GET INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

BUILDING SAFER SHIPS: PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AND ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE IN PHILIPPINE MARITIME WORK

Christian Murielle M. Garcia[1], Jinamarlyn B. Doctor[2]
[1,2]Eulogio "Amang" Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology

Corresponding Email: christiangarcia.rpsy@gmail.com, jbdoctor@earist.edu.ph

Available Online: February 2026
Revised: January 2026
Accepted: January 2026
Received: December 2026

Volume IV Issue 1 (2026)
DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.18772254
E-ISSN: 2984-7184
P-ISSN: 2984-7186
GET International Research Archives

Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between psychological safety and organizational climate within the Philippine shipping industry, a sector uniquely influenced by local cultural dynamics. Utilizing a descriptive survey research design, data were gathered from 74 respondents—including managers, supervisors, and various agents—using a validated 86-item, 5-point Likert scale instrument. Statistical analysis, including Weighted Mean, One-way ANOVA, and Pearson R, revealed that respondents perceive a generally high level of psychological safety (WM=4.18) and a positive organizational climate (WM=4.08). While customer service agents reported higher psychological safety scores than other groups, ANOVA results (F=0.283) indicated no statistically significant differences across the five job roles. Further, the study established a significant correlation between all dimensions of organizational climate—structure, responsibility, reward, risk, warmth, and standards—and psychological safety (individual safety, team respect, and team learning). In spite of these positive trends, varied challenges were identified across departments, suggesting a need for localized improvements. The findings culminate in a proposed intervention training program designed to bridge identified gaps, draw upon cultural strengths, and foster a more supportive work environment. This research points up that integrating psychological safety into organizational strategy is vital for enhancing employee well-being and operational harmony in the maritime logistics sector.

Keywords: *Psychological safety, organizational climate, shipping industry, Filipino Work Culture, Intervention Training Program*

Recommended Citation:

Garcia, C. M. M., & Doctor, J. B. (2026). BUILDING SAFER SHIPS: PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AND ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE IN PHILIPPINE MARITIME WORK. GET INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL, 4(1), 65–73. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18772254

INTRODUCTION

Psychological safety and organizational climate are foundational constructs that dictate the psychological well-being and operational efficiency of individuals within a professional collective. Psychological safety is defined as the shared belief that the environment is conducive to interpersonal risk-taking—allowing members to voice ideas and acknowledge mistakes without fear of retribution. With this is the organizational climate, which encompasses the shared perceptions of the policies, practices, and informal attitudes that characterize the work environment. The significance of these constructs extends beyond corporate productivity and aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, this research contributes to SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) by prioritizing mental health and reducing workplace-related distress, and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), which advocates for safe and secure working environments for all. In the maritime industry, achieving these goals is inextricably linked to the "human element"—the psychological state of the workforce that ensures both operational safety and sustainable economic productivity.

Fostering a safe environment requires more than just policy; it requires the active cultivation of trust. Luis (2021), trust is the cornerstone of a psychologically safe workplace, and organizations must actively model it to build resilient, adaptive teams. Leaders who engage in consultative and supportive behaviors empower employees to move beyond "impression management" and contribute to collective problem-solving. This is particularly critical in the shipping industry, a sector crucial for global trade that poses unique stressors for its workforce. Employees must navigate complex logistical demands while contending with the nuances of Filipino work culture. As noted by Talosig (2022), the deep-seated culture of respecting elders often translates into a workplace deference to authority, which can inadvertently create barriers to "speaking up." These cultural barriers are further complicated by mental health stigma; as established by Doctor (2025), social judgment and traditional norms in the Philippines often prevent individuals from expressing psychological distress or seeking professional support. Organizational stigma often translates into reduced psychological safety, as the cultural weight of hiya discourages employees from risking social displacement. These dynamics are further complicated by the hierarchical and collectivist nature of Philippine workplaces. Rooted in Sikolohiyang Pilipino, the concept of Kapwa (shared identity) serves as a dual-edged sword: it fosters a cohesive organizational climate while simultaneously framing dissent as a threat to shared social bonds.

While these constructs are well-documented globally, existing literature remains heavily rooted in Western paradigms, creating a significant research gap within the Philippine maritime sector. This study addresses this disparity by examining a major shipping firm in Pasay City, seeking to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical application through a proposed intervention training program. By fostering an environment where employees feel psychologically safe to learn from failure and experiment with new methodologies, organizations can unlock the growth mindset necessary for long-term innovation. This alignment not only enhances internal operational safety and organizational climate but also fulfills the global mandate for "Decent Work and Economic Growth" (SDG 8). Finally, prioritizing psychological safety encourages knowledge sharing and feedback loops, directly strengthening the maritime industry's collective learning outcomes and innovative capabilities.

Philosophical View

The philosophical foundation of this study is built upon the synergy between Amy Edmondson's (2019) Theory of Psychological Safety and the Organizational Climate Theory developed by George Litwin and Robert Stringer (2002). These frameworks provide a dual-layered lens for examining the shipping company's internal environment—balancing

the broad organizational "atmosphere" with the intimate, interpersonal "trust" required for high-performance teams. At the core of the interpersonal layer is Edmondson's Paradigm of Psychological Safety. Within the high-stakes context of the shipping industry, this theory posits that a team's success is predicated on a shared belief that the environment is safe for interpersonal risk-taking. This safety is not merely a lack of conflict; rather, it is a proactive state where individual safety, team respect, and team learning are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. When an individual feels psychologically safe, they are more likely to voice concerns and contribute ideas without the paralyzing fear of negative consequences. This individual security flourishes only within a culture of team respect, where members are treated with dignity and their unique contributions are valued. The ultimate manifestation of this safety is team learning—a dynamic process where employees seek feedback, experiment with new methods, and share knowledge gained from both successes and failures.

While Edmondson focuses on the "heart" of team interaction, Litwin and Stringer's Organizational Climate Theory provides the "skeleton" or the structural context in which these interactions occur. This theory offers a multi-dimensional assessment of the work environment's atmosphere, emphasizing that employees' perceptions of their surroundings directly shape their behavior and motivation. To achieve a comprehensive understanding of the shipping company, this study utilizes six key dimensions of climate that are most relevant to contemporary settings: Structure, Responsibility, Reward, Risk, Warmth, and Standards (Shintri & Bharamanaikar, 2017). Structure provides the clarity of rules and systems, while Responsibility empowers employees with autonomy and accountability. These are balanced by the Reward system, which recognizes excellence, and the organization's tolerance for Risk, which dictates how much innovation is actually permitted. Finally, Warmth provides the social support networks that humanize the workplace, while Standards establish the high-performance expectations that drive the organization forward.

By anchoring the study in both theories, a holistic picture emerges: Litwin and Stringer's model identifies the systemic factors of the work environment (the organizational climate), while Edmondson's theory explains how employees navigate their interpersonal relationships within those systems (the psychological safety). This theoretical synthesis is crucial for identifying the specific gaps that the proposed intervention training program must address to foster a truly resilient and innovative workforce in the maritime sector.

Objectives

The study aimed to determine the shipping company employee's psychological safety and organizational climate: Basis for a Proposed Intervention Training Program. Specifically, it tried to answer the following questions;

1. How do managers, supervisors, sales representatives, customer service agents, and operations agents assess the employees psychological safety in the company as to the following:

    1.1. Individual safety,

    1.2. Team respect, and

    1.3. Team learning?

2. Is there a significant difference in the assessment of the five groups of respondents?

3. How do the respondents assess the level of organizational climate in the shipping company as to the following:

    3.1. Structure,

    3.2. Responsibility,

    3.3. Reward,

CC BY SA

3.4 Risk,

3.5 Warmth, and

3.6 Standards?

4. Is there a significant relationship between Psychological Safety and Organizational Climate?
5. What are the challenges encountered by the respondents in the shipping company?
6. Based on the findings, what training program may be proposed?

METHODS

Participants

The study was conducted with a total of 74 respondents, all of whom are currently employed at the Pasay City headquarters of the participating shipping firm. To ensure a comprehensive representation of the organizational hierarchy, the participant pool was drawn from a diverse range of professional roles, including managers, supervisors, sales representatives, customer service agents, and operations agents. This multi-level approach allows for a nuanced comparison of how psychological safety and organizational climate are perceived across different tiers of responsibility and daily operations. Beyond their professional designations, the participants were further characterized by a detailed demographic profile designed to capture the "human element" of the workforce. Data were meticulously gathered regarding their age group, specific department, and length of service, providing insights into how career maturity and departmental culture might influence individual experiences. By focusing exclusively on the Pasay City headquarters, the study maintained a consistent geographical and cultural context, ensuring that the findings reflect the unique interpersonal dynamics of a centralized Filipino maritime logistics environment.

Design and Procedure

This study utilized a descriptive survey research design to evaluate the levels of psychological safety and organizational climate among the employees of the participating shipping company, a method chosen for its efficacy in identifying prevailing patterns and trends within a specific organizational context (Smith and Jones, 2018). The primary data collection tool was a researcher-developed questionnaire, meticulously designed to capture the specific nuances of psychological safety and organizational climate within the maritime sector. To ensure the instrument's content validity, it underwent a rigorous validation process by a panel of experts in psychology and organizational behavior, who evaluated the items for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the theoretical frameworks of Edmondson (2019) and Litwin and Stringer (2002). Following this expert review, a dry run was conducted with a representative group of participants to identify any ambiguities in the phrasing and to assess the practical flow of the survey. To further establish the instrument's reliability, the data from the pilot test were subjected to statistical testing—specifically the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient—to ensure internal consistency across the 86 items. This multi-stage validation and reliability protocol ensured that the survey was a high-fidelity instrument capable of producing stable and accurate measurements for the final analysis.

The data collection process was initiated by securing formal authorization from the company's Human Resources Department, followed by the digital deployment of a researcher-developed questionnaire via Microsoft Forms. To uphold ethical standards, an informed consent form was integrated as the primary section of the digital instrument, ensuring that all participants were fully apprised of the study's purpose and their right to anonymity before proceeding. Once the data were electronically gathered from the headquarters in Pasay City, the responses were

systematically tallied, consolidated, and endorsed to a professional statistician for rigorous analysis using tools such as One-way ANOVA and Pearson R to determine significant relationships and differences among the variables.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Psychological Safety

The assessment of Psychological Safety among the five groups of respondents revealed a generally high level of interpersonal trust, characterized by an overall weighted mean of 4.18 (Agree). In terms of Individual Safety (WM=4.08), managers were the sole group to "strongly agree," suggesting that those in higher leadership tiers perceive a greater freedom to speak up compared to supervisors and agents. Team Respect (WM=4.19) was particularly evident among customer service agents, though supervisors reported the lowest scores in this category, indicating a potential disconnect in how middle management feels valued within the team. Team Learning (WM=4.27) received the highest ratings, particularly from sales and operations agents, reflecting a culture of knowledge sharing and experimentation at the operational level.

This emphasis on learning and operational growth aligns with the findings of Cainday (2023), who posits that the continuous development of employees is a fundamental necessity for maintaining and improving work engagement. As Cainday argues, an organization's most valuable resources are its people; therefore, their personal, professional, and career development must be continuously monitored to ensure they consistently perform at their peak. In the context of the shipping company, the high scores in team learning suggest that the workforce is already primed for development, reinforcing the idea that fostering a psychologically safe environment is the primary vehicle for unlocking the human capital potential that Cainday identifies as essential for organizational success.

Table 1

Employee's Psychological Safety

Criteria	Managers		Supervisors		Customer Services Agents		Operation Agents		Composite Mean	
	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI
Individual Safety	4.28	SA	3.81	A	4.11	A	4.16	A	4.08	A
Team Respect	4.27	SA	3.81	A	4.46	SA	4.19	A	4.19	A
Team Learning	3.98	A	4.10	A	4.56	SA	4.29	SA	4.27	SA
Overall Weighted Mean	4.17	A	3.91	A	4.38	SA	4.21	SA	4.18	A

Differences on the Assessment of Five Groups of Respondents

On the significant differences in these assessments, the statistical analysis demonstrated a non-significant variation across the five professional groups. This is evidenced by the consistent acceptance of the null hypothesis across all dimensions, as the calculated F-statistics for Individual Safety (0.45), Team Respect (1.59), and Team Learning (1.93) all fell below the critical value of 2.505. The overall F-stat of 0.283 further confirms that the "Shipping Company" has successfully established a relatively uniform culture of psychological safety that effectively transcends departmental boundaries and job roles. This statistical consistency suggests that the organization's core values regarding interpersonal risk-taking are being communicated and felt effectively across the Pasay City headquarters, regardless of an employee's specific rank or function.

This uniform level of safety holds significant potential for the organization's growth. As suggested by Yang (2021), a high level of psychological safety serves as a guarantee for the personal investment employees make within the creative process, directly resulting in more frequent creative behaviors. Furthermore, Luis (2021) posits that such an environment builds and nurtures the trusting relationships between employers and team members necessary for collective success. However, for these non-significant differences to translate into peak performance, leadership must remain proactive. Talosig (2022) notes that positive feelings of psychological safety are strongest when leaders are perceived as role models who are trusted to act on feedback for the genuine good of the people. Therefore, the shipping company's current statistical uniformity provides a stable foundation upon which leaders can model the behaviors needed to sustain long-term innovation and employee engagement.

Table 2

Differences on the Assessment on Psychological Safety

Dimension	F-stat	Critical Value	Decision	Interpretation
Individual Safety	0.45	2.505	Accept H_O	Not significant
Team Respect	1.59	2.505	Accept H_O	Not significant
Team Learning	1.93	2.505	Accept H_O	Not significant
Overall	0.283	2.505	Accept H_O	Not significant

Level of Organizational Climate

The evaluation of Organizational Climate resulted in an overall mean of 4.08 (Agree), indicating a stable and professional work environment within the Pasay City headquarters. Dimensions such as Warmth (WM=4.25) and Responsibility (WM=4.19) were identified as primary strengths, implying that the organization excels in fostering supportive interpersonal relationships and empowering employees with a sense of autonomy. Furthermore, the high rating for Standards (WM=4.15) and Structure (WM=4.13) suggests that employees operate with a clear understanding of performance expectations and organizational systems.

However, the dimensions of Reward (WM=3.82) and Risk (WM=3.87) received the lowest relative scores. While these figures remain within the "agree" range, it is suggested that the recognition systems and the organization's tolerance for innovation are areas that require further development to move from a state of general agreement to one of strong organizational commitment. As noted in the study by Abun et al. (2021), a failure to continuously improve critical climate factors—such as clarity, standards, and rewards—can significantly diminish employee work engagement. Their research underscores that an effective organizational culture is one that not only creates clear standards but also actively values and respects each member through robust reward systems. Therefore, addressing these lower-scoring dimensions is essential to preventing a decline in engagement and ensuring the shipping company maintains a culture of excellence and mutual respect.

Table 3

Level of Organizational Climate

Criteria	Managers		Supervisors		Sales Representatives		Customer Services Agents		Operation Agents		Composite Mean	
	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI
Structure	4.08	A	3.91	A	4.23	SA	4.44	SA	3.97	A	4.13	A
Responsibility	4.30	SA	3.91	A	4.34	SA	4.49	SA	3.88	A	4.19	A
Reward	3.84	A	3.27	MA	4.02	A	4.17	A	3.78	A	3.82	A
Risk	3.82	A	3.59	A	4.11	A	4.31	SA	4.04	A	3.97	A
Warmth	4.34	SA	4.10	A	4.22	SA	4.40	SA	4.21	SA	4.25	SA
Standard	4.08	A	3.69	A	4.25	SA	4.53	SA	4.20	SA	4.15	A
OVERALL	4.08	A	3.74	A	4.19	A	4.39	SA	4.01	A	4.08	A

Relationship of Psychological Safety and Organizational Climate

A critical finding of this study is the significant positive relationship between psychological safety and organizational climate, with correlation coefficients ranging from 0.22 to 0.81. The data indicate that all dimensions of climate—particularly Reward and Warmth—are strongly linked to an individual's sense of safety. Furthermore, the high correlation between Structure/Responsibility and Team Learning underscores that clear operational roles and employee empowerment are the necessary precursors for a team to engage in the feedback loops and experimentation vital for growth.

These findings are deepened when viewed through the lens of Anderson (2020), who observed that fostering an organizational climate for psychological safety may not yield beneficial outcomes in terms of innovation performance unless the level of perceived safety is sufficiently high. This provides a vital nuance for managers at the shipping company: while the current correlation is positive, the organization must strive to push these "Agreeable" scores toward "strongly agree" to truly reap innovation-related benefits. As Anderson suggests, there appears to be a threshold effect where the transition from a supportive climate to actual creative output requires a robust, high-level foundation of psychological safety. Therefore, maintaining the current "Agreeable" status is a positive start, but reaching the "strongly agree" peak is the key to unlocking the adaptive and innovative capabilities necessary in the global maritime industry.

Challenges of the Respondents

Even with the generally positive perceptions within the shipping Company, several critical challenges emerged, specifically regarding the "middle-management squeeze." Supervisors consistently reported lower scores in the areas of Warmth, Reward, and Team Respect compared to their managerial or frontline counterparts. This suggests a hierarchical friction point where middle management may feel less socially supported and inadequately recognized for their contributions. Furthermore, the moderate scores for Risk (WM=3.87) across all groups point to a lingering hesitation toward innovation, likely rooted in a conservative corporate culture where employees may still perceive a "safe" path as the only viable one. These localized friction points are echoed in the study by Ravishankar (2022), which states the vital importance of employee recognition practices. Ravishankar's research indicates a profound need for organizations to move beyond traditional structures to enhance non-monetary rewards and consistent feedback

mechanisms. According to Ravishankar, psychological safety remains a growing concern globally, as employees frequently express underlying fears regarding the repercussions of sharing unconventional ideas or taking calculated risks. This suggests that the "Agreeable" levels found in the shipping company are not static; they represent a persistent challenge that requires continuous, targeted interventions to ensure that the organizational climate remains truly supportive for every tier of the workforce.

Proposed Intervention Programs

To address the identified gaps, a Proposed Intervention Training Program has been developed to guide the organization's existing strengths in interpersonal warmth and collective learning while standardizing safety protocols. The program specifically targets the enhancement of reward systems and the empowerment of middle management to foster inclusive team dynamics. The shipping firm can bridge hierarchical divides and cultivate a resilient environment where employees feel empowered to contribute to the company's global objectives. While the organization demonstrates a baseline of psychological safety, the study reveals nuanced discrepancies across various tiers—most among supervisory roles. This emphasizes the necessity of targeted interventions to institutionalize safety practices uniformly across all levels. Furthermore, specific climate dimensions, including structure, responsibility, and reward, represent key levers for improvement. Strengthening these pillars will not only bolster psychological safety but also cultivate a high-performance culture where innovation and resilience are driven by a shared sense of ownership and empowerment

CONCLUSION

In light of the empirical findings, several key conclusions are drawn that emphasizes the interplay between human dynamics and organizational structure within the shipping company. While customer service agents reported a higher level of psychological safety compared to other roles, the overall statistical analysis confirmed that there is no significant difference among the five groups of respondents, indicating a relatively uniform culture of trust across the Pasay City headquarters. The data further reveal a generally positive organizational climate, characterized by strong perceptions of warmth and responsibility, though varying levels of agreement persist across different departments and job roles. A significant positive relationship was established between psychological safety and all dimensions of organizational climate, validating that structural clarity and interpersonal support are essential precursors to a safe work environment. Furthermore, addressing identified friction points—particularly the "middle-management squeeze" and moderate risk tolerance—through targeted interventions and organizational initiatives is vital for fostering a more supportive atmosphere. Finally, the proposed intervention training program serves as a strategic framework to understand and integrate these constructs, ensuring that the organization leverages its strengths to drive long-term resilience and innovation.

REFERENCES

Abun, D., Menor, R. I., Catabagan, N.C., Magallanes, T., & Ranay, F. B. (2021). Organizational climate and work engagement of employees of divine word colleges in Ilocos Region, Philippines. International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science (2147-4478), 10(1), 107–121. https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v10i1.1017

Batugal, M. I. C. (2019). Organizational culture, commitment and job satisfaction of faculty in private-sectarian Higher Education Institutions (HEIS). World Journal of Education, 9(2), 123–135. https://doi.org/10.5430/wje.v9n2p123

Cainday, M. R. L., et al. (2023). Relationship of personality traits and organizational climate work engagement among higher education personnel in the Philippines. International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research, 4(9), 3123–3133. https://doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.04.09.06

Doctor, J. B. (2025). Mental health stigma, mental health services and professionals, and interventions in the Philippines. Diversitas Journal, 10(special_1), 609–619. https://doi.org/10.48017/dj.v10ispecial_1

Edmondson, A. C. (2019). The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. ISBN 9781119477266

Luis, G. S. (2021, July 13). Psychological wellbeing in the workplace. Inquirer Business. https://business.inquirer.net/326941/psychological-wellbeing-in-the-workplace

Shintri, S., & Bharamanaikar, S. (2017). A theoretical study on evolution of organizational climate, theories and dimensions. International Journal of Science Technology and Management, 6(3), 652–658. Retrieved from https://www.ijstm.com/images/short_pdf/1491485761_P652-657.pdf

Smith, W. T., & Jones, L. R. (2018). Research methods in social sciences (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Stringer, R. (2002). Leadership and organizational climate: The cloud chamber effect. Prentice Hall series in organizational development. ISBN 9780130321879

Talosig, A. (2022, November 11). Breaking down hierarchies and nurturing psychological safety in Philippine workplaces. LinkedIn. https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/breaking-down-hierarchies-nurturing-psychological-safety-talosig

Yang, Y., et al. (2021) Why and when paradoxical leader behavior impact employee creativity: Thriving at work and psychological safety. Current Psychology 40, 1911–1922. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-018-0095-1