

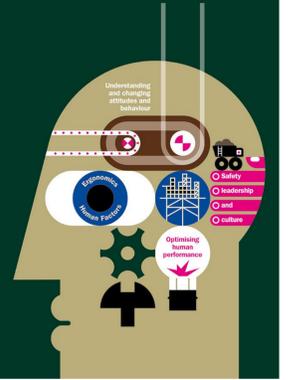
LITERATURE REVIEW:

the relationship between psychological safety, human performance and HSE performance

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Openness, reporting culture, admitting error, active reporting, willingness, openly discussing error, speaking up, psychological safety, behavioural integrity, no blame culture, Just culture, trust, team trust, high performing teams, error management, error climate.....



The Energy Institute, on behalf of Shell, commissioned a rapid review of psychological safety to identify evidence on how this may support further improvement of safety performance. The report is in press by the Energy Institute for **2019**.

THIS REVIEW

This rapid review focused on three questions.

1. Is there a proven correlation between Psychological Safety and Health, Safety and Environmental (HSE) Performance?
2. Is there evidence that building psychological safety results in improved HSE Performance?
3. What interventions in the industry have proven to be effective in increasing Psychological Safety resulting in an increased HSE performance and what interventions have proven to be ineffective?

A systematic search for evidence was completed, screened against inclusion criteria and reliability ratings, with a focus on high reliability empirical research, finding 104 cited references. There is a reasonably high number of studies, particularly in the context of healthcare errors, aviation safety, safety climate, error management and Just Culture.

WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY?

Psychological safety can be described as the willingness of people to express an opinion, admit mistakes or unsafe behaviours, without fear of being embarrassed, rejected or punished.

WHY IS PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IMPORTANT?

Psychological safety is thought to play a role in:

- Facilitating the reporting of errors and unsafe behaviours – thereby enabling these to be identified, learnt from and improvements made to prevent repetition;
- Facilitating open discussion of error, understanding errors and unsafe behaviours.

The capacity of an organisation to identify areas of weakness in safety performance (as indicated by errors and unsafe behaviours) and effectively resolve these contribute to the prevention of incidents.

The Baker report cites psychological safety as a factor in the Texas City explosion.



BP should ... develop a positive, trusting, and open process safety culture within each U.S. refinery... such that the vast majority of unsafe acts or conditions can be reported without fear of punishment.

Baker, J., N. Leveson, F. Bowman, S. Priest, G. Erwin, I. Rosenthal, & L. D. Wilson. (2007). *The Report of the BP U.S. Refineries Independent Safety Review Panel.*



WHAT INFLUENCES PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY?

Many correlational studies report a link between psychological safety and willingness to report one's errors and behaviours. The correlational research indicates that higher levels of psychological safety is associated with better safety performance.

Psychological safety is influenced by a combination of individual, team, social and organisational factors.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

A culture that holds individuals accountable, without fair process or a wish to learn from error can impact negatively on psychological safety. If that culture does not consider 'speaking up' an aspect of professional behaviour this can also have a negative impact on psychological safety.

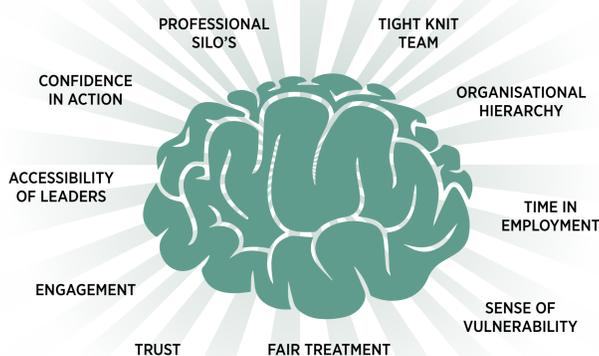
SOCIAL AFFILIATION

The number of years in employment or social affiliation within a team can increase fear of social stigma from reporting one's own error or challenging others' errors.

ORGANISATIONAL HIERARCHY

Higher grades tend to have higher levels of psychological safety, due to the degree of authority and respect afforded to individuals based on their position.

FACTORS INFLUENCING INDIVIDUAL'S SENSE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY



The ability to learn from error is related to error being seen by the team, and the organisation, as a collective learning opportunity and a shared experience about what works and what does not work.

Interventions need to overcome hierarchical barriers and fears by:

- Developing trusting interpersonal relationships such as those from team building exercises. Having groups share personal experiences, either from work or outside, creates a sense of trust between them.
- Having inclusive leaders and role models facilitates learning through adopting a set of supportive behaviours, accessibility, neutral language and positive reinforcement of reporting.
- Generating a sense that error is a shared learning opportunity and a collective responsibility aimed at performance improvement as opposed to allocating blame.
- Demonstrating the value of speaking up by acting effectively in response and communicating outcomes back to the workforce.

Interactive education – A re-orientation and hearts and mind form of engagement and training at all organisational levels to develop acceptance of the value of reporting error and recognition that employees may fear reporting/speaking up and that specific steps must be taken to facilitate reporting and learning

The report provides additional guidance on tools and techniques for promoting psychological safety.

NEXT STEPS

A key need is to Benchmark levels of psychological safety and associated levels of error self-reporting and how/why this varies between teams, departments and organisations. This review did not identify any published assessments of the current extent to which personnel in safety critical sectors are willing or unwilling to report error nor of the effectiveness of organisational responses to self-reported error.

The added value of new interventions will depend in part on the baseline level of psychological safety.

BENCHMARK YOUR PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY



HOW CAN YOU IMPROVE PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY?

To affect psychological safety positively leadership must:

- Acknowledge fallibility and proactively seek input;
- Display a sense of openness, availability and accessibility;
- Acknowledge the contribution of employees;
- Possess inclusive and facilitative leadership styles to overcome individual, team and organisational barriers;
- Provide opportunity to contribute ideas that may challenge norms and be seen as risky.

The confidence in effective action is influenced by perception of organisational commitment to safety and past responses to reported errors or unsafe behaviour. There is some evidence that:

- Interventions, such as facilitative leadership and reporting schemes, are less effective if a person perceives vulnerability from their reporting;
- A sense of trust and facilitative leadership may overcome hierarchical barriers to speaking up.

