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Relationships between leadership, psychological safety and organizational innovation: a systematic literature review protocol

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Support - Self-funded.

Review Stage at time of this submission - The review has not yet started.

Conflicts of interest - None declared.

INPLASY registration number: INPLASY2025100060

Amendments - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 17 October 2025 and was last updated on 17 October 2025.

INTRODUCTION

Review question / Objective This research aims to synthesize current, peer-reviewed empirical studies that confirm and describe the relationship between leadership, psychological safety, and organizational innovation, as well as HRM practices focused on effective leadership development and development in promoting organizational innovation, considering the influence of psychological safety on this process.

Considering the importance of innovative behaviors in the context of organizational change, we defined the following research questions:

- a) How are organizational leadership styles related to psychological safety and organizational innovation?
- [1] How does leadership promote psychological safety and organizational innovation?

- [2] Which leadership styles demonstrate the greatest effectiveness in promoting psychological safety?
- [3] Which leadership styles demonstrate the greatest effectiveness in promoting organizational innovation?
- [4] How does psychological safety promote organizational innovation?

CIMO (Context, Intervention, Mechanism, Outcome) - CIMO (Context, Intervention, Mechanism, Outcome)

C - Organizations
I - Leadership Styles (HRM Practices)
M - Psychological Safety
O - Organizational Innovation
To this end, the following will also be considered:
How were leadership styles, psychological safety, and organizational innovation empirically examined in relation to the study design and methodologies?

(What is the context of these studies, in what types of organizations?)

What scales and/or tools for leadership, psychological safety, and organizational innovation were used in these studies? (Are the theoretical foundations presented?)

What were the main findings of the included studies? (What mechanisms indicate the effectiveness of leadership and psychological safety?)

What are the implications of these findings for individuals, teams, and organizations?

What limitations and gaps exist in the literature?

Rationale The rationale for conducting this systematic review of scientific articles reporting empirical studies lies in the limited documentation of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices—specifically, those related to leadership training and development (T&D)—that are based on scientific evidence and clearly describe how leadership can influence organizational innovation, considering psychological safety as a mediating factor in promoting such innovation. Therefore, this systematic review aims to provide a synthesis of the main leadership styles that foster organizational innovation and to examine how psychological safety plays a role in this process.

Condition being studied This review will include studies describing empirical research and peer-reviewed articles that investigated and identified associations between the constructs of leadership, psychological safety, and organizational innovation. Qualitative and quantitative studies will be considered, with no restrictions on study design. HRM practices focused on leadership development and development that demonstrate relationships between leadership, psychological safety, and organizational innovation will be documented. We will also record the instruments used to measure and evaluate these three constructs.

METHODS

Search strategy Databases: Scopus, Web of Science (all indexes), Emerald Insight, PsycINFO (APA) and EBSCO.

Search strategy:

Scopus, Web of Science and EBSCO:

(leadership OR "leadership style") AND ("psychological safety" OR "psychological climate") AND ("organizational innovation" OR "innovation performance" OR "innovation capability" OR "innovative behavior")

Emerald Insight, PsycINFO (APA):

leadership OR "leadership style" AND "psychological safety" OR "psychological climate" AND "organizational innovation" OR "innovation performance" OR "innovation capability" OR "innovative behavior"

Note: Filters for languages, type of documents and time frame will be applied manually, after the general search.

Participant or population Workers, leaders, and organizational teams participating in empirical studies that assess leadership, psychological safety, and organizational innovation, including studies on HRM practices focused on leadership training and development.

Intervention Human resource management (HRM) practices focused on leadership training and development, aiming to enhance leadership, psychological safety, and organizational innovation, as reported in the included studies.

Comparator Not applicable.

Study designs to be included Qualitative and quantitative studies will be considered, with no restrictions on study design.

Eligibility criteria Scientific articles that address the assessment of leadership style; assessment of psychological safety; assessment of organizational innovation; explicitly address the relationships between the constructs of leadership, psychological safety, and organizational innovation; published in English, Spanish, and Portuguese; open access; the time frame will be 2014 to 2025.

Information sources Databases: Scopus, Web of Science (all indexes), Emerald Insight, PsycINFO (APA) and EBSCO.

Main outcome(s) The following outcomes will be extracted and analyzed:

Certain leadership style(s) may promote psychological safety.

Certain leadership style(s) may promote organizational innovation.

Psychological safety impacts innovative and creative organizational behaviors.

A management practice/leadership style capable of simultaneously promoting psychological safety and organizational innovation/organizational outcomes requires a training/development process tailored to its organizational context.

The confirmation of these hypotheses aligns with the core focus of this review, which aims to

investigate which leadership styles can foster organizational innovation through psychological safety. The literature recognizes innovation as a key element for organizational sustainability, while psychological safety is identified as a necessary condition for creative and innovative behaviors. This enables the identification of practical strategies for leadership development and the application of such evidence in organizational contexts.

Data management The review will be conducted with the support of Rayyan software; Study selection will follow these steps: (1) screening of articles by titles and abstracts; (2) full-text reading; (3) inclusion of eligible studies. Inclusions and exclusions will be based on predefined criteria. A flow diagram of the selection process will be presented in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. The list of studies excluded after full-text review will be made available along with the corresponding justifications. A standardized data extraction form developed specifically for this review will be used, and before application, it will be tested through a pilot with three studies included in the sample for the necessary adjustments to the extraction form.

Quality assessment / Risk of bias analysis Risk of Bias Assessment Tools for Primary Studies

The risk of bias assessment of the included primary studies will be conducted considering the different methodological designs. The following tools will be applied according to the study type:

Observational studies (cohort, case-control, or analytical cross-sectional): Newcastle-Ottawa Scale (NOS), which assesses participant selection, group comparability, and outcome measurement adequacy.

Qualitative studies: Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) – Qualitative Checklist, which evaluates clarity of objectives, appropriateness of methodology, researcher reflexivity, data analysis, and validity of findings.

Mixed methods studies: Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT, 2018 version), which allows integrated assessment of methodological quality of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods studies.

Experimental quantitative studies (randomized controlled trials): Cochrane Collaboration's Risk of Bias tool version 2 (RoB 2), which examines biases related to randomization, deviations from intended

interventions, incomplete outcome data, outcome measurement, and selective reporting.

Strategy of data synthesis Data will be extracted following the CIMO (Context, Intervention, Mechanism, Outcome) theoretical-analytical framework. A content analysis approach will be employed to compare studies in order to identify patterns of relationships among the constructs of leadership styles, psychological safety, and organizational innovation, as well as theoretical and methodological divergences or gaps.

Main categories will be predefined (e.g., leader/psychological safety and organizational innovation relationships), but additional subcategories may emerge during the analysis. Quantitative data will be grouped into comparative tables as they are identified.

The quantitative data extracted from the studies will be presented both in tabular and narrative formats, based on the CIMO framework. For studies with incomplete data or insufficient information, the absence of data will also be reported.

The analysis will be conducted by subcategory, according to the Item Data (CIMO), which will be compared descriptively. Studies with a high risk of bias will be analyzed, and their influence on the overall results will be discussed.

A structured narrative synthesis will be conducted. Data will be presented through charts and comparative tables containing study information (authors, year, country, type of organization, method, instruments used, main findings); an analytical textual description grouping results by thematic similarity; an integrated discussion on the relationships between leadership styles, psychological safety, and organizational innovation; among other elements.

Subgroup analysis The analysis will be conducted by subcategory, according to the Item Data (CIMO), which will be compared descriptively. Studies with a high risk of bias will be analyzed, and their influence on the overall results will be discussed.

The following data will be extracted: title, keywords, authors, academic background of the authors, year of publication, country and institution of origin.

Context (C) – Organizations:

Type of organization: public, private, third sector, or hybrid

Economic sector: primary, secondary, or tertiary (see Table 1)

Geographical location: country where the study was conducted

Organization size: micro, small, medium, or large enterprise (based on the criteria established by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], the International Labour Organization [ILO], and/or SEBRAE, according to number of employees, revenue volume, and/or total assets) (see Table 2)

Sample composition: number of participants

Population studied: occupational role (leadership, managers, teams, etc.) and gender.

Intervention (I) – Leadership styles (HRM practices):

Investigated leadership styles, e.g., transformational, authentic, servant

Description/detailing of HRM practices associated with leadership training

Description/detailing of HRM practices associated with leadership development

Mechanism (M) – Psychological Safety (as a mediator of leadership effect):

Conceptual definition of psychological safety

Description/presentation of identified psychological processes: trust, freedom to fail, freedom to speak up, and others

Role of psychological safety: mediator between leadership and innovation, catalyst, antecedent or consequence, or no identified relationship

Outcome (O) – Organizational Innovation:

Conceptual definition of organizational innovation

Description/presentation of innovative behaviors

Type of innovation investigated: product, service, process innovation, and others

Evidence of promotion of organizational innovation

Measured outcomes and main findings: correlations, direct and indirect effects between leadership and psychological safety constructs

Study design:

Type of empirical study conducted

Methodological approach: qualitative, quantitative, or mixed

Data collection method

Data analysis method

Measurement instruments (scales and/or tools used to assess):

Leadership; Psychological Safety; Organizational Innovation

Validated in Brazil

Additional instrument information: instrument/scale name, original authors and translators/adapters (if applicable), number of items, and response format.

Sensitivity analysis A formal assessment of publication bias will not be conducted. However, to minimize the risks of meta-biases related to publication, selection, and citation, the following measures will be taken: inclusion of studies published in Portuguese, English, and Spanish; selection of databases covering international and multidisciplinary literature (Scopus, Web of Science, PsycINFO (APA), Emerald Insight e EBSCO); methodological quality of studies will be assessed according to criteria appropriate to the study type (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed), and results will be considered accordingly in the interpretation; study selection and data extraction will be performed independently by two reviewers.

Language restriction English, Spanish and Portuguese.

Country(ies) involved Brazil and Portugal.

Other relevant information Second affiliation: Faculdade de Psicologia e da Ciências da Educação da Universidade de Coimbra (FPCEUC)

Any changes made after the start of the review will be recorded directly on the INPLASY platform, and all relevant modifications will be properly documented and justified in the Methods section of the final systematic review report.

The strength of the body of evidence will be assessed using the GRADE tool.

Keywords leader; leadership style; psychological safety; psychological climate; organizational innovation; innovation performance; innovation capability; innovative behavior.

Dissemination plans The findings of this systematic literature review will be disseminated through the author's master's dissertation, publication in a peer-reviewed international journal, presentations at national and international conferences, and sharing the protocol and data in open-access repositories. Additionally, the results may be presented in seminars or workshops targeting professionals and organizational managers interested in leadership, psychological safety, and organizational innovation.

Contributions of each author

Author 1 - Géssica Ferreira Neves - Contributed to the review conception, review design, review coordination, data collection and management, data analysis and interpretation, and protocol writing.

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Author 2 - Alessandro Vinicius de Paula - He provided general supervision of the project, critical review of the protocol, contributed to the conception and methodological design of the review and guided the interpretation of the data.

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Author 3 - Carla Maria Santos de Carvalho - Participated in the critical review of the protocol, supported the methodological design, guided the analysis and interpretation of data, and provided suggestions for writing the protocol.

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