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Building Psychosocial Safety Climate

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Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) is a lead indicator for psychosocial risks and health outcomes. It refers to the organisational climate for employee psychological health, well-being, and safety. This action explains PSC and offers suggestions for how you can build PSC in your organisation.

Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) refers to the organisational climate for employee psychological health, well-being, and safety. A high PSC work environment is one in which employees' perceive that their health and well-being outcomes are prioritised over operational and strategic goals (Brunetto et al., 2025). It is determined by organisational policies, practices, and procedures for the protection of worker psychological health and safety. PSC reflects senior management commitment, organisational participation, and communication and consultation in relation to psychosocial safety at work (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). Research across many studies has demonstrated the power of PSC to reduce worker exposure to psychosocial risks and positively influence mental health and wellbeing outcomes.

PSC was identified in the recent MARS Landmark – Insights Survey (Yam et al., 2023) as a key organisational factor impacting mining sector employee wellbeing, with positive PSC related to improved mental health, wellbeing, and a respectful culture. Improvements to PSC are necessary to enhance the wellbeing and mental health of sector employees in addition to providing productivity benefits. PSC is also good for business, and increased PSC has been linked to increased employee engagement, reduced sickness absence and turnover, and fewer workers' compensation claims. It is also an important tool in meeting your duty of care to your workers.

Measuring PSC is important in meeting work health and safety legal duties to mitigate risks to workers' psychological health. Assessing PSC risk levels, benchmark standards and prognosis can provide information on the future risk of psychosocial hazards and associated harm. For example, poor PSC increases an individual's risk of developing depressive symptoms by 200% within a year. Organisations with higher PSC scores experience lower claims costs and fewer days needed to return to work compared to those with lower scores. Improving PSC leads to a decrease bullying and an increase in job satisfaction (Dollard, Dormann & Idris, 2019).

How to build PSC into your work systems

Measure:

As a first step, it is important that you understand your current levels of PSC across your business/mine site/team in relation to benchmark standards (Bailey, Dollard & Richards, 2015). Engagement with the **Better Together Platform** – the MARS Workplace Barometer, is a great way to achieve this, so congratulations on making this commitment to psychosocial safety. You will be able to not only understand your mine site's PSC, but also benchmark your organisation against the sector and track PSC performance over time. We recommend regularly repeating the Better Together Platform survey as this will allow you to track progress and will motivate elevated performance across your organisation/mine site/team.

Workshop and action plan:

We encourage mining organisations and mine sites to host on-site workshops to help workers and key managerial staff understand the importance of PSC, empowering senior leaders to effectively champion PSC initiatives. This may involve structured discussions and strategy sessions on improving PSC within specific operational contexts and across different levels of the organisation. The training workshops can be facilitated by MARS Centre researchers or other consultants or experts in this field. Each session should result in some actionable ideas for change or improvements that could be adopted across the four PSC dimensions:

- Organisational prioritisation of psychological health and safety,
- senior management commitment,
- organisational participation, and communication and
- consultation in relation to psychosocial safety at work.

Some other ways in which your organisation/mine site can support the elevation of PSC are suggested below:

Demonstrate management commitment to psychological safety and wellbeing

- Act to address psychosocial problems raised by workers, and provide feedback to the relevant employees on how the matter was addressed.
- Ensure processes to fix problems raised by workers are in place, well communicated, and effective.

- Provide education designed to improve management commitment and priority to psychosocial safety issues to supervisors.

Demonstrating management prioritisation of psychological safety and wellbeing

- Include PSC measures/performance in senior management KPIs.
- Include PSC in performance reviews of management and appointment of leadership positions based on individual commitment to PSC policies.
- Clarify the prioritisation of employee wellbeing by top management through policy documents, public and internal statements, induction processes, training, and other methods.
- Take actions and implement initiatives that demonstrate management values wellbeing and psychological health.

Organisational communication regarding psychological safety and wellbeing

- Regularly communicate the organisation's commitment to workers psychological health and safety.
- Ensure information related to psychosocial safety and wellbeing is communicated effectively.
- Ensure workers are listened to.

Organisational participation around psychological safety and wellbeing

- Ensure all workers are encouraged to be involved in psychological health and safety in meaningful ways.
- Establish mechanisms for ensuring staff concerns regarding psychosocial hazards and/or their wellbeing are heard and responded to.
- Ensure workers are willing to/feel safe to articulate their concerns and report psychosocial problems.

References

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