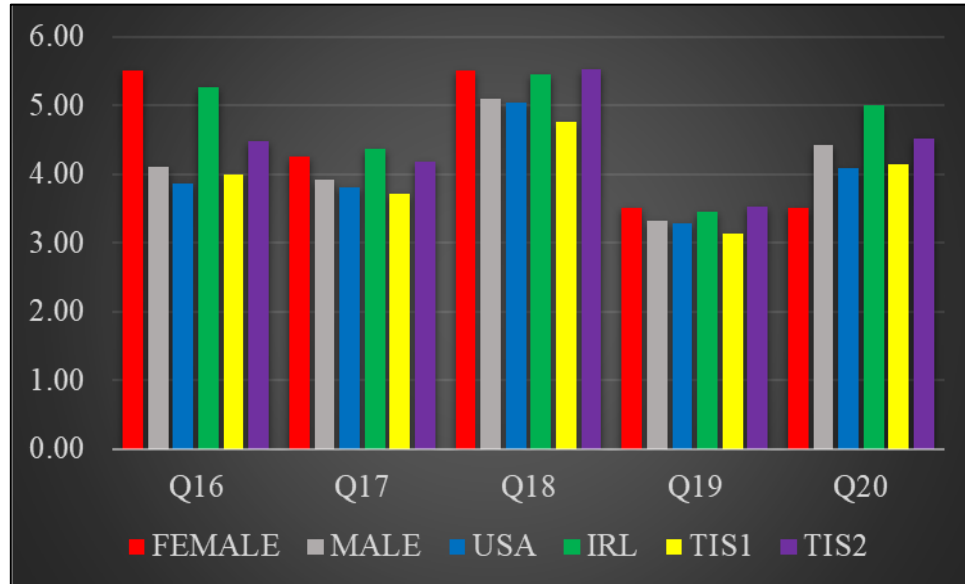


Figure 4.13: P5 Mean Proportional Subgroup Variations

P5 Qualitative Findings

The interconnectedness between psychological climate and psychological safety was again observed in the focus group thematic analysis. Participants echoed the influence of values-based servant leaders in that they care for “troops in general... [and] create a lot of trust and respect, but don’t get the kudos.” The inverse influence was noted in a leader who “didn’t live up to his own values, even though he preached [them].” The participant explained the repercussions, stating, “We [had] never seen such a mass exodus... of ‘lifetimers’.” From their individualistic perceptions, the retained officer participants also highlighted having the right leader at the right time in their careers developed and instilled principles that helped them weather future unit turbulence.

Like the questionnaire results, the focus group discussion analysis also found a mix of risk tolerance. One participant stated, “It’s okay to make a mistake. [If] you’re trying to do things correctly, you’ll be given the [latitude] that you need.” Agreeing statements were also caveated with a qualification against negligence and for following standing operating procedures. Contrarily, some units were discussed as having “their main focus on finding problems... a culture of ‘Gotcha!’... putting people under severe mental and physical stress.” The impact of psychological safety on unit members was further exemplified by stating, “It inhibits or puts off a lot of people from taking some appointments because they know... careers [are] stalled or finished if there’s a mistake made.”

Risk avoidance or acceptance was then thematically linked to participants’ perceived interpersonal risk in speaking freely. Most officers believed they could bring up difficult issues

with superiors and characterised those units with higher mediating mechanisms. However, some found the opposite; members “were afraid to ask questions because only negative connotations [came] down.” One went on to say that service members’ questions were “filtered through three different layers before they got to [the recipient]... and we received feedback then to temper [them].” The officer added that not only was it alienating but that it created “dissonance between [us] at the unit level and the very top... an environment that [was] not psychologically safe.” While this reluctance to speak up to higher commands remained, respondents agreed at the lower unit level “constructive criticism is at the forefront.”

Within the units, participants reported strong levels of teaming, diversity inclusion, and working together towards their common objectives. Officers stated that in the psychologically safe units, “everybody wanted to do their job, and everybody was happy [to be] in that workplace.” An agreement was found in the willingness of unit members to work together, which was “very easy, very powerful” and created a “very positive” psychological climate. Questionnaire and focus group analyses exemplified how psychological safety mediates the servant leadership-psychological climate relationship. These emergent findings support the confirmation of Proposition 5.

Conclusion

This Part illustrated the contextual application of the mediating and moderating aspects of the military’s servant leadership and retention relationship. Additionally, the research can advance current literature by presenting and analysing the emergent research findings. The preponderance of the data collected in each research method indicated that the research propositions were valid.

The findings presented within each proposition, and supported by the established literature, can be identified as support for the theoretical research model. The moderating effect upon the established mediating mechanisms of retention can be seen in demonstrating the efficacy of the psychological climate within the retained junior officer population studied. Furthermore, the findings highlight the effectiveness of psychological safety in positively mediating the servant leader and psychological climate dynamic. The implications of these findings will be discussed below to better understand their impact on retention and provide initial recommendations to mitigate service member turnover.

PART FOUR. Conclusions and Recommendations

From the onset of the study, this research has sought to provide tangible ways for military leaders at all levels to realise the potential mitigating effect that psychological safety can have on the current retention crisis. The research finds its foundation in established literature and advances it by expanding existing understanding and demonstrating application within the military context. The research methodology and design outlined the conduct of the study, giving way to the presentation of the research findings. This Part seeks to interpret those findings in the context of the research question and its supporting propositions. Implications of the research findings will be presented along with identified limitations, suggested future research, and recommendations for the force.

Implications of Research Findings

The research findings highlighted the ability to improve the mediating mechanisms within the servant leadership and retention relationship. Propositions one, two, and three identified the moderating effect of psychological climate (PC). The interpretation of these propositions' findings addresses the psychological impact within the military but does not address all factors within the DF or US Army climates. Propositions four and five sought to establish the link between servant leadership and psychological climate, and framed the mediating effect of psychological safety within it. The nuance and interconnectedness of psychological safety and psychological climate create difficulty in definitively demonstrating how one variable affects the other. However, in line with the research model, illustratively separating and studying each finds implications to improve upon both and thus positively influence mediating mechanisms of retention.

Proposition 1 (P1) Implications

The P1 research findings supported the confirmation of the proposition that psychological safety positively moderates the relationship between servant leadership and team cohesion. The retained officer populations demonstrated the leader's significance in setting the tone for their organisation. By deliberately establishing a positive psychological climate within the unit, the servant leader can create a higher level of perceived team cohesion and support within the organisation. In keeping with the literature, the research saw increased cohesion characteristics associated with higher productivity levels, morale, and motivation within respondents' units.

Intentionally focusing on the psychological climate can allow the leader to positively moderate the efficacy of team cohesion. The inverse is also true. If the psychological climate is not maintained and improved, the unit's cohesion will dissipate and disenfranchise its members. The moderating effect of psychological climate can drive or inhibit higher levels of team cohesion. Military leaders at all levels can realise this increased cohesion within their units and, in doing so, improve the mediating effect that cohesion has on retention rates.

Proposition 2 (P2) Implications

The P2 research findings validated the proposition that psychological climate moderated the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction. The research found characterisations of positive psychological climates linked to increased unit loyalty, involvement, and development. These factors enable the individual's intrinsic motivation and spur higher organisational commitment.

The servant leader then has the ability to drive higher degrees of job satisfaction through the deliberate implementation of these aspects. The research found that the leader is instrumental in improving or shattering an individual's perception of job satisfaction. The importance of the leader providing a psychologically positive climate is seen in its moderating effect on job satisfaction. The degree of job satisfaction within the individual then has a respective and direct mediating effect on their retention decision. Military leaders stand to realise improved retention rates through an intentional focus on providing a positive psychological climate and thus increasing job satisfaction.

Proposition 3 (P3) Implications

The findings within P3 further highlighted the moderating effect of psychological climate on embeddedness. The value members of an organisation placed on remaining was directly influenced by their perception of the psychological climate set by their leader. The positive psychological climates found stronger degrees of connection within inter-unit relationships and a corresponding degree of embeddedness in their units.

The military leader can directly influence the internally perceived cost associated with turnover intention among subordinates. By focusing on foundationally providing a positive psychological climate, the leader can positively moderate the degree of embeddedness within the unit members. This increased embeddedness allows for further positive mediation of retention rates within the organisation. As such, leaders can potentially mitigate decreasing retention rates through the increased embeddedness enabled by a positive psychological climate.

Proposition 4 (P4) Implications

The P4 findings demonstrated a positive link between servant leader characteristics and psychological climate. The P1, P2, and P3 findings also showed that servant leader characteristics are associated with positive psychological climates. The respondent population's leaders were seen to influence the degree to which the members felt supported and had clear, meaningful work.

By implementing servant leader values and characteristics, the military leader can provide the basis to foster a positive psychological climate. This augmented authentic leadership style can potentially reinforce or create an increasingly positive psychological climate within a unit. As shown in the implications of the previous propositions, the ability to further bolster the psychological climate creates a heightened positive mediation across multiple retention variables. The servant leader then has the capability to positively impact turnover intention within their unit.

Proposition 5 (P5) Implications

Finally, P5 findings framed and exemplified psychological safety's mediating effect on the servant-leader and retention relationship. The research showed that the servant leader directly influenced the unit members' perceptions of interpersonal risk, ability to express themselves, and the levels of trust, respect, and help across the team. The study highlighted many interrelated aspects, as higher perceptions of psychologically safe units were related to the more positive psychological climates.

The leader's ability to create a psychological sense of safety within the group allows for higher levels of involvement, risk acceptance, learning, and performance. In reducing or eliminating the perception of interpersonal risk, the leader can create an environment supportive of creative problem-solving. This adaptability within a constantly changing battle space is paramount within the military context. The candour provided in the psychologically safe unit has numerous immediately tangible benefits, as highlighted in Part One, not the least of which is the ability to affect the psychological climate.

Applying psychological safety across the organisation, led by values-based leaders, provides the means for increasingly positive psychological climates. Focusing on reducing

interpersonal fear and increasing workplace candour allows military leaders at all levels to significantly improve the psychological climate of their organisations. The mediating aspect of psychological safety can further enable the moderating effect of psychological climate. As exemplified in the 2017 Gallop poll, if military leaders create this psychological sense of safety in just 60% of their service members, they could comparatively stand to reduce organisational turnover by nearly 30% (p. 112). Through the application of servant leadership, psychological safety presents an ability to improve retention rates rapidly and significantly across the force.

Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

While the research findings hold significant implications towards mitigating the retention crisis, the research itself had limitations. The first of which was the sample size. The research relied upon voluntary responses from a specific population across multiple organisations and, as such, found limitations in the number of respondents able to participate. This is acutely manifest in the representative sampling size in females and the comparative sampling size in Irish responses. The research was also limited in the inability to study voluntarily retiring junior officers' decision-making process.

The research also found limitations in rigidity and adherence to a set timeframe to conduct the research. The abbreviated research window necessitated dividing a fixed amount of time to allow saturation of the questionnaire and coordination of focus group sessions. This time-bound limitation constrained the reach and depth of the questionnaire and hampered focus group scheduling. Furthermore, the research was limited in its inability to provide longitudinal conclusions across the careers of the research population.

Finally, in conjunction with the above limitations, the breadth of propositions within the cross-sectional research design prevents establishing causal inferences. While the findings highly suggest causality among variables, each would need to be studied independently, longer, and with greater sample sizes to justify them empirically. Additionally, as the research model was based on theory, the research design does not eliminate the potential for alternative models.

Future research should seek to mitigate these limitations. An expansion within the research timeframe would allow for wider reach across organisations and longer saturation times within them. This would then allow for larger and increasingly representative sample sizes. Focus within these populations could provide substantive evidence across the variables tested to prove causality and determine the viability of alternative models.

Recommendations

While future research would expand and strengthen the findings' implications, they can immediately and tangibly impact retention rates. Consistent with existing literature and the research findings, this impact can be realised by deliberately improving psychological safety. While numerous opportunities to positively influence it exist, a proven selection of immediately available recommendations is presented for consideration.

Creating or improving psychological safety requires interaction among multiple complex social skills and types of intelligence. In her 2019 book *The Fearless Organization*, Dr. Edmondson outlines three interrelated practices from which military leaders can benefit in creating psychological safety: "setting the stage, inviting participation, and responding productively" (p. 183). To set the stage for psychological safety, leaders must frame or

reframe the work to be done and emphasise its purpose to subordinates. This practice can allow military leaders to set a shared expectation of failure, ambiguity, and the need for candour, as well as provide motivation (Edmondson, 2019). Through implementation, the environment for psychological safety can be set.

With shared expectations and meaning provided, military leaders need to invite active participation in their units. To do so, leaders must demonstrate humility, practice inquiry²², and establish structure and process within the organisation for feedback (Edmondson, 2019). This acknowledges fallibility and gaps while creating a venue for guided input that provides confidence to subordinates that their voice is welcomed.

Finally, leaders must respond productively to this candour. This can be done through expressing appreciation, destigmatising failure, and sanctioning clear violations²³ (Edmonson, 2019). This response can help the military leader orient the unit toward continuous learning while reducing interpersonal fear.

This positive perception of psychological safety within unit members has numerous benefits for the organisation. Principally, the positive mediation of the psychological climate. The deliberate focus of military leaders on increasing the unit's psychological safety stands to improve the psychological climate directly and, thus, the mediating mechanisms of retention indirectly.

While not novel, these recommendations are the beginning of creating a climate in which subordinates choose to stay. While research findings suggest retained respondents have experienced psychological safety and positive climates in previous units, a need for further improvement was continuously highlighted. Furthermore, the absence of the psychological perception of safety in the workplace and its relation to junior officers seeking release from active duty can be presumed as poignant. Vast resources have been spent to increase service members' extrinsic motivation to stay in the military with limited return on these investments. By helping leaders at all levels understand the importance of psychological safety and its effect on the psychological climate, units can directly create positive perceptions of the mediating mechanisms, ultimately improving intrinsic motivation and indirectly improving retention rates across the organisation.

Conclusion

This research sought to provide the force with an immediate ability to enhance organisational change and improve retention. To do this, it questioned the extent to which psychological safety influenced retention decisions in junior officers. Supported by its associated literature and methodology, the research findings provided meaningful answers to each of the propositions studied, and validated the theoretical research model. Confirming the model's elemental characterisation supports the assertion that psychological safety has a proportional influence on retention rates within the military context.

²² Practicing inquiry is described in the leader "asking good questions [of subordinates] and modelling intense listening" to their responses (Edmondson, 2019, p. 159)

²³ Destigmatizing failure is the process of shifting away from individuals hiding failures to protect themselves. Reframing failure creates acknowledgement, discussion, fast learning, and innovation. Sanctioning violations examines differentiating preventable, complex, and intelligent failures in order to set boundaries, uphold standards, and influence future behaviour (Edmondson, 2019).

The research stemmed from the author's personal observation of voluntarily retiring officers citing leader toxicity in their decision to leave. While not dismissive of varying lived experiences, and with an acknowledgement that toxic leaders can exist at all levels of the organisation, the author would assert that the research findings generally point away from toxicity. The author contends that in the context of this research, the totality of units and leaders were not necessarily, or definitionally, toxic but rather sustained psychological perceptions of inconsistency regarding safety and interpersonal fear.

Implementing the recommendations as a starting point can allow micro-adjustments within the military culture to regain service members' perception of consistent psychological safety. These seemingly minor practices help to drive larger organisational change by eradicating corrosive behaviour and replacing it with action that increases psychological safety and a positive psychological climate. Through this construct, the realisation of psychological safety as a mitigating factor in the organisational retention crisis is boundless.

The views, conclusions and recommendations expressed within this article are those of the author alone and should not be taken to represent the views of the United States Government, US Army, or any other group or organisation

REFERENCES

- Allen, D.G. and Griffeth, R.W. (2001). Test of a Mediated performance-turnover Relationship Highlighting the Moderating Roles of Visibility and Reward contingency. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(5), pp.1014–1021.
- Avolio, B.J. and Bass, B.M. (2002). *Developing Potential Across a Full Range of Leadership*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Barbuto, J.E. and Wheeler, D.W. (2006). Scale Development and Construct Clarification of Servant Leadership. *Group & Organization Management*, 31(3), pp.300–326.
- Bass, B. (1985). *Leadership and Performance beyond Expectations*. New York: Free Press.
- Bass, B.M. (1990). *Bass & Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership: Theory, research, and Managerial Applications*. 3rd ed. New York: Free Press; London.
- Bass, B.M. and Bass, R. (2008). *The Bass Handbook of Leadership : Theory, Research, and Managerial Applications*. Simon & Schuster.
- Bass, B.M. and Riggio, R.E. (2006). *Transformational Leadership*. 2nd ed. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Benmira, S. and Agboola, M. (2021). Evolution of Leadership Theory. *BMJ Leader*, [online] 5(1), pp.3–5. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1136/leader-2020-000296>.
- Bevans, R. (2020). *An Introduction to T Tests | Definitions, Formula and Examples*. [online] Scribbr. Available at: <https://www.scribbr.com/statistics/t-test/> [Accessed 30 Apr. 2024].
- Bhandari, P. (2022). *An Easy Introduction to Deductive Reasoning*. [online] Scribbr. Available at: <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/deductive-reasoning/> [Accessed 4 Jan. 2024].

Birren, J.E. (2007). *Encyclopedia of Gerontology*. Amsterdam ; Boston: Elsevier/Academic Press.

Birtch, T.A., Chiang, F.F.T. and Van Esch, E. (2015). A Social Exchange Theory Framework for Understanding the Job Characteristics–Job Outcomes Relationship: the Mediating Role of Psychological Contract Fulfillment. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, [online] 27(11), pp.1217–1236. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2015.1069752>.

Blau, P. (1986). *Exchange and Power in Social Life*. 2nd ed. [online] Routledge. doi:<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203792643>.

Boyt, T., Lusch, R. and Mejza, M. (2005). Theoretical Models of the Antecedents and Consequences of Organizational, Workgroup, and Professional Esprit De Corps. *European Management Journal*, [online] 23(6), pp.682–701. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2005.10.013>.

Boyt, T.E., Lusch, R.F. and Naylor, G. (2001). The Role of Professionalism in Determining Job Satisfaction in Professional Services. *Journal of Service Research*, [online] 3(4), pp.321–330. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/109467050134005>.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, [online] 3(2), pp.77–101. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.

Bresman, H. and Edmondson, A.C., (2022). *Exploring the Relationship Between Team Diversity, Psychological Safety and Team Performance: Evidence from Pharmaceutical Drug Development* (No. 22-055). Harvard Business School Working Paper.

Brown, S.P. and Leigh, T.W. (1996). A new look at psychological climate and its relationship to job involvement, effort, and performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, [online] 81(4), pp.358–368. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.81.4.358>.

Carlyle, T. (1993). *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, & the Heroic in History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cartwright, D. (1968). The Nature of Group Cohesiveness. In D. Cartwright & A. Zander (Eds.), *Group Dynamics: Research and Theory*. New York: Harper & Row.

Chen, M., Gao, X., Zheng, H. and Ran, B. (2015). A Review on Psychological Safety: Concepts, measurements, antecedents and Consequences variables. *Proceedings of the 2015 International Conference on Social Science and Technology Education*. [online] doi:<https://doi.org/10.2991/icsste-15.2015.118>.

Coghlan, D. and Brydon-Miller, M. (2014). *The Sage Encyclopedia of Action Research*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Crotty, M.J. (1998). *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Cyr, J. (2017). The Unique Utility of Focus Groups for Mixed-Methods Research. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 50(04), pp.1038–1042. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/s104909651700124x>.

Dalio, R. (2018). *Principles*. Simon and Schuster.

Dalyanto, A., Sajidan, Siswandari and Sukarmin (2021). Developing Instrument to Measure Entrepreneur Skills of Vocational School Students Based on Sustainable Development.

Journal of Physics: Conference Series, 1842(1), p.012025. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/1842/1/012025>.

Damyanov, M. ed., (2023). *Mediator Vs Moderators in Research: Overview & FAQs*. [online] Dovetail. Available at: <https://dovetail.com/research/mediator-vs-moderator/#:~:text=No%2C%20a%20mediator%20variable%20and> [Accessed 27 Oct. 2023].

Dugan, J.P. (2017). *Leadership Theory: Cultivating Critical Perspectives*. John Wiley & Sons.

Edmondson, A. (2002). *Managing the Risk of Learning: Psychological Safety in Work Teams*. [online] Boston, MA: Harvard Business School. Available at: https://www.hbs.edu/ris/Publication%20Files/02-062_0b5726a8-443d-4629-9e75-736679b870fc.pdf [Accessed 15 Aug. 2023].

Edmondson, A. (2014). *Building a Psychologically Safe Workplace | Amy Edmondson | TEDxHGSE*. YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhoLuui9gX8> [Accessed 15 Aug. 2023].

Edmondson, A.C. (2019). *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Edmondson, A.C. and Bransby, D.P. (2022). Psychological Safety Comes of Age: Observed Themes in an Established Literature. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, [online] 10(1). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-120920-055217>.

Edmondson, A.C. and Lei, Z. (2014). Psychological Safety: The History, Renaissance, and Future of an Interpersonal Construct. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 1(1), pp.23–43. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-031413-091305>.

Edmondson, A. (2003). (PDF) *Psychological Safety, Trust, and Learning in Organizations: A Group-level Lens*. [online] ResearchGate. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/268328210_Psychological_Safety_Trust_and_Learning_in_Organizations_A_Group-level_Lens [Accessed 15 Aug. 2023].

Edwards, R. and Holland, J. (2013). *What Is Qualitative Interviewing?* Bloomsbury Academic. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5040/9781472545244>.

Focht, A. and Ponton, M. (2015). Identifying Primary Characteristics of Servant Leadership. *International Journal of Leadership Studies*, [online] 9(1). Available at: <https://www.regent.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/1-IJLS.pdf> [Accessed 21 Sep. 2023].

Forsyth, D.R. (2021). Recent Advances in the Study of Group cohesion. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 25(3), pp.213–228.

Frost, J. (2022). *Cronbach's Alpha: Definition, Calculations & Example*. [online] Statistics by Jim. Available at: <https://statisticsbyjim.com/basics/cronbachs-alpha/> [Accessed 22 Mar. 2024].

Fryer, T. (2020). *A Short Guide to Ontology and Epistemology: Why Everyone Should Be a Critical Realist*. [online] Tom Fryer. Available at: <https://tfryer.com/ontology-guide/> [Accessed 4 Dec. 2023].

Gandz, J., Crossan, M., Seilts, G. and Reno, M. (2013). Leadership character and corporate governance. *Ivey Business Journal*, [online] 77(3), pp.15–22. Available at: <https://iveybusinessjournal.com/publication/leadership-character-and-corporate-governance/> [Accessed 13 Aug. 2023].

Gardner, W.L., Avolio, B.J. and Walumbwa, F.O. eds., (2005). *Authentic Leadership Theory and Practice: Origins, Effects and Development*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Government of Ireland (2022a). *High Level Action Plan for the Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces*.

Government of Ireland (2022b). *Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces*.

Government of Ireland (2022c). *Strengthening Our Defence Forces – Phase One*. [online] Available at: <https://assets.gov.ie/30647/dcd2f11e73114ef3ab1d1df8f0e3b627.pdf> [Accessed 4 Jan. 2024].

Gray, C.S. (2006). *Strategy and History*. New York: Routledge.

Greene, J.C., Caracelli, V.J. and Graham, W.F. (1989). Toward a Conceptual Framework for Mixed-Method Evaluation Designs. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 11(3), pp.255–274. doi:<https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737011003255>.

Greenleaf, R.K. (1970). *The servant as leader*. [online] Westfield, Indiana: The Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership. Available at: http://www.ediguys.net/Robert_K_Greenleaf_The_Servant_as_Leader.pdf [Accessed 13 Aug. 2023].

Guillaume, O., Honeycutt, A. and Savage-Austin, A. (2013). The Impact of Servant Leadership on Job Satisfaction. *Journal of Business and Economics*, [online] 4(5), pp.444–448. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Oris-Guillaume/publication/336265383_The_Impact_of_Servant_Leadership_on_Job_Satisfaction/links/5d9791dc299bf1c363f8d454/The-Impact-of-Servant-Leadership-on-Job-Satisfaction.pdf [Accessed 15 Sep. 2023].

Harden, G., Boakye, K.G. and Ryan, S. (2016). Turnover Intention of Technology Professionals: A Social Exchange Theory Perspective. *Journal of Computer Information Systems*, 58(4), pp.291–300. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/08874417.2016.1236356>.

Hayes, A. (2022). *T-Test: What It Is with Multiple Formulas and When to Use Them*. [online] Investopedia. Available at: <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/t/t-test.asp> [Accessed 30 Apr. 2024].

Hersey, P. and Blanchard, K.H. (1969). Life cycle theory of leadership. *Training & Development Journal*, 23(5), 26–34

Hu, J. and Liden, R.C. (2011). Antecedents of Team Potency and Team effectiveness: an Examination of Goal and Process Clarity and Servant leadership. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(4), pp.851–862.

Huang, C.-K. and Lin, C.-Y. (2020). Employee Turnover Intentions and Job Performance from a Planned change: the Effects of an Organizational Learning Culture and Job Satisfaction. *International Journal of Manpower*, [online] 42(3), pp.409–423. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/ijm-08-2018-0281>.

Hughes, L. (2005). Developing Transparent Relationships through Humor in the Authentic leader-Follower Relationship. In: W.L. Gardner, B.J. Avolio and F.O. Walumbwa, eds., *Authentic Leadership Theory and Practice: Origins, Effects, and Development*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp.83–102.

Huning, T.M., Hurt, K.J. and Frieder, R.E. (2020). The effect of servant leadership, perceived organizational support, job satisfaction and job embeddedness on turnover intentions. *Evidence-based HRM: a Global Forum for Empirical Scholarship*, [online] ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/ebhrm-06-2019-0049>.

Hurt, K.J. and Heath, M. (2017). Antecedents and Outcomes of Servant Leadership: Understanding the Effects of Leader Motivation, Character, and Perceived Organizational Support. *International Journal of Servant-Leadership*, [online] 11(1), pp.101–137. doi:<https://doi.org/10.33972/ijsl.90>.

Hurt, K.J., Huning, T.M. and Thomson, N.F. (2016). Understanding Servant Leadership's Influence on Turnover Intentions and Job Satisfaction: The Mediating Role of Perceived Organizational Support and Job Embeddedness. *The Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*, [online] 22(2), pp.26–38. doi:<https://doi.org/10.9774/gleaf.3709.2017.ap.00004>.

Irish Defence Forces. (2015) Defence Forces Capstone Doctrine (DFDM-J1). Defence Forces Printing Press.

Irish Defence Forces. (2023) Defence Forces Leadership Doctrine (DFDM-J2). Defence Forces Printing Press.

Johnson, R.B. and Onwuegbuzie, A.J. (2004). Mixed Methods Research: A Research Paradigm Whose Time Has Come. *Educational Researcher*, 33(7), pp.14–26.

Jones, T., Baxter, M. and Khanduja, V. (2013). *A Quick Guide to Survey Research*. [online] The Annals of The Royal College of Surgeons of England. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1308%2F003588413X13511609956372> [Accessed 5 Feb. 2024].

King, A.S. (1990). Evolution of Leadership Theory. *Vikalpa: the Journal for Decision Makers*, [online] 15(2), pp.43–56. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0256090919900205>.

Krippendorff, K. (2019). *Content Analysis: an Introduction to Its Methodology*. 4th ed. [online] Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071878781> [Accessed 5 Feb. 2024].

Kundu, S.C. and Lata, K. (2017). Effects of supportive work environment on employee retention. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, [online] 25(4), pp.703–722. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/ijoa-12-2016-1100>.

Ladelsky, L.K. (2014). The Effect of Job Satisfaction on IT Employees Turnover Intentions in Israel. *Annals of the University of Oradea, Economic Science Series*, [online] 23(1), pp.1028–1038. Available at: <http://anale.steconomieuoradea.ro/volume/2014/n1/113.pdf> [Accessed 22 Sep. 2023].

Laub, J. (2004). Defining Servant Leadership. a Recommended Typology for Servant Leadership Studies. In: *Proceedings of the Servant Leadership Research Roundtable*. [online] p.9. Available at: <https://www.servantleaderperformance.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Defining-Servant-Leadership-SL-Roundtable-2004.pdf> [Accessed

15 Aug. 2023].

Liang, J., Farh, C.I.C. and Farh, J.-L. (2012). Psychological Antecedents of Promotive and Prohibitive Voice: A Two-Wave Examination. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55(1), pp.71–92. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2010.0176>.

Lincoln, Y.S., Lynham, S.A. and Guba, E.G. (2018). Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences, Revisited. In: *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 5th ed. Los Angeles: Sage.

Lindemann, N. (2023). 12 Advantages and Disadvantages of Questionnaires. *Pointerpro*. [online] Available at: <https://pointerpro.com/blog/questionnaire-pros-and-cons/> [Accessed 5 Feb. 2024].

Lipman-Blumen, J. (2005). Toxic Leadership: When Grand Illusions Masquerade as Noble Visions. *Leader to Leader*, [online] 2005(36), pp.29–36. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1002/ltl.125>.

Luthans, F. and Avolio, B.J. (2003). Authentic Leadership Development. In: K.S. Cameron, J.E. Dutton and R.E. Quinn, eds., *Positive Organizational Scholarship*. San Francisco: Barrett-Koehler Publishers, pp.241–261.

Mackenzie, N. and Knipe, S. 2006, "Research dilemmas: Paradigms, methods and methodology", *Issues in Educational Research*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 193-205.

Madanchian, M., Hussein, N., Noordin, F. and Taherdoost, H. (2016). *Leadership Theories; an Overview of Early Stages*. [online] ResearchGate. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305323677_Leadership_Theories_an_Overview_of_Early_Stages [Accessed 28 Nov. 2023].

Mallol, C.M., Holtom, B.C. and Lee, T.W. (2007). Job Embeddedness in a Culturally Diverse Environment. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, [online] 22(1), pp.35–44. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-007-9045-x>.

McConville, J. (2021). People First: Insights from the Army's Chief of Staff. *Army Sustainment (PB 700)*, [online] 21(01), pp.18–21. Available at: <http://www.alu.army.mil/alog/ARCHIVE/PB7002101FULL.pdf> [Accessed 26 Oct. 2023].

McGinn, A. (2023a). *Research Philosophy*. [online] Maynooth University: HY677M[A] — Thesis Preparation. Available at: <https://moodle.maynoothuniversity.ie/mod/resource/view.php?id=579286> [Accessed 2 Feb. 2024].

McGinn, A. (2023b). *Research Strategy*. [online] HY677M[A] — Thesis Preparation: Maynooth University. Available at: <https://moodle.maynoothuniversity.ie/mod/resource/view.php?id=579292> [Accessed 2 Feb. 2024].

Merriam, S.B. and Tisdell, E.J. (2016). *Qualitative Research: a Guide to Design and Implementation*. 4th ed. San Francisco, Ca: Jossey-Bass, Cop.

Mills, J. and Birks, M. (2014). *Qualitative Methodology: A Practical Guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Mitchell, D.E. (2015). *The Relationship of Transformational Leadership Behaviors with Organizational Commitment, Job Satisfaction, and Productivity at One Investment Services*

Company in the Mid-Atlantic Region, Wilmington University (Delaware).

Morrow, E., Duff, M.C. and Mayberry, L.S. (2022). Mediators, Moderators, and Covariates: Matching Analysis Approach for Improved Precision in Cognitive-Communication Rehabilitation Research. *Journal of Speech Language and Hearing Research*, [online] 65(11), pp.4159–4171. doi:https://doi.org/10.1044/2022_jslhr-21-00551.

Onwuegbuzie, A.J., Dickinson, W.B., Leech, N.L. and Zoran, A.G. (2009). A Qualitative Framework for Collecting and Analyzing Data in Focus Group Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, [online] 8(3), pp.1–21. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800301>.

Oxford Dictionaries (2001). *The Oxford Essential Dictionary of the U.S. Military*. Oxford University Press. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780199891580.001.0001>.

Oxford English Dictionary (2023a). *Brain Drain* . [online] Oed.com. Available at: <https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=brain+drain> [Accessed 8 Nov. 2023].

Oxford English Dictionary (2023b). *Nepotism*. [online] Oed.com. Available at: <https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=nepotism> [Accessed 4 Jan. 2024].

Padilla, A., Hogan, R. and Kaiser, R.B. (2007). The Toxic triangle: Destructive Leaders, Susceptible Followers, and Conducive Environments. *The Leadership Quarterly*, [online] 18(3), pp.176–194. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2007.03.001>.

Page, D. and Wong, P. (2000). *A Conceptual Framework for Measuring Servant-Leadership*. [online] ResearchGate. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242232213_A_Conceptual_Framework_for_Measuring_Servant-Leadership [Accessed 15 Aug. 2023].

Patil, P. (2018). *What Is Exploratory Data Analysis?* [online] Towards Data Science. Available at: <https://towardsdatascience.com/exploratory-data-analysis-8fc1cb20fd15> [Accessed 30 Apr. 2024].

Prensky, M. (2014). VUCA: Variability, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity. *Educational Technology*, [online] 54(2), pp.64–64. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44430261> [Accessed 6 Dec. 2023].

Rittel, H.W.J. and Webber, M.M. (1973). Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning. *Policy Sciences*, [online] 4(2), pp.155–169. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4531523> [Accessed 4 Jan. 2024].

Rock, D. (2009). *Managing with the Brain in Mind*. [online] Strategy+Business. Available at: <https://www.strategy-business.com/article/09306?gko=5df7f> [Accessed 6 Dec. 2023].

Rozovsky, J. (2015). *The five keys to a successful Google team* . [online] Michigan.Gov. Available at: <https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mdhhs/Folder4/Folder10/Folder3/Folder110/Folder2/Folder210/Folder1/Folder310/Google-and-Psychological-Safety.pdf?rev=7786b2b9ade041e78828f839eccc8b75> [Accessed 6 Dec. 2023].

Salas, E., Grossman, R., Hughes, A.M. and Coultas, C.W. (2015). Measuring Team Cohesion. *Human Factors: The Journal of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society*, [online] 57(3),

pp.365–374. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0018720815578267>.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2019). Understanding Research Philosophy and Approaches to Theory Development. In: *Research Methods for Business Students*. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited, pp.128–170.

Sparrowe, R.T. and Liden, R.C. (1997). Process and Structure in Leader-Member Exchange. *Academy of Management Review*, 22(2), pp.522–552.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1997.9707154068>.

Spector, B.A. (2015). Carlyle, Freud, and the Great Man Theory More Fully Considered. *Leadership*, [online] 12(2), pp.250–260. Available at:
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1742715015571392> [Accessed 28 Nov. 2023].

Stone, A., Russell, R., College, H. and Patterson, K. (2003). *Transformational versus Servant Leadership: a Difference in Leader Focus a Difference in Leader Focus*. [online] Available at: https://www.regent.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/stone_transformation_versus.pdf [Accessed 21 Sep. 2023].

Taber, K.S. (2018). The Use of Cronbach’s Alpha When Developing and Reporting Research Instruments in Science Education. *Research in Science Education*, 48(6), pp.1273–1296.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11165-016-9602-2>.

US Army (2019a). *ADP 3-0: Operations*. Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army.

US Army (2019b). *ADP 6-22: Army Leadership and the Profession*. Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army.

US Army (2023). *People First - Prioritizing Our Most Valuable Asset*. [online] www.army.mil. Available at:
<https://www.army.mil/peoplefirst/#:~:text=Our%20Soldiers%2C%20Civilians%20and%20the,ir> [Accessed 26 Oct. 2023].

Van Dierendonck, D. (2011). Servant Leadership: A Review and Synthesis. *Journal of Management*, [online] 37(4), pp.1228–1261.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206310380462>.

Walumbwa, F.O., Hartnell, C.A. and Oke, A. (2010). Servant leadership, Procedural Justice climate, Service climate, Employee attitudes, and Organizational Citizenship behavior: a cross-level investigation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 95(3), pp.517–529.

Webster, M. (2020). *Definition of ESPRIT DE CORPS*. [online] Merriam-webster.com. Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/esprit%20de%20corps> [Accessed 15 Aug. 2023].

Williams, L.M., Barton, M.J., Kemp, A.H., Liddell, B.J., Peduto, A., Gordon, E. and Bryant, R.A. (2005). Distinct Amygdala–autonomic Arousal Profiles in Response to Fear Signals in Healthy Males and Females. *NeuroImage*, 28(3), pp.618–626.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuroimage.2005.06.035>.

Wright, T.A. and Bonett, D.G. (2007). Job Satisfaction and Psychological Well-Being as Nonadditive Predictors of Workplace Turnover. *Journal of Management*, [online] 33(2), pp.141–160. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206306297582>.

Yammarino, F. J. and Bass, B. M. (1990). Long-term forecasting of transformational leadership and its effects among naval officers: Some preliminary findings. In K. E. Clark & M. B. Clark (Eds.), *Measures of leadership* (pp. 151–169). Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership

Yanow, D., Ybema, S. and van Hulst, M. (2012). Practicing Organizational Ethnography. In: *Qualitative Organizational Research: Core Methods and Current Challenges*. [online] London: Sage Publications Ltd. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254778326_Practising_organizational_ethnography [Accessed 2 Feb. 2024].

Yao, X., Lee, T., Mitchell, T., Burton, J., & Sablynski, C. (2004). Job Embeddedness: Current research and future directions. In R. Griffeth & P. Hom (Eds.), *Understanding employee retention and turnover*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age. pp. 153-187.