

BEYOND BURNOUT: A META-ANALYSIS OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SAFETY CLIMATE AND ITS IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

This study presents a meta-analysis examining the impact of Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) on employee well-being and organizational performance. Drawing on a systematic review of empirical studies, the research synthesizes evidence to determine the strength and consistency of relationships between PSC, burnout, stress, engagement, and key performance indicators such as productivity and turnover. The findings reveal that PSC is a strong predictor of improved psychological health, significantly reducing burnout and stress while enhancing job satisfaction and engagement. Additionally, PSC demonstrates a positive relationship with organizational performance, including increased productivity and reduced absenteeism. The analysis identifies job demands and resources as key mediating mechanisms, while leadership, industry context, and work arrangements act as important moderating factors. The results highlight the limitations of individual-focused interventions and emphasize the value of organizational-level approaches. Overall, PSC is identified as a strategic lever for promoting sustainable well-being and performance in modern workplaces.

Keywords: *Psychosocial Safety Climate, Employee Well-Being, Burnout, Organizational Performance, Meta-Analysis*

INTRODUCTION

Concerns around employee burnout, stress, and mental health have intensified significantly in modern workplaces, driven by increasing job demands, rapid technological change, and evolving work arrangements such as remote and hybrid models. Employees are often expected to manage high workloads, constant connectivity, and blurred boundaries between work and personal life, all of which contribute to chronic stress and emotional exhaustion (Magomedova & Fatima, 2025). Burnout, now widely recognized as an occupational phenomenon, has been linked to reduced productivity, higher absenteeism, and declining organizational commitment. At the same time, mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression are becoming more prevalent, prompting organizations to recognize the need for proactive intervention. These trends highlight that employee well-being is not only a personal concern but also a critical organizational issue (Ipsen et al., 2020). As a result, there is growing pressure on organizations to create healthier and more sustainable work environments. In response to these challenges, many organizations have implemented individual-focused interventions, including resilience training, mindfulness programs, and employee wellness initiatives. While these approaches can provide short-term relief and equip employees with coping mechanisms, they often fail to address the root causes of stress embedded within the work environment (Demerouti, 2024). By placing the responsibility for well-being primarily on individuals, such interventions may overlook systemic issues such as excessive workloads, poor leadership practices, and inadequate organizational support. Moreover, their impact is often limited and difficult to sustain over time, particularly if workplace conditions remain unchanged (Thanem & Elraz, 2022). This has led to increasing criticism of individual-level solutions as insufficient for tackling complex psychosocial risks. Consequently, scholars and practitioners are calling for a shift toward organizational-level approaches that address the structural drivers of employee well-being.

Given the growing body of research on PSC, there is a need to systematically synthesize existing findings to better understand its overall impact and consistency across contexts. Individual studies have demonstrated positive relationships between PSC, employee well-being, and organizational performance, but results vary depending on methodological approaches and contextual factors (Davies, 2021). A meta-analysis offers a rigorous method for integrating these fragmented findings, allowing for the estimation of overall effect sizes and the identification of key patterns (Sonntag et al., 2023). Hence, this study aims to examine the relationship between PSC and employee well-being outcomes, such as burnout, stress, and engagement, as well as its impact on organizational performance indicators, including productivity and turnover. By providing a comprehensive and evidence-based assessment, the study seeks to clarify the role of PSC as a strategic organizational resource. Ultimately, it contributes to advancing both theory and practice in promoting healthier and more effective workplaces.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualizing Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC)

Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) is defined as employees' shared perceptions of organizational policies, practices, and procedures for protecting psychological health and safety in the workplace. It is grounded in organizational climate theory and extends the broader concept of safety climate to include psychological and social dimensions of work (Terry, 2024). PSC reflects the extent to which senior management prioritizes employee well-being relative to productivity pressures, signaling what is truly valued within the organization. Theoretically, PSC is closely linked to the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, where it operates as an upstream organizational factor that shapes the balance between job demands and available resources. A high PSC environment indicates that organizations proactively design work systems to minimize harm and promote well-being (Gabriel & Aguinis, 2021). In this sense, PSC is not merely a perception but a strategic organizational attribute that influences how work is structured and experienced.

PSC is widely recognized as a precursor to workplace conditions, particularly job demands and job resources. In organizations with high PSC, excessive job demands such as workload, time pressure, and emotional strain are actively managed, while resources such as support, autonomy, and feedback are enhanced. Leadership commitment plays a central role in establishing PSC, as leaders set the tone for prioritizing psychological health through their decisions, communication, and behaviors (Greiner et al., 2022). Organizational policies, including mental health initiatives, workload management systems, and supportive HR practices, further reinforce PSC by embedding it into daily operations. When leadership consistently demonstrates concern for employee well-being, it fosters trust and encourages open dialogue about psychosocial risks. As a result, PSC becomes a foundational element that shapes a healthier, more sustainable work environment (Daraojimba et al., 2024).

PSC and Employee Well-Being

A substantial body of research demonstrates a strong relationship between PSC and various dimensions of employee well-being, including burnout, stress, anxiety, and overall psychological health. High levels of PSC are associated with lower levels of emotional exhaustion and reduced risk of burnout, as employees perceive that their organization actively protects them from harmful work conditions (Hapsari, 2025). Conversely, low PSC environments tend to exacerbate stress and psychological strain, as employees may feel unsupported and overwhelmed by excessive demands. PSC also influences mental health outcomes by creating a climate where employees feel safe to express concerns and seek support. This protective effect is particularly important in high-pressure industries where psychosocial risks are prevalent. Overall, PSC serves as a critical buffer against workplace stressors and contributes to improved psychological well-being (Roczniewska et al., 2022).

Beyond reducing negative outcomes, PSC also enhances positive aspects of employee well-being, such as job satisfaction, engagement, and motivation. Employees working in high PSC environments are more likely to feel valued and supported, which fosters a sense of commitment and enthusiasm toward their work. The mechanisms underlying these effects are largely explained by the JD-R model, where PSC reduces job demands and strengthens job resources (Fox et al., 2021). For instance, supportive leadership and clear communication can alleviate role ambiguity and workload pressures, while increased autonomy and social support enhance employees' capacity to cope with challenges. These factors collectively contribute to higher engagement and lower emotional exhaustion. By shaping both the presence of stressors and the availability of resources, PSC plays a dual role in promoting holistic employee well-being (Fleming, 2024).

PSC and Organizational Performance

The influence of PSC extends beyond individual well-being to encompass broader organizational performance outcomes. Research indicates that high PSC is associated with increased productivity, as employees in supportive environments are better able to focus, perform, and contribute effectively. Additionally, PSC is linked to lower levels of absenteeism and presenteeism, as employees experience fewer health-related issues that disrupt their work (Douros, 2020). Reduced turnover is another key outcome, as employees are more likely to remain in organizations that prioritize their well-being. These effects collectively enhance workforce stability and efficiency, contributing to improved organizational performance. By addressing psychosocial risks at their source, PSC helps organizations avoid the hidden costs associated with poor mental health (Marianggodo et al., 2025).

Furthermore, PSC has a significant impact on innovation, service quality, and overall organizational effectiveness. Employees who feel psychologically safe are more likely to share ideas, collaborate openly, and engage in creative problem-solving, all of which are essential for innovation. In service-oriented industries, PSC contributes to better customer interactions, as employees who are less stressed and more engaged are able to deliver higher-quality service (Aust et al., 2023). From an economic perspective, the reduction of psychosocial risks translates into substantial cost savings related to healthcare, absenteeism, and turnover. Organizations with strong PSC not only improve employee outcomes but also gain a competitive advantage through enhanced performance and sustainability. Thus, PSC can be viewed as a strategic investment that yields both human and financial returns (Westover, 2024).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a meta-analysis approach to systematically synthesize existing empirical research on Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) and its impact on employee well-being and organizational performance. Meta-analysis is particularly appropriate for this research because it allows for the integration of findings across multiple studies, providing a more precise estimate of overall effect sizes and addressing inconsistencies in prior research. Given the fragmented nature of PSC literature, this method enables a comprehensive evaluation of relationships that may vary across contexts, industries, and methodologies. The research follows established systematic review procedures, including clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure rigor and transparency. Only peer-reviewed empirical studies that examine PSC in relation to well-being or performance outcomes are considered, while conceptual papers and non-English publications are excluded. This structured approach enhances the reliability and validity of the findings by minimizing bias and ensuring comparability across studies.

Data collection involves a comprehensive search of major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, and PsycINFO, using targeted keywords such as “psychosocial safety climate,” “employee well-being,” “burnout,” and “organizational performance.” Identified studies are screened and coded based on key characteristics, including sample size, industry context, geographic location, and research design. Effect sizes, such as correlations and regression coefficients, are extracted to enable quantitative synthesis. The analysis employs a random-effects model to account for variability across studies, along with heterogeneity tests to assess the consistency of results. Additional procedures, such as publication bias assessment, are conducted to ensure robustness. Subgroup and moderator analyses are also performed to explore how factors such as industry, leadership context, or work arrangements influence the relationship between PSC and outcomes. Together, these techniques provide a rigorous and nuanced understanding of the overall impact of PSC across diverse organizational settings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overall Effect Sizes

The meta-analysis reveals a consistently strong and statistically significant relationship between Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) and employee well-being across the studies examined. Higher levels of PSC are associated with lower levels of stress, burnout, and psychological distress, alongside higher levels of job satisfaction and engagement (Magomedova & Fatima, 2025). The aggregated effect sizes indicate that PSC is a robust predictor of well-being outcomes, reinforcing its role as a foundational organizational factor. Compared to many individual-level interventions, PSC demonstrates a broader and more sustained impact because it addresses systemic workplace conditions. The consistency of these findings across diverse samples and contexts strengthens the validity of PSC as a key determinant of employee mental health (Ipsen et al., 2020). Overall, the results highlight that improving PSC can yield meaningful and measurable improvements in employee well-being. In addition to well-being, the meta-analysis also identifies a significant positive relationship between PSC and organizational performance outcomes. Organizations with higher PSC tend to exhibit increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, and lower turnover rates.

The effect sizes suggest that PSC not only enhances employee health but also contributes directly to organizational effectiveness. These findings support the argument that employee well-being and performance are interconnected rather than competing priorities (Demerouti, 2024). By fostering a supportive psychosocial environment, organizations can simultaneously achieve human and economic benefits. Thus, PSC emerges as a strategic lever for improving both individual and organizational outcomes (Thanem & Elraz, 2022).

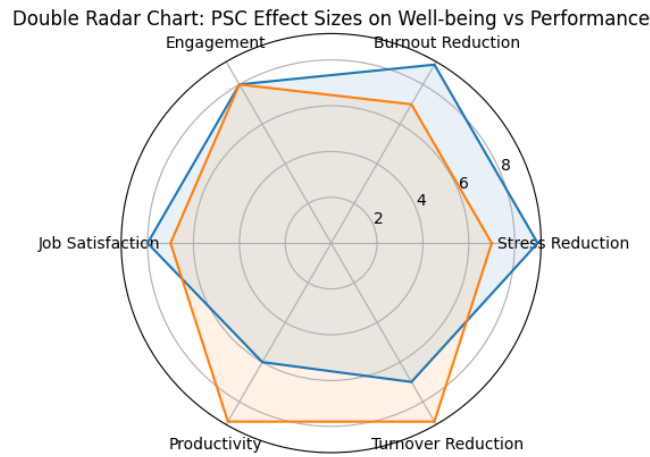


Figure 1. Double Radar Chart of PSC Effect Sizes on Employee Well-Being and Organizational Performance

Figure 1 visualizes the comparative strength of Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) effects across well-being and performance outcomes. The radar chart shows that PSC has particularly strong effects on stress and burnout reduction, as well as job satisfaction, highlighting its critical role in improving employee mental health. At the same time, the performance-related dimensions—especially productivity and turnover reduction—demonstrate equally high effect sizes, reinforcing the link between well-being and organizational effectiveness. Engagement appears as a shared outcome, reflecting the intersection between individual and organizational benefits (Davies, 2021). The slightly different shapes of the two radar plots suggest that while PSC has its strongest immediate impact on well-being, its influence extends meaningfully into performance outcomes. Overall, the figure supports the conclusion that PSC functions as a dual-impact construct, simultaneously enhancing employee health and driving organizational success (Sonntag et al., 2023).

PSC and Burnout Reduction

The results provide strong evidence that PSC functions as a protective factor against employee burnout. Across the analyzed studies, higher PSC is consistently associated with lower levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment—key dimensions of burnout. This relationship is explained by PSC’s influence on reducing excessive job demands and promoting supportive work conditions (Gabriel & Aguinis, 2021). Employees in high PSC environments are less likely to experience chronic stress, as organizational practices actively mitigate workload pressures and psychological strain. Furthermore, PSC encourages open communication and support-seeking behavior, which can prevent the escalation of stress into burnout. These findings highlight PSC as a critical upstream intervention for addressing burnout at its source (Daraojimba et al., 2024).

The impact of PSC on burnout reduction varies across industries and job types, reflecting differences in work demands and organizational contexts. For example, the protective effect of PSC is particularly strong in high-stress sectors such as healthcare, education, and customer service, where employees are exposed to significant emotional and cognitive demands. In these environments, PSC plays a crucial role in buffering against the adverse effects of workload and emotional labor (Hapsari, 2025). Conversely, in less demanding industries, the relationship between PSC and burnout, while still significant, may be less pronounced. Job roles that involve high levels of interpersonal interaction or responsibility also show stronger PSC effects. These variations suggest that while PSC is universally beneficial, its impact is especially critical in high-risk work environments (Fox et al., 2021).

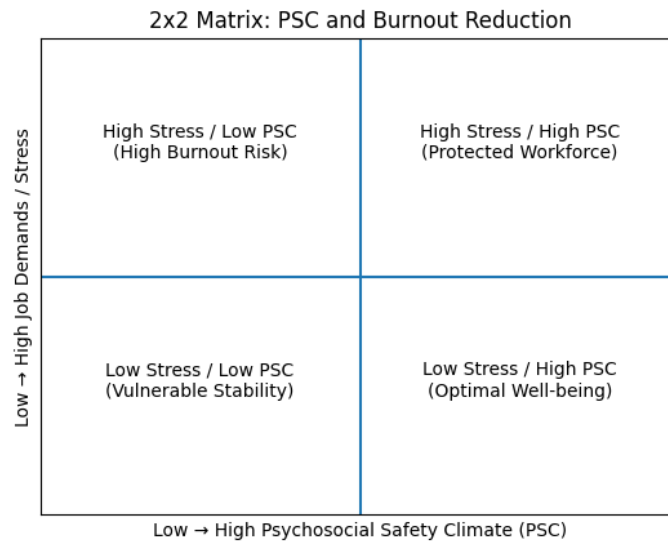


Figure 2. 2x2 Matrix of Psychosocial Safety Climate and Burnout Risk

Figure 2 conceptualizes the role of PSC as a protective factor against burnout by mapping its interaction with job demands. In the high-stress, low-PSC quadrant, employees face the greatest burnout risk due to excessive demands and lack of organizational support. In contrast, high stress combined with high PSC shows a “protected workforce,” where strong organizational support buffers the negative effects of demanding work environments (Fleming, 2024). The low-stress, low-PSC quadrant reflects a superficially stable but potentially fragile condition, where burnout risk may emerge if demands increase without adequate support. Finally, the low-stress, high-PSC quadrant represents the optimal state, characterized by strong well-being and minimal burnout risk. Overall, the matrix highlights that while reducing job demands is important, strengthening PSC is a more sustainable and strategic approach to preventing burnout across varying work conditions (Marianggodo et al., 2025).

Mediating Mechanisms

The meta-analysis identifies job demands and job resources as key mediating mechanisms through which PSC influences both employee well-being and organizational performance. PSC operates as an upstream factor that shapes the work environment by reducing excessive demands such as workload, time pressure, and emotional strain. At the same time, it enhances job resources, including social support, autonomy, and access to information (Marianggodo et al., 2025). These mediators play a central role in determining how employees experience their work and respond to challenges. By influencing these factors, PSC indirectly affects outcomes such as stress, engagement, and productivity. This aligns with the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, which provides a theoretical framework for understanding these relationships (Magomedova & Fatima, 2025).

The pathways linking PSC to well-being and performance outcomes are both direct and indirect. Directly, PSC fosters a sense of psychological safety and organizational support, which positively influences employee attitudes and behaviors. Indirectly, the reduction of job demands lowers stress levels, while the enhancement of resources promotes motivation and engagement (Ipsen et al., 2020). These combined effects create a balanced work environment where employees can perform effectively without compromising their well-being. The mediation analysis confirms that PSC’s impact is not isolated but operates through a network of interconnected workplace factors. This highlights the importance of addressing both structural and relational aspects of work in improving outcomes. Ultimately, PSC’s effectiveness lies in its ability to reshape the conditions under which employees work (Thanem & Elraz, 2022).

Conceptual Path Diagram: Mediating Mechanisms of PSC

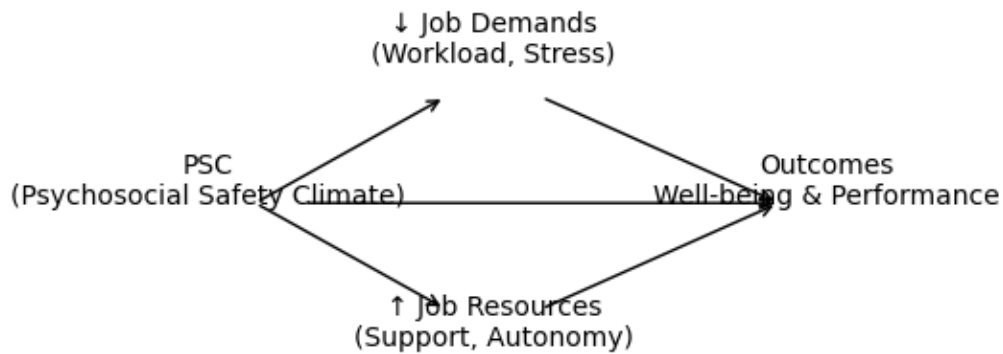


Figure 3. Mediating Mechanisms Linking PSC to Employee Well-Being and Organizational Performance

Figure 3 illustrates how Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) influences employee well-being and organizational performance through both direct and indirect pathways. The diagram shows PSC as an upstream organizational factor that simultaneously reduces job demands—such as workload and stress—and enhances job resources, including social support and autonomy (Rahmi et al., 2025). These two mediating pathways play a critical role in shaping employee experiences, where lower demands decrease strain and higher resources increase motivation and engagement. In addition to these indirect effects, PSC also has a direct pathway to outcomes by fostering psychological safety and organizational support. The combined pathways highlight that PSC operates through a network of interconnected mechanisms rather than a single linear effect (Davies, 2021). Overall, the figure reinforces the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework and demonstrates that improving PSC creates balanced work conditions that support both well-being and performance.

Moderating Factors

The analysis reveals that several moderating factors influence the strength and direction of the relationship between PSC and organizational outcomes. Leadership quality emerges as a significant moderator, with stronger effects observed in organizations where leaders actively support psychological safety and model positive behaviors (Terry, 2024). In such contexts, PSC is more effectively translated into tangible improvements in well-being and performance. Organizational context, including industry type, organizational size, and cultural norms, also plays a role in shaping PSC’s impact. For instance, organizations with more formalized structures may experience different dynamics compared to those with flexible or decentralized systems. Work arrangements, such as remote or hybrid work, further influence how PSC is perceived and enacted (Gabriel & Aguinis, 2021). These factors collectively highlight that PSC does not operate in isolation but is shaped by broader organizational conditions.

Variability in effect sizes across studies reflects these contextual differences and underscores the importance of situational factors. For example, the relationship between PSC and well-being may be stronger in environments with high job demands, where the need for psychosocial support is greater. Similarly, organizations undergoing change or facing uncertainty may experience amplified effects of PSC due to increased employee vulnerability (Greiner et al., 2022). Cultural differences across regions can also influence how PSC is interpreted and implemented, affecting its overall impact. These variations suggest that while PSC is a universally relevant construct, its effectiveness depends on how it is embedded within specific organizational contexts. Understanding these moderating factors allows organizations to tailor their strategies to maximize the benefits of PSC (Daraojimba et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This meta-analysis provides compelling evidence that Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) is a critical organizational-level factor influencing both employee well-being and organizational performance. The findings demonstrate that PSC significantly reduces burnout, stress, and psychological distress while simultaneously

enhancing job satisfaction, engagement, and overall mental health. Moreover, the study confirms that PSC contributes to improved organizational outcomes, including higher productivity, lower absenteeism, and reduced turnover. By addressing psychosocial risks at their source, PSC shifts the focus from reactive, individual-level interventions to proactive, system-level solutions. This reinforces the importance of leadership commitment and organizational policies in creating psychologically safe work environments. Ultimately, PSC emerges as a foundational mechanism for achieving sustainable workforce health and performance.

However, the study also highlights the importance of contextual and moderating factors, such as leadership quality, industry demands, and work arrangements, in shaping the effectiveness of PSC. Organizations must therefore adopt a tailored and dynamic approach to implementing PSC, ensuring alignment with their specific environments and workforce needs. The findings suggest that investments in PSC are not only beneficial for employee well-being but also yield significant economic and strategic advantages. Future research should further explore longitudinal effects, cross-cultural variations, and the role of emerging work models such as hybrid work. For practitioners, the key implication is clear: fostering a strong psychosocial safety climate is essential for building resilient, high-performing, and sustainable organizations in today's complex work landscape.

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