

Psychological Safety: Conceptual Issues, Group Dynamics, and Critical Perspectives for Organization and Occupational Health

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Abstract

Psychological safety (PS), defined by Edmondson (1999) as the shared belief that a collective constitutes a safe space to speak up, take initiative, and admit mistakes without fear of sanctions, is generating increasing interest across the humanities and social sciences (Maillet & Marcoux, 2023). Long associated with management and team performance, it is now trending toward broader perspectives that touch upon mental health at work, organizational ethics, and the prevention of

psychosocial risks (PSR) (Gouvernement du Canada, 2023; Vézina, 2010).

This paper offers a theoretical reflection aimed at clarifying the concept's foundations, tensions, and contributions (Maillet & Marcoux, 2023). Three main axes will be developed:

1. Its socio-cognitive anchoring, linked to theories of motivation, organizational climate, and interpersonal trust (Akan et al., 2020; Deci & Ryan, 2000).
2. Its psychosocial and group dimension, which underscores the importance of

implicit norms, inclusive leadership, and mutual recognition (Edmondson, 1999; Gouvernement du Canada, 2023).

3. A critical approach that questions its limitations, notably the risks of instrumental appropriation, the dilution of its ethical scope, and the difficulties of intercultural measurement (Hofstede, 1980; Rachédi, 2024).

We maintain that psychological safety must be considered a multidimensional construct, situated at the intersection of well-being, organizational justice, and collective performance (INSPQ, 2025; Vézina, 2010). It represents both a lever for creativity and cooperation, and an indicator of the quality of the social climate and the respect for psychological rights (Edmondson, 1999; INSPQ, 2025).

Keywords: psychological safety, theoretical models, organizational climate, occupational health, ethics.

1. General Introduction

The concept of Psychological Safety (PS) has experienced a rapid rise in the humanities and social sciences over the past two decades, establishing itself as a fundamental explanatory

variable for organizational effectiveness and well-being at work (Maillet & Marcoux, 2023).

The canonical definition, proposed by Edmondson (1999), establishes PS as “the shared belief that a collective constitutes a safe space to speak up, take initiative, and admit mistakes without fear of sanctions” (p. 350). This conceptualization emphasizes that PS is not an individual trait, but a quality of the team environment—an aggregated perception of prevailing interpersonal norms (Edmondson, 1999).

Historically associated primarily with team management and performance improvement—particularly by fostering learning, innovation, and cognitive risk-taking—interest in PS has recently broadened (Akan et al., 2020). The concept is now positioned at the crossroads of mental health at work, organizational ethics, and the prevention of psychosocial risks (PSR) (Gouvernement du Canada, 2023; Vézina, 2010). This thematic shift necessitates rigorous theoretical clarification in the face of its increasing adoption, which often leads to conceptual simplification. The challenge lies in the need to anchor the debate about PS in its collective perspective (the “shared belief”) while simultaneously acknowledging its impact on the individual (Maillet & Marcoux, 2023).

This academic paper proposes a theoretical reflection aimed at clarifying the foundations and tensions of the concept of psychological safety. It explores the socio-cognitive anchoring of the construct, analyzes its group psychosocial dynamic, and finally, presents a critical approach questioning its practical and ethical limits. The main thesis supported is that psychological safety must be viewed as a multidimensional construct, located at the crucial intersection of well-being, organizational justice, and collective performance (INSPQ, 2025; Vézina, 2010). It represents both a lever for creativity and cooperation, and an essential indicator of the quality of the social climate and the respect for employees' psychological rights (Edmondson, 1999; INSPQ, 2025).

2. Theoretical Foundations and Socio-Cognitive Anchoring

Analyzing psychological safety requires placing it within the theoretical currents of organizational psychology, particularly in relation to motivation, trust, and work climate.

2.1. PS, Organizational Climate, and Interpersonal Trust

Psychological safety is often studied in conjunction with organizational climate and interpersonal trust, while maintaining an

essential analytical specificity (Edmondson, 1999; Maillet & Marcoux, 2023).

Organizational Climate is perceived as the aggregated set of perceptions of practices, procedures, and structures within an organization. It is considered a major determinant of psychological safety. PS is a function of this climate: it is the perception that the context (the climate) allows for interpersonal risk-taking without negative consequences (Maillet & Marcoux, 2023).

It is crucial to differentiate PS from Interpersonal Trust (Edmondson, 1999). Trust is a positive expectation regarding the intention or behavior of another individual or group (Akan et al., 2020). It is generally bidirectional and based on the assessment of others' reliability and integrity. Psychological Safety (PS), in contrast, is a collective perception of the consequences of risk in a given context (Edmondson, 1999). For instance, a leader may trust a team member's competence (trust), but that member may still doubt that the collective will accept peer criticism or the reporting of a systemic error without judgment (PS).

Research has also shown that the strength of the climate—the degree of member consensus on this perception of the climate—is an essential boundary condition that can either foster or impede the establishment of PS (Maillet &

Marcoux, 2023). A strong, fair, and predictable organizational climate is indispensable for the shared belief in PS to be established sustainably and function as a risk buffer.

2.2. Psychological Safety and Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Psychological safety significantly aligns with motivation theories, particularly Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory (SDT). SDT posits that human flourishing and intrinsic motivation depend on the satisfaction of three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (or belonging).

The psychological safety environment emerges as the contextual mediator that makes the satisfaction of autonomy and relatedness possible (Maillet & Marcoux, 2023). The very definition of PS—the ability to speak up and take initiative—is a behavioral manifestation of autonomy.

The safe environment supports the pursuit of intrinsic goals (Deci & Ryan, 2000). If employees are deliberately deprived of the possibility to have a say in their work or the methods used to accomplish their tasks (low decision latitude), their need for autonomy is frustrated (INSPQ, 2025). This frustration reduces intrinsic motivation and the willingness to engage in cognitive risk-taking (like

expressing disagreement), thereby weakening PS.

By providing an emotional buffer zone, PS allows the individual to take cognitive risks with the assurance of being supported by empathetic and non-controlling individuals (Edmondson, 1999; Maillet & Marcoux, 2023). Consequently, PS is perceived as an organizational state that creates favorable conditions for the flourishing of desirable psychological states, such as intrinsic motivation and optimal engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

2.3. Organizational Determinants and Influencing Factors

Beyond individual and interpersonal theoretical foundations, research has identified a series of specific contextual determinants that shape PS within teams. These structural factors can be grouped into several key categories (Edmondson, 1999; Maillet & Marcoux, 2023):

- **Climate and Organizational Practices:** The set of policies, procedures, and management systems in place.
- **Team Characteristics:** Such as task interdependence, size, or diversity.
- **Leadership Behaviors:** The management practices of the immediate supervisor.
- **Relational Networks:** The links between team members and with the external environment.

- Individual Differences: The personality and past experiences of members.

Task interdependence is a significant catalyst for PS (Edmondson, 1999). When team objectives require close coordination and intensive knowledge sharing, PS becomes essential. It is in these contexts that the willingness to report errors and uncertainties is most critical for collective success (Akan et al., 2020; Cooke et al., 2004).

The literature particularly emphasizes the boundary conditions that can either foster or impede the establishment of a psychological safety climate: cultural differences (power distance, uncertainty avoidance), climate strength (degree of member consensus on this perception), adherence to norms (conformity or resistance to established rules), and task interdependence (Hofstede, 1980; Maillet & Marcoux, 2023). These factors underscore that the establishment of PS is a dynamic process that must adapt to the socio-cognitive and contextual realities of the organization. The study of these boundary conditions, especially power distance and cultural differences, is essential because they directly modulate the perception of interpersonal risk and can neutralize the best leadership practices (Hofstede, 1980; Panissal, 2014).

3. Psychological Safety as a Group Dynamic and Pillars of Leadership

The psychosocial dimension of psychological safety highlights its central role in regulating group interactions and its structural dependence on leadership (Edmondson, 1999; Gouvernement du Canada, 2023). PS is the expression of an implicit social contract that defines the acceptability of vulnerability within the collective.

3.1. The Structuring Role of Implicit Team Norms

Psychological safety is, by definition, a “shared belief” (Edmondson, 1999), which means it is fundamentally codified by the team's implicit norms (Maillet & Marcoux, 2023). These norms, often unwritten or not formally recognized, are powerful. They collectively determine how errors, failures, and disagreements are managed and interpreted by team members.

In a psychologically safe collective, the implicit norm is that failure is considered a source of useful information for continuous improvement, and not a reason for blame or shame (Edmondson, 1999). The safe environment is one that actively encourages members to:

- Question ideas constructively, without fearing personal judgment or discrimination.
- Take interpersonal risks, which includes asking questions, admitting a shortcoming, or reporting an anomaly, even if it could potentially embarrass a colleague or a superior (Akan et al., 2020).

If, for example, silence is the implicit norm when a superior makes a mistake—even in the absence of formal sanctions—PS is non-existent, because the dreaded consequence (humiliation or exclusion) is anticipated by all (Gouvernement du Canada, 2023; Panissal, 2014). Implicit norms, established by repeated behaviors and reactions to past incidents, are the true guardians of the perceived level of interpersonal risk in the collective.

3.2. Inclusive Leadership: Modeling and Key Behaviors

The role of the leader is undoubtedly the most decisive factor in establishing a culture of psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999; Gouvernement du Canada, 2023). The leader is responsible for modeling and normalizing the behaviors that define a safe space.

3.2.1. Inclusive Leadership as an Ethical Model

The concept of inclusive leadership is specifically linked to PS because it involves promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion while creating a psychologically safe environment (Gouvernement du Canada, 2023). Inclusivity and PS are therefore mutually dependent: PS creates the space where diversity can be expressed without fear.

The inclusive leader acts as a model by demonstrating their own fallibility (Gouvernement du Canada, 2023). By accepting fallibility and publicly acknowledging their mistakes or uncertainties, leaders send a powerful signal to employees: it is acceptable to take risks and make errors. This modeling of vulnerability is the most effective act in transforming implicit team norms, as it makes psychological risk-taking acceptable for subordinates (Edmondson, 1999). Inclusive leadership behaviors rely on ethical qualities such as courage, empathy, compassion, and mindfulness (Gouvernement du Canada, 2023).

3.2.2. Communication, Active Listening, and Recognition

Communication is identified as one of the fundamental pillars of PS and inclusive leadership (Akan et al., 2020; Gouvernement du Canada, 2023). It is not the quantity of speech that matters, but its quality, notably active listening. Leaders must excel at active listening

and ensure that ideas are not only understood but are taken into account. The failure to listen to presented ideas can lead to a breakdown in the team and compromise PS, resulting in defensive silence (Akan et al., 2020).

Furthermore, recognition is an essential PS factor (INSPQ, 2025). Data reveals that the lack of recognition is a major reason why individuals seek psychological support (Vézina, 2010). Recognition is perceived as a form of listening and validation that directly supports psychological safety and the sense of belonging, confirming that the individual and their contribution are valued by the collective (Deci & Ryan, 2000; INSPQ, 2025).

3.3. PS, Shared Cognition, and Team Performance

Psychological safety is more than just a well-being factor; it is the affective lubricant necessary for the proper functioning of the complex cognitive architecture of teams (Cooke et al., 2004; Edmondson, 1999).

When PS is high, members can openly exchange information and knowledge, which is essential for the formation of shared cognition and Shared Mental Models (SMMs) (Cooke et al., 2004; Ren & Argote, 2011). Team cognition is a multi-level phenomenon mobilizing individual knowledge structures and team processes, such as communication and coordination.

3.3.1. Shared Mental Models (SMMs)

Shared cognition occurs when team members maintain a level of information sharing and acquire a common understanding of their goals and each other's capabilities (Cooke et al., 2004). These Shared Mental Models (SMMs) are stable structures that the team relies on to optimize:

- **Communication:** For instance, by using closed-loop communication.
- **Task Coordination:** SMMs allow for anticipating teammates' actions, which is crucial in highly interdependent environments.

These concepts can be linked to the *référentiel opératif commun* (ROC) or Common Operating Framework, often used in Francophone ergonomics, which designates the shared knowledge system used by the team to manage the work situation.

3.3.2. The Transactive Memory System (TMS)

The development of these models is facilitated by the Transactive Memory System (TMS), initially proposed by Wegner in 1986 (Ren & Argote, 2011). The TMS is a shared system that allows the team to know “who knows what” and frees up capacity in individual memory (Cooke et al., 2004; Michinov & Michinov, 2009).

Psychological safety is essential for the constitution of the TMS (Edmondson, 1999). For a TMS to develop, members must inform each other about their strengths, weaknesses, and shortcomings, which represents a high interpersonal risk in the absence of PS. By reducing the cognitive load associated with emotional defense and the fear of humiliation, PS frees up resources for reflection, dialogue, and collective collaboration (Michinov & Michinov, 2009; Ren & Argote, 2011). Research has shown that the development of a TMS is correlated with better collective performance, including in academic contexts (Michinov & Michinov, 2009).

4. Practical Applications: PSR Prevention, Justice, and Performance

The relevance of psychological safety is measured by its capacity to be a practical lever for improving health and productivity in the workplace. It offers a powerful conceptual framework for integrating well-being requirements (mental health) and effectiveness objectives (innovation and performance).

4.1. PS as a Protective Factor and Meta-Indicator of Psychosocial Risks (PSR)

The absence of psychological safety is intrinsically linked to the presence of risk factors that cause psychological distress (Vézina, 2010). The concept of PS acts as a meta-

indicator of the quality of the social climate and the respect for employees' psychological rights. Cross-analysis of the concepts reveals a convergence between the components that foster PS and those that prevent PSR (INSPQ, 2025; Vézina, 2010).

Researchers and occupational health and safety (OHS) organizations agree that the compromise of psychological safety is more likely in the presence of five key conditions, which are simultaneously major determinants of PSR (INSPQ, 2025; Vézina, 2010):

1. **Excessive Professional Demands:** When workload and required efforts constantly exceed skills or are not distributed equitably, this directly increases the risk of stress and burnout.
2. **Limited Decision Latitude:** Employees are deprived of the ability to exercise control over their work, choose their methods, or express their views. This low decision-making autonomy is a key factor in stress and low engagement, contrary to the "initiative" component of PS.
3. **Absence of Reward and Recognition:** Work is not praised, recognized, or rewarded for no valid reason. The lack of recognition is a major reason why individuals seek psychological support,

highlighting its critical role in emotional distress.

4. Lack of Equity: Legitimate needs and rights are not considered, which harms perceived organizational justice.
5. Lack of Support: The deliberate absence of support in the form of advice, guidance, or practical resources and information. The presence of social support, whether from the manager or colleagues, is an essential component of work organization for PSR prevention.

Integrating PS into PSR management thus makes it possible to address risks such as moral harassment and internal violence, as PS ensures the shared belief that it is safe to speak up and report without fear of retaliation (Gouvernement du Canada, 2023; INSPQ, 2025). Legal and scientific approaches converge on these risk factors, emphasizing that failure to address PS factors violates occupational health and safety obligations (Vézina, 2010).

4.2. PS and Organizational Justice: The Operationalization of Equity

Psychological safety is fundamentally inseparable from organizational justice. The perception of equity, one of the five key

conditions, refers directly to the need for both distributive justice (fair distribution of rewards and workload) and procedural justice (fair adherence to rules and consideration of legitimate needs during decision-making) (Vézina, 2010).

Public health organizations recognize that implementing management practices that foster PS is the direct application of the principles of organizational justice and PSR prevention (INSPQ, 2025). The Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ, 2025) identifies six key components of work organization that must be targeted for PSR prevention and which overlap with the pillars of PS: workload, recognition at work, social support from the immediate manager, social support from colleagues, decision-making autonomy, and information and communication.

These components are the operationalization of psychological safety, as they create an environment where the individual does not have to fear injustice or lack of support. The management practices recommended by INSPQ to foster recognition and organizational justice are thus direct levers for strengthening PS

Table 1: Psychological Safety at the Intersection of PSR (Protection Factors)

PS Dimension	Mitigated Psychosocial Risk Factor (PSR)	Key Organizational Mechanism (INSPQ/Practice)
Belief in expression without fear (Edmondson, 1999)	Moral harassment and internal violence	Activities or policy against psychological harassment (Gouvernement du Canada, 2023)
Decision Latitude / Initiative (Deci & Ryan, 2000)	Stress, low engagement, lack of competence	Decision-making autonomy and participation in decisions (INSPQ, 2025)
Reward / Valuation (Absence of sanction)	Burnout, Presenteeism	Recognition at work and fair management (INSPQ, 2025; Vézina, 2010)
Collective Social Support (Akan et al., 2020)	Isolation, psychological distress	Social support from the immediate manager and colleagues (INSPQ, 2025)

4.3. Preventive Management and the Adoption of Norms (INSPQ)

The implementation of PS is a structured approach that falls within the broader framework of the employer's obligations regarding psychological health and safety (Vézina, 2010). This approach relies on adopting tools and practices aimed at identifying, correcting, and controlling PSR, which are, by definition, factors compromising PS.

The employer has a legal obligation to include PSR in its prevention program and action plan (Vézina, 2010). Risk assessment often involves the use of structured identification grids. For

example, the INSPQ Psychosocial Risk Identification Grid (2025) is an interview tool designed to help occupational health teams briefly assess the presence of these factors, explicitly including workload, recognition, social support, decision-making autonomy, and information/communication.

The prevention approach is thus three-pronged, in coherence with the levels of intervention in occupational health:

- **Primary Prevention:** Acting directly on work organization and management practices to reduce exposure to PS and PSR risk factors. INSPQ (2025) offers practical management sheets to promote autonomy at work, workload

balance, recognition and organizational justice, as well as mutual aid and cooperation among colleagues.

- **Secondary Prevention:** Targeting individuals at risk and offering early intervention, for example through workshops on stress management or time management.
- **Tertiary Prevention:** Managing the consequences of PSR, including absenteeism and presenteeism, by implementing return-to-work activities or policies.

By adopting these management practices to promote a psychosocial safety climate, organizations implement the fundamental requirement of PS: creating an environment where interpersonal risks and judgments are minimized, thereby ensuring not only legal compliance but also an ethical management of human resources (Gouvernement du Canada, 2023; INSPQ, 2025).

4.4. PS as a Lever for Adaptive Performance and Innovation

The main initial interest of psychological safety lies in its role as a lever for collective performance and continuous learning (Edmondson, 1999). By minimizing interpersonal fear and the fear of ridicule, PS allows teams to achieve adaptive performance—the ability to change, innovate, and quickly course-correct in the face of uncertainty (Akan et al., 2020).

This link is ensured by two main mechanisms:

1. **Learning and Openness to Criticism:** PS is the environment that normalizes the recognition of failure not as an individual fault, but as a source of useful information for continuous improvement (Edmondson, 1999). Employees feel authorized to challenge the status quo, constructively question ideas, and take the risks necessary for innovation. The absence of fear of sanctions related to admitting errors is the keystone of the organizational learning process.
2. **Consolidation of Team Cognition:** At the cognitive level, PS is the factor that encourages the open and non-defensive exchange of information (Cooke et al., 2004). This communication fluidity is indispensable for the development of Shared Mental Models and the Transactive Memory System (Michinov & Michinov, 2009; Ren & Argote, 2011). These collective cognitive structures allow team members to have a common understanding of goals and to know “who knows what”. The improvement of this transactive memory system has been shown to be correlated with better collective performance (Michinov & Michinov, 2009).

It is concluded that the recognition that supports PS plays a critically dual role: it validates the individual (reducing the risk of PSR) and reinforces their commitment to collective goals, thereby increasing the chances of success

(INSPQ, 2025; Vézina, 2010). Psychological safety is the foundation upon which trust, learning, and cooperation can develop, leading to superior and sustainable collective outcomes.

5. Critical Perspectives, Instrumentalization, and Intercultural Challenges

The theoretical analysis of PS would be incomplete without a critical approach that questions its practical limits, ethical tensions, and the challenges of intercultural measurement.

5.1. The Risk of Instrumental Appropriation and Performativity

When popularized, the concept of psychological safety risks becoming a victim of its own success through instrumental appropriation. It can be reduced to a simple managerial tool solely aimed at improving profitability and productivity indicators, thereby diluting its initial ethical scope focused on well-being (Maillet & Marcoux, 2023).

In critical management research, this phenomenon is analyzed from the perspective of performativity. When management mechanisms, including attempts to measure and improve PS, aim only to transform organizational reality to achieve predefined performance objectives, they can lead to “perverse effects”. If the organization adopts the language of PS but maintains punitive power structures, the promise of safety is broken, leading to the “infelicity” of performative acts.

PS then becomes an HR marketing label rather than a lived reality. The ethics of responsibility must prevail over the sole logic of performance to avoid the ethical dilution of the concept (Gouvernement du Canada, 2023).

5.2. Challenges of Measurement and Intercultural Limits

The measurement of PS using standard scales faces challenges of validity and generalization, particularly in intercultural contexts (Maillet & Marcoux, 2023). PS is vulnerable to Western conceptual homogenization, which struggles to integrate the complexity of cultural norms governing the expression of vulnerability. Hofstede’s (1980) dimensions provide a critical framework for understanding these limits.

5.2.1. Power Distance

In cultures with high Power Distance (PD), submission to authority is a powerful societal norm (Hofstede, 1980). Speaking up, admitting an error, or challenging a directive is intrinsically a risky act. Even if a leader seeks to encourage inclusion (inclusive leadership), the cultural implicit norm of respecting PD can neutralize this effort (Gouvernement du Canada, 2023). The perceived insecurity in these contexts can thus result from a deep cultural adherence rather than an isolated managerial failure, complicating the interpretation of PS scores.

5.2.2. Uncertainty Avoidance

Similarly, cultures that prioritize Uncertainty Avoidance tend to view cognitive risk-taking and the admission of errors (necessary for PS) as threatening or irresponsible behaviors (Hofstede, 1980). PS requires a tolerance for ambiguity and failure that may contradict the fundamental values of some cultures.

Furthermore, in North American society, the mindset of “big and fast are beautiful” (a rather masculine trait) predominates, demanding that change be significant and results be rapid (Rachédi, 2024). This tendency can create resistance when intervening in cultures where this trait is prevalent.

5.3. Towards a Critical Intercultural Approach

It is imperative to move beyond the model of simple “cultural competence” to adopt a critical

intercultural approach to PS (Rachédi, 2024). This approach requires directly addressing power differences and structural biases, such as racism and discrimination, which can generate deep psychological insecurity not measurable by standard tools. For example, non-Caucasian health personnel may report colleagues' ignorance regarding the power dynamics that exist between them and the non-Caucasian patients under their care.

PS must be contextually adapted, requiring practitioners to engage in constant self-regulation and adjustment of intervention strategies (praxeology), as a solution effective in one culture may prove counterproductive in another (Panissal, 2014; Rachédi, 2024).

Table 2: Critical Analysis: Ethical and Contextual Tensions of PS

Critical Dimension	Analytical Challenge	Consequence of Instrumentalization/Measurement	Key Cultural Influence (Hofstede)
Instrumentalization	Reduction of PS to a tool for profitability and performance	Dilution of ethical scope (priority to "performativity")	Masculinity ("Big and fast are beautiful" orientation) (Rachédi, 2024)
Measurement Difficulties	Validity and reliability of scales in heterogeneous contexts	Underestimation of insecurity due to cultural conformity (forced silence)	Power Distance (Fear of challenging authority) (Hofstede, 1980)

Critical Dimension	Analytical Challenge	Consequence of Instrumentalization/Measurement	Key Cultural Influence (Hofstede)
Ethical Dilution	Focus on individual perception to the detriment of structural justice	Failure to deconstruct systemic biases (need for a critical approach)	Uncertainty Avoidance (Resistance to cognitive risk) (Hofstede, 1980; Rachédi, 2024)

6. Conclusion and Future Directions for Research and Practice

6.1. Synthesis of Contributions

This paper has demonstrated that psychological safety is a fundamental construct whose impact extends from individual motivation (satisfaction of SDT's needs for autonomy and relatedness) to collective performance (facilitation of shared cognition and shared mental models) (Cooke et al., 2004; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Edmondson, 1999). It is the most precise indicator of the acceptance of vulnerability within a team.

By explicitly linking PS to psychosocial risk factors (low autonomy, lack of recognition, inequity), it is established that the promotion of PS is not only a lever for creativity and cooperation, but a fundamental requirement of ethical and preventive organizational management (INSPQ, 2025; Vézina, 2010). However, the risk of managerial instrumentalization and the challenges posed by

cultural dimensions (PD, uncertainty avoidance) necessitate a continuous critical perspective on the application and measurement of this concept (Hofstede, 1980; Maillet & Marcoux, 2023).

6.2. Future Directions for Academic Research

To consolidate the theoretical and practical foundation of PS, several research directions are crucial:

- **Causality Methodology:** Conducting robust longitudinal studies to establish clear causal links between inclusive leadership interventions and changes in PS levels and performance (Gouvernement du Canada, 2023; Maillet & Marcoux, 2023). The use of mixed methods (qualitative for implicit norms, quantitative for perceptions) is necessary to capture the complexity of the phenomenon.
- **New Contexts:** Studying PS in high emotional constraint environments, such as healthcare, where PS is directly linked to patient safety and where peer support programs are critical.

- **Intercultural Validation:** Developing and validating PS measurement instruments sensitive to cultural variables (e.g., by modulating the perception of risk based on power distance) (Hofstede, 1980). Continuing research on critical intercultural approaches that address systemic power differences, rather than mere communication differences (Rachédi, 2024).

6.3. Implications for Managerial Practice

Practical implications focus on adopting an ethical and behavioral approach to PS:

- **Priority to Recognition and Equity:** PS prevention efforts must target key PS factors, notably by ensuring a fair distribution of workload, sufficient autonomy, and a functional reward and recognition system (INSPQ, 2025; Vézina, 2010).
- **Development of Behavioral Leadership:** Leadership training must emphasize modeling vulnerability, empathy, and active listening, as these behaviors are the fundamental drivers for establishing a psychologically safe culture (Gouvernement du Canada, 2023).
- **Ethical Integration:** PS must be considered not as a means to increase productivity, but as an end in itself, ensuring that the organization respects the psychological rights of its members (Vézina, 2010). It is by adopting this ethical perspective that PS will retain its transformative power.

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